

**"WHERE ONCE OUR HEROES DANCED THERE IS
NOTHING BUT A HIDEOUS STAIN"**

NATIONALISM AND CONTEMPORARY ZIMBABWEAN LITERATURE

Laurice Taitz

**A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg,
in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Art.**

Degree awarded with distinction on 4 December 1996.

Johannesburg 1996

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

LAURICE TRITZ
(Name of candidate)

16 day of MAY, 19 96.

ABSTRACT

This study demonstrates the relationship between nationalism and identity formation by exploring the ways in which Zimbabwean writers have constructed identities within the context of a nationalist struggle for independence. By focusing on the predominant themes of disease, alienation and disintegration, it explores how these identities emphasise difference and heterogeneity in response to the homogenising discourses of colonialism and nationalism. The disparity between the ways in which nationalism articulates itself and is apprehended, and the ways in which nationalism allows for the foregrounding of particular identities is illustrated by reference to the idea of a pact or alliance - an agreement reached on the basis of the necessity of defeating colonialism. While motivations are often disparate, this common goal allows for a show of unity, often mistaken as homogeneity. The achievement of independence entails a shift in priorities, where those differing identities that previously seemed homogenous, come to the fore precisely to emphasise their difference.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Like many who have gone before me - when it comes to writing an acknowledgement that expresses a full debt of gratitude - I called on the muses for inspiration. Why they neither responded nor left a forwarding address is another thesis in itself, so I have been forced to resort to quoting somebody who quoted somebody wise who once said that there is a theory that if anyone discovers exactly what the Universe is for and why it is here, it will disappear and be replaced by something even more bizarre and inexplicable. I have never met the person who said this nor do I intend to, but after working with Bheki Peterson as a supervisor I have no doubt that things are never what they seem and for this I would like to thank him. My gratitude also extends to: my friend Melissa, who perfected the technique of looking attentive while she was really asleep (even though I knew this it didn't stop me from reading endless drafts to her); and to the African Literature Department for their patience and sense of humour.

The financial assistance of the Centre for Science Development, (HSRC, South Africa) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at, are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the Centre for Science Development.

CONTENTS

Abstract

Acknowledgements

CHAPTER ONE

Nationalism: A Question of Identity 1-35

CHAPTER TWO

Doubling up: Nervous Conditions 36-69

CHAPTER THREE

Knocking on the door of the House of Hunger 70-101

CHAPTER FOUR

Acts of Resistance: Exhuming the Bones 102-129

CHAPTER FIVE

On the Warpath 130-162

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion 163-172

BIBLIOGRAPHY

173-179

CHAPTER ONE

Nationalism: A Question of Identity

Setting the boundaries

This study seeks to explore how writers in Zimbabwe have attempted to construct identities within the context of a nationalist struggle for independence from settler colonial rule. This will be done through an investigation of the predominant themes of disease, alienation and disintegration within Zimbabwean literature written in English. The literary texts to be studied are Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, Dambudzo Marechera's *The House of Hunger*, Chenjerai Hove's *Bones*, Charles Sarnupindi's *Pawns*, and Irene Staunton's *Mothers of the Revolution*.

While the literature selected for this study was produced in both the pre- and post-independence periods, there is a link between the different texts in terms of their preoccupations. The themes of disease, alienation and disintegration are pervasive. Linked to metaphors of land and drought, and to concerns with violence and schizophrenia, these themes have their origins in the pre-independence literature. What is striking about Zimbabwean literature is that even after the attainment of the nationalist goal of independence these themes are deployed in different ways to speak about the post-independence state. It is this inter-linkage that serves to open up a dialogue between the different texts as they write back to each other.

Betrayal and disillusionment are common preoccupations in all of the texts in this study, serving to question nationalist narratives and the attainment of the goal of nationalist struggle, independence. While writers have reacted to colonialism and legitimised the need for a politics that will respond, it is clear that the 'fruits of independence' are yet to be attained.

In the literature under discussion these themes and preoccupations have implications on a number of different levels. While they can be related to concrete historical occurrences, it

is also necessary to relate these themes to the ways in which they have been literally and metaphorically constructed. It is these different levels that this study will attempt to explore, and in so doing attempt to show the implications that this literature has for the understanding of nationalism and of the formation of identity within this context. It is by tracing the similarities in thematic concerns that one is able to examine the ways in which the ambiguities displayed in the texts have implications for the understanding of nationalism.

Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* explores the ways in which systems of patriarchy and colonialism compete to define an African identity, and offers a critique of the effects of colonial education and colonial violence on the identity of the colonised subject. Dambudzo Marechera's *The House of Hunger* serves as a metanarrative, a critique of narrative itself. The writer's inability to construct a cohesive narrative of his own identity serves to question all narratives of identity, and the narratives of nationalism itself. Chenjerai Hove's *Bones* looks at the peasant experience of guerilla war and deconstructs the category of the peasantry, who have been constructed as an homogenous grouping, anonymous in their collective actions. In *Pawns*, Charles Samupindi gives a scathing critique of the guerilla war and the lack of options and opportunities available to returning guerillas, while in Irene Staunton's collection of oral testimonies, *Mothers of the Revolution*, the focus is on the violence of the guerilla struggle.

Critics have noted that Zimbabwean literature, in the context of African Literature as a discipline, and in terms of its development and nationalist preoccupations, has been markedly different to:

[the] typical pattern in the development of African Literature - a phase of cultural nationalism and anti-colonial protest followed by a phase of post-colonial disillusionment.... Here post-colonial disenchantment and criticism of African leadership emerged even before independence was achieved.¹

¹Flora Veit-Wild, *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers: A Social History of Zimbabwean Literature* (Harare: Baobab, 1993) 1.

Underlying such a trajectory is the assumption that the nationalist struggle reaches its height at the moment when independence occurs. Presumably this is the moment when hegemony is achieved and differing interests are forged into a consensus which looks forward to the benefits promised by the nationalist struggle, the fruits of independence.

In looking at nationalism as leading to this consensus, critics have failed to perceive how this process of hegemony takes place, and that those differing interests that for the nationalist moment seem homogenous, aligned and in agreement with each other are exactly that, differing. This misrecognition would then account for the somewhat incorrect thesis that many have put forward of the revolution being betrayed. The assumption of state power at independence sees these differing interests come to the fore, as differing identities and social groups are no longer under the banner and leadership of nationalism. The notion of *post-colonial disillusionment* can then be seen to be misplaced, and is a result of a misunderstanding of the processes through which nationalism operates. The era of post-independence is an era which involves the collapse of popular alliances between different sections of the colonised people, and therefore post-colonial disillusionment represents a failure of nationalist parties to find a new political strategy that would be a logical extension of nationalism after independence has occurred.

According to Anne McClintock:

Nations are historical and institutional practices through which social difference is invented and performed. Nationalism, becomes as a result, radically constitutive of people's identities, through social contests that are frequently violent and always gendered.... Despite nationalisms' ideological investment in the idea of popular *unity*, nations have historically amounted to the sanctioned institutionalization of [gender] *difference*.²

²Anne McClintock, "Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family," *Feminist Review* 44 (1993): 61.

By "difference", McClintock refers to the differentiation of access to the rights and resources of the nation-state that a state affords men and women. However, McClintock's observation can be extended to a number of contested sites of identity as differentiation also occurs on the basis of race, class ethnicity and region. Nations are then defined as contested systems of cultural representation that limit and legitimise peoples' access to the resources of the nation-state.³ The gaining of the nationalist goal of independence then entails a new political struggle, one that is contested on the basis of difference.

The struggle for political independence involves a move towards defining and asserting a cultural identity. Whether the interests in forging this identity are aligned or disparate, I will argue that these attempts still represent a form of nationalism, the creation of a national identity, and that it is precisely through *difference* that national identities are forged.

Crucial to the perception of identity formation is the understanding that:

Within each society, each social agent is inscribed in a multiplicity of social relations - not only social relations of production but also the social relations, among others, of sex, race, nationality and vicinity. All these social relations determine positionalities or subject positions, and every social agent is therefore the locus of many subject positions and cannot be reduced to only one.⁴

Zimbabwean writers are faced with competing discursive formations within which they locate their work. Colonial discourses of race have constructed the 'African' as an homogenous and monolithic grouping, incapable of actions that initiate historical moments. African nationalist discourses have challenged colonial discourses on race, but only on the basis that Africa has its own history, it's own proof of civilization. Because of the structure of the colonial argument, African nationalism has been doomed to respond to its terms, to assert that there is value in homogeneity in order to prove a united opposition to colonialism. African

³McClintock, "Family Feuds" 61.

⁴Chantal Mouffe, "Hegemony and New Political Subjects: Towards a New Concept of Democracy," trans. S. Gray, *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* eds. L. Grossberg & C. Nelson (London: Macmillan, 1988) 89-90.

nationalist discourses have served to imprison the 'African image' in much the same way as colonialism has sought to fix the 'African identity'.

The competing discourses of colonialism and nationalism simultaneously construct and deconstruct an African identity. Writers in Zimbabwe have responded within their work by simultaneously deconstructing themselves as colonial subjects and constructing themselves as subjects whose positions become defined by the very act of writing, and the act of writing against colonial discourses, nationalist discourses and neo-colonial disempowerment and dependence. While one identity is related to their position as writers in Zimbabwean society, as 'speaking voices' who have made a particular cultural intervention, other identities are then related to the specific locus in which they place their writing, writing from the perspective of a particular gender, race, class, ethnic or language group.

The ambiguity of nationalism becomes a defining characteristic and in this context differing perspectives within literature do not deny the existence of a national literature, rather they validate this concept of a nation as composed of differing identities and interests. In the case of Zimbabwean literature, writers share a common national historical background and common interests in terms of this. The production of a national literature is produced through this intertextuality within literature and criticism, where there is a shared common basis but differing interests in terms of different identities, subject positions and personal histories.

Defining nationalism: A dialogue between Janus and Esu

Critics dealing with the concept of nationalism have generally interpreted nationalism as being two mutually exclusive, opposing and conflicting tendencies. In this way, nationalism, depending on whether it is seen as liberatory or fascist as the two most extreme poles, has been viewed as being either wholly positive or wholly negative.

According to Geoff Eley the distinction created between the two types of "nationalisms" characterised the first as a "political or voluntarist conception of nationality" and the second

as an "irrational or organic one".⁵ The first category is then defined as originating from the experience of the French Revolution and is "linked to notions of citizenship and popular sovereignty, where the nation signifies a political category of freely associating individuals", while the second category "denies this assumed contractual basis and insists on the inherited historicist character of national identity".⁶ This distinction is then developmentally conceived and therefore the only resolution of these two separate categories has been to view them as distinct phases in the development of history, where they reach their logical conclusion in the second form. This type of approach to nationalism excludes any form of contextual analysis as it relies on generalisations and instances which by their similarity, fit into either one or the other category. It follows therefore that this interpretation is conceptually limited as it relies on the creation of a division between two forms or tendencies and denies any form of human agency.

The two categories of nationalism that have been created should not however be completely dismissed, rather they should be conceived of as being flexible and inter-related and ultimately dependent on the particular contexts - historical, geographical, economic, political, social and ideological - in which forms of nationalism arise. In attempting to trace the source of particular nationalisms it is therefore necessary to trace the context in which they emerge and to attempt to define at which points in historical development, particular ideological, cultural, social or political interventions are made to lay the basis for their formation. Tom Nairn refers to the concept of nationalism as being "Janus-faced". Nairn contends that:

In short, the substance of nationalism as such is always morally, politically, humanly ambiguous. This is why moralizing perspectives always fail, whether they praise or berate it. They simply seize upon one face or another of the creature and will not admit that there is a common head conjoining them. But nationalism can in this sense be pictured as like the old Roman god, Janus, who stood above gateways with one face looking forward and one backwards.

⁵Geoff Eley, "Review Essay: Nationalism and Social History," *Social History* 6. 1 (1981): 85.

⁶Eley, "Review Essay" 85.

Thus does nationalism stand over the passage to modernity, for human society.⁷

Like the old Roman god, Janus, the figure of Esu-Elegbara, the divine trickster of Yoruba mythology is the guardian of the crossroads. Esu represents mutability, indeterminacy, open-endedness and ambiguity, disruption and reconciliation, closure and disclosure, encasement and rupture. According to H.L. Gates, Jr., Esu is the classic figure of mediation, of the unity of opposed forces, and his discourse is, metaphorically, double-voiced. "In Yoruba mythology, Esu is said to limp as he walks precisely because of his mediating function: his legs are of different lengths because he keeps one anchored in the realm of the gods while the other rests in this, our human world".⁸

According to Nairn, nationalism is a crucial, fairly central feature of the modern capitalist development of world history.⁹ By defining nationalism as encompassing two faces, Nairn effectively creates some answers to the dilemma of nationalism, as being both revolutionary - as a necessary phase of development which facilitates liberation from oppression and domination - and as a reactionary phase of more powerful and developed countries. However, Nairn's conceptualisation is based on a developmental perspective and therefore fails to account for the forms of nationalism that arise in the case of under-development, and uneven development - where there is an overwhelming disparity between different modes of production which are then regionally defined within a country. Uneven development entails a competition between different modes of production as they compete for status in contexts where the metropolitan production modes are privileged and exist in opposition to those in the regions that surround it. Despite this, Nairn's assertion that nationalism faces two directions, simultaneously encompassing two dimensions, that of the past and the future, is a valid one.

⁷Tom Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (London: New Left Books, 1977) 348-349.

⁸Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford UP, 1988) 5-7.

⁹Nairn, *The Break-up* 331.

The concept of nationalism therefore needs to be grasped as a whole, as only in this way can one transcend the weight of either side, both the positive and the negative. It is necessary to escape from a moralising perspective and in an effort to do so, to locate the specific phenomena of nationalism within the particular context in which it arises. Nairn traces the term as denoting "new, heightened significance accorded to factors of nationality, ethnic inheritance, customs and speech from the early nineteenth century onwards".¹⁰ In this way the concept of nationalism is thought to be a necessary stage of development of all societies. However, nationalism does not take a uniform shape but depends upon the distinctive forces or interests which are resident within the specific social formations concerned. In this way one can account for the variety of different nationalisms that achieve prominence in different contexts.

According to Ernesto Laclau, narratives of development presuppose a movement from tradition to modernity as they rest upon the framework of a continuum.

However, certain forms of 'modernisation' are not only compatible with but tend to reinforce traditional forms. If we accept that the modernisation of certain aspects of society is not necessarily an indicator of the modernisation of that society as a whole - on the contrary, the modernisation of partial aspects can result in a strengthening of a traditional social pattern - we must admit that one society can be more 'traditional' than another from the point of view of some or most of its features, and nevertheless be more 'modern' from the point of view of its structure.¹¹

On this basis, Laclau argues for the abandonment of the analysis of transition in terms of a continuum of features and attitudes, and for the need to confront it as a "discontinuous series of structures".¹²

¹⁰Nairn, *The Break-up* 333.

¹¹Ernesto Laclau, *Politics & Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism - Fascism - Populism* (London: Verso, 1977) 155.

¹²Laclau, *Politics & Ideology* 155.

A particularly striking example of this can be found in the case of the Zimbabwean peasantry and the uneven development of the agricultural sector. Widespread unrest in rural areas was the result of increasing impoverishment as the limited land set aside for 'Native Reserves' became increasingly eroded and access to markets or improved means of production was denied. These events reached a climax with the introduction of the Native Land Husbandry Act in 1951 which introduced stringent measures to force African farmers to de-stock and modify land tenure practices. Land ownership was individualised by the allocation of titles. However, prospects were only offered to 'master farmers', those farmers who had more substantial holdings. This Act which was intended to provide opportunities for peasant farmers therefore only served to further disadvantage them. The 'improvement' measures were submerged even further by the introduction of "enforced conservation provisions, such as the culling of livestock and forced and unpaid labour".¹³ This Act then became a focal point of nationalist protest:

At the same time the impoverishment of those with tiny holdings or no access to land was institutionalised for all time - under the new land tenure arrangements they would stand no chance of being allocated land in the future. At the other end of the scale the resulting abrogation of their rights to allocate land upset chiefs and headmen.¹⁴

These events served to generate broader mass support for the nationalist movement. A further illustration follows the declaration of UDI in November 1965 by the Rhodesian Government which resulted in the imposition of sanctions against Rhodesia by the international community. Following this, white farmers were encouraged by the state to diversify agricultural production away from tobacco into maize, cattle and cotton. Helped by state subsidies and loans, white farmers increased their share in domestic food production and in the process, displaced an African peasantry who, up until this time, had had a major share. This move on the part of the farmers and the state served to exacerbate the level of poverty among the peasantry. It also served to restrict the growth of a kulak class, those peasant

¹³Colin Stoneman & Lionel Cliffe, *Zimbabwe: Politics, Economics and Society* (London: Pinter, 1989) 21.

¹⁴Stoneman & Cliffe, *Zimbabwe* 21.

farmers who had become proprietors of their own farms, middle peasants and Purchase Area farmers.¹⁵ According to Ian Phimister, "while this redivision of rural resources undoubtedly slowed the deterioration of the kulak economic base, it failed to stop the process of impoverishment initiated by the settler state".¹⁶

Mounting economic grievances were then closely interlinked with the escalation of the war. Many of the landless unemployed left Rhodesia as volunteers to join the guerillas, while the sharp decline in the African share of the agricultural market served to persuade many peasant cultivators to shelter these guerillas and thereby sustain their attack on the Rhodesian State.¹⁷ The entry of the peasantry into the nationalist struggle for independence was therefore the result of a pact or alliance based upon the desire to recover land, and restore previous modes of production and traditional patterns of authority within peasant societies. Different sectors of the peasant population had different reasons for participating in the nationalist struggle. However, these different motivations can be shown as being spurred on by the desire to regain control and status within peasant societies.

Whether nationalism is considered as a positive or negative stage of development, there is general agreement that it supplies a people with an important commodity, that is an identity. This search for and the acquisition of identity needs, according to Nairn, to be understood in the context of "development" as it is only in this context that "nationhood acquired systematic and abstract meaning".¹⁸

Nairn characterises this as the ambivalence or ambiguity that marks most nationalisms. In order to advance, these countries needed to mobilize their societies, and their most important resource in this context were *the people*, the centre of nationalism. "All there was was the

¹⁵Ian Phimister, "The Combined and Contradictory Inheritance of the Struggle Against Colonialism," *Zimbabwe's Prospects: Issues of Race, Class, State and Capital in Southern Africa* ed. Colin Stoneman (London: Macmillan, 1988) 8-9.

¹⁶Phimister, "The Combined and Contradictory Inheritance" 9.

¹⁷Phimister, "The Combined and Contradictory Inheritance" 9.

¹⁸Nairn, *The Break-up* 334.

people and the peculiarities of the particular region".¹⁹ In this way, the masses made their entrance into history, with one foot in the past and the other directed towards the future.

Imagining the nation

Benedict Anderson claims that the concept of nationalism does not align itself with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with cultural systems. Anderson traces the history of this concept as being materialised with the emergence of written or literary forms in which technical means were then provided for representing the kind of imagined community that is the nation. The writer is able to conjure up an imagined world in the audience's mind where members of a society are depicted as being connected to one another by the writer, creating the "conception of a stable community".²⁰

In keeping with this tradition of thought that nationalism is the creation of a group of intellectuals, certain interpretations of nationalism have attempted to dismiss mass participation and organization under the banner of nationalism. In so doing, these accounts have again managed to theorise about nationalism without taking into account the specific ideological, cultural, political and economic contexts within which nationalisms have emerged and been supported. It is due to the conception of nationalism as being imposed from above, created, invented and imagined by a small intellectual elite that "there has been little attempt to explore the social bases of mass patriotism that started to emerge".²¹ The idea that "nations are not so much discovered as created by the labours of the intelligentsia"²² serves to trace the origin of nationalist thought and movements to a mythic intelligentsia, to an international petit bourgeois

¹⁹Nairn, *The Break-up* 340.

²⁰Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983) 15.

²¹Eley, "Review Essay" 99.

²²Turner in Eley, "Review Essay" 87.

conspiracy that has led the masses astray. This is a contradictory development, as in seeking to give a political voice to the so-called masses, it removes their voice entirely.

Norma Kriger argues that it is critics' pre-occupation with peasant collective action in the context of revolution which has resulted in the neglect of internal grievances within this highly differentiated grouping. This has resulted in the attempt to shift the focus towards common grievances against the state that would account for collective action and support of nationalist organisation on the part of the peasantry. In this way, internal differences and grievances have been viewed as an obstruction to nationalist organisation. In the context of Zimbabwean history, the role played by the peasantry and by different classes and ethnic groups, and their differing interests cannot be understood within this conceptualisation. Through the use of oral testimonies, Kriger's study shows how these internal grievances which had their origins in the structures of privilege within peasant communities and were based upon traditional relations of authority, played a major role in mobilising peasant participation and cooperation.²³ Neil Lazarus extends this idea by arguing that the projection of unity and co-ordinated political will onto the masses cannot withstand historical scrutiny. In a study undertaken on Frantz Fanon's work on the Algerian revolution, Lazarus contends that this kind of interpretation will always fail to account for the "wholesale demobilization and disenfranchisement of 'the people' in the years immediately following the acquisition of independence".

Such a development cannot be reconciled with Fanon's evocation of a disciplined and progressively unified population coming closer and closer to self-knowledge as the struggle against the [French] colonial forces intensified. It seems inconceivable that, having been decisively and world-historically conscientised during the anti-colonial struggle (as Fanon claims they had been), this population would have permitted itself to be so easily and so quickly neutralised after decolonization. The truth, rather, would seem to be

²³Norma Kriger, "Popular Struggles in the Zimbabwean War of National Liberation," *Cultural Struggle and Development in Southern Africa* ed. Preben Kaarstholm (London: James Currey, 1991) 125-6.

that as a class the [Algerian] peasantry was *never* committed to the vision of the FLN, even when it was fighting under the FLN's leadership.²⁴

Lazarus argues for the position taken by Ian Clegg when Clegg characterised the peasant participation in nationalist struggles as being different in content to the passive role pursued in a post-independence period. According to Clegg, "the peasants were fighting for what they regarded as their inheritance. Their consciousness was rooted in the values and traditions of the past, and their aim was its re-creation".²⁵

Lazarus offers a critique of theorists of colonial discourse who tend to cast all forms of national consciousness as based upon disunited ethnically identified communities. According to Ranajit Guha:

What... historical writing of the kind cannot do is to explain nationalism for us. For it fails to acknowledge, far less to interpret, the contribution made by the people on their own, that is independently of the elite to the making and development of... nationalism.²⁶

Guha maintains that even in those cases in which the masses were mobilised very self-consciously and wilfully by bourgeois nationalist elites, they still managed to break away from that control and put their own characteristic imprint of popular politics on campaigns originally initiated by the upper classes. For Lazarus, this is especially the case if one subscribes to the view that colonialism was "on the whole, unable to shatter the strength and integrity of indigenous moral and cultural frameworks". Lazarus develops this further by positing that:

²⁴Neil Lazarus, "Disavowing Decolonization: Fanon, Nationalism and the Problematic of Representation in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse," *Research in African Literatures* 24. 4 (1993): 78-79.

²⁵Lazarus, "Disavowing Decolonization" 79.

²⁶Lazarus, "Disavowing Decolonization" 86.

We should be willing to concede that 'the people' could or would not have spoken the language of nationalism without transforming it at least to some degree into a discourse capable of expressing their own aspirations.²⁷

One therefore needs to move away from the notion of nationalism as being solely a product of the intellectual labours of a particular dominant class which has served to silence and marginalise the interests of subordinate classes. This shift entails an emphasis on the specific moments at which agreements, alliances or pacts between 'intellectuals' and the 'masses' are reached. These alliances need to be seen as necessary to the project of nationalism as they entail an agreement regarding the imperatives of resisting colonialism.

The example of peasant participation, cited previously, illustrates the content of these alliances. While the aim of the nationalist struggle in Zimbabwe was on the one hand to recover land taken away, on the other it was to wrest control of the economy from colonialist domination. Practical land issues appealed to the peasantry and served to create peasant support for the nationalist struggle. The land issue also held a symbolic appeal for those classes who were not part of the peasantry. While nationalism is directed towards the future, towards change, alliances or pacts between different classes often look to the past and the restoration of traditional relationships of authority and power. Once independence is achieved, these become contradictory imperatives, and the pacts or alliances that were formed in the context of a nationalist struggle become unsustainable.

It is clear that different classes or groupings have differing interests for uniting to achieve nationalist ends. The idea of an alliance or pact then suggests that while this end seems to be primary, nationalism is organised as an oppositional force and gets its **cohesion** (homogeneity) from its organisation as oppositional. Further, it also suggests that internal to nationalist organisations as an oppositional force, is the recognition of ethnic, class and other differences that are (temporarily) accorded a secondary position because of the preoccupation with defeating colonialism.

²⁷Lazarus, "Disavowing Decolonization" 86.

The preoccupation with symbolic codes, cultures and identities can be regarded as being very much a response to colonialism's own foregrounding of these instances in Zimbabwe. This will be demonstrated later in this study through the examples of the *chimurenga* and the role played by spirit mediums, and the constructions of ethnic identities.

Colonialism and its (dis)contents

According to V.Y. Mudimbe, despite the fact that the colonial experience, from today's perspective, represents a brief moment in African history, this moment is still charged and controversial since it signified a new historical form and the possibility of radically new types of discourses on African history, traditions and cultures.²⁸

When the British South Africa Company occupied the country in 1890 the monument [Great Zimbabwe] became the subject of considerable settler polemic and controversy. While its origins were still uncertain Cecil Rhodes recognised the considerable propaganda value that evidence of ancient foreign settlement, preferably white and successful with Biblical origins, would have. It would give a precedent and respectability to the conquest and a promise of similar prosperity to the settlers and investors in the new colony.... It was inevitable that the Rhodesian Front regime of 1962-79, built on an antagonism toward all African aspirations towards equality, should rapidly recognise the dangers of promoting black cultural pride and political consciousness through any indication that Zimbabwean history, however remote, had a proud record of achievement.²⁹

Mudimbe defines the processes of colonization and colonialism as entailing the construction or organisation of non-European areas, both literal and symbolic territory, into fundamentally

²⁸V.Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1988) 1.

²⁹P.S. Garlake, "Prehistory and Ideology in Zimbabwe," *Past and Present in Zimbabwe* eds. J.D.Y. Peel & T.O. Ranger (Manchester, Manchester UP, 1982) 1.

European constructs.³⁰ For its implementation, colonialism relied on force and on both the threat and the use of violence. It served to create a structural condition of violence as it struggled to demarcate its territory, to encode both the landscape and the 'native' body with the markings of its power.

The history of colonialism inscribed itself upon the native body and gains meaning through the decoding of the body's deformity. The body, like the landscape is mutilated by the violence of colonialism. According to Michel Foucault, "the body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold on it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs".³¹ The body becomes a concrete example of the workings of power as "the natural body is marked, organised and produced as a cultural body".³² It is violence which serves as a central structure around which communities become defined or organised. Violence serves to create or re-create the notion of community, race, ethnicity and gendered identities.

Displaying the body

The demonstration or display of power and authority is often tied up with the threat or use of violence. The notion of a "theatre state" is central to understanding the performance and display of violence within different political contexts. Violence becomes a ritualised performance of power, where power is located in its very performance. In Chenjerai Hove's *Bones*, and Charles Samupindi's *Pawns*, the unburied bodies and bones that litter the landscape are continual reminders of the costs of the war against the colonial state. Several oral accounts in Irene Staunton's collection, *Mothers of the Revolution*, mention the display

³⁰Mudimbe, *The Invention* 1.

³¹Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Penguin, 1977) 25.

³²Peter Brooks, *Body Work: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993) xii.

of guerilla bodies by Rhodesian soldiers intent on using these bodies as a warning against challenging their power. The following scene is described in *The House of Hunger*:

He had marked out with red ink an article about a battle between Smith's security forces and the guerillas; two large pictures accompanied it. The photographs showed twenty-two dead guerillas laid out for display.³³

In this context, the display of violence serves as a centre within which to locate political power, rather than as a representation or reflection of that power. Here, violent events and their enactment are not the means to political ends but the ends in themselves.

In the period following Zimbabwean independence, different forms of violence can be delineated. In 1965 The Rhodesian government declared a state of emergency, which was re-enacted fifteen years later, after independence, by the Zanu-led Zimbabwean Government.³⁴ Long-standing strains between the two nationalist parties, ZANU and ZAPU, surfaced after independence and took on an ethnic dimension.

On the whole, Matabeleland had remained loyal to its own leader, Joshua Nkomo, and therefore to ZAPU when in 1963, in the turbulent clashes over nationalist policies, ZANU split off. Now they felt aggrieved, convinced that their part of the new nation was not receiving a fair share of resources for development. Ex-combatants generally, having missed out on years of education, were finding that freedom had brought few rewards, and this was especially so in Matabeleland. There the Lancaster House Agreement that there should be no expropriation of white farms hit particularly hard, and the dissident ex-guerillas found a measure of ready sympathy in the local population.... The new government had at its disposal the same resources for quelling civil and armed disorder as the previous regime - the army, the police and intelligence services.... Nor had their methods changed. For, in addition,

³³Dambudzo Marechera, *The House of Hunger* (London: Heinemann, 1993) 60.

³⁴Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, *Zimbabwe: Wages of War - A Report on Human Rights* (New York: Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, 1986) 5.

all the hated security legislation of the last twenty years remained in force.... The Fifth Brigade was deployed in January 1983. These met their match in the better trained ex-ZIPRA dissidents, and then turned on the civilian population to frighten them off supporting insurgents. The result was that for the people, to all intents and purposes, the war continued as before, caught as they were between the threats, demands and assaults of dissidents and government forces. Murder, beatings and rape were exacerbated by the familiar curfew, and now also by a drought, in which people were not allowed to trade or bring in food, in case it was used to support dissidents.³⁵

While similarities can be traced from the colonial to the post-colonial state, the forms of violence that each makes use of are very different in the way that they are represented. The colonial state relied on the display of violence to coerce subordination to its rule, while the post-colonial state makes use of its achievement of independence and the threat to this independence as justification for the use of force.

In order to decode the public displays of power, it is necessary to also attempt to distinguish between this and the private realm of a particular social order. It is in this private realm, of individuals and of subjectivity that domination can be shown to fail in its attempts to win or produce consent. In the build-up to the war for independence, the displays of guerilla bodies were part of a morale-boosting propaganda campaign waged by the Rhodesian government. In *None But Ourselves*, Julie Frederikse argues that this propaganda exercise was in fact somewhat of a failure:

The antidote, schemed propagandists, was to counter the demoralising effect of dead white bodies with images of victory: dead enemy bodies. Assuming that blacks had been impressed with 'terrorist' body displays, could whites not be motivated by an array of *floppies* to graphically illustrate the 'kill rate'? In reality, however, the

³⁵Victor de Waal, *The Politics of Reconciliation: Zimbabwe's First Decade* (New Jersey: Africa World Press, 1990) 92-94.

strategy proved ineffective with whites as it had with blacks, and once again there was a negative boomerang effect.³⁶

The response of many white Rhodesians to these displays of guerilla bodies was outrage and disgust at what they saw as the brutality of war. In September 1975, The **Rhodesian Herald** expressed this view in a headline that read: "Terror Pictures being overdone". Displays of guerilla bodies on television prompted letters from white Rhodesians, such as this one:

Sir - I was shocked by the mindless, kindless, heartless "Reporting from the operational area" shown on our television screen as a news item.... We were then subjected to the horror of a film of the bodies being dragged along the ground and being loaded into a Land-Rover and were asked "not to spare a thought for them as they are brutal killers".... This is a retrogressive step in our country's progress and reflected a fundamental difference between one section of the community's accumulated experience of what civilian standards are, and another's.... No matter what they have done, they remain God's creatures and their mutilated bodies deserve a modicum of dignified treatment.... The terrorists concerned payed with their lives. Is that not enough?³⁷

Violence is shown to fail in its attempt to produce consent for its use. Charles Samupindi's **Pawns** is a response to the violence of guerilla war. For Samupindi, there is nothing valiant or noble in the use of violence. Violence fractures and maims individuals and the social structures of which they form part. In Irene Staunton's **Mothers of the Revolution**, many of the oral testimonies recorded display a preoccupation with the violence of the war and show how in retrospect, from the standpoint of those who fought for independence, the suffering experienced continues to be a lingering feature in their remembrances of the war. Even the attainment of the goal of independence cannot erase the costs that the struggle entailed.

³⁶Julie Frederikse, **None But Ourselves: Masses vs Media in the Making of Zimbabwe** (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1982) 167.

³⁷Elizabeth McClelland, letter, **Rhodesian Herald**, 26 September 1975 (cited in Frederikse, **None But Ourselves** 167).

These kinds of responses to violence serve as a critique of Frantz Fanon's theory of the redemptive powers of violence. In "Concerning Violence", Fanon claimed that violence against the colonised "invests their characters with positive and creative qualities" and that:

The practice of violence binds them together as a whole, since each individual forms a violent link in the great chain, a part of the great organism of violence which has surged upwards in reaction to the settler's violence in the beginning. The groups recognise each other and the future nation is already indivisible.... violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect.³⁸

Any understanding of violence is both culturally mediated and shaped by the literary forms in which this understanding is represented. It is within literary forms that specific cultural and historical meanings are attached to violence, and the strategies employed to narrate violence alter according to specific contexts. Through the use of narrative and narration, violent events which are otherwise perceived as ruptures in the cultural continuum, are inserted back into traditions and structures they would otherwise defy.³⁹ According to James E. Young, this retelling entails a "contradictory impulse to preserve in narrative the very discontinuity that lends events their violent character, the same discontinuity that is effectively neutralised by its narrative rendering".⁴⁰

In the literary texts in this study, the discontinuity of violent events is expressed through different literary forms, through the fragmentation of narrative and character. In Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, the violence of colonialism is evidenced in the

³⁸Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. C. Farrington (London: Penguin, 1990) 73-74.

³⁹James E. Young, "Interpreting Literary Testimony: A Preface to Rereading Holocaust Diaries and Memoirs," *New Literary History* 18. 2 (1987): 404.

⁴⁰Young, "Interpreting" 404.

schizophrenia of the colonial subjects while in Marechera's *The House of Hunger*, Hove's *Bones* and Samupindi's *Pawns* violence is expressed through fragmentary forms of narration.

The image of violence therefore becomes a motif in a context where a society is born out of a violent encounter with colonialism. Violence is responsible for the fracturing and disintegration of identity and the increasing sense of alienation experienced by many writers in pre- and post-independent Zimbabwe.

The colony: a place of splitting

The process of colonialism relies upon a dichotomizing system which sets up a number of mutually exclusive categories which are then defined by their opposition to each other. The policy of colonialism was born out of the desire to economically exploit certain regions by incorporating indigenous economies into the world market. In order to further this aim, colonial policies sought to make people reject their cultural heritage in favour of a new identity, that of the 'colonised'. Born out of this was the condition of a triple alienation. Firstly, the colonised were forcefully estranged from their cultural heritage and secondly, alienated and rejected by those who sought their colonisation. Thirdly, they were further alienated from the means of production as all economic goods were appropriated by the 'coloniser' and their mother-country.

Culturally, the policy of colonialism sought to redefine the terrain, to inscribe it's meaning on a space that was thought to be previously uninscribed. However, it is the presence of previous meanings that causes a disruption of the cultural identity of the colonised. Frantz Fanon characterised the colonial world as a "world divided into compartments.... The colonial world is cut in two".⁴¹ The condition of splitting or schizophrenia is a symptom of the contradictory inheritance of colonialism.

⁴¹Fanon, *The Wretched* 29.

Fanon's observation can be likened to a similar one made by W.E. Du Bois when he described the condition of being an African-American, as a condition of "double consciousness", "this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others which engenders twoness - two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body".⁴² In his foreword to *Black Skin, White Masks*, Homi K. Bhabha emphasizes this idea of schizophrenia positing that, reading from Fanon, "the very place of identification, caught in the tension of demand and desire, is a space of splitting. The fantasy of the native is precisely to occupy the master's place while keeping his place in the slave's *avenging* anger".⁴³

According to Abdul JanMohammed, colonialism disrupted both the material and the discursive universe. JanMohammed refers to Fanon's definition of the conqueror-native relation as a "Manichean struggle", constructed by the colonizer through the economy of a central trope - the Manichean allegory. Through its practice, racial difference was transformed into moral and even metaphysical difference.

Though the phenomenological origins of this metonymic transformation may lie in the 'neutral' perception of physical difference (skin colour, physical features, and such), its allegorical extensions come to dominate every facet of imperialist mentality.⁴⁴

In an attempt to ensure that the process of colonialism is completed, one cultural process is seized upon and becomes determinate. Imperial culture is instituted as the norm and the culture of the colonised is marginalised and repressed. The normative culture of the coloniser

⁴²W.E. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: The New American Library, 1961) 45.

⁴³Homi K. Bhabha, foreword, "Remembering Fanon - Self, Psyche and the Colonial Condition," *Black Skin, White Masks* Frantz Fanon, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 1986) xv-xvi.

⁴⁴Abdul JanMohammed, "The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature," *'Race', Writing and Difference* ed. H.L. Gates, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985) 80.

is imbued with value, civilisation and linguistic superiority. Imperial culture denigrates indigenous culture, thereby justifying its conquest and subsequent rule.⁴⁵

The redefinition of the cultural production of the 'other' is a statement of ownership of the control of the means of symbolic production. By the creation of the binary oppositions of coloniser/colonised, modern/traditional, colonialism sought to secure a ruling definition, to struggle for signifying supremacy and by so doing, to make all others subordinate. While the dichotomies that colonialism symbolically created were theorized as being evolutionary - as being logical extensions of each other - a movement from tradition to modernity - Mudimbe categorises the intermediate space between them as being designated by marginality:

This intermediary space could be viewed as a major signifier of underdevelopment. It reveals the strong tension between a modernity that often is an illusion of development, and a tradition that sometimes reflects a poor image of a mythical past.... This marginal space has been a great problem since the beginning of the colonizing experience; rather than being a step in the imagined "evolutionary process", it has been the locus of paradoxes that called into question the modalities and implications of modernization in Africa.⁴⁶

These paradoxes are evident in the contestations over definitions of spirit mediums and the role played by them in different wars of liberation. The intermediary space is a space of contestatory politics and of competing definitions of identity.

⁴⁵Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language and African Literature* (London: James Currey, 1986) 17.

⁴⁶Mudimbe, *The Invention* 5.

Contesting identity: the symbolic codes of ethnicity and spirit mediums

According to Geoff Eley, accepted approaches to the study of nationalism use the term "imagined" in order to re-emphasize the manufactured or artificial character of the nineteenth-century nationalities. Eley asserts that while the emergence of these nationalities bore quite an arbitrary relationship to existing forms of social organisation (common territory, language or religion), "this is not to say that a common territory, language or culture provided no basis for shared identity or consciousness". However, for that consciousness to then become a nationalist consciousness rather than regionalist, ethnic or peasant-populist, something else had to happen in the form of political intervention. Eley observes that:

This need to constitute nations through processes of imaginative ideological labour - i.e. the novelty of national culture, its manufactured or invented character rather than its deep historical rootedness - is probably the most important point to emerge from recent literature.⁴⁷

An example of the kinds of political and ideological interventions that result in the creation of cohesive identities can be found in the case of ethnicity and the creation of ethnic identities. According to Terence Ranger, the attacks launched against white settlers in what has been described as the first *chimurenga* in the 1890s, took these settlers by surprise. Ranger attributes this unpreparedness on the part of the settlers to the misunderstanding of African reaction to colonial rule in Southern Rhodesia, since there was an inclination to believe that Africans welcomed white protection. There was a prevailing belief that Ndebele society, no matter how centralised and effective it had been in the past, had also been arbitrary and oppressive and that it had been abhorrent to most involved in it. Shona society was believed to welcome Company rule as protection against the Ndebele.⁴⁸

⁴⁷Eley, "Review Essay" 92.

⁴⁸Terence Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia 1896-97: A Study in African Resistance* (London: Heinemann, 1967) 2.

In a study done on white Rhodesian literature, Preben Kaarsholm posits that the basic racism of the discourse used is supplemented by a discourse of **tribalism**. The history of 'division' and irreconcilable difference is used to justify both colonial conquest and the continuation of settler rule.⁴⁹

The effect of this construction of ethnic division can then be traced further to the period leading up to independence in 1980, where both nationalist parties, ZANU and ZAPU, formed a common 'Patriotic Front' under pressure exerted by the Front Line states. In the independence elections both parties went their separate ways and only reunited eight years later. According to Stoneman & Cliffe, while various explanations have been offered for the original split between the two parties and for their continued separate existence, the one factor that is frequently cited is that of **ethnicity**.⁵⁰

In other words, creative political action is required to transform a segmented and disunited population into a coherent nationality, and though potential communities of this kind may clearly precede such interventions (so that they are rarely interventions into a vacuum), the latter remain responsible for combining the materials into a larger collectivity.⁵¹

Eric Hobsbawm refers to these attempts to establish symbolic continuities between past and present as "invented traditions". Hobsbawm defines these as:

a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact,

⁴⁹Preben Kaarsholm, "From Decadence to Authenticity and Beyond: Fantasies and Mythologies of War in Rhodesia and Zimbabwe, 1965-1985," **Cultural Struggle and Development in Southern Africa** ed. P. Kaarsholm (London: James Currey, 1991) 43.

⁵⁰Stoneman & Cliffe, **Zimbabwe** 19.

⁵¹Eley, "Review Essay" 90.

where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past.⁵²

The foundation of nationalist thought is the past, the recovery of history, language and cultural understandings and meanings. In the process certain elements are suppressed in order to give others prominence. This process is one of cultural innovation where certain elements are carefully selected, defined and purified of prior meaning. Both language and history are selected in order to create this sense of nationality. It is at this point that certain representations of a nation are seized upon as being reflections of the real, assuming the status of icon or symbol. In this way nationalist symbols and myths of origin are created which then justify and legitimate claims of nationhood, cultural autonomy and ultimately political independence. The assumption of homogeneity denies the political and cultural interventions that need to take place in order for the nation to be (re)constituted. For those countries that have undergone a colonial experience, this process represents a necessary step as the ability to (re)define the past is the ability to take control of history and culture. Colonialism failed to erase the history and culture of the colonised, rather it sought to (re)define them in order to lend legitimacy to its own project. This reinsertion of events into narrative is the primary objective of history as a discipline as history is, after all, narrative construction.⁵³

A particularly striking illustration of creative political intervention is to be found in the contestations over the role and status of spirit mediums in Zimbabwe. The struggles to define their significance are struggles over the control of African bodies - the peasantry - and land. Spirit mediums have become symbols, appropriated by colonialists and nationalists - seized upon to legitimate their respective interests. Represented as part of colonial history, as being symbols of failed African resistance and as part of nationalist histories, as being symbols of

⁵²Eric Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1983) 1.

⁵³R. Samuel & P. Thompson, *The Myths We Live By* (London: Routledge, 1990) 2. For further discussion see Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Maryland: John Hopkins UP, 1987) 2-3.

continuity between different struggles against the colonial state, spirit mediums are associated with attempts to conquer particular spaces. Frederikse notes that:

The parallel between the uprisings of the indigenous black people of Zimbabwe in the 1890s against the white settlers led by Cecil Rhodes, and the guerilla war of the 1970s against the white regime of Ian Smith became a central theme in the folklore of African resistance. The most popular folk heroes to emerge from 1896-1897 risings were two 'spirit mediums', people who were seen by the Shona as the link with their ancestral spirits. Nehanda and Kagubi simply played the traditional role of articulating the peoples' grievances through the voices of the spirits - in this case, against settler oppression. But to the settlers, they were dangerous instigators. Nehanda and Kagubi were captured and executed, thus transforming these *murenga* - rebels or fighters - into martyrs. So the guerilla war that erupted seventy years later was known as *Chimurenga*, the second war of liberation. This parallel was further strengthened by the emergence of a new medium of the Nehanda spirit who advised guerillas on the conduct of the war.⁵⁴

According to D.N. Beach, the uprising of 1896 against settler colonial rule can be characterised as a traditionalist uprising spurred on by the desire of indigenous peoples to recover a pre-colonial past, rather than as a proto-nationalist rising which looked towards the future. Beach claims that this uprising was not pre-planned or co-ordinated but was the result of a "ripple effect" in which "limited resistance to European rule was being carried out in separate, unconnected outbreaks and some communities were thinking of starting a full scale war". The threat of famine caused by locusts was the major factor that then led certain central Shona leaders to contact the religious leader Mkwati in the Ndebele area, then in revolt against European rule, in search of locust medicine.⁵⁵ It was the news of European defeat transmitted by these contacts that led to a full-scale uprising in which Shona

⁵⁴Frederikse, *None But Ourselves* 42.

⁵⁵D.N. Beach, "Chimurenga: The Shona Rising of 1896-7," *Journal of African History* 20, 3 (1970): 419.

communities resisted or collaborated as the news reached them.⁵⁶ The major uprisings, referred to as the Chimurenga wars, were eventually put down with great force by the settler state. On the nature of this defeat, Stoneman & Cliffe note:

It has been argued that this crushing and total, overall defeat of a broad movement was of a decisive, unambiguous and general character and thus explains why there was a long gap between the emergence of 'modern' nationalist politics - a view put forward to counter the notion of a continuous tradition of resistance through to today. If that latter view is a nationalist simplification, it is nevertheless certainly the case that the Chimurenga tradition was very much a symbol in the war of liberation in the 1970s.⁵⁷

According to David Lan, when the ZANLA guerillas entered Zimbabwe they realised that if they were to be successful they would have to be seen to be liberators by the people whom they had come to set free. Their actions therefore had to appear legitimate - not in terms of the political analyses of socialist theoreticians - in terms of the political interpretations of history of the peasants of Zimbabwe themselves. "These folk ideas had been forged by history, both remote and recent, and by the peoples' continual struggle to make sense of their history and their environment".⁵⁸ Co-operation between the guerillas and the peasant populace, where it did occur, needs to be understood in terms of an alliance or pact as the agreements that different classes or groupings enter into to achieve a particular goal, defeating colonialism, are key to understanding the workings of nationalism.

If the guerillas were to be helped by others, they had to recognise others and so, to a degree, lose their autonomy.... The Shona have always seen the relation between their past and their present as mediated by their ancestors. The young fighters therefore had to enter into a dialogue with these ancestors,

⁵⁶Beach, "Chimurenga" 420.

⁵⁷Stoneman & Cliffe, *Zimbabwe* 18.

⁵⁸Maurice Bloch in David Lan, *Guns and Rain: Guerillas and Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe* (London: James Currey, 1985) xiii.

to justify and explain their actions and seek ancestral help.... A common reaction has been to characterise ordinary people as the passive subjects of their political and economic circumstances which they neither seek to change nor understand. Their beliefs and practices then appear as quaint folklore, out of touch with the 'real' world which has irretrievably changed.⁵⁹

While a parallel can be drawn between the responses of successive governments in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe to spirit mediums in terms of different historical moments at which persecution of these people took place in an attempt to sever their connection with the land, it is apparent that the different governments in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe responded to spirit mediums for radically differing reasons. For our purposes it is clear that the role played by spirit mediums and religious organisations in both *chimurenga* wars, in 1896 and in the war leading up to independence has been politicised. Whether this continuity represents merely a manipulation or an invention of tradition, it is nevertheless the case that symbolic continuity between the two struggles has been established through the portrayal of spirit mediums. Spirit mediums represent an unbroken relationship with the land and a dialogue between the past and the future. We can understand the ways in which spirit mediums were inscribed as ideological symbols of popular resistance by drawing on Laclau's observation that:

ideological practice always works with raw materials constituted by prior interpellations which, on being disarticulated from the class discourses into which they were formerly integrated, lose any necessary class belonging.... Popular resistance was increasingly expressed through indigenist symbols, which originally represented the resistance to the dissolution of peasant communities but which reinterpreted by urban sectors, lost any necessary rural connotation and came to be symbols of popular resistance in general.⁶⁰

P.S. Garlake links the suppression of the origins of Great Zimbabwe to the marginalisation of spirit mediums by the Rhodesian government. According to Garlake, the museum at Great

⁵⁹Bloch, *Guns and Rain* xiv.

⁶⁰Laclau, *Politics & Ideology* 179-180.

Zimbabwe was finally evacuated and public visits to the monument ended in June 1979. At the same time a local spirit medium, Sophia Tsavatayi Muchini, was arrested. She was a highly respected spirit medium, held to be that of Mbuya Nehanda, the heroine of the war in 1897 who was executed by the settler courts for her role in the war.

Many spirit mediums played an important role in the last war advising and assisting the liberation forces, including, it seems, Sophia. She recruited people for guerilla training and was asked to become a guerilla 'leader'. Harassed by the Rhodesian forces... she was imprisoned for her activities for six weeks in 1978 and again in July 1979 until the week after the 1980 elections that brought ZANU to power.⁶¹

Muchini returned to Great Zimbabwe, where she had first established herself in 1974, on her release. She was subjected to continual police harassment to induce her to leave the area, following repeated complaints about her activities by the regional Director of Museums. Eventually her home was burnt down by the police and her property confiscated. She still refused to leave. She appealed to the new Government to end the harassment and for help in conducting a traditional ceremony of reconciliation and peace at the Monument. Garlake documents the events which followed:

Her respect and standing in the community were such that she was visited by the Minister of Health and senior army officers to see if they could assist her.... This came to nothing. Her home was again destroyed by police and she went to live secretly and alone below the Hill Enclosures. However, at last guerillas from a nearby Assembly point... were authorised to come to her help, as well as to have the spirits of those they had killed placated.... She seems to have appealed to the Government to legitimate this protection, but at this stage the guerillas carrying her message killed two local settler farmers. Once guerillas were known to be with her her home was stormed by police, several people were shot and killed by them and all the remainder, including

⁶¹Garlake, "Prehistory and Ideology" 16.

Sophia were arrested. Her children, aged twelve and fourteen, were assaulted, held in Police custody for nine months and threatened with death. On their evidence, with that of two young patients similarly treated by the police, and that of two guerillas already under sentence of death for the murders and promised clemency if they gave evidence against Sophia, she was tried in December 1981 for the settlers' murders, convicted, sentenced to death, her appeal rejected, at present awaits execution.⁶²

Ironically, the attempt to repress and marginalise spirit mediums and the connections established between the two wars served to further reinforce an unbroken continuity by the punishment meted out, execution, by the successive governments. According to Lan, those ancestors who had protected their descendants during the war, were then celebrated and applauded at the ceremonies held to mark the achievement of independence.⁶³

The post-independent state: internal differentiation

In asserting that nationalism's goal is independence, and that differentiated groupings enter into agreement to further particular aims in this regard, historical markers become displaced. The moment of independence rewrites all prior historical events into a continuous narrative of resistance leading up to independence. However, writers' pre-occupations with betrayal and their disillusionment regarding the non-delivery of the fruits of independence serves to displace independence as the centre of the narrative. In *Nervous Conditions*, and the *House of Hunger*, the autobiographical narrative voices used place individual experience at the centre of the narrative, and thereby challenge historical markers as being determinate while in *Pawns and Mothers of the Revolution*, the foregrounding of the violence of the guerilla war serves to undermine the sense of victory at the attainment of independence.

⁶²Garlake, "Prehistory and Ideology" 16-17.

⁶³Lan, *Guns and Rain* xvii-xviii

The gaining of independence can be utilised as a marker in order to demarcate historical periods only insofar as it represents the goal of nationalist struggle, or signifies the end of a particular political struggle. The gaining of independence proclaimed the end of colonialism and confirmed a victory for the national movement for liberation. It was this moment of transition that served to transform the "harsh memories of struggle - memories of degradation and violence - into images of heroism".⁶⁴ The independence ceremony itself allowed the newly independent to (re)imagine their past in a meaningful way, to (re)conceive of the setbacks and defeats they had endured prior to this moment, as positive events. In the process, "all defeats visited upon the colonized by their colonizers began to seem linked in a chain, as moments of resistance leading ineluctably to independence day".⁶⁵ Conceptualised in these terms of coloniser/colonised, independence then became the property of all who had been colonised. The moment of independence therefore signalled the (re)attainment of nationhood.⁶⁶

Fredric Jameson argues that the practice of periodization is reductive as it tends:

in spite of itself to give the impression of a facile totalization, a seamless web of phenomena each of which, in its own way "expresses" some unified inner truth - a world-view or a period style or a set of structural categories which marks the whole length and breadth of the "period" in question.⁶⁷

The independence ceremony can be seen in terms of Clifford Geertz's conception of a "theatre state", in which spectacle and ceremony serve to publicly dramatise the "ruling

⁶⁴Neil Lazarus, *Resistance in Postcolonial African Fiction* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1990) 2.

⁶⁵Lazarus, *Resistance* 2.

⁶⁶Lazarus, *Resistance* 3.

⁶⁷Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Methuen, 1981) 27.

obsessions of a particular culture".⁶⁸ Unlike the colonial theatre state which relied upon the display of violence to represent its power, the newly independent state relies upon a show of unity, of 'nationhood'. In this context, the state serves as a mass ritual device for its own enactment, where the display or spectacle of power is the state.

Ibbo Mandaza posits that in the African situation, in particular:

nothing is more enthralling and lulling to the masses - and to the African petty bourgeoisie itself - than the arrival of black majority rule, especially when, in the mind of the average person, this event immediately offers the promise of total (political and economic) liberation.⁶⁹

However, Mandaza then goes on to point out that the post-colonial state, and specifically that component of it that comprises the African petit bourgeoisie, gradually begins to develop an ideological superstructure within which to explain the ever-growing disparity between these popular demands and the economic and social realities of the neo-colonial situation.⁷⁰

Mandaza contends that in the post-colonial situation, the state plays a role in concealing the full and direct impact of international finance capital as it continues to exploit the human and material resources in this neo-colonial situation. Mandaza characterises the neo-colonial state as "schizophrenic", as it seeks to reconcile on the one hand the pursuit of the developmentalist objectives of independence, in response to the popular aspirations and expectations of the masses; and, on the other, the sheer weight of the imperialist forces of international finance capital.⁷¹

⁶⁸Clifford Geertz, *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1980) 13.

⁶⁹Ibbo Mandaza, introduction, "The Political Economy of Transition," *Zimbabwe: The Political Economy in Transition 1980-1986* ed. Ibbo Mandaza (Dakar: CODESRIA, 1986) 14.

⁷⁰Mandaza, "The Political Economy" 14.

⁷¹Mandaza, "The Political Economy" 13-14.

This condition of schizophrenia is further evidenced in the split that is present within all state institutions - the army, the police, the court system, the parliament and even the government itself (including the cabinet), and we might add even the political parties.⁷²

In the post-independence state, writers wrestle with the idea of fractured identities, with splitting or schizophrenia that occurs as a result of competing demands on individual identities. On the one hand, they depict a concern with portraying their endorsement of the need for independence and on the other, their resentment of the lack of concrete changes that have taken place. While the imperatives of the nationalist struggle served to silence the complexity of identities, to homogenise all interests, the attainment of independence entails a breakdown of homogeneity, a fracturing of the national front against colonialism as new struggles are defined in the post-independent state.

This schizophrenic condition is internalised as evidenced by the schizophrenic tendencies that even individual political leaders then exhibit when they feel compelled on the one hand to respond to the democratic demands of the people, and on the other feel the pressure of international capital which drives them to suppress those very demands to which they want to respond, but are unable.⁷³

The theme of schizophrenia and the themes of disease, alienation and disintegration will be explored further in this study, as pervasive pre-occupations of both pre- and post-independence literature in Zimbabwe. The following chapters will focus on five different literary texts and attempt to explicate the issues raised in Chapter One. Chapter Two focuses on Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* which is concerned with issues relating to colonial education, and the internalisation of colonial violence in the colonised subject. While Dangarembga re-writes the genre of the *bildungsroman*, which is inherently a male genre, from a woman's perspective, in Chapter Three, Marechera shows the unsuitability of this

⁷²Yash Tandon in Mandaza, "The Political Economy" 13-14.

⁷³Tandon in Mandaza, "The Political Economy" 13-14.

genre for the African male's experience. Marechera foregrounds violence in **The House of Hunger** and is concerned with issues of narrative construction and deconstruction. In Chapter Four Chenjerai Hove's **Bones** is concerned with the status of the peasantry and peasant women in particular as well as with contestations over the body and land. Chapter Five focuses on narratives of war, both in the form of the novel, Charles Samupindi's **Pawns**, and that of oral testimonies recorded by Irene Staunton in **Mothers of the Revolution**. Both texts portray a concern with finding a literary form that can adequately express the experience of violence.

CHAPTER TWO

Doubling up: Nervous Conditions

Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* begins with an epigraph which is taken from Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*: "The condition of native is a nervous condition". While Fanon foregrounded the conflicts and contradictions that plague the identity of the colonised subject, Dangarembga writes back to Fanon's propositions, extending Fanon's concerns through her focus on the effects of Shona patriarchal practices on the identity of the female subject. Writing of this "nervous condition", Fanon posits that:

In the period of colonisation when it is not contested by armed resistance, when the sum total of harmful nervous stimuli overstep a certain threshold, the defensive attitudes of the natives give way and they then find themselves crowding the mental hospitals. There is thus during this calm period of successful colonisation a regular and important mental pathology which is the direct product of oppression.¹

The characters of *Nervous Conditions* suffer from "bad nerves"² bad dreams³, hysteria⁴, "anxiety"⁵, eating disorders⁶, schizophrenia⁷ and unnamable "illnesses"⁸. They encounter a profound sense of alienation, brought about by the conflicts engendered by the competing

¹Fanon, *The Wretched* 201.

²Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* (London: The Women's Press, 1988) 102.

³Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 90.

⁴Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 201.

⁵Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 56.

⁶Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 190.

⁷Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 167.

⁸Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 185.

demands of the patriarchal order and the colonial project. Their inability to effectively resist patriarchal and colonial control results in psychological distresses which manifest themselves in physical disorders and diseases. "The status of *native* is a nervous condition introduced and maintained by the settler among colonised people *with their consent*".⁹

Patriarchal and colonial ideologies target the body as a means of identifying and dominating the 'other', transforming gender and racial difference into physical and metaphysical difference. Structured within discursive systems of binary opposites, the colonised/patriarchal subject is constantly being confronted with narratives of their own identity, which privilege the physical over the psychological. Patriarchal and colonial discourses commodify the native subject into a stereotyped object, negating their subjectivity and individuality.¹⁰ The dominated are denied a unified identity, and the only means of expression available is through the body itself which has been given signifying capacity.

Written in 1988, and set in the period leading up to the nationalist struggle in Zimbabwe, Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* is concerned with the racial and gendered limits imposed upon African identity, and specifically, African female identity. *Nervous Conditions* catalogues the narrator, Tambudzai's, struggle:

to escape the impoverished and stifling atmosphere of the "homestead" in search of education and a better life, as well as the efforts of other women in her family to negotiate their circumstances, offering all the while a scathing critique of the confused and corrupt social structure they are part of. Tambu's movement from her homestead, which symbolizes rural decay, to the prosperous, urban mission of her uncle introduces us to a cast of characters scarred by encounters with the savagery of colonialism in the context of an indigenously oppressive society.¹¹

⁹Jean Paul Sartre, preface, *The Wretched* 17.

¹⁰JanMohammed, "The Economy of Manichean Allegory" 83.

¹¹Deepika Bahri, "Disembodying the Corpus: Postcolonial Pathology in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*," *Postmodern Culture* 5. 1 (1994): 1.

Nervous Conditions is a first person narrative account of the contradictions that inhere in the position of the female colonised subject. Tambudzai exhibits a growing awareness of the constructedness of her own identity through narratives of patriarchy and colonialism. Her awareness entails a resistance to her position as an object of these narratives, concretised in making herself the subject of her own narrative. According to Brenda Bosman, Dangarembga's narrator, Tambudzai, "denies that she is telling her own story".¹² The narrator is only able to tell her story and construct her identity in relation to the community of which she is part and therefore, the story that she tells is "the story of four women whom I loved, and our men".¹³ Through her focus on the different responses of women to patriarchal control, Dangarembga foregrounds the notion that the identity of women is neither unitary nor monolithic, but consists of fragmentary and at times contradictory experiences.

Dangarembga locates the text within a domestic realm, juxtaposing two different households - the rural homestead and the mission station. Constantly moving between these two geographical locales, the text points to the protagonist's growing awareness of the similarities and differences that exist between different forms of patriarchal control.

Dangarembga shows how the corresponding methods of patriarchy and colonialism are a source of conflict for the colonised subject. They seek on the one hand to assimilate the subject into their own structures by assigning value to their identity, while on the other, to constantly remind the subject of their place in a racial and gendered hierarchy and of the limits of their identity. In the words of the narrator's cousin, Nyasha:

To forget who you were, what you were and why you were that. The process, she said, was called assimilation, and that was what was intended for the precocious few who might prove a nuisance if left to themselves, whereas the others - well really, who cared about the others? So they made a little space into which you were assimilated, an honorary space in which you can join them and they could make sure

¹²Brenda Bosman, "A Correspondence Without Theory: Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*," *Current Writing* 2 (1990): 96.

¹³Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 204.

Nervous Conditions is a first person narrative account of the contradictions that inhere in the position of the female colonised subject. Tambudzai exhibits a growing awareness of the constructedness of her own identity through narratives of patriarchy and colonialism. Her awareness entails a resistance to her position as an object of these narratives, concretised in making herself the subject of her own narrative. According to Brenda Bosman, Dangarembga's narrator, Tambudzai, "denies that she is telling her own story".¹² The narrator is only able to tell her story and construct her identity in relation to the community of which she is part and therefore, the story that she tells is "the story of four women whom I loved, and our men".¹³ Through her focus on the different responses of women to patriarchal control, Dangarembga foregrounds the notion that the identity of women is neither unitary nor monolithic, but consists of fragmentary and at times contradictory experiences.

Dangarembga locates the text within a domestic realm, juxtaposing two different households - the rural homestead and the mission station. Constantly moving between these two geographical locales, the text points to the protagonist's growing awareness of the similarities and differences that exist between different forms of patriarchal control.

Dangarembga shows how the corresponding methods of patriarchy and colonialism are a source of conflict for the colonised subject. They seek on the one hand to assimilate the subject into their own structures by assigning value to their identity, while on the other, to constantly remind the subject of their place in a racial and gendered hierarchy and of the limits of their identity. In the words of the narrator's cousin, Nyasha:

To forget who you were, what you were and why you were that. The process, she said, was called assimilation, and that was what was intended for the precocious few who might prove a nuisance if left to themselves, whereas the others - well really, who cared about the others? So they made a little space into which you were assimilated, an honorary space in which you can join them and they could make sure

¹²Brenda Bosman, "A Correspondence Without Theory: Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*," *Current Writing* 2 (1990): 96.

¹³Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 204.

Nervous Conditions is a first person narrative account of the contradictions that inhere in the position of the female colonised subject. Tambudzai exhibits a growing awareness of the constructedness of her own identity through narratives of patriarchy and colonialism. Her awareness entails a resistance to her position as an object of these narratives, concretised in making herself the subject of her own narrative. According to Brenda Bosman, Dangarembga's narrator, Tambudzai, "denies that she is telling her story".¹² The narrator is only able to tell her story and construct her identity in relation to the community of which she is part and therefore, the story that she tells is "the story of four women whom I loved, and our men".¹³ Through her focus on the different responses of women to patriarchal control, Dangarembga foregrounds the notion that the identity of women is neither unitary nor monolithic, but consists of fragmentary and at times contradictory experiences.

Dangarembga locates the text within a domestic realm, juxtaposing two different households - the rural homestead and the mission station. Constantly moving between these two geographical locales, the text points to the protagonist's growing awareness of the similarities and differences that exist between different forms of patriarchal control.

Dangarembga shows how the corresponding methods of patriarchy and colonialism are a source of conflict for the colonised subject. They seek on the one hand to assimilate the subject into their own structures by assigning value to their identity, while on the other, to constantly remind the subject of their place in a racial and gendered hierarchy and of the limits of their identity. In the words of the narrator's cousin, Nyasha:

To forget who you were, what you were and why you were that. The process, she said, was called assimilation, and that was what was intended for the precocious few who might prove a nuisance if left to themselves, whereas the others - well really, who cared about the others? So they made a little space into which you were assimilated, an honorary space in which you can join them and they could make sure

¹²Brenda Bosman, "A Correspondence Without Theory: Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*," *Current Writing* 2 (1990): 96.

¹³Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 204.

that you behaved yourself.¹⁴

The contradictions inherent in native identity are well documented by Fanon, who claimed that the "settler's world is a hostile world which spurns the native, but at the same time it is a world of which he is envious".¹⁵ In *Nervous Conditions*, Dangarembga represents these unreconciled desires through the juxtaposition of different female characters, who at once embody the conflict of competing desires both to resist and to succumb to patriarchal control. This doubling is represented on a number of different levels: through the illnesses which are manifestations of anxiety; through the juxtaposition of female characters and their responses; and through the construction of two opposing domestic spaces, the rural homestead and the urban mission station. The representation of the double is an externalisation of internal conflict. The device of psychological doubles serves as a means of revealing polarities of cultural division and of providing an image of a psychological split.

The novel documents the growth of the protagonist, Tambudzai, from childhood to adulthood/womanhood. Dangarembga shows how, for women, development into adulthood entails assimilation into a patriarchal order. The first person narrative represents an attempt at self-articulation, and self-definition within the context of competing narrative constructions of identity. Tambudzai's quest for her independence is allegorical for the larger national struggle for independence from colonial rule. However, by focusing on the patriarchal practices of the Shona society of which the protagonist forms part, Dangarembga questions the value of independence and the ambiguities that plague the nationalist goal in a context where patriarchal relations of dominance and subordination continue to persist and are not addressed.

¹⁴Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 178-179.

¹⁵Fanon, *The Wretched* 41.

Clearing a space to write

Dangarembga sets the novel in Rhodesia in the period of the UDI years. Although *Nervous Conditions* is set in the period leading up to the intensification of the nationalist struggle and the guerilla war, the text is mostly silent about these issues. Dangarembga only makes indirect references to the political arena in which the text is placed. This separation of public and domestic arenas is characteristic of women's writing and experience.

According to Florence Stratton, a strong historical sense marks the work of African women writers. This historical sense is integrated on two levels. The first is one on which women seek explanation for their own position in society, through history. While on the second level, the conditions of women in their particular societies are analogous for the conditions of the state. Women's position in society therefore provides an index of the general condition of the society in which they live.¹⁶

Power relations in this context are to be found in the representation of the everyday domestic arena in which the female protagonist, Tambudzai, finds herself. The year 1965 is pivotal in the text because it signifies two important historical events for the protagonist - her uncle's return from England and his decision to educate her brother Nhamo at the mission school of which he is the principal.¹⁷ The declaration of UDI by the Smith Government in 1965 is never directly mentioned in the text, but the escalation of the struggle for independence in this period correlates to the narrator's own struggle to escape the poverty of her rural background through gaining access to education which is seen as a key to her own independence.

The silence regarding public political events is necessary, as it enables the narrator to clear a space for the construction of her own identity through the use of autobiography. *Nervous Conditions* raises and addresses the question "of the possibility of constructing women's

¹⁶Florence Stratton, "The Shallow Grave: Archetypes of Female Experience in African Fiction," *Research in African Literatures* 19. 2 (1988): 144.

¹⁷Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 5.

biography and autobiography as a mode of rebellion and as liberating history".¹⁸ While black women do have a voice in history, their's is not an *official* voice of *recognised* history and therefore the act of narration represents an attempt to:

Control the meaning of one's own life... exploring the ways in which women realise the shape of their lives, and the inter-relation between this realisation and the nature of their stories, thus demonstrating recognition of the context in which their voices must be heard.... For women, the ability to inhabit their own stories, and to become a subject of their own histories can be of itself an act or gesture of rebellion.¹⁹

While *Nervous Conditions* is an exploration of the rite of passage of a young girl growing into womanhood, Dangarembga's text serves to subvert the traditions of the Western *Bildungsroman* which emphasizes a young man's 'first physical awakenings; dramatic adolescent conflicts and later reconciliation with family, religion, educational systems or national community'.²⁰

The traditional Western *Bildungsroman* is the story of a boy growing into manhood and being initiated into male society. It is a narrative of reconciliation. Dangarembga rebels against this, subverting the traditional text by writing back to it with a counter-narrative of women's experience. While manhood is depicted as bringing opportunities and integration into society, womanhood is represented as bringing the opposite - disruption, alienation and a set of restrictions. Through the female characters of *Nervous Conditions*, Dangarembga documents how assimilation into patriarchal familial and colonial educational structures corresponds to an increasing sense of alienation from all of these, as assimilation entails the acceptance of

¹⁸Abena P.A. Busia, "Rebellious Women: Fictional Biographies - Nawai el Sa'adawi's *Women at Point Zero* and Mariama Ba's *So Long a Letter*," *Motherlands: Black Women's Writing from Africa, the Caribbean and South Asia* ed. Susheila Nasta (London: The Women's Press, 1991) 88.

¹⁹Busia, "Rebellious Women" 89.

²⁰Miki Flockemann, "'Not-Quite Insiders and Not-Quite Outsiders': The 'Process of Womanhood' in *Beka Lamb*, *Nervous Conditions* and *Daughters of the Twilight*," *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 27. 1 (1992): 38.

the values and limits placed upon womanhood within these ideological frameworks.

The death of Tambudzai's brother, Nhamo, is symbolic as it puts her in a position to claim her own story and create a narrative of her own identity. Nhamo is the favourite son, afforded the opportunity of education by virtue of his being male. His death marks the end of a patriarchal stranglehold on Tambudzai and her story:

I was not sorry when my brother died.... Therefore I shall not apologise but begin by recalling the facts as I remember them that led up to my brother's death, the events that *put me in a position to write this account*.... The event of my brother's passing and the events of my story cannot be separated.²¹

Simon Gikandi echoes this view of writing:

To write is to claim a text of one's own; textuality is an instrument of territorial possession; because the other confers on us an identity that alienates us from ourselves, narrative is crucial to the discovery of our selfhood.²²

Nhamo's death allows Tambudzai to pursue her own education. However, this event is marked by a discussion between her uncle - Babamakuru - and her father, where they stress that women's bodies are contested terrains, either the properties of their parents or their husbands.

Babamakuru again raised the question of the emancipation of my father's branch of the family. 'It is unfortunate,' he said, 'that there is no male child to take this duty, to take this job of raising the family from hunger and need, Jeremiah.'

'It is as you say,' my father agreed. 'Tambudzai's sharpness with her books is no use because in the end it will benefit strangers.'

²¹Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 1. (emphasis added)

²²Simon Gikandi in Elleke Boehmer, "Stories of Women and Mothers: Gender and Nationalism in the Early Fiction of Flora Nwapa," *Motherlands* 10.

the values and limits placed upon womanhood within these ideological frameworks.

The death of Tambudzai's brother, Nhamo, is symbolic as it puts her in a position to claim her own story and create a narrative of her own identity. Nhamo is the favourite son, afforded the opportunity of education by virtue of his being male. His death marks the end of a patriarchal stranglehold on Tambudzai and her story:

I was not sorry when my brother died.... Therefore I shall not apologise but begin by recalling the facts as I remember them that led up to my brother's death, the events that *put me in a position to write this account*.... The event of my brother's passing and the events of my story cannot be separated.²¹

Simon Gikandi echoes this view of writing:

To write is to claim a text of one's own; textuality is an instrument of territorial possession; because the other confers on us an identity that alienates us from ourselves, narrative is crucial to the discovery of our selfhood.²²

Nhamo's death allows Tambudzai to pursue her own education. However, this event is marked by a discussion between her uncle - Babamakuru - and her father, where they stress that women's bodies are contested terrains, either the properties of their parents or their husbands.

Babamakuru again raised the question of the emancipation of my father's branch of the family. 'It is unfortunate,' he said, 'that there is no male child to take this duty, to take this job of raising the family from hunger and need, Jeremiah.'

'It is as you say,' my father agreed. 'Tambudzai's sharpness with her books is no use because in the end it will benefit strangers.'

²¹Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 1. (emphasis added)

²²Simon Gikandi in Elleke Boehmer, "Stories of Women and Mothers: Gender and Nationalism in the Early Fiction of Flora Nwapa," *Motherlands* 10.

'You are correct, Jeremiah,' observed my uncle, 'but I will not feel that I have done my duty if I neglect the family for that reason. Er - this girl - hey, Tambudzai - must be given the opportunity to do what she can for the family before she goes into her husband's home.'²³

Tambudzai's growing awareness of her identity is linked to her confrontation with the values and limits assigned to the female body by the patriarchal order.

Commodifying the body

The hierarchical structures of patriarchy and colonialism entail a representation of the subjected 'other' as lacking a unified identity. Operating through the constructions of binary oppositions, the subjects of these discourses are constructed as *objects*, symbolic territories awaiting conquest and control. Power is inscribed on the subject's body which is then a subjected body. In *Nervous Conditions*, Dangarembga portrays the various stages of these discursive practices through the representation of the female characters.

The growth of the protagonist from childhood to adulthood entails her assimilation into patriarchal structures. In this context, women do not achieve adulthood, but *womanhood*, where their development signals a heightening of their biological productive and reproductive capacities. The development of a women's body is associated with the 'unclean' as it erupts uncontrollably in menstruation, and is a potent reminder of the biological power of women to reproduce. This body becomes threatening and needs to be controlled. This differentiation of the female body points to the values accorded to female identity within patriarchy:

As children we were not restricted. We could play where we pleased. But the women had their own spot for bathing and the men their own too. Where the women washed the river was shallow.... The women liked their spot because it was sensibly

²³Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 49-56.

'You are correct, Jeremiah,' observed my uncle, 'but I will not feel that I have done my duty if I neglect the family for that reason. Er - this girl - heyo, Tambudzai - must be given the opportunity to do what she can for the family before she goes into her husband's home.'²³

Tambudzai's growing awareness of her identity is linked to her confrontation with the values and limits assigned to the female body by the patriarchal order.

Commodifying the body

The hierarchical structures of patriarchy and colonialism entail a representation of the subjected 'other' as lacking a unified identity. Operating through the constructions of binary oppositions, the subjects of these discourses are constructed as *objects*, symbolic territories awaiting conquest and control. Power is inscribed on the subject's body which is then a subjected body. In *Nervous Conditions*, Dangarembga portrays the various stages of these discursive practices through the representation of the female characters.

The growth of the protagonist from childhood to adulthood entails her assimilation into patriarchal structures. In this context, women do not achieve adulthood, but *womanhood*, where their development signals a heightening of their biological productive and reproductive capacities. The development of a women's body is associated with the 'unclean' as it erupts uncontrollably in menstruation, and is a potent reminder of the biological power of women to reproduce. This body becomes threatening and needs to be controlled. This differentiation of the female body points to the values accorded to female identity within patriarchy:

As children we were not restricted. We could play where we pleased. But the women had their own spot for bathing and the men their own too. Where the women washed the river was shallow.... The women liked their spot because it was sensibly

²³Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 49-56.

architected for doing the laundry.²⁴

Development into womanhood entails the commodification of the female body. The rural household, portrayed by Dangarembga, is sustained by female labour. The female subject becomes an object, valued for her productive and reproductive capacities:

The Shona economy... was basically an agricultural one.... The strong association of female fertility with that of the land was reflected in the gender division of labour. As the initial producers of life, women were expected to sustain it through the provision of nourishment. Consistent with this view, a wide range of productive and reproductive activities fell into women's domain. The production of children and of food from the land were their most important tasks... Despite women's centrality in agricultural production, most significant property was controlled by the male head of the household.²⁵

Female labour serves to uphold the patriarchal relations within the household. Tambudzai and the women in her family are constantly represented as being part of a domestic labour economy that caters for men. Her uncle Babamakuru is the chief patriarch of the family, accorded this status because of his wealth and his education. On his arrival from England with his family, the women are expected to provide and cook the food, to serve it and "in the kitchen we dished out what was left in the pots for ourselves and the children... there was not enough left".²⁶

It is female labour that also sustains the value and status of males in the household. Within the context of the homestead, Tambudzai, her mother, Mainini, and her sisters, Rambanai and Netsai, all labour to sustain a patriarchal hierarchy to educate the male child, Nhamo, who has privileged access to education. Tambudzai observes that:

²⁴Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 3.

²⁵Elizabeth Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders, and Wives: Shona Women in the History of Zimbabwe, 1870-1939* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1992) 44.

²⁶Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 41.

During the... holidays Nhamo refused to come home, saying it was necessary to read his books ceaselessly in order to pass his examinations.... It enabled him to avoid the uncomfortable tasks of pulling down and stacking the maize and stripping the cobs of their leaves.... It was not surprising that Nhamo did not like the harvest. None of us found it a pleasant task. It was just one of those things that had to be done.²⁷

Women's productive labour also serves to enhance the status of the men in the household. When Tambudzai is forced to leave school because there is not enough money to pay for her fees, she decides to cultivate a small plot of land in order to earn money to pay for her schooling. Her father responds to her initiative by saying: "Can you cook books and feed them to your husband? Stay at home with your mother. Learn to cook and clean".²⁸ Further on in her story, Tambudzai relates how her brother Nhamo steals her produce. Reflecting on his behaviour she concludes:

Perhaps I am making it seem as though Nhamo simply decided to be obnoxious and turned out to be good at it, when in reality that was not the case; when in reality he was doing no more than behave, perhaps extremely, in the expected manner. The needs and sensibilities of women in our family were not considered a priority, or even legitimate.²⁹

To maintain his status in the patriarchal family structure, Tambudzai's father also takes credit for the productive labour of women.

... so Lucia helped me... and as a result of her pregnancy, was not as agile as she would have liked to have been. When Babamakuru came to fetch me he noticed the roof was in a much better condition. 'That's a good job you have done Jeremiah,' he observed ... Hal Ya, Mukoma', agreed my father. 'There was a job there! You should have seen us!'. Lucia and I could not hide our smiles. 'See, Jeremiah,'

²⁷Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 6.

²⁸Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 15.

²⁹Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 12.

During the... holidays Nhamo refused to come home, saying it was necessary to read his books ceaselessly in order to pass his examinations.... It enabled him to avoid the uncomfortable tasks of pulling down and stacking the maize and stripping the cobs of their leaves.... It was not surprising that Nhamo did not like the harvest. None of us found it a pleasant task. It was just one of those things that had to be done.²⁷

Women's productive labour also serves to enhance the status of the men in the household. When Tambudzai is forced to leave school because there is not enough money to pay for her fees, she decides to cultivate a small plot of land in order to earn money to pay for her schooling. Her father responds to her initiative by saying: "Can you cook books and feed them to your husband? Stay at home with your mother. Learn to cook and clean".²⁸ Further on in her story, Tambudzai relates how her brother Nhamo steals her produce. Reflecting on his behaviour she concludes:

Perhaps I am making it seem as though Nhamo simply decided to be obnoxious and turned out to be good at it, when in reality that was not the case; when in reality he was doing no more than behave, perhaps extremely, in the expected manner. The needs and sensibilities of women in our family were not considered a priority, or even legitimate.²⁹

To maintain his status in the patriarchal family structure, Tambudzai's father also takes credit for the productive labour of women.

... so Lucia helped me... and as a result of her pregnancy, was not as agile as she would have liked to have been. When Babamakuru came to fetch me he noticed the roof was in a much better condition. 'That's a good job you have done Jeremiah,' he observed.... Ha! Ya, Mukoma', agreed my father. "There was a job there! You should have seen us!.... Lucia and I could not hide our smiles. 'See, Jeremiah,'

²⁷Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 6.

²⁸Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 15.

²⁹Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 12.

praised Babamakuru, pleased with my father's labour, 'even your daughter is pleased when you have done a good job.'³⁰

Women's bodies also have exchange value and are shown to form an integral part of the rural economy. As commodities they can be replaced with cattle and shared by different men in the patriarchal hierarchy:

There were no cattle at all in my grandfather's kraal. Because of this, some people believed it was a blessing that the first two of my maternal grandparents' children were girls... the daughters will bring cattle, the cattle will enable the old man to work his fields, the family will prosper, and when the sons of an age marry, by then they will have accumulated their *roora* [dowry].³¹

Dangarembga is concerned with the ways in which women are forced to participate in this system of commodification of their bodies, because of their limited access to choices and alternatives. Tambudzai observes that for most of her life "my mother's mind, belonging first to her father and then to her husband, had not been hers to make up".³² Her mother is, however, resigned to her fate, "What I have endured for nineteen years I can endure for another nineteen, and nineteen more if need be".³³

The myths of patriarchal control and obedience to this control are sustained by the women in the family who exhibit an awareness of the price attached to resistance. The myth of Babamakuru as told by Tambudzai's grandmother, serves to instil a particular world-view and set of values and to maintain the status quo through its emphasis on obedience:

It was truly a romantic story to my ears, a fairy-tale of reward and punishment, of

³⁰Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 154.

³¹Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 125.

³²Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 153.

³³Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 153.

cause and effect. It had a moral too, a tantalising moral that increased your aspirations, but not beyond a manageable level.... This indicated that life could be lived with a modicum of dignity in any circumstances if you worked hard enough and obeyed the rules.... The suffering was not minimised but the message was clear: endure and obey, for there is no other way.³⁴

Tambudzai takes comfort in her domestic role, "in the camaraderie of cooking, it was comfortable to occupy the corner that that same natural process had carved out for me. It was comfortable to recognise myself as solid, utilitarian me".³⁵ Tambudzai succumbs to her female role because she believes that it is the price attached to poverty. She believes that education will provide an escape route from the roles that have been carved out for her. However, she becomes aware of the contradictions inherent in this position through the figure of her aunt, Maiguru.

My mother said being black was a burden because it made you poor, but Babamakuru was not poor. My mother said being a woman was a burden because you had to bear children and look after them and the husband. But I did not think this was true. Maiguru was well looked after by Babamakuru.... I decided it was better to be like Maiguru, who was not poor and had not been crushed by the weight of womanhood.³⁶

Slowly the myths begin to unravel as Tambudzai realises that Maiguru, while possessing the same educational qualifications as her husband, is still expected to maintain her role as wife to the patriarch. Her salary supplements the family income and sustains the patriarchal structure while her domestic labour is in the service of the entire family structure. Maiguru's labour supports and enables the colonial and patriarchal system which denies her the fruits

³⁴Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 19.

³⁵Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 40.

³⁶Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 16.

of her labour.³⁷

'What it is,' she sighed, 'to have to choose between self and security. When I was in England I glimpsed for a little while the things I could have done if - if - if things were - different - But there was Babawa Chido and the children and the family. And does anyone appreciate, what sacrifices were made? As for me, no one ever thinks about the things I gave up.'³⁸

Her other aunt Lucia, childless and unmarried, represents the individual woman who chooses self over security, recognising that within the context of patriarchal relations, security is not enough. "Maybe when you marry a woman, she is obliged to obey you. But some of us aren't married, so we don't know how to do it".³⁹ Lucia controls her own sexuality, and the fruits of her own labour. However, the value of her independent nature is shown to be contradictory, as it makes her more attractive to the men of the rural homestead, especially Tambudzai's father, who:

no longer felt threatened by a women's boldness since he had proved his mettle by dispiriting my mother, was excited by the thought of possessing a woman like Lucia, like possessing a thunderstorm to make it crackle and thunder and lightning at your command.⁴⁰

Lucia manages to operate within the patriarchal system because she is able to both challenge it and to use it strategically to her own advantage when she needs to: "Her body had appetites of which she was not ashamed".⁴¹ She controls her own body and her movement, arriving at the mission school to ask Babamakuru for employment: "Babamakuru wanted to

³⁷Bahri, "Disembodying the Corpus" 5.

³⁸Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 101-102.

³⁹Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 171.

⁴⁰Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 127.

⁴¹Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 153.

be asked so I asked. And now we both have what we wanted".⁴² Lucia's independence wins her grudging respect from the head patriarch, Babamakuru. His wife, Maiguru is torn between conflicting demands, at once resenting Lucia because of the powerful image that she presents to other women, and admiring Lucia's ability to challenge the patriarch's rules. This admiration is, however, only displayed and expressed in the safe company of other women.

'That Lucia! Aiwa! That Lucia is mad'.... Tete wiped the merriment from her eyes.... 'I heard', chuckled Maiguru. 'But they asked for it. They shouldn't meddle with women like Lucia!' They puckered their faces and dissolved into helpless giggles.... Those men!⁴³

Dangarembga also shows how the system of patriarchy operates by causing conflict among women as they are forced to compete with each other to achieve status within the patriarchal structure of the family.

It stung too saltily, too sharply and agonizingly the sensitive images that the women had of themselves, images that were really no more than reflections. But the women had been taught to recognise these reflections as self and it was frightening now to even begin to think that, the very facts which set them apart as a group, as women,... were only myths; frightening to acknowledge that generations of threat and assault and neglect had battered these myths into the extreme, dividing reality they faced, of the Maigurus or the Lucias. So instead of broadening from both positions, instead of an encompassing expansion and growth, the fear made it necessary to tighten up. Each retreated more resolutely into their roles, pretending while they did that actually they were advancing, had in fact initiated an offensive, when really, for each one of them, it was a last solitary, hopeless defence of the security of their illusions.⁴⁴

The character of Lucia is a threatening and disruptive force within the patriarchal family

⁴²Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 160.

⁴³Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 148.

⁴⁴Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 138.

structure because of her ability to use the patriarchal system to her own advantage. She is constantly accused of being a witch, "vicious, unnatural and uncontrollable"⁴⁵, by both the men and the women in the family.

'But look at that Lucia! Ha! There is nothing of a woman there. She sleeps with anybody and everybody, but she hasn't borne a single child yet. She's been bewitched. More likely she's a witch herself.' Thus poor Lucia was indicted for both her barrenness and her witchery.⁴⁶

Lucia is accused of being a witch because her status as a single, independent woman, is a threat to a patriarchal society in which motherhood and the reproductive and productive capacities of women are extolled. Witchcraft works as a device on which the fears and anxieties of a society are displaced. It serves to make the unknown, known, as all events that are felt to be out of the ordinary, to be threatening and disruptive of the existing social order are immediately associated with witchcraft.

Accusations of witchcraft are almost always preceded by tension and conflict within the household, village or community.... Tension... then finds expression in accusations of witchcraft, especially when other avenues of expression are sealed off.... accusations of witchcraft usually express areas of tension in social relationships. At times these accusations act as a force buttressing the moral code of society.⁴⁷

Dangarembga shows how accusations of witchcraft are used as a means of asserting control over the body. They mark the body as other and as threatening, while at the same time policing this threat by isolating the individual as a witch. The threat posed by the witch is that she will contaminate the ideas, norms and moral codes of a society. In *Nervous*

⁴⁵Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 145.

⁴⁶Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*, 127.

⁴⁷G.L. Chavunduka, "Witchcraft and the Law in Zimbabwe," *Zambezia* viii. ii (1980): 133-135.

Conditions, women are shown as actively participating in maintaining the moral order of patriarchy as they accuse other women of witchcraft, in an attempt to ensure that their own position in the patriarchal order is secure.

Lucia's manages to 'escape' patriarchal control because she is able to successfully manipulate the system to her own advantage, unlike Tambudzai's cousin Nyasha whose "rebellion may not in the end have been successful".⁴⁸ Nyasha represents the most extreme example of female resistance to patriarchal control in the text. Unlike Lucia, Nyasha is unable to operate within the patriarchal system. She is alienated from her Shona cultural background and initiated into the colonial project - aware of her identity as a "hybrid"⁴⁹. Unlike Tambudzai, she has no connection to a rural background, or to the company of a community of women within which she can locate her identity. Schooled in colonial education, she is unable to accept the identity accorded to her and the narratives that construct and trap her.

Nyasha's identity begins to fragment. While Tambudzai is, "secure... under Babamakuru's shadow", she cannot understand why Nyasha "found this so threatening".⁵⁰ While Tambudzai does experience doubts concerning the role and position allotted to her by the patriarchal system, she is also aware of the gains that can be achieved, and that she can take advantage of what the system has to offer her. She recognises that any rebellion against patriarchal control needs to be launched from a position of strength, from the personal strength that comes with realising her own potential and a sense of her own identity: "I thought there was time to see what would happen, to decide what needed to be done. I thought I was wise preserving my energy, unlike my cousin, who was burning herself out".⁵¹

For Nyasha, her awareness of her body and her budding sexuality is constantly under watch

⁴⁸Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 1.

⁴⁹Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 78.

⁵⁰Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 116.

⁵¹Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 116.

from her father, constantly being constrained, so that even her womanhood is curtailed. The result is a battle between opposing forces, where her body becomes the battleground on which she wages her struggle to resist.

Nyasha's diseased self suggests the textualised female body on whose abject person are writ large the imperial inscriptions of colonisation, the intimate branding of patriarchy, and the battle between native culture, Western narrative, and her complex relationship with both. Not surprisingly, Nyasha's response to this violence on the body is not only somatogenic but is to manifest specifically that illness which will consume the body.⁵²

Nyasha's anorexia-bulimia is a form of resistance. In a rural economy based on the production and distribution of food, Nyasha rejects its value, while at the same time her condition is metaphoric for her refusal to digest the lies and myths and the narratives that seek to construct and limit her identity. According to Naomi Wolf, studies consistently show that "with dietary deprivation, sexual interests dissipate".⁵³ Anorexia and bulimia are a means of asserting control over the female body and specifically the femaleness of the body as "delayed puberty" is a common feature in starving women. The anorexic body is therefore a sexually safe body to inhabit as it refuses womanhood and the choices that are confined to it.⁵⁴

The contradictory value of colonial education

For Tambudzai, education represents a means of escape from familial structures of control, a means of arming herself against patriarchal control and against poverty. Dangarembga shows how the acquisition of education brings with it a class consciousness and a set of new

⁵²Bahri, "Disembodiment the Corpus" 2.

⁵³Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are Used Against Women* (New York: Anchor Books, 1992) 193.

⁵⁴Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*: 199-204.

values. Education is not neutral. It involves the assimilation of the individual into new structures of being and thought. In *Nervous Conditions* education has a contradictory value. On the one hand it is seen as the key to social advancement, on the other it represents a rejection of the family and community that imbue it with these values in the first place.

Nhamo is chosen to be educated, to "lift our branch of the family out of the squalor in which we were living".⁵⁵ However, his experience at the mission school leaves him with a distaste for his family and their rural way of life.

All this poverty began to offend him, or at the very least to embarrass him after he went to the mission, in a way that it had not done before. Before he went to the mission, we had been able to agree that although our squalor was brutal, it was uncompromisingly our's; that the burden of dispelling it was, as a result our's too. But then something he saw at the mission turned his mind to thinking that our homestead no longer had any claim upon him.⁵⁶

Nhamo 'forgets' how to speak Shona, and in so doing cuts off any meaningful communication with his mother. His mother is rejected together with his "mother-tongue".⁵⁷ His acquisition of colonial education necessarily entails a rejection of the way of life that preceded his entry into the colonial world. For example, Nhamo refuses to travel home on a bus, where "the women smelt of unhealthy reproductive odours" and the "men gave off strong aromas of productive labour. He did not like sharing the vehicle with various kinds of produce".⁵⁸

Dangarembga explores the issue of class distinctions by the use of the metaphors of cleanliness and uncleanness, linking social and class mobility with a corresponding repulsion

⁵⁵Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 6.

⁵⁶Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 7.

⁵⁷Bosman, "A Correspondence" 94.

⁵⁸Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 1-4.

for the dirt and poverty of rural living. These images of cleanliness and uncleanness are used as symbols, on a number of different levels. Firstly, they are associated with the erupting or in this case, menstruating female body. Unclean, as it represents a domain beyond male control, the female body becomes threatening. Secondly, bodily regions are transcoded and mapped onto social topography, class divisions and geographical locations. Dirt becomes a correlative of peasant life and rural experience. Babamakuru and Maiguru's obsession with keeping their house clean is an attempt to marginalise their association with the rest of their family who are part of a lower social class. Their inability to succeed is a constant reminder of their class origins and of the fight for their own social advancement:

Babamakuru was God, therefore I had arrived in Heaven. I was in danger of becoming an angel, or at very least a saint, and forgetting how ordinary humans existed - from minute to minute and from hand to mouth. The absence of dirt was proof of the other-worldly nature of my new home. I knew, had known all my life, that living was dirty and I had been disappointed by that fact.... It was common knowledge among the younger girls at school that the older girls menstruated into sundry old rags which they washed and reused and washed again. I knew, too, that the fact of menstruation was a shamefully unclean secret that should not be allowed to contaminate male ears by indiscreet reference to this type of dirt in their presence. Yet at a glance it was difficult to perceive dirt in Maiguru's house. After a while, as the novelty wore off, you began to see that the antiseptic sterility that my aunt and uncle strove for could not be attained beyond an illusory level... thus restoring your sense of proportion by reminding you that this was not heaven.⁵⁹

Tambudzai seems doomed to repeat Nhamo's experience, as she perceives her entry into the world of mission school education as an entry into "Heaven", as a step away from the poverty and dirt associated with rural life "I was to take another step upwards in the direction of my freedom. Another step away from the flies, the smells, the fields and the rags; from stomachs which were seldom full, from dirt and disease",⁶⁰ she says.

⁵⁹Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 70-71.

⁶⁰Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 183.

However, like the dirt that cannot be effaced in the mission household, Tambudzai's consciousness of her background and her sense of identity cannot be dislodged, "no matter how violently you try".⁶¹ She enters into the mission school educational system, believing that her education will provide her with an escape route from her rural background, only to realise that the value of the education she will receive needs to be negotiated and redefined in order for it to be of value to her in her quest for selfhood.

In *Nervous Conditions*, the acquisition of literacy and education is shown to have an ideological role. The colonial educational system offers "promising blacks" an opportunity to be educated in exchange for their submission and obedience to colonial rule.

Babamakuru was appreciative of the opportunity that had been offered; and further, to decline would have been a form of suicide. The missionaries would have been annoyed by his ingratitude. He would have fallen from a grace with them and they would have taken under their wings another promising young African in his place.⁶²

Babamakuru does not decline the offer and instead he allows the colonial ideology to commodify him by buying into its practices. The system of patronage that operates in the colonial context, is one that is mimicked by Babamakuru within his own household as he represents the "good African. And it was generally believed that good Africans bred good African children".⁶³ But Babamakuru's position in the colonial hierarchy is a tenuous one, as there is a constant pressure to 'behave', a pressure which is responsible for his "bad nerves" and his obsession with controlling his daughter Nyasha and the rest of his extended family.

Babamakuru is obsessed with control in general, control over women in particular, and control over his girl-becoming women-daughter, how much she eats, how she dresses... what she reads, all measures designed to fashion her into a "decent"

⁶¹Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 173.

⁶²Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 14.

⁶³Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 107.

woman.... Being himself, implicated in a societal system that puts men in the slot of caretaker and guardian... he must maintain and improve, juggling old ways and new ways, or find his position as a "good boy" jeopardised. Nyasha's body and her mind, then, are pressed into Babamakuru's strangely distorted project of asserting his control and preserving his status in society lest it be challenged: "I am respected at the mission," he announces, "I cannot have a daughter who behaves like a whore".⁶⁴

While Babamakuru is respected at the mission, his power and the respect that it generates does not extend into the rest of the colonial world. When he accompanies Tambudzai to the Young Ladies College of the Sacred Heart, which is outside of his domain of control, he loses his status and becomes "Mr See-ga-ookey", merely another African with an unpronounceable name. Tambudzai's dreams of the "beauties of her new life" which she expects to be reflected in her room in the convent, are shattered as she discovers that "The room is empty".⁶⁵ The coloniser's promise of education and by extension equality seems as vacant as the room.⁶⁶

The acquisition of education and literacy itself cannot be isolated from its context. Brian Street contends, "that whatever the particular practices or concepts of reading and writing are for a given society; that they are already embedded in an ideology and cannot be isolated or treated as mechanical or neutral. What practices are taught and how they are imparted depend upon the nature of the social formation. Literacy is not a neutral technology. It needs to be seen in specific social and historical circumstances, and like any other cultural resource literacy is subordinated to historical factors."⁶⁷

Literacy, therefore, does not entail a uniform and linear process of development. The

⁶⁴Bahri, "Disembodying the Corpus" 7.

⁶⁵Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 194.

⁶⁶Sally McWilliams, "Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*: At the Crossroads of Feminism and Post-colonialism," *World Literature Written in English* 31. 11 (1991): 109.

⁶⁷Brian V. Street, *Literacy in Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984) 1.

introduction of literacy is subordinated to the social setting in which it is introduced. The so-called impact of literacy cannot be overdetermined in any context as this impact will always be limited by the initiatives and resistance and internal divisions of different communities whose cultural forms are in a constant process of development.

The skills and concepts accompanying the acquisition of literacy do not stem from its inherent qualities, rather they are aspects of a specific ideology, where faith in the power of literacy itself is socially learnt.⁶⁸ Brian Street emphasises the significance of socialization in the process of constructing meanings of literacy, and is therefore concerned with the social institutions through which this process takes place. Street investigates the role of teaching as a form of social control, one that attempts to maintain hegemony.⁶⁹ The qualities inherent in literacy are in fact conventions of literacy practices in particular societies, and within these different social contexts people transform literacy to their own cultural concerns, needs and interests.

Education is informed by the ideological context in which the ideas associated with it, are communicated. In *Nervous Conditions*, ideas about education are tied to missionary schools, bringing with them a new set of Christian values concerning behaviour. For Tambudzai, her education represents a religious conversion, entry into Heaven and into God's house, God being represented by her uncle, the school principal. Her assimilation into colonial educational structures involves an assimilation into colonial structures of thought and discourse.

The Whites on the mission... were holy. They had not come to take but to give. They were about God's business here in darkest Africa. They had given up the comforts and security of their own homes to come lighten our darkness.... It was a sacrifice that made them superior not only to us.... We treated them like minor deities.⁷⁰

⁶⁸Street, *Literacy* 1.

⁶⁹Street, *Literacy* 2.

⁷⁰Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 103.

In *Nervous Conditions*, education is viewed as entailing assimilation into colonial structures of thinking and behaviour. It represents an escape from poverty and the key to material prosperity, "emancipation" and a passport into a racially determined class hierarchy.⁷¹

Tambudzai excels in the "entrance exam", a metaphor for "earn[ing] the privilege of associating with the elite at that time, the privilege of being admitted on an honorary basis into their culture".⁷² For Nyasha, this represents a "marvellous opportunity.... to forget who you were, what you were and why you were that".⁷³

While physical control over women, both in terms of labour and productive capacities, served the interests of African men and the colonial state, missionaries were in charge of ideological control. Missionary education sought to instil the values of hard work, discipline and obedience to authority in the minds of the colonised. The mission education system was gendered, as missionaries differentiated between the value of education for men and woman. This gendering correlated with African patriarchal concerns over the role and place of women in African society. While missionaries fought for the right to educate women, their preoccupation was with training women to fulfil their biological and domestic roles:

Life at the mission stations did not mean female emancipation.... Mission women and girls found that they had exchanged one form of patriarchal authority for another. The watchful eyes of African patriarchs were replaced by the paternalistic rules and regulations of European missionaries.... However the price for membership in this new elite was high. In exchange for their privileged social and economic status, mission women and girls were forced to accept European values and behavioural codes that circumscribed their options outside the domestic sphere.⁷⁴

⁷¹Flockemann, "Not-Quite Insiders" 39.

⁷²Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 178.

⁷³Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 178-179.

⁷⁴Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders, and Wives* 123.

The 'civilising mission' of European missionaries entailed the domestication of African women in ways that were compatible with the colonial state. However, these objectives were not always achieved. "Armed with their newly acquired skills, mission school graduates insisted upon shaping their own futures in ways not often foreseen - or endorsed - by missionaries, capital, or the state".⁷⁵

The motif of education serves to highlight the pre-existing divisions and conflicts in familial relations. The characters whom Dangarembga represents as being resistant to education are not simply relics of past generations and therefore resistant to change. Rather, their resistance stems from their anxiety concerning the values attributed to education and access to literacy. Their's is not simply a stubborn refusal to accept change and to opt for tradition instead of modernity and modern practices.

In the attempt to ensure the adoption of literacy, mission education relegated orature to a subordinate position within a colonial hierarchy. Literate culture was instituted as the norm, while orature was marginalised and repressed. The normative literate culture was imbued with value, 'civilization' and linguistic superiority. By denigrating oral cultures, by constructing them as 'primitive' and static, educational institutions attempted to uphold literacy as being everything that orality is not, civilized and developed.

Dangarembga is concerned with showing a particular view of the imposition of education and literacy. To this end she juxtaposes an older generation - serving as a repository of oral history and collective memory - with a younger generation, schooled in the ways of European education. Here, orality is conceptualised as being a distinct cultural form, which literacy as a cultural form acts upon, restructures and changes. Tambudzai's grandmother, for example, is the keeper of the family history, the custodian of its myths, "she gave me history lessons as well. History that could not be found in textbooks".⁷⁶ The grandmother figure, as represented in *Nervous Conditions*, serves as a valuable source of rural knowledge in a society where women have little or no access to institutionalised historical accounts.

⁷⁵Schmidt. *Peasants, Traders, and Wives* 122.

⁷⁶Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 17.

The 'civilising mission' of European missionaries entailed the domestication of African women in ways that were compatible with the colonial state. However, these objectives were not always achieved. "Armed with their newly acquired skills, mission school graduates insisted upon shaping their own futures in ways not often foreseen - or endorsed - by missionaries, capital, or the state".⁷⁵

The motif of education serves to highlight the pre-existing divisions and conflicts in familial relations. The characters whom Dangarembga represents as being resistant to education are not simply relics of past generations and therefore resistant to change. Rather, their resistance stems from their anxiety concerning the values attributed to education and access to literacy. Their's is not simply a stubborn refusal to accept change and to opt for tradition instead of modernity and modern practices.

In the attempt to ensure the adoption of literacy, mission education relegated orature to a subordinate position within a colonial hierarchy. Literate culture was instituted as the norm, while orature was marginalised and repressed. The normative literate culture was imbued with value, 'civilization' and linguistic superiority. By denigrating oral cultures, by constructing them as 'primitive' and static, educational institutions attempted to uphold literacy as being everything that orality is not, civilized and developed.

Dangarembga is concerned with showing a particular view of the imposition of education and literacy. To this end she juxtaposes an older generation - serving as a repository of oral history and collective memory - with a younger generation, schooled in the ways of European education. Here, orality is conceptualised as being a distinct cultural form, which literacy as a cultural form acts upon, restructures and changes. Tambudzai's grandmother, for example, is the keeper of the family history, the custodian of its myths, "she gave me history lessons as well. History that could not be found in textbooks".⁷⁶ The grandmother figure, as represented in *Nervous Conditions*, serves as a valuable source of rural knowledge in a society where women have little or no access to institutionalised historical accounts.

⁷⁵Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders, and Wives* 122.

⁷⁶Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 17.

For Dangarembga's protagonist, Tambudzai, history begins with the acquisition of education and the practice of literacy allowing her to write her own history and that of her family, "Add writing, and history proper begins".⁷⁷ However, the acquisition of education and literacy are manipulated by Tambudzai as these provide her with the tools to write her own autobiography, and the tools for her rebellion. She questions the status of conventional historiography through her emphasis on domestic and familial experiences and directly challenges patriarchal structures of control in exposing within her narrative, the alienating effects of the Western (Christian) education model and its alliance with patriarchal and imperialist control.⁷⁸ "Quietly, unobtrusively and extremely fitfully, something in my mind began to assert itself, to question things and refuse to be brainwashed, bringing me to this time when I can set down my story".⁷⁹

Tambudzai acts as an historical witness to the processes of change taking place in her society as a result of competing political, ideological and social structures and to the differing responses of members of her family to these conflicting demands produced by patriarchal and colonial control.

The double: repression and liberation of desire

Tambudzai's desire to speak is generated out of her entrapment in the fabric of patriarchal relations, and enabled by the presence of another woman⁸⁰, her cousin Nyasha. Dangarembga shows how the identity of women is entrapped by patriarchal narratives of female identity, causing a crisis of choice and a fragmentation of personality in the will to both accept the stereotypes that have been imposed by a patriarchal society and to reject them.

⁷⁷Jack Goody & Ian Watt, "The Consequences of Literacy," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* V (1962-1963): 304.

⁷⁸Flockemann, "Not-Quite Insiders" 45.

⁷⁹Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 45.

⁸⁰Busia, "Rebellious Women" 89.

This schizophrenic impulse finds its expression in the concept of the "double". The use of the double as a literary device operates through the juxtaposition of different female characters, portraying the contradictory responses of the female subject to patriarchal practices of control. Concerning this doubling, Flockemann writes:

A dual focus is given by the interaction between the protagonist and her friends, cousin or sister; this acts as a strategy for bridging the uncomfortable and problematic relationship between insider/outsider, self/other in writing by black women in the post-colonial context, where women have been traditionally positioned as object (or native/other). Feminist theorists with an interest in Third World women, such as Gayatri Spivak, have commented on the difficulties of "Clearing... a subject-position in order to speak or write."⁸¹

While these different responses are characterised by the relationships between Tambudzai and her cousin Nyasha, Tambudzai's mother and her sister Lucia, and in the figure of Maiguru, discussion will be limited to the character of Tambudzai in relation to her 'double', Nyasha.

I was intrigued and fascinated with one part of my mind, the adventurous explorative part.... Most of me sought order.... Everything about her spoke of alternatives and possibilities that if considered too deeply would wreak havoc with the neat plan I had laid out for my life.⁸²

Nyasha serves as Tambudzai's double, acting out Tambudzai's repressed desires, desires that are in conflict with the values of a patriarchal order, as they threaten to disrupt its very foundation. Tambudzai's response to the limits placed upon her female identity are at first characterised by submission and obedience. She exhibits a "socially acceptable or convenient personality"⁸³, while Nyasha's rebelliousness is seen as anomalous or subversive within this paradigm:

⁸¹Flockemann, "Not-Quite Insiders" 38.

⁸⁴Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 75-76.

⁸³Stratton, "The Shallow Grave" 157.

Beside Nyasha I was a paragon of feminine decorum, principally because I hardly ever talked unless spoken to and then only to answer with the utmost respect whatever question had been asked. Above all, I did not question things.... I simply accepted that this was so.⁸⁴

Tambudzai's neither challenges nor undermines the patriarchal and colonial systems of control. This kind of response serves to incorporate her into a patriarchal value system. In this way the system of patriarchy is perpetuated, through the naturalising or normalising of certain responses and the construction of others as deviant or socially unacceptable as these threaten the very foundations of a male order.

By setting down her story, Tambudzai brings her internal conflicts to the surface of her consciousness, expressing all that which had been previously repressed and silenced. For Tambudzai, the realization that "all conflicts came back to this question of femaleness. Femaleness as opposed and inferior to maleness"⁸⁵ is the point from which she writes.

'Why are you jealous anyway.' he retaliated..'Did you ever hear of a girl being taken away to school? You are lucky you even managed too go back to Rutivi. With me it's different. I was meant to be educated'.⁸⁶

Tambudzai writes back to this patriarchal line of succession, highlighting male rights to education. Her rejection of her brother's position on the one hand and her acceptance of her uncle's authority on the other serve to create a division in her will to either accept or reject patriarchal control. "My vagueness and my reverence for my uncle... had stunted the growth of my faculty of criticism, sapped the energy that in childhood I had used to define my own position".⁸⁷

⁸⁴Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 55.

⁸⁵Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 116.

⁸⁶Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 49.

⁸⁷Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 164.

Dangarembga shows how gendered relations serve to create this conflict. The freedom and independence of childhood allowed Tambudzai her own act of self-definition. However, her development into womanhood involves the assigning of particular values by the society of which she forms a part. Adulthood, in this case, womanhood mark her as other, as a subject who is need of control and regulation. Gendering of her identity involves a policing of the threat that she poses by being a woman.

The double is shown to be internalised in Tambudzai's character and in all the other female characters, in their will to both obey and to resist the imposition of control over their behaviour. As Tambudzai narrates: "I was an intelligent girl but I had also to develop into a good woman, he said, stressing both qualities equally and not seeing any contradiction in this".⁸⁸

Tambudzai's recognition of the conflicts created by patriarchal control causes her identity to fragment. This fragmentation culminates on the eve of her parent's wedding. Babamakuru insists that Tambudzai's parents marry according to Christian law. For Tambudzai, the wedding represents an effacement of her identity:

I could not approve of the wedding. This I acknowledged with half of my mind, but in the other half the black square of sin reappeared and grew to an alarming size. I could not ignore it.... A wedding that made a mockery of the people I belonged to and placed doubt on my legitimate existence in the world. I knew I had to come to a decision, take some sort of action, but I was not like Nyasha: I simply could not go up to Babamakuru and tell him what I thought.⁸⁹

Her inability to express her resistance results in a literal splitting of her identity, where she "appeared to have slipped out of my body and was standing somewhere near the foot of my bed".⁹⁰ She effects a separation from her body, a body marked by patriarchal values of

⁸⁸Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 88.

⁸⁹Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 163.

⁹⁰Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 166.

of obedience and submission: "The body on the bed didn't even twitch. Meanwhile the mobile alert me, the one at the foot of the bed, smiled smugly, thinking that I had gone somewhere where he could not reach me, and I congratulated myself for being so clever".⁹¹

Tambudzai's character splits into 'self' and 'other'. She chooses to be an "intelligent girl" rather than a "good woman" and in so doing resists Babamakuru's control over her behaviour.

In an interview with Rosemary Marangoly George and Helen Scott, Tsitsi Dangarembga referred to this condition of the double as a "split consciousness":

Clearly, none of the women are at home. You asked me whether I thought the male characters were at home as well. And my sense is that in this situation, (and now I'm not even talking specifically about the characters in the novel but just generally, in the structure of life at that time), one was always working with this split consciousness as it were.... It's such a shock to have to suddenly start developing this other consciousness that deals with you as "the powerless", and labels you as such. And you have to internalise this to some extent in order to be able to cope in that system.⁹²

According to Flockemann, the intimacy of the form whereby the narrating self - Tambudzai - relives adolescence not only as experiencing self, but also in terms of an other - being not-quite self and not-quite other - provides a dialectical relationship between the self that survives and the non-self that succumbs to self-destructive despair, flight or death.⁹³

Flockemann contends that the dual focus used by Dangarembga in her text, serves to present alternative scenarios, the implication being that the price attached to succumbing to or being

⁹¹Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 166. (emphasis added)

⁹²Rosemary Marangoly George & Helen Scott, "An Interview with Tsitsi Dangarembga," *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 26. 3 (1993): 314.

⁹³Flockemann, "Not-Quite Insiders" 38.

assimilated by the dominant (patriarchal/colonial) social and educational structures is the destruction of "selfhood" as constituted within dominant culture.⁹⁴ Flockemann develops this idea further by pointing out that:

It is useful to look at the effects of educational structures, family relationships... showing how these inform gender, race and class identity... in post-colonial contexts. One can speculate why the "not-quite others"... Tambu's cousin Nyasha... who initially appear[s] to have more potential academically and in terms of opportunities... do not survive, or only at a cost.⁹⁵

Figuring the hysteric

The figure of the hysteric expresses her condition through converting mind to body, translating her fears and repressions into a language of body images.⁹⁶ In Sue Thomas' "Killing the Hysteric in the Colonized's House: Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*", Thomas alludes to Virginia Woolf's elaboration of the prime problem facing the woman writer, which is:

Killing the angel in the house, the patriarchal fantasy ideal of self-sacrificing, sympathetic, submissive womanhood, in order to reclaim a "mind" of her own. Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*... details the hysteric in the colonized's house in Rhodesia on the eve of intensified guerilla struggles in 1969.⁹⁷

Thomas describes the hysteric as taking several different forms - most spectacularly, anorexia

⁹⁴Flockemann, "Not-Quite Insiders" 38.

⁹⁵Flockemann, "Not-Quite Insiders" 39.

⁹⁶Elleke Boehmer, "Transfiguring: Colonial Body into Postcolonial Narrative," *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 26. 3 (1993): 269.

⁹⁷Sue Thomas, "Killing the Hysteric in the Colonised's House: Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*," *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 27. 1 (1992): 26.

nervosa; more banally, angelic housewifely submission, the horizontal violence of naming women witches, the oppression of loss which manifests itself in obsessively repeated justifying myths which entrench colonial rule, and the "bad nerves" which accompany playing the part of the 'good kaffir' of the colonizer's imagination.⁹⁸

Hysteria is "the *symptomatic acting out* of a proposition the hysteric cannot articulate" within bewitching master narratives or the justifying narratives by which the hysteric is mastered. Dangarembga works to "re-insert" into the histories of "consent" to patriarchal and colonial domination "acts and figures" of resistance under the spectacular and banal signs of the hysteric. These "acts and figures" bespeak two principal things: the manners in which the sexualities of native men and women are contained and mortified by colonialism and by Shona and Western patriarchy respectively; and the nature and scope of masculine and feminine investment in that libidinal continence and mortification. Dangarembga implicitly qualifies Fanon's argument that "consent" to racial domination is a sign of an inferiority complex, reinforced by material privilege.⁹⁹

Thomas argues that Dangarembga both extends and writes back to Fanon's canonical "master narrative" of post-colonial psychiatric thought and literature.¹⁰⁰ Fanon ascribed to the practice of medicine, a role in conquest. According to Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan, Fanon saw the use of Western medicine as providing an institutionalized rationalisation which stifled both the conscience and consciousness of its own agents. Medicine provided a scientific basis for this rationalisation, and in so doing, it served to fortify the rationale behind the system of colonialism. In order for colonialism to justify its purpose, the African had to be characterised "in sub-human terms" as freak of nature, or at least a subnormal human being whose infantile proclivities and dependency needs, call for the exercise of external authority

⁹⁸Thomas, "Killing the Hysteric" 26.

⁹⁹Thomas, "Killing the Hysteric" 27.

¹⁰⁰Thomas, "Killing the Hysteric" 27.

or the presence of a parent-surrogate".¹⁰¹

The implication of this construction was that Africans looked upon European colonizers as a parent surrogate who would protect and meet their innate dependency needs. The African was seen to share certain frames of thought with the white mental patient. External authority and ruthless control were justified in the name of science.¹⁰² For Fanon, Western medicine is an instrument of colonial oppression and the institutions of the hospital, prison and school are inextricably linked, as absolute institutions of colonial humiliation. They are undifferentiated in their function - to enforce control. The colonised are forced to choose between the curative innovations of Western civilisation and retaining their socio-cultural nexus. Fanon argued that the "patient becomes a battleground for opposing cultural and political forces".¹⁰³

Whilst the history of insanity in Europe is the history of the definition of the mad as 'Other', in colonial Africa the 'Other' already existed in the form of the colonial subject, the African. The category of the mad African, then, more often included the colonial subject who was insufficiently other - who spoke of being rich, ... who imitated the white man in dress and behaviour and who therefore threatened to disrupt the ordered non-communication between ruler and ruled.¹⁰⁴

For Fanon, the fundamental cause of alienation is firstly socio-economic and secondly the result of the internalization of societal inequity and violence. Disalienation can only be achieved through interventions at a socio-economic and psychological level.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan, *Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression* (New York: Plenum Press, 1985) 83.

¹⁰²Bulhan, *Frantz Fanon* 83-84.

¹⁰³Bulhan, *Frantz Fanon* 96.

¹⁰⁴Megan Vaughan, *Curing their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1991) 101.

¹⁰⁵Bulhan, *Frantz Fanon* 80.

Nyasha's anorexia and depression is a symptom of her alienation. She embarks on a diet to discipline her body,¹⁰⁶ articulating her anger through her body which is her only available means of expression. Nyasha's "illness" is a symptom of hysteria, of alienation and psychological violence. It is a reaction to her assimilation, to a condition of alienation, as she rejects and is in turn rejected by those structures - the family, school, community - where her identity is located.

'They've done it to me,' she accused... 'It's not their fault. They did it to them too. You know they did,' she whispered. 'To both of them, but especially to him. they put him through it all. But it's not his fault, he's good.' Her voice took on a Rhodesian accent. 'He's a good boy, a good ment. A bloody good kaffir,' she informed in sneering and sarcastic tones. Then she was whispering again. 'Why do they do it, Tambu...to me and to you and to him? Do you see what they've done? They've taken us away... They've deprived... ourselves of each other. We're grovelling...I won't grovel... Nyasha was beside herself with fury. She rampaged, shredding her history book between her teeth ('Their history. Fucking liars. Their bloody lies') breaking mirrors, her clay pots, anything she could lay her hands on and jabbing the fragments viciously into her flesh... 'They've trapped us.... But I won't be trapped. I'm not a good girl.... The next morning she was calm, but she assured me it was an illusion.... 'There's a whole lot more,' she said. 'I've tried to keep it in but it's powerful. It ought to be. There's nearly a century of it.'¹⁰⁷

The violent disruption of colonialism and its concomitant processes cause a dislocation in Nyasha's personality. Nyasha is torn between competing sets of demands, colonial and patriarchal. Her rebellion is directed at her father who represents for her the nexus of these conflicts. Here Dangarembga explicates Fanon's theory of vertical and horizontal violence.

Nyasha's condition is not recognised by the white psychiatrist. He "said that Nyasha could not be ill, that Africans did not suffer in the way we had described. She was making a scene.

¹⁰⁶Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 197.

¹⁰⁷Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 201.

We should take her home and be firm with her".¹⁰⁸ This is because the recognition of the causes of Nyasha's illness would entail a commitment to social change and would serve to invalidate the very foundations of colonial intervention into African societies. To admit this would be an admission of guilt, one that the psychiatrist is not prepared to make.

Implications for nationhood

Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* explores the position of the colonised subject as an object of patriarchal and colonial practices. Dangarembga foregrounds the instances of alliances, intersections and collusion between Shona patriarchy and colonial practices, exploring the complex relationships of power that exist in the interaction between these and the effects of this on the 'colonised subject'.

Dangarembga shows how, for the colonised subject submission or resistance to patriarchal and colonial narratives of power have a price attached. Submission results in a loss of selfhood and the intensification of a "split consciousness", while the path of resistance is plagued by a resulting condition of alienation. While Tambudzai appears to succeed as a figure of resistance, "It was a long and painful process".¹⁰⁹

Dangarembga is critical of the narratives that construct the identity of the colonised subject, and in this context it would seem that, by implication, nationalist narratives of identity cannot succeed in restoring selfhood or a sense of nationhood if they fail to address a history of patriarchal as well as colonial control.

¹⁰⁸Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 201.

¹⁰⁹Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* 204.

CHAPTER THREE

Knocking on the Door of the House of Hunger

Dambudzo Marechera's *The House of Hunger* explores the fissures and cracks in the narrative of colonialism. The colonialist enterprise sought to secure its economic aims by violence and the systematised devalorisation of the cultural values, ways of life and language of the colonised. "The imposition of a new system of values was not proposed but affirmed by the heavy weight of can(n)ons".¹ Marechera foregrounds the idea that colonialism entailed an act of narrative construction which has sought to define and imprison the African identity. The seamless narrative of colonialism - of the conquest and control of the colonised - is interrupted by Marechera's focus on the violence of colonialism, and the resultant fracturing of Zimbabwean society and identity which, for the narrator in the "House of Hunger", manifests itself in a condition of alienation and double consciousness.

The novella or long short story, "House of Hunger", opens with the line, "I got my things and left"² only to have its structure undermined by the inability of the protagonist to move beyond the township's beerhall³, and beyond the house of hunger itself. The "House of Hunger" refers to a number of different contested arenas: the family, the community, the nation and the state, and ultimately signifies the narrator's state of mind, "the House of Hunger where the acids of gut-rot had eaten into the base metal of my brains. The House has now become my mind; and I do not like the way the roof is rattling".⁴ All of these different arenas present the narrator with options for recovering and defining a sense of his own identity. However, they are so fraught with violence that the narrator cannot help but

¹Frantz Fanon, *Towards the African Revolution: Political Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1964) 32-34.

²Marechera, "House of Hunger" in *The House of Hunger* 1.

³Kevin Foster, "Soul-Food for the Starving: Dambudzo Marechera's *House of Hunger*," *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 27. 1 (1992): 59.

⁴Marechera, "House of Hunger" 13.

experience a profound sense of alienation from each of these domains while at the same time a sense of longing and almost affection for them.

The autobiographical voice used by Marechera in the "House of Hunger" holds the promise of a journey through the events that have been determinate in forging the narrator's identity. It is a journey that in attempting to project the protagonist forward, projects him backwards into his own psychic condition, and into his own entrapment within the colonial narratives that seek to define his identity.

The narrator's inability to create a coherent narrative of his own identity serves for him, to question all narratives of identity. His critique of the colonialist enterprise necessarily entails a critique of its response, nationalism. The "House of Hunger" is concerned with the intersection of these two political processes, and two distinct frames of reference, colonialism and Zimbabwean nationalism. Written at the height of the nationalist struggle and closely preceding the attainment of political independence, Marechera's criticism of nationalism and the nationalist movement preceded the eve of independence. For critics, this type of literature represented an anomaly as, on the one hand they agreed that "in the 1970s Zimbabwean literature left its infancy", while on the other "they deplored the sceptical unpatriotic outlook which marked the outstanding works of that time; it did not fit into the political landscape on the eve of independence".⁵

Throughout the "House of Hunger", the narrator searches for "authentic black heroes", "icons of individual and collective self-identity", and "bitterly laments their absence from contemporary Zimbabwe".⁶ Colonialism denied the existence of black heroes while African nationalism sought to reverse the colonial narrative. African nationalism then served to imprison the 'African image' in much the same way as colonialism sought to fix the 'African identity', as it responded within an uncritical paradigm already created by colonialism. Marechera's concern with the overdetermination of African identity represents a critique of the narratives that have identified him and given him a racialised identity. This

⁵Veit-Wild, *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers* 243.

⁶Kevin Foster, "Soul-Food" 59.

overdetermination by institutional structures, political processes and systems of language which seek to define blackness as an essential identity, create a state of indeterminacy for the narrator. His struggle to define his identity and to create order out of individual experiences is continually being disordered by competing frames of references and systems of knowledge.

Marechera is concerned with competing conceptions of an 'African identity'.⁷

States of mind in their instantaneity were biographies, autobiographies of the whole continent.... Suddenly it seemed all the best minds were accessible, had experienced the same anguish as ourselves, had felt the same anger and humiliation at the hands of whites and were waiting for us to let every brother know. And then, of course, it turned out that the identity which we ourselves were constructing in our novels and poems was as false as in the white novelists' and poets' descriptions.⁸

For Marechera, African identity, like any identity, is a construct of narrative, and is constantly in need of reinvention. Identity is always evolving. This is not to say that there is no basis on which to pin any notion of identity but rather, that identity is, in a sense, momentary - momentarily defined by discursive, ideological and institutional structures and positions. As these institutional structures and positions adapt, change, and reinvent themselves anew according to their context, so identity is forced to alter. In this process, the writer perceives himself as having a changing relationship to these structures, at once

⁷The different titles of chapters or stories in *The House of Hunger* allude to different writers who have sought to define African identity within a paradigm of African Literature and play on the titles of other works. The different titles allude to texts written by Frantz Fanon (*Black Skin What Mask*), Ngugi wa Thiong'o (*The Writer's Grain*), Athol Fugard (*Are There People Living There?*) and Musuaemura Zimunya (*Thought-tracks in the Snow*). This intertextuality works on a number of different levels as Marechera plays with the notion that texts relate to each other by creating a text that can be described as a novella and short stories, a novel, or an autobiography. While the primary focus of this chapter will be on the "House of Hunger", reference will be made to both the short stories in this collection and Marechera's other literary works. This is because Marechera's texts speak back to each other, engaging in a constant dialogue. These intertextual dialogues reject any formal closure of his texts, and by implication, his identity.

⁸Dambudzo Marechera, *The Black Insider* (Harare: Baobab, 1990) 80-81.

defining himself in terms of them and in their terms, and dismantling these terms which results in their alteration at an institutional level.

By deconstructing the narrative of colonialism, Marechera raises fundamental questions concerning narrative itself, and it is here that Marechera's critique of colonialism necessarily entails a critique of its response, nationalism. The ability to deconstruct narrative in the first place represents the ability to disassemble all narratives: political, fictional, historical and ultimately even autobiographical. However, this deconstruction can only take place through the use of narrative, and therefore narrative is constantly open to change and re-evaluation. Through the act of narration, the writer is never without options for recovering a sense of his own identity. The deconstructive act is necessary for the (re)construction of identity as it allows for the stripping away of all narratives - colonial and nationalist - that seek to define the individual in relation to something other than the self.

The House of Hunger... offers a searing critique of the spiritual, moral and cultural starvation imposed on Zimbabwe's blacks by minority rule.... Marechera's narrative strategy transforms fragmentation and incoherence into positive affirmations of cultural and political sovereignty... recognising that the basis of true self-determination lies in an appropriate means of self representation.⁹

Questions concerning the nature of identity are raised through the use of the autobiographical voice of the narrator. Defining the self, finding an "appropriate means of self-representation" is a response to the limitations inherent in the ways in which colonialist and nationalist narratives attempt to identify and define their subjects.

In *The House of Hunger* Marechera questions received notions concerning the generic distinctions between autobiography, fiction, history and narrative, and in so doing provides the reader with a metanarrative - a critique of the process of narration and the deconstruction of the implicit authority that events are endowed with through this act. By foregrounding the different ways in which identity can be constructed through writing, the implications of

⁹Foster, "Soul-Food" 59.

Marechera's *The House of Hunger* are that identity is not a fixed or stable category, but is in essence unstable, fluid and ever-changing and necessitating constant redefinition.

Entering the house of hunger

In the "House of Hunger", the family, the community, the nation and the state each "house" a particular definition of the narrator's identity, and hold a promise for the narrator who is in search of his own identity. As he explores each different option, the narrator experiences a sense of disillusionment with their inadequacy to represent him. His horizons begin to shrink, pointing back to himself as a centre - bringing with it the realization that his experience defines his self. The black heroes whom he searches for elude him throughout the house of hunger and in the process of searching for them, the narrator keeps finding aspects of himself, and in so doing becomes the black hero who he is searching for.

The house of hunger holds everyone and everything in its grip. The confinement of the colonised is generated by colonialism which creates native quarters, "a world divided into compartments" where "the native is hemmed in".¹⁰ Fanon described the "native town" as:

a place of ill fame, peopled by men of evil repute. They are born there, it matters little where or how; they die there; it matters not where or how. It is a world without spaciousness; men live there on top of one another.... The native town is a hungry town.¹¹

The inhabitants of the house of hunger take out their frustrations on each other, "manifesting this aggressiveness which has been deposited in his bones against his own people. This is the period when the niggers beat each other up".¹² Their sense of frustration with the poverty of their daily lives causes them to react in extreme ways - the forgetfulness found in alcohol,

¹⁰Fanon, *The Wretched* 40.

¹¹Fanon, *The Wretched* 30.

¹²Fanon, *The Wretched* 40.

the illusions and delusions of nervous conditions, the violence which they express against each other, and their betrayals of one another.

The narrator's earliest experience of violence takes place within the family home, where family relations are constantly being fractured by violence. "Denied dignity in the society at large, the frustrated adults fight for supremacy within the home".¹³

It was the House of Hunger that first made me discontented with things. I knew my father only as the character who occasionally screwed mother and who paid the rent, beat me up, and was cuckolded on the sly by various persons.... He was despised... he was an alcoholic.¹⁴

The narrator's mother drinks excessively which makes her "smash up her words at one particular rail-crossing which... effectively crunched all meaning or significance".¹⁵ The disintegration of the family structure is metonymic for the disintegration of the nation. In the "House of Hunger", the institutions of the family, the community, the nation and the state are incapable of providing a sense of identity for the narrator. Marechera explores the condition of alienation, and the fracturing of identity and those societal institutions that are represented as being responsible for endowing one with a primary sense of identity, and thus a sense of wholeness. Alienation is represented as being twofold as Marechera portrays a central protagonist, the narrator, who is rejected by the different institutions of the family, the nation and the state, and in turn rejects them.

Anne McClintock contends that a paradox lies at the heart of most national narratives. While nations are frequently figured through the iconography of familial and domestic space - symbolically figured as domestic genealogies - at the same time, since the mid-nineteenth

¹³Foster, "Soul-Food" 64.

¹⁴Marechera, "House of Hunger" 77.

¹⁵Marechera, "House of Hunger" 9.

The 'family' offered an indispensable metaphoric figure by which hierarchical (and one might add, often contradictory) social distinctions could be shaped into a single *historical* genesis narrative. Yet a curious paradox emerges. The family as a metaphor offered a single genesis narrative for national history, while, at the same time, the family as an *institution* became voided of history.¹⁷

McClintock goes on to argue that since the subordination of woman to man, and child to adult was considered a "natural fact", other forms of social hierarchy could be depicted "in familial terms to guarantee social difference as a category of nature". The family image became indispensable for justifying and legitimising exclusion and hierarchy within non-familial social formations like nationalism and imperialism.

Secondly, the family offered an indispensable trope for figuring what was often violent, *historical change* as natural, *organic time*. Since children 'naturally' progress into adults, projecting the family image on to national and imperial 'Progress' enabled what was often murderously violent changes to be legitimized as the progressive unfolding of natural decree.¹⁸

The disintegration of the narrator's family structure as a result of the internalisation of violence, causes a fragmentation of the narrator's character and of his identity, causing instances of sickness and of madness.

In 1965, with the declaration of UDI, the Smith Government also declared a state of emergency that was to continue until 1990. According to Chenjerai Hove, "the assassination

¹⁶McClintock, "Family Feuds" 63.

¹⁷McClintock, "Family Feuds" 63.

¹⁸McClintock, "Family Feuds" 64.

of ideas and dreams became a priority in government thinking".¹⁹ Hove explains the nature of their "literary control": "Before 1980, the state of emergency had built a matrix of laws around it, laws from which the present government found it difficult to disentangle themselves. For, they have become a legal jungle in which only the sick and the mad survive".²⁰

Chenjerai Hove's statement echoes a similar one made by the narrator in "House of Hunger". "Patricia is one of those disturbingly concise and adult youths whom our country either breaks or confines in prisons and lunatic asylums".²¹

The "House of Hunger" refers to a multiplicity of contested arenas. Marechera continually refers to his own imprisonment in and alienation from all of these 'homes' where 'home' is an institution, a refuge for the mentally disturbed and disabled. The narrator writes: "I couldn't have stayed on in that House of Hunger where every morsel of sanity was snatched from you the way some kinds of birds snatch food from the very mouths of babes".²²

Images of sickness and madness pervade the "House of Hunger". The narrator's sense of alienation is shown to be the result of the disintegration of family structures and of a metaphorically diseased state, affecting the physical and mental health of the nation. Disease as a metaphor emerges out of a social context in which there is an unequal distribution of resources and political power. The preventability of disease is then linked to progressive social change.²³

In the House of Hunger diseases were the strange irruptions of a disturbed universe.

¹⁹Chenjerai Hove, unpublished paper, "Literary Control: The Fate of Literary Cockroaches," (Harare: Zimbabwe International Book Fair, 1992) 3.

²⁰Hove, "Literary Control" 2.

²¹Marechera, "House of Hunger" 71.

²²Marechera, "House of Hunger" 1.

²³David Sanders with Richard Carver, *The Struggle for Health: Medicine and the Politics of Underdevelopment* (London: Macmillan, 1985) xii.

Measles or mumps were the symptoms of a malign order. Even a common cold could become a *casus belli* between neighbours. And add to that the stench of our decaying family life with its perpetual headaches of gut-rot and soul sickness.²⁴

In the house of hunger, the asylum, like the school, the hospital, the church, and the prison, is an institutionalized site of control over the colonised subject. Under colonial domination, in their functions and their intent, these institutions are undifferentiated in that they represent arenas in which the colonised subject is forced to succumb to colonial control. These institutions are deceptive in their function as they offer the colonised subject salvation or a 'cure' for their condition while at the same time they function to instill particular values of obedience to colonial rule and entail a corresponding loss of selfhood in the colonised subject.

'I sent you to University, ' she said. 'There must be big jobs waiting for you out there.'

'Tell that to Ian Smith,' Peter butted in maliciously. 'All you did was leave yourself to send this shit to school while Smith made sure that the kind of education he got was exactly what has made him like this'.... Peter... spat in my general direction, and muttered something about capitalists and imperialists.

'And the bloody whites,' I added, for this trinity was for him the thing that held the House of Hunger in a stinking grip. The foul breath of our history, he said.²⁵

The narrative of the "House of Hunger" opens up a dialogue with the traditional narrative of the *Bildungsroman*. Kevin Foster argues that Marechera's "House of Hunger" knowingly inverts the pattern, structure and themes of this narrative form, where protagonists "increasingly resent and rebel against a formal education which seems designed to do little more than stifle their individual identities and impose a slavish adherence to conformity". The end of formal education is usually marked by a sense of release and optimism. In Marechera's narrative, the aspirations instilled by education in the youthful protagonist and

²⁴Marechera, "House of Hunger" 7.

²⁵Marechera, "House of Hunger" 9.

those of his generation, are denied fulfilment by the very system that encourages them to search for it. "The end of formal education is therefore the point at which their options disappear rather than multiply".²⁶ Marechera's narrator elaborates on this point:

At this time I was extremely thirsty for self-knowledge and curiously enough believed I could find that in 'political consciousness'. All the black youth was thirsty. There was not an oasis of thought which we did not lick dry.... But the search was doomed from the start.... The freedom we craved for... was so alive in our breath and in our fingers that one became intoxicated by it even before one had actually found it.... This was the paradox whose discovery left us uneasy.... There were no conscious farewells to adolescence for the emptiness was deep-seated in the gut. We knew that before us lay another vast emptiness.... Life stretched out like a series of hunger-scoured hovels stretching endlessly towards the horizon. One's mind became the grimy rooms, the dusty cobwebs in which the minute skeletons of one's childhood were forever in the spidery grip....²⁷

The house of hunger holds the narrator and all of the characters who inhabit its' "hunger-scoured hovels" in its' "spidery grip". It is a place of frustrated possibilities and unfulfilled promises. Solomon the township photographer "is now a rich man" because he can, for a fee, obliterate "the squalor of reality" with his photographs. His customers, who have little hope of ever leaving the township are able to realise their dreams of escape through the illusions that Solomon creates:

Photographs of Africans in European wigs.... Africans who pierce the focusing lens with a gaze of paranoia. The background of each photo is the same: waves breaking upon a virgin beach and a lone eagle swivelling like glass fracturing light towards the potent spaces of the universe. A cruel yearning that can only be realised in crude photography.²⁸

²⁶Foster, "Soul-Food" 65.

²⁷Marechera, "House of Hunger" 2-4.

²⁸Marechera, "House of Hunger" 11.

The residents of the house of hunger are constantly being assaulted with images or masks of their own identity. These masks are constructions of 'blackness' by the colonial media institutions which serve to hamper any attempt at self-definition or self-representation. "The walls were plastered with advertisements for skin-lightening creams, afro wigs".²⁹

But the young woman's life is not at all an easy one; the black young woman's. She is bombarded daily by a TV network that assumes that black women are not only ugly but also they do not exist unless they take in laundry, scrub lavatories, polish staircases, and drudge around in a nanny's uniform. She is mugged everyday by magazines that pressure her into buying European beauty; and the advice columns have such nuggets like 'Understanding is the best thing in the world, therefore be more cheerful when he comes home looking like thunder'. And the only time the *Herald* mentions her is when she has - as in 1896/7 - led an uprising against the State and been safely cheered by the firing squad or when she is caught for the umpteenth time soliciting in Vice Mile.³⁰

The narrator's journey through the house of hunger involves a search for the key to his own identity. He is constantly confronted with the absence of black heroes. The township inhabitants live in the shadow of the "old fortifications which our warlike ancestors had used in time of war".³¹ The narrator breaks the continuity between struggles against colonialism, a continuity that has been reinforced by nationalist discourse: "But the match died out and history was the blackened twig of it. The fine grains of that burnt-out insurrection were the stories of those black heroes among whom my story was merely one more skin-lightening pain".³²

In an interview with himself, Marechera described his writing influences as the "dogged

²⁹Marechera, "House of Hunger" 23.

³⁰Marechera, "House of Hunger" 50.

³¹Marechera, "House of Hunger" 12.

³²Marechera, "House of Hunger" 25.

though brutalized humanity of those among whom I grew up".³³ This "brutalised humanity" is a result of colonialism, writes Marechera:

There's white shit in our leaders and white shit in our dreams and white shit in our history and white shit on our hands in everything we pray for. Even if that was okay there's still sellouts and informers and stuck-up students and get-rich-fast bastards.... Just as bad as white shit. There's a lot of those bastards hanging around in London waiting to come back here and become cabinet ministers. The only cabinet they'll be in is a coffin.... There's clouds of flies everywhere you go, flies eating our dead. There's armies of worms slithering in our history. And there's squadrons of mosquitoes homing down onto the cradle of our future. What can we do? *Clutch and drown each other*, that's what, and if we cant do ourselves in properly there's a congregation of missionaries and shrinks to do it and they have on their side cops and soldiers.³⁴

The only means of resistance to these colonial institutions is for the colonised to "clutch and drown each other". In *The House of Hunger*, the structural violence of colonialism and its attendant practices is responsible for engendering conflicts within colonised communities. The colonised betray each other in an attempt to escape their circumstances.

Her father was a priest in the Roman Catholic Church.... And from chimney to pulpit he began to denounce all African customs; from desk to dustbin he carted out all manner of filthy traditions which in reality were the only strengths still in the minds of his own people... loyalty rather than insurrection is the supreme Christian virtue.³⁵

³³Dambudzo Marechera, "Dambudzo Marechera interviews himself," *Dambudzo Marechera: A Source Book on his Life and Work* ed. F. Veit-Wild (Harare: UZP, 1992) 1.

³⁴Marechera, "House of Hunger" 59.

³⁵Marechera, "House of Hunger" 34-35.

The narrator's friend Harry is the priest's son. He is a spy for the Special Branch and receives money for infiltrating student organisations. The act of betrayal seems part of a natural human condition in the context in which the protagonist narrates his story. "We came out of the bottle-store, arm in arm, the way Jesus and Judas must have been when they both knew each other's secret".³⁶ The characterisation of Harry exemplifies Fanon's statement that the "colonised man is an envious man", who turns on the settler's town "with a look of lust". This is a "look of envy: it expresses his dreams of possession: to sit at the settler's table, to sleep in the settler's bed, with his wife if possible".³⁷ Harry has a "white chick".³⁸ For him, "nigger girls are just meat".³⁹ He aspires to be 'civilised', which is for him "the pinnacle of a life well lived"⁴⁰, and entails betraying his friends in an effort to attain rewards from his colonial masters.

Marechera explores the effects of colonial violence on the colonised subject, showing how, in Fanon's words: "The settler keeps alive in the native an anger which he deprives of an outlet;... trapped in the tight links of the chains of colonialism... the native's muscular tension finds outlet regularly in bloodthirsty explosions - in tribal warfare, in feuds... in quarrels".⁴¹

The narrator's memories and his experience of township life are constantly being fractured by violence. In the context of colonialism, violence becomes a necessary condition for upholding relations of power. Power creates its own discourse, that of spectacle and display. Marechera juxtaposes the Rhodesian government's display of force, and of guerilla bodies in order to instil fear and coerce consent for its continued rule, with the spectacle of rape in the township.

³⁶Marechera, "House of Hunger" 10.

³⁷Fanon, *The Wretched* 30.

³⁸Marechera, "House of Hunger" 12.

³⁹Marechera, "House of Hunger" 13.

⁴⁰Marechera, "House of Hunger" 11.

⁴¹Fanon, *The Wretched* 40-42.

There were arrests en masse at the university and when workers came out on strike there were more arrests. Arrests became so much a part of one's food that no one even turned a hair when two guerillas were executed one morning and their bodies later displayed to a group of schoolchildren.⁴²

The dead guerilla bodies provide a spectacle of colonial power, a power that is exercised visually through the use of violence. Through spectacle, the complex ideological processes that construct 'otherness' or difference become concretized. It is the spectacle of violence which serves as a means of organising a community.

The image of violence becomes a motif in the context where a society is born out of a violent encounter with colonialism. In *The House of Hunger*, violence is shown to be responsible for the fracturing and disintegration of identity and an increasing sense of alienation while at the same time images of violence are used as central organising principles around which the text is structured. Violence serves to create or (re)create the notion of community only in so far as a community is created through the threat and spectacle of violence. In the "House of Hunger":

The older generation too was learning. It still believed that if one did not beat up one's wife it meant that one did not love her at all. These beatings (not entirely one-sided, because the man next door tried it and was smashed into the Africans Only hospital by his up to then submissive wife) were always salted and peppered by the outrageous statements of the participants about the morals of either party. The most lively of them ended with the husband actually fucking - raping - his wife right there in the thick of the excited crowd. He was cursing all women to hell as he did so. And he seemed to screw her forever - he went on and on and on until she looked like death. When at last - the crowd licked its lips and swallowed - when at last he pulled his penis out of her raw thing and stuffed it back into his trousers, I think she seemed to move a finger, which made us all wonder how she could have survived such a

⁴²Marechera, "House of Hunger" 3.

The narrator's brother, Peter, constantly rages for a fight "which was just not there. And because he hungered for the *fight* everyone saw it in his eyes and liked him for it".⁴⁴ Unable to direct his fight at the agents of his own oppression, Peter finds an outlet in beating up his girlfriend. Her rebelliousness and determination frustrates him further:

The severity of the beatings could not stamp the madness out of her. And though he finally beat her until she was just a red stain I could still glimpse the pulses of her raw courage in her wide animal-like eyes.... But Peter with his great hands swinging yet again - to smash - those eyes stung him to greater fury.⁴⁵

The violence inherent in the system and practice of colonialism creates a cycle, entrapping the colonised subject within it. The violence of the coloniser is taken up by the colonised and is channelled towards the family, the community and ultimately the nation. This type of violence precedes concrete political action against the state, and represents the failure of a movement that will allow for pacts and alliances among the colonised to unite against colonialism. It serves to reaffirm the stereotypes of the colonised subject and the need for enforcement of colonial control, thereby continuing the cyclical pattern started by colonial intervention.

In the "House of Hunger", Marechera explores the violence of colonialism on a number of different levels. The first level relates back to the violent conquest of the land by colonial forces. On another level, land becomes a metaphor for the terrain of the human psyche, where the 'African personality' has been conquered through the violence of colonialism, drained of its resources. Violence serves to erode the basis of the community, and in this process is internalised by the oppressed subject. As a result of this, neither the family, nor the community is able to offer the narrator any options for recovering a sense of his own

⁴³Marechera, "House of Hunger" 50.

⁴⁴Marechera, "House of Hunger" 2.

⁴⁵Marechera, "House of Hunger" 4.

identity. All relations are fractured by violence. The identity of the colonised is so overdetermined in this context that it becomes indeterminate.

Overdetermination, alienation and schizophrenia

The colonised subject is constantly being confronted by definitions of his/her own identity: "overnight the Negro has been given two frames of reference".⁴⁶ Colonial intervention entails the imposition of a new frame of reference on the colonised subject, a paradigm in which the colonised subject is denied subjectivity. However, for the colonised subject, this colonial paradigm is constantly being undermined by the traces of an earlier frame of reference. It is these two frames of reference, two competing discursive structures that vie for control to define identity. The result is a splitting of the self, a fragmentation, where 'othering' is concretized in a double consciousness and double-voicedness, and in a condition of alienation.

The condition of alienation as represented in *The House of Hunger* represents a disruption of a colonial narrative which seeks to impose a unified, monolithic and homogeneous identity upon the subjects of colonization. Alienation is both a political and a psychological phenomenon, at once a result of socio-economic causes, the internalisation of societal inequality and the effects of violence.⁴⁷

Fanon uses the word "alienation" to indicate a variety of phenomenon. The first sense in which Fanon makes reference to the condition of alienation identifies a "psychoexistential complex", a series of inferiority complexes that manifest themselves in the existential condition of the individual. In this case the existential condition is the condition of *blackness*, a racial identity. The second sense in which the term alienation is used by Fanon indicates the condition of separation or attempted separation of the individual from the existential self or an aspect of it. The term is also used to designate a condition of neurosis, of mental

⁴⁶Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* 110.

⁴⁷Bulhan, *Frantz Fanon* 80.

disorder, a nervous condition characterised by anxiety, hysteria and depression.

Because no other solutions are left it, the racialised social group tries to imitate the oppressor and there-by to deracialise itself. The 'inferior race' denies itself as a different race. It shares with the 'superior race' the convictions, doctrines, and other attitudes concerning it. Having witnessed the liquidation of its systems of reference, the collapse of its cultural patterns, the native can only recognise with the occupant that "God is not on his side". The oppressor, through the inclusive and frightening character of his authority, manages to impose on the native new ways of seeing.... This event which is commonly designated as alienation... is found in the official texts under the name of assimilation.⁴⁸

In the short story/chapter "Black Skin What Mask", Marechera makes reference to this 'fact of blackness', an overdetermined racialised identity. Marechera's description of the condition of blackness echoes Fanon's proposition that: "I am overdetermined from without. I am the slave not of the *idea* that others have of me but of my own appearance".⁴⁹

My skin sticks out a mile in all the crowds around here. Every time I go out I feel it tensing up, hardening torturing myself. It only relaxes when I am in shadow, when I am alone... when I am angry.... It is like a silent friend: moody, assertive, possessive, callous - sometimes. I had such a friend once. He finally slashed his wrists. He is now in a lunatic asylum.... He was always washing himself.... He did not so much wash as scrub himself until he bled. He tried to purge his tongue too, by improving his English and getting rid of any accent from the speaking of it. It was painful to listen to him, as it was painful to watch him trying to scrub the blackness out of his skin.⁵⁰

Marechera's double-voiced narrative shatters the colonial distinction between

⁴⁸Fanon, *Towards the African Revolution* 38.

⁴⁹Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* 116.

⁵⁰Marechera, "Black Skin What Mask," *The House of Hunger* 93.

coloniser/colonised, self/other. Here it is the 'self' that is 'other'. The narrator is split between two competing definitions of his own identity. The condition of splitting or schizophrenia is a symptom of the contradictory inheritance of colonialism, which imposed a definition of identity whose limits prevent the narrator from aspiring to or achieving an identity that is closer to that of the coloniser. The shadow of his blackness dogs his every move, making it difficult for the narrator, Marechera, to speak for or about himself. His only means of communication is in confrontation with himself/selves.

Double-voicedness is also central to the act of novel writing, where the author's intention is refracted. This is a double-voiced discourse as the novel serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking and the refracted intention of the author. In novelistic discourse there are two meanings, two voices, two expressions and all the time these are dialogically interrelated as if they are having a conversation with each other.⁵¹

The indeterminacy of language and identity

The "House of Hunger" was written by Marechera during his stay in London. While being in exile heightens one's sense of experience, and distance seems to promote a kind of clarity, it is also this distance that serves to concretise a sense of alienation from a primary perception of identity. Marechera writes: "A lot has been said about how I felt alienated from my environment, from my Africanness.... What the hell! I felt no group sense and no group context with all those around me, London or Harare".⁵²

Anthony O'Brian has observed that exile and the difficulty of reintegration, raises the question of what national borders mean to literature, and even of what the nation itself means to the writer.

⁵¹M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* by M.M. Bakhtin trans. C. Emerson & M. Holquist (Austin: University of Texas, 1981) 324.

⁵²Dambudzo Marechera, *Mindblast* (Harare: College Press, 1984) 120.

While both language and nation, in the still popular conception deriving from nineteenth-century Europe, seem to have or to require natural limits, the truth is that both nations and languages shift their limits constantly in response to the demands of economic and political interaction between human groups.... But then what is the basis on which the power of a naturalised linguistic nationalism, or the nationalist theory and practice of language policy, rests? There is first of all its psychological grounding in the intimate link between one's first language and one's deepest sense of self or identity: to be at home is to be in the speech community of one's first language.⁵³

In the "House of Hunger", Marechera is never at home. He is an outsider "in my own biography, in my country's history, in the world's terrifying possibilities".⁵⁴ The narrator too is an outsider in his family, his community, and his nation.

Throughout the text, the narrator searches for "authentic black heroes". The search for heroes is a search for a key to his own African identity. However, his quest is unsuccessful, and finding no model on which to pin a sense of his own history and by implication, his own identity, his sense of self begins to fracture.

But in turn I told her about my nervous breakdown when I had become aware of persons around me whom no one else could see. They could not have been the black heroes whom I sought - or perhaps they were.... They began to *talk*.... Meanwhile the voices continued to torment me;.... Where are the bloody heroes?... the voices had not only found me out, they had taken over the inner chords of my own voice.... I was being severed from my own voice. I would listen to it as to a still, small voice coming from the huge distances of the mind. It was like this: English is my second language, Shona my first. When I talked it was in the form of an interminable

⁵³Anthony O'Brian, paper, "Against the Democracy Police: The Contradictions of Nation Language in Dambudzo Marechera's *House of Hunger*," (Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand, History Workshop, 1994) 2-4.

⁵⁴Marechera, "The African Writer's Experience of European Literature," Dambudzo Marechera xiii.

argument, one side of which was always expressed in English and the other side in Shona. At the same time I would be aware of myself as something indistinct but separate from both cultures. I felt gagged by this absurd contest between Shona and English.... That is when *they* began to laugh.⁵⁵

The struggle over language is internalised and represented through the portrayal of the narrator's nervous breakdown. The narrator experiences a growing realization of the overdetermination of his identity which results in a sense of indeterminacy. The narrator is at once "indistinct" and "separate" from the contest between two competing discursive and ideological structures, stifled by the associations accorded to discursive practices. The choice of language is riddled with these associations where English is a colonial language and the use of Shona constitutes a reclamation of an African or nationalist identity through its retrieval. It is for this reason that Marechera chooses to write against these discourses, to deconstruct himself as a colonial, nationalist or neo-colonial subject. Marechera resists this entanglement in a contest not of his own making.

The language debate hinges upon the question of the validity or legitimacy of a particular language to express a particular cultural understanding of the world. This debate has played a central role in the movement towards defining what constitutes African Literature, and in the debates regarding the issue of what criteria should be used in its criticism.⁵⁶ For Marechera, this debate is fraught with contradictions for the African writer. The reclamation of the Shona language and the process of cultural retrieval is not an option for this writer.

In an interview with himself, "Escape from the *House of Hunger*: Marechera Talks About His Life", Marechera argued that writing in the Shona language "never occurred" to him.

I began to stammer horribly.... Even speech, language, was deserting me.... I was learning to distrust language, a distrust necessary for a writer, especially one writing in a foreign language.... Shona was part of the ghetto daemon I was trying to escape.

⁵⁵Marechera, "House of Hunger" 28-30.

⁵⁶Ngugi, *Decolonising the Mind*.

Shona had been placed within the context of a degraded, mind-wrenching experience from which apparently the only escape was into the English language and education.... I took to English' as a duck takes to water. I was therefore a keen accomplice and student in my own colonisation. At the same time of course there was the unease, the shock of being suddenly struck by stuttering, of being deserted by the very medium I was to use in my art.⁵⁷

In the "House of Hunger", the discontinuity of language expresses the discontinuity of the narrator's identity. Language itself does not possess any essential characteristics. Meaning can only be pinned down momentarily. The word is constantly subjected to interpretation, and always contains within it resonances of earlier meanings. Because language cannot convey a trans-historical meaning, it loses its currency and meaning is constantly being redefined and reinvented. The narrator's stammer in the "House of Hunger" is a logical development. If words cannot be trusted to convey concrete meaning, then speech itself loses its value. 'I wanted to say more, but I began to stammer'.⁵⁸

Here Marechera raises questions concerning narrative construction, and its adequacy as a tool for providing the writer with a sense of his own history and identity, and the adequacy of language to express this identity.

Investigation of the ontology of the self, both as entity and as idea, suggests the wisdom of abandoning the familiar formulation of the relation between the self and the language that is its means of expression in autobiography. Instead of debating the old either/or proposition - whether the self is a transcendental category preceding language in the order of being, or else a construct of language brought into being by it - it is preferable to conceptualize the relationship between the self and language as a mutually constituting interdependency, for study of early human development reveals an intimate and necessary linkage between the acquisition of language and the emergence

⁵⁷Marechera, "Dar.budzo Marechera interviews himself" 3-4.

⁵⁸Marechera, "House of Hunger" 35.

Eakin posits that the autobiographical act figures as a third and culminating phase in a history of self-consciousness that begins with the moment of language in early childhood and subsequently deepens in a second-level order of experience in childhood and adolescence in which the individual achieves a distinct and explicit consciousness of him/herself as a *self*. In the developmental perspective, the autobiographical act is revealed as a mode of self-invention that is always practised first in living and only eventually - sometimes - formalised in writing. Eakin views the processes entailed by the autobiographical act as recapitulating the fundamental processes of identity formation: "in this sense the writing of autobiography emerges as a second acquisition of language, a second coming into being of self, a self-conscious self-consciousness".⁶⁰

The autobiographical act: emerging into self-consciousness

Alienation is central to the autobiographical act as this act entails a splitting off or fracturing of a communal identity in order to write the 'I' into prominence. The creation of an autobiography involves a necessary rewriting of the position of the 'I' (self) in relation to particular communities or identities which then allows for the possibility of a reinsertion of the 'I' back into the commun(i)ty with which it both identifies and dis-identifies simultaneously.

The struggle to concretise and formalise identity is a twofold process in the writing of autobiography, where the impetus to write encapsulates the desire for a specific identity and the achievement of one through writing. As a narrative genre, autobiography is double-voiced, as it relies upon the autobiographer negotiating a narrative passage between the roles of the artist and the historian and the genres of fiction and history. Marechera writes that:

⁵⁹P.J. Eakin, *Fictions in Autobiography: Studies in the Art of Self-Invention* (New Jersey: Princeton UP) 8.

⁶⁰Eakin, *Fictions* 9.

"I always tried to reduce everything into a sort of autobiographical record. As though I needed to stamp myself with the evidence of my own existence".⁶¹

In his work, Dambudzo Marechera performs as both artist and historian, negotiating a narrative passage between imaginative creation on the one hand and biographical fact on the other. Marechera posits his work as autobiographical in the sense that he attempts to tell his own story. However, at the same time he undermines the notion of objective truth that is often associated with the genre of autobiography.

The "autobiographical pact" assumes a tacit agreement between writer and reader - that the writer is looking retrospectively, from a position of authority, and is in control of his or her story. Marechera shows the fiction-making process at work. He identifies the fluidity and changing nature of memory in terms of the techniques and forms that he uses. Autobiographical narrative is usually authenticated by its relationship to extra-textual 'facts'. But the self at the centre of the autobiography is not a stable and fixed category. Identity is constructed and formed in the process of writing. There is therefore no need to search for or impose an extra-textual chronology of events in the writer's life, as the evidence of his life is contained both in his writing and in the act of writing itself.⁶²

Marechera undermines the notion that life determines and produces autobiography, showing instead how the use of autobiography is an attempt to produce and determine his life. Eakin observes that fictions and the fiction-making process are a central constituent of the truth of any life as it is lived and of any art devoted to the presentation of that life. Memory ceases to be merely a convenient repository in which the past is preserved inviolate, ready for the inspection of hindsight at any future date. This understanding marks the movement away from the belief that autobiography as an act of narration can offer a faithful and unmediated reconstruction of an historically verifiable past; instead, it expresses the play of the autobiographical act itself, in which the materials of the past are shaped by memory and imagination to serve the needs of a present consciousness.

⁶¹Marechera, *The Black Insider* 80.

⁶²Eakin, *Fictions* 3.

This technique is evidenced in Marechera's reference to his "front teeth". The same front teeth that are knocked out of his mouth when his father punches him in the "House of Hunger" are referred to in *The Black Insider*.

'How dare you speak in English to me,' she said crossly. 'You know I don't understand it, and if you think because you're educated...' She hit me again.

'I'm not speaking in Eng- ' I began, but stopped as I suddenly realised that I was talking to her in English... and dragging my box from under the bed took out my English exercise-books and began to tear them up with a great childish violence.... When I got back father was eating.... Mother was telling him about the torn exercise-books.... The blow knocked my front teeth out.... I fell back into my corner onto the exercise-books. Staining them with blood. I was nine years old then.⁶³

In *The Black Insider*, the narrator claims that having his front teeth knocked out is the only visible damage that he has suffered from the war, adding in parentheses that, "If the truth were told, the reader would know that my front teeth were knocked out by two black comrades to whom I owed thirty pence in Oxford".⁶⁴

Autobiography is therefore both an act of memory and of imagination, a process of storytelling, a drive toward narrating the self.⁶⁵ The act of self-invention does not only refer to the creation of the self in autobiography but also to the idea that the self or selves that writers seek to (re)construct in their art are not a given, but are made in the process of writing. This narrative technique represents a critique of narrative itself as it serves to expose the fissures and cracks in the writer's construction of the text and of himself. The 'truth' of the writer's identity is always evolving. The use of autobiography would seem to provide a definition of the writer's identity, however, autobiography in this context is merely a means for exploring the complexities and the fragmentary nature of identity and narrative itself.

⁶³Marechera, "House of Hunger" 13-14

⁶⁴Marechera, *The Black Insider* 24.

⁶⁵Eakin, *Fictions* 5-6.

In an interview with Alle Lansu, in February 1986, Marechera referred to the death of his father as being "mysterious". He recounts:

I think I was in Form 3.... We still don't know which army officer did it. One night we were woken up - my father was away - the police were knocking on the door asking mother to come and identify father's body because he had been killed. That was in 1966, and rumours said when ZANU(PF) started its guerilla operations, that's when civilians started getting killed.... It was really horrible in the mortuary; you could see that he had been riddled with bullets, the heavy automatic bullets which had almost cut off a part of his body, because they had sewn it back, you could see the stitches.⁶⁶

According to Flora Veit-Wild, this version of his father's death has not been confirmed by anybody else. The general version is that he was run over by a car while walking home one night. "Michael Marechera, who also went to the mortuary, says that there was no sign of bullets and that he had not been killed by an army officer".⁶⁷

The discrepancies between these two versions of his father's death are interesting in that they point to the acts of narration, narrative construction and invention. What happens, how it is remembered and recorded is dependent on the writer's particular point of view at a particular time. In the first version, the nationalist movement is determinate in Marechera's recounting of the event. He assigns blame to the ZANU guerillas, and points to the violence inherent in the nationalist struggle. Marechera carefully scrutinises the facts of his life in an attempt to understand them and to concretise a sense of his own identity. The fluidity of identity demands a constant re-evaluation of all that was previously held to be certain. Extra-textual 'reality' can only be known through narrative recreation which is textual, and it is as unstable and as ever-changing as textual and fictional construction. For Marechera, truth is contained in his writing. It is not stable, but constantly changing and constantly subjected to different interpretations. Like the stitches that join parts of his father's body together, writing becomes

⁶⁶Veit-Wild, *Dambudzo Marechera* 11.

⁶⁷Veit-Wild, *Dambudzo Marechera* 11.

a way of stitching together the fragments that are the writer's life.

In his writing, Marechera uses the image of stitches as a symbol of continuity and discontinuity. Stitches serve to connect that which was previously unconnected, while at the same time leaving traces of a suture, a seam formed after stitching: stitches occur at moments of intersection. Further, the use of stitches creates analogies between the practice of medicine and that of writing. In this context, both are concerned with interpretation and healing of the 'body'(text). Interpretation is a primary activity of clinical medicine, where the physician, like the literary critic, diagnoses and interprets symptoms, signs and signifiers of a particular condition. The body serves as a text that needs to be interpreted in order to be understood. The text and the body are then cultural artifacts.⁶⁸ Violence creates physical deformities which serve to deform all social relations within this context. The traces or scars on the body serve as sources of fascination, marks of 'otherness' accompanied by the desire to penetrate the meaning or essence of that pain that produced them.

My head seemed encased...: but when I explored with my hand, ripping off the bandages and feeling around the wet stinging wound, it was only the cold cold stitches they had used on the gash. Stitches enough to weave webs from one wall of my mind to the wall of the House of Hunger.... Afterwards they came to take out the stitches from the wound of it. And I was whole again. The stitches were published. The reviewers made obscene noises. It is now out of print. But those stitches, those poems.... The stitches run like the great dyke across the country. A little blood still seeps through...⁶⁹

A further version of the death of the narrator's father is recounted in the "House of Hunger":

The old man died beneath the wheels of the twentieth century. There was nothing left but stains, bloodstains and fragments of flesh, when the whole length of it was

⁶⁸William Monroe, "Performing Persons: A Locus of Connection for Medicine and Literature," *The Body and the Text: Comparative Essays in Literature and Medicine* eds. W. Aycock & B. Clarke (Texas: Texas Tech UP, 1990) 26-29.

⁶⁹Marechera, "House of Hunger" 38-40.

through with eating him. And the same thing is happening to my generation. No, I don't hate being black. I'm just tired of saying it's beautiful... The bulldozers have been and gone and where once our heroes danced there is nothing but a hideous stain. They stretched the wings of our race, stretched them out against the candle-flame.⁷⁰

Stitches leave their traces in stains. The attempt by the writer to piece events together, to relate what seems unrelated, leaves behind traces of discontinuity. For Marechera, the events of the twentieth century have outstripped attempts to produce a seamless narrative of them. Events can(not) be contained in writing, which is the founding presupposition of all writing since there are always omissions, traces of violence, and silences that serve to interrupt the attempt at imposing continuity through narrative containment.

Autobiography and nationalism

The autobiographical act has implications for the understanding of African Literature as a discipline as it is within this literature that the 'African image' has been given definition by African writers. African Literature as a discipline, was institutionalised through its confrontation with colonialism and colonial history. Here fiction writes back to history and in so doing competes for historical status. The African writer constantly confronts colonialism as the writer at once writes from a position of marginality and constructs him/herself as a centre. Autobiography as a narrative genre represents a challenge to the position of marginality accorded to the colonised subject. In this process of writing, what is 'other' becomes central, and what is usually central and determinate - historical/political processes - become 'othered'. African literature challenges the monolithic status of history by exposing history as narrative construction and fiction as a worthy opponent.

Gayatri Spivak relates the notion of textuality, of narrative construction and the constructions of (textual) meaning to the notion of "worlding". The worlding of a world on a supposedly

⁷⁰Marechera, "House of Hunger" 45-46.

previously uninscribed territory was central to the imperialist project of "othering":⁷¹

that is, the projection of one's own systematic codes onto the 'vacant' or 'uninscribed' territory of the other. By this process, the Other is transformed into a set of codes that can be recuperated by reference to one's own systems of cultural recognition. The unknowable becomes known; and whatever 'spillage' might have occurred in the problematics of racial and cultural difference becomes stoppered by the network of textualization that is inscribed onto the Other and then read as a 'lack' or 'negation' of that which constitutes the Imperial and transcendent One.⁷²

The Imperial self that engineers this discourse fixes the limits of both value and signification of the other to that which takes place within the projected system, and arrogates to (him)self sole purchase on the possibility of organic wholeness. The 'others' are determinant in a system of power and self-constitution. They are elements somewhere out there beyond the circle, awaiting discovery, conquest, appropriation and interpretation.⁷³

The inability of Marechera's protagonists to reconstitute a sense of wholeness represents Marechera's refusal to simply reverse this Imperial process. According to Fanon, the discovery of the futility of alienation by the colonised or oppressed subject results in a process of cultural retrieval. Fanon argues that the "inferiorised individual" develops a passionate attachment to the culture that was previously abandoned, rejected and despised.

The culture... which has vegetated since the foreign domination, is revalorised. It is not reconceived, grasped anew, dynamised from within. The customs, traditions, beliefs, formerly denied and passed over are violently valorised and affirmed.⁷⁴

⁷¹Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues* (New York: Routledge, 1990) 1.

⁷²Stephen Slemon, "Monuments of Empire: Allegory/Counter-Discourse/Post-Colonial Writing," *Kunapipi* 9. 3 (1987): 7.

⁷³Slemon, "Monuments of Empire" 7.

⁷⁴Fanon, *Towards the African Revolution* 42-43.

In the "House of Hunger", the character of Stephen embodies this position. Stephen represents an "authentic black identity", a "typical African bully in an ordinary African school".⁷⁵ He appropriates for his own use "such notable figures as Nkrumah, Kaunda, Che, Castro, Stalin, Mao" and is "an avid reader of the Heinemann African Writers Series".⁷⁶ Steven believed that: "there was something peculiarly African in anything written by an African.... Stephen also had nightmares, great bouts of them; and he was ashamed of this one 'weakness'".⁷⁷

The narrator muses that the Edmund-Stephen fight "even outclassed UDI".⁷⁸ The Edmund-Stephen fight is a struggle between two competing conceptions of identity. Edmund "refused to have anything to do with our armchair politics",⁷⁹ and could not read "enough of Gogol... Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Turgenev".⁸⁰ Edmund wants to be a writer. Stephen, as representing African nationalism, is a bully willing to stamp out anybody who disagrees with his views or voices dissent.

Stephen came out of the bathroom.... There was blood on his shirt; a rather large stain which seemed in outline to be a map of Rhodesia.... They wired his [Edmund's] jaw. They used a lot of stitches to save something of that crushed-in face. Yards of stitches.⁸¹

Ironically, while Stephen claims to represent an African identity, "Africa always rises to the

⁷⁵Marechera, "House of Hunger" 63.

⁷⁶Marechera, "House of Hunger" 63.

⁷⁷Marechera, "House of Hunger" 63-64.

⁷⁸Marechera, "House of Hunger" 63.

⁷⁹Marechera, "House of Hunger" 60.

⁸⁰Marechera, "House of Hunger" 61.

⁸¹Marechera, "House of Hunger" 65-66.

challenge"⁸², it is Edmund that goes on to become a guerilla fighter in the war. He is eventually captured by the Rhodesian security forces during a "fierce engagement" and is the "sole survivor".⁸³

The Edmund-Stephen fight is an allegory for the different political conflicts that were fought out during the war against the Rhodesian government. These political conflicts are first those between the military wings of two political parties, ZANU and ZAPU, who both claimed to legitimately represent the people of Zimbabwe and secondly, the conflict between the guerillas and the Rhodesian state. Foster explores Marechera's use of allegory:

Marechera has constructed a metaphor for both intra- and inter-racial political and cultural relations in Rhodesia. It not only dramatizes white intolerance or social challenge... but by having the school's self-proclaimed champion of an authentic black identity embody a violent white dictatorship, Marechera demonstrates the tyranny implicit in all expressions of cultural centrality.⁸⁴

This overdetermination of black identity by the fictions of colonial ideological and discursive structures and the corresponding nationalist fictions can only be deconstructed by disassembling fiction itself.

Do you remember Lobengula's letter to the Queen? "Some time ago a party of men came to my country.... They asked me for a place to dig gold and said that they would give me certain things for the right to do so.... A document was written and presented to me for my signature. I asked what it contained, and was told that in it were my words and the words of those men. I put my hand to it. About three months afterwards I heard from other sources that I had given, by that document, the rights to all the minerals in the country...." Of course the understatement of the year came from

⁸²Marechera, "House of Hunger" 65.

⁸³Marechera, "House of Hunger" 60-61.

⁸⁴Foster, "Soul-Food" 60-61.

Lobengula, who said of white men: "You people must want something from me". And then, I said, War. Of a sort. The Maxim and the other guns began to speak and within a quarter of an hour the surrounding country was strewn with dead and wounded.... Lobengula fled Bulawayo.... He said: "They have beaten my regiments, killed my people, burnt my kraals, captured my cattle, and I want peace". The one thing that bugs me about the man is that he even loved white men.... Even trusted them.... Is this all there is to our history?.... There is stinking deceit at the heart of it. Where are the bloody heroes?.... So here we are all sticky with the stinking stains of history.⁸⁵

For the narrator in the "House of Hunger", the deception of Lobengula through the written word is a metaphor for the deception of narrative construction - colonial and nationalist - of history and ultimately of language itself. Marechera is concerned with structure, with examining the fissures and cracks that are usually sealed in an attempt to create what would seem to be a seamless narrative - a structure that imposes closure on events by endowing them with explanatory power. The exploration of the seams and stitches of the narrative of colonialism exposes the points at which violence, alienation and disintegration leave their traces. It is this deconstructive act that Marechera reveals in the construction of a narrative of his own identity. Here structure and content are mutually reinforcing. The fragmentary structure of his narrative reveals the content, reinforcing the multiplicity of identities that cannot be reconciled to show a unilinear or determinate identity.

From this perspective, narrative structuring follows. The act of narration then is an attempt to control a series of events, an attempt on the part of the writer to define both the meaning of these events and their significance with regard to the formation of his own identity. However, his own identity is difficult to define as his blackness is so overdetermined by language that his identity becomes indeterminate. This indeterminacy is the point at which Marechera writes, in an effort to redetermine his identity.

Marechera's narrative moves between past, present and future - mixing narrative time - as well

⁸⁵Marechera, "House of Hunger" 42-43.

as between fiction and autobiography, mixing narrative genres. Marechera attacks the reader's concept of linear time that is traditionally ascribed to narrated fiction.

Dieter Riemenschneider, in "Short Fiction from Zimbabwe", writes of Marechera's narrative technique:

Such a narrative strategy naturally questions the unity of the mind and the progress of time, two fundamental presuppositions of most postcolonial writing, whose intention it is to overcome the experience of dispossession and not to confirm its lasting continuity after independence. Marechera challenges these assumptions, and by breaking away from conventional ways of storytelling, he does not merely dabble in formal experimentation - as some of his critics maintain - but radically questions the views held by many postcolonial writers that it is not only possible but morally obligatory to reinstate a sort of status quo that is considered to represent one's identity.⁸⁶

Marechera's writing questions itself, and the narrative structures that seek to impose continuity and seamlessness. From this point of view, history can never offer one a primary sense of identity and a sense of continuity from past to present. The narrator's quest for the heroes of the past is unfulfilled: "And there we all were; in an uncertain country, ourselves uncertain. A land with a sly heart; and ourselves ready to be deceived. A morally corrosive atmosphere, and ourselves base metals ready for the acids of maturity".⁸⁷

Nationalism cannot offer Marechera a sense of identity. The rejection of nationalism stems from the writer's ability to deconstruct and expose the seams of narration - colonial, nationalist, fictional, historical and ultimately autobiographical. **The House of Hunger** serves as a metanarrative, a critique of narrative and the act of narration.

⁸⁶Dieter Riemenschneider, "Short Fiction from Zimbabwe," **Research in African Literatures** 20. 3 (1989): 405-406.

⁸⁷Marechera, "House of Hunger" 92.

CHAPTER FOUR

Acts of Resistance: Exhuming the Bones

Critical engagement

Chenjerai Hove's *Bones* was published in 1988 and went on to receive the Noma Award for Publishing in Africa in 1989. Highly acclaimed, and translated into many different languages, Hove's novel has also generated a variety of critical reviews. These critical perspectives can be categorised as being concerned with three broad issues: Hove's treatment of the nationalist struggle; his portrayal of the rural peasantry; and the representation of the figure of the peasant woman. By engaging with the responses that Hove's text has elicited, this chapter aims to elucidate the concerns of Hove's text and to demonstrate its implications for the understanding of nationalism and identity.

Critics like Flora Veit-Wild, Dan Wylie and Tim McLoughlin have all commented on Hove's failure to make a distinction between the pre- and post-independence period in *Bones*¹. For Veit-Wild, this serves to decontextualise the "political implications of power and powerlessness"², diluting the specific nature of - and differences in - political issues in these two distinct periods. Another common criticism levelled at Hove's *Bones*, and directly related to the "erasure of the importance of time"³ is that Hove strives to mythologise national history by suggesting a close affiliation between peasants and guerillas.⁴ This then serves to support

Flora Veit-Wild, "Dances with Bones: Hove's Romanticised Africa," *Research in African Literatures* 24. 3 (1993) 6.; Dan Wylie, "Language Thieves: English-Language Strategies in Two Zimbabwean Novellas," *English in Africa* 18. 2 (1991): 48.; and T.O. McLoughlin, "Men at War: Writers and Fighters in Recent Zimbabwean Fiction," *Current Writing* 3 (1991): 149.

Veit-Wild, "Dances" 6.

Wylie, "Language" 48.

Veit-Wild, "Dances" 8.

the idea of a seamless narrative of nationalism and resistance.⁵

Concerning Hove's characterisation, Veit-Wild maintains that the author mystifies history by simplifying the rural populace.⁶ The characters of *Bones* lack individual characteristics⁷ and distinctive voices.⁸ Representing collective memory and history, they present a monolithic view of African society.⁹ Wylie asserts that Hove's technique then serves to blur the "moral lineaments of the characters".¹⁰ Furthermore, Veit-Wild contends that the image of the peasant woman, as represented by the protagonist, Marita, is outdated, an "over-simplified image of the poor, illiterate, 'native' woman", a "ridiculously earthy image".¹¹ This type of characterisation "completely excludes an awareness of the crisis of identity which Zimbabwean women have undergone in the last decades".¹²

Connecting the bones

Flora Veit-Wild credits Chenjerai Hove with being "a major poetic observer of the war of liberation"¹³, acknowledging that the primary stimulus for his writing emerged from his experiences in 1977 to 1978 as a teacher in rural Zimbabwe. It was here that Hove "witnessed

⁵Wylie, "Language" 48.

⁶Veit-Wild, "Dances" 9.

⁷Wylie, "Language" 48-49.

⁸McLoughlin, "Men at War" 149.

⁹Veit-Wild, "Dances" 10.

¹⁰Wylie, "Language" 48.

¹¹Veit-Wild, "Dances" 9.

¹²Veit-Wild, "Dances" 10.

¹³Veit-Wild, "Dances" 5.

the atrocities of war and the suffering of rural people".¹⁴ He reflects on this experience in an interview with Flora Veit-Wild when he points out that:

When you are with them you see their problems, you attend a funeral ... some who have been massacred and so on. And then you begin to understand what it is to be without a gun between two people who have guns.

F. V-W: So were you not actively involved in the struggle?

I was actively involved, but the struggle was not fought with guns only. There were many fronts to it. And if by 'active' you mean carrying guns, I think you narrow the meaning too much to give you a good overview of what the struggle really involved.¹⁵

For Hove, the experience of living among the peasant population during the war for independence allowed him to look at the struggle "from the other side", to look at it "from a peasant's point of view".¹⁶ Hove's *Bones* represents an attempt to clarify "what the struggle really involved" for the peasant population of Zimbabwe.¹⁷ In the novel, Hove narrates the effects of the violence of the war experience on peasant life.

By choosing to narrate peasant experience, Hove engages with a number of contending historical viewpoints regarding the role played by the peasantry during the armed struggle for independence. These perspectives are drawn from the corpus of texts, both historical and fictional¹, that have attempted to portray the rural peasantry as: being integrally involved in providing support to the guerillas and the aims of the nationalist struggle; being coerced to participate; or, as using the armed conflict to further their own interests and as a means of expressing discontent with traditional patterns of authority.¹⁸

¹⁴Veit-Wild, "Dances" 5.

¹⁵Veit-Wild, *Patterns of Poetry* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1988) 35-36. (emphasis added)

¹⁶Veit-Wild, *Patterns* 35.

¹⁷Veit-Wild, *Patterns* 36.

¹⁸Kruger, "Popular Struggles".

Historical texts by Terence Ranger and David Lan,¹⁹ in particular, have attempted to show how the peasantry were united in their support of guerilla war and in their support of the aim of the nationalist struggle - independence. This kind of view has then served to bolster the idea of a seamless narrative of resistance and of peasant support from the 1896/7 uprising to the nationalist struggle for independence. As a consequence, the peasantry has been seen as a monolithic, homogenous grouping, an undifferentiated category whose identity as a group has seemed to transcend historical changes, and their own individuality.

As a class, the rural peasantry are marginal characters in the political processes of nationalism and independence. They are usually only given prominence in relation to the role they play in supporting or undermining nationalist struggles. Like the bones of the novel, the category of the peasantry is constantly exhumed to prove a political point, their interests and motivations are constantly neglected. Their geographical distance to the urban centre has become symbolic of how far away they are from change.

In *Bones*, Hove sets out to provide an historical correction to these views. Perceptions of the peasantry as playing a 'supportive' role have made them a marginal grouping as they fail to take into account any political initiative on their part. In *Bones*, the marginal become central. Hove depicts a peasant community that is fraught with its own internal conflicts and torn in its allegiances. The exploration of these internal struggles takes on a national dimension as Hove shows how personal choices and conflicts are fraught with political significance.

While the characters of *Bones* are not directly involved in the war, Hove shows how the violence of war fractures communities and identities. The notion of 'community' is undermined by Hove's references to "sell-outs", by the female protagonists' alienation from their community, and finally by the young girl, Janifa's, confinement in the "madhouse". Hove sets up and portrays inequalities that permeate the fabric of peasant society. These are evident on every level of experience. While he creates a world in which the powerless rural populace struggle against the powerful white Rhodesia, the farmers and black bureaucrats,

¹⁹Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerilla War in Zimbabwe: A Comparative Study* (London: James Currey, 1984) and David Lan, *Guns and Rain: Guerillas and Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe* (London: James Currey, 1985).

this merely provides a backdrop against which the conflicts within the peasant community itself can be viewed.

Although Hove focuses on peasant experience of nationalist struggle and guerilla war, it is interesting to note that he gives centrality to the experience of peasant women. Through the characters of Marita - the old woman whose son left to fight as a guerilla and never returned - and Janifa (Jennifer) - the young girl who has in her possession a love letter from Marita's son - Hove attempts to shift attention to the predicament of peasant women. While conjuring up familiar symbolic analogies between women's bodies and land, and women's bodies as symbolic territory, Hove's concern is with the continuities of the abuse of women in both a pre- and post-independence landscape, and the implications of this kind of abuse of power.

In the novel, the different time frames of pre-independence and post-independence seem to merge, pointing to both continuities and differences between these two periods. The continuities are evidenced in the position of the peasant women in two very different [political] landscapes while discontinuities exist in terms of who exercises power. The movement from the rural pre-independence landscape, ruled by the white farmer Manyepo, to the urban post-independence landscape, controlled by government workers and bureaucrats, serves to rupture the seamless narrative of nationalism, which attains closure at the point of independence.

The "bones" in the title are a reference to the decaying remains of the war, a constant reminder of the sacrifice of the body to a political and ideological cause. From the unburied bodies that litter the land and the psyche, to the analogies between women's bodies and land, the body represents both physical and symbolic territory. The plot of the novel revolves around the search for *a body*, a guerilla body, and in the process, explores issues relating to subjectivity, ownership and possession of the body.

The text entails both an act of construction and of deconstruction. Hove combines a number of different narrative voices, as each chapter is told from a character's perspective. These fragmentary narratives are assembled together to collectively construct the identity of Marita, who never has her own narrative but is constructed through the memories, interior

monologues and voices of other characters. Taken together, these narratives also serve to disassemble Janifa's identity as they culminate in her confinement in the "madhouse", "in the house where people with bad heads are kept".²⁰ The internal struggles within the peasant community are then internalised in the character of Janifa.

Hove combines the oral with the literate. Taken as a whole, the novel is an attempt to give a voice to the oral narratives of collective memory. However, in this oral culture, the letter becomes central. The letter sent to Janifa by the guerilla frames the text. The written word is the only remnant of the guerilla's identity. By making the written word - in the form of the letter - central, Hove also clears a space for his own writing. In keeping with his literary manifesto, Hove gives a voice to the "voiceless, the powerless, the victims of both power and circumstance".²¹ The letter survives to be read and re-read, and serves as a reminder of the past, of the period before the war.

Bones begins and ends with the lines: "Marita... she asked me to read the letter for her again today, every day she comes to me, pleading".²² While this narrative device does seem to point towards an "erasure of time", the movement of the novel, between a pre- and a post-independence landscape, serves to question independence as a political marker. Instead of erasing time, Hove invites the reader to make comparisons between these two periods and landscapes.

The body of the text/the body as a text

Hove dedicates his novel to: "the women whose children did not return, sons and daughters, those who gave their bones to the making of a new conscience, a conscience of bones, blood

²⁰Chenjerai Hove, *Bones* (Harare: Baobab, 1988) 108.

²¹Veit-Wild, "Dances" 6.

²²Hove, *Bones* 7 and 112.

and footsteps, dreaming of coming home some day in vain".²³

The central theme of the novel is the search for the body of Marita's son, a guerilla fighter: "Old woman like me crying about a lost son, maybe one dead but with no grave to console her".²⁴ The male body is present throughout the text, at once both central and marginal. It is central in that the recovery of the male body provides the impetus for events, and marginal as this body is displaced by the portrayal of women's bodies and their experiences. As in the return of the repressed, where desires and painful memories are diverted to the unconscious and reappear in other forms, this male body continually surfaces, serving as a catalyst for action in the novel.

It is as if identity, and its recognition, depended on the body having been marked with a special sign, which looks suspiciously like a linguistic signifier. The sign imprints the body, making it part of the signifying process. Signing or marking the body signifies its passage into writing, its becoming a literary body, and generally also a narrative body, in that the inscription of the sign depends on and produces a story. The signing of the body is an allegory of the body become a subject for literary narrative - a body entered into writing.²⁵

In *Bones*, the body becomes a sign which signifies a multiplicity of meanings that cannot be contained by its frame. The body is sacrificed for a number of different causes, for a number of different wars. While war itself is represented as a struggle for and over the rights to possess the body, references to unburied bodies abound in the text. Janifa's grandfather's body remains unburied: he fought in the Second World War and his body was never returned.²⁶ Marita's brother died in the cane fields, "they say he died of an unknown disease, so they could not allow us to take the body for burial at home in the way the

²³Hove, *Bones* 8.

²⁴Hove, *Bones* 13.

²⁵Brooks, *Body Work* 3.

²⁶Hove, *Bones* 30.

ancestors taught us".²⁷ The unburied body continually resurfaces and refuses to be repressed. It serves as a constant reminder of conflicts that are unresolved and in so doing, it serves to resist closure of the text. Brooks writes about the body as a text:

Narratives in which a body becomes a central preoccupation can be especially revelatory of the effort to bring the body into the linguistic realm because they repeatedly tell the story of a body's entrance into meaning. That is, they dramatise ways in which the body becomes a key signifying factor in the text: how, we might say, it embodies meaning.²⁸

The predominant image of the land is that of a graveyard, a burial site. The bodies that litter the landscape merge to form the body of the land. Hove associates images of women's bodies with images of land. Marita's feet are "cracked with neglect"²⁹, her "fingers... stiff like sticks on a dry branch of the mupani tree".³⁰ Marita's barrenness is described by reference to images of land, "the man planted his seed in me, but the soil inside me could not make it grow to a plant".³¹

The landscape is mapped onto the body, where women's bodies are metaphors for land in that they are subject to struggles between male actors for control and ownership. "Breathing the soot of Manyepo's harvests... in the hot sun possessed by Manyepo.... She is part of Manyepo's soil".³² Marita's body is a desired body: "Today I meet the woman whose eyes make everyone on the farm drunk with love.... Did Manyepo not ask about you.... I know inside him there is a strong desire to have you in the fields".³³

²⁷Hove, *Bones* 70.

²⁸Brooks, *Body Work* 8.

²⁹Hove, *Bones* 7.

³⁰Hove, *Bones* 14.

³¹Hove, *Bones* 14.

³²Hove, *Bones* 14-15.

³³Hove, *Bones* 84.

Harassment, abuse, beatings and rape are presented as political acts, attempts to enforce control over the body. The conquest of the land entails the conquest of territory, and the symbolic territory of women's bodies. Marita is interrogated and raped by the Rhodesian security forces who are in search of information regarding Marita's son, the guerilla fighter. The brutality of the soldiers' attack on Marita represents their repressive political will:

Marita, how they brought you back torn like a piece of cloth.... It is difficult to kill a human being, Marita. I saw it with my own eyes. If you had been a goat or a dog, you would have been dead by the time they threw you naked on the muddy soil smelling of worms and cowdung. Watery soil that smelt of rotten roots and leaves.... You breathed, but the breath came out through frothy soil that had been pushed into your mouth. They had burnt you with burning things all over your body, even the places that cannot be mentioned.... They kept you naked all the time, bringing even village boys to come and see all they wanted to see. Then they put a lot of hard things through where you say children come out.³⁴

In *Bones*, as in the other texts in this study, women's bodies are presented as having exchange value. Marita's body is stripped of its subjectivity by the Rhodesian soldiers, and replaces the body of her son. To the soldiers, punishing Marita's body is a way of getting at the guerilla's body. Janita is raped by Chisaga because she replaces Marita, "she has left all the things of her womanhood with you. The pots, the baskets, everything that makes a woman feel a woman".³⁵ While the bodies and labour of women are a point of contestation between the men, Hove also implicates women as buying into this system of control through the portrayal of Janita's mother, who is eager to marry off her daughter for a profit. She even goes so far as to defend her daughter's rapist to the police. She says: "The man who did it is the child's friend. We like him, so do not put him in jail.... He is not a bad man".³⁶ Commenting on her mother's betrayal, Janita says:

³⁴Hove, *Bones* 60.

³⁵Hove, *Bones* 84.

³⁶Hove, *Bones* 92.

I will get there so I can spit on my mother's face,.... My mother's face has escaped shame far too many times. To let her think that I am one to erase poverty from the hearth of her house is to let her eat fire. There is nothing wrong in erasing poverty with one's sweat of the hands, as she always says with her own mouth.... But to sell me to Chisaga or the herbalist like a goat is to cure her wounds with hot pepper.³⁷

In the urban post-independence landscape, the struggle over rights to the body becomes a struggle against the state. The "unknown woman" challenges the post-independent state's control, by her small act of resistance. She attempts to claim Marita's body, and when she is refused "she sits patiently by the door of the house where they keep dead bodies".³⁸ She attempts to rescue Marita from anonymity, to validate Marita's identity. The "unknown woman" attempts to make Marita the "known woman", to restore subjectivity to Marita's body: "She simply said that she wanted to take away the body of the woman whom nobody claimed to know for proper burial because she is the only one who knows the dead woman".³⁹

The state strips the body of its subjectivity, and of its identity. The body then becomes an object, subject to possession and ownership. The private becomes public, as control over the body is no longer an individual right. The idea of anonymity is reinforced through the constant use of the terms, "no(body)", "some(body)" and "any(body)", which is illustrated in the following passage:

It told the people that the fighters were not like *anybody* who is in this land visiting their relatives. Do you know that *nobody* was allowed to see those who died? It was said that many lorries made many trips to carry dead bodies to a burial place. We never knew whose sons they were, but we knew there would be much mourning in

³⁷Hove, *Bones* 99.

³⁸Hove, *Bones* 79.

³⁹Hove, *Bones* 80.

the villages.... Many say the place still smells of death.⁴⁰

The effects of the war are metaphorically connected to the war's effect on land and bodies. "The earth turned red... even the trees grew red leaves smeared with blood,"⁴¹ while the aeroplanes of the Rhodesian army appear as "locusts", plaguing the environment.⁴² The land becomes hostile to those who occupy it as "the cracked earth thirsts for more blood".⁴³

The war is associated with disease and madness. It has eaten away at the land and the psyche. Images of eating abound in the text, both as references to natural bodily functions, as well as references to decay and disintegration. "Words that eat into one like a bad disease which eats even into the bones of a victim".⁴⁴ Women and women's bodies are also associated with disease, and parallels are drawn between the representations of infertility or fertility of the land and of women's bodies. The idea of infertility is linked to disease which serves as a metaphor of disruption: "Disease has eaten into the wealth of your soil. Disease has eaten into the wills of your ancestors, your own fathers and mothers. Disease has sucked the juice of the land you inherited for your children".⁴⁵

Images of disease pervade the text and in this context, disease is a social condition with political and economic implications. The origins of disease lie in the organisation of a society, in systems of production and social reproduction and in exploitation, "they lie in poverty and in the exercise of political power".⁴⁶ The guerillas are "the children who have

⁴⁰Hove, *Bones* 74. (emphasis added)

⁴¹Hove, *Bones* 72.

⁴²Hove, *Bones* 73.

⁴³Hove, *Bones* 82.

⁴⁴Hove, *Bones* 17.

⁴⁵Hove, *Bones* 47.

⁴⁶Vaughan, *Curing Their Ills* 5.

come to cleanse the soil".⁴⁷ They are represented as being responsible for restoring a sense of order. While the war seems to hold the promise of being curative, and of being able to alleviate these conditions, it is unable to restore a sense of wholeness to those whose lives it has affected.

It is a hard thing for a man with so many scars from many fights of guns and aeroplanes. To hear people say without shame... he married a woman from the house where they keep people with crooked insides of their heads.... It is a shame that a war can kill such a young man's mind, they will say.⁴⁸

Metaphors of disease and health are linked to the representation of women, where a healthy society is one which has healthy women and children and according to Florence Stratton, women's position in society provides an index of the general condition of the society in which they live.⁴⁹ This image of women also relates to the image of women that are then constructed through nationalist discourses where women are represented as lovers, fighters, providers, reproducers of the nation and as bearing the responsibility for holding together the family that is the nation. In this context, it becomes necessary to explore the contradictions inherent in the position of [rural] women, who are at once represented as nationalist symbols and at the same time often have no direct relationship to the state, and no direct access to state power. In terms of the power ascribed to their racial, class and gendered identities, the peasant women in Hove's *Bones* form part of the lowest strata in a hierarchy of competing identities.

The peasant woman

In *Bones*, Marita, the peasant woman, is accorded a central position, one not normally occupied by women, and women of the peasant classes in particular. However, even at the

⁴⁷Hove, *Bones* 58.

⁴⁸Hove, *Bones* 110.

⁴⁹Stratton, "The Shallow Grave" 144.

centre of the narrative Marita is an outsider in her community and in her country. Hove is concerned with (re)constructing women's identity, and giving a voice to the experience of rural life. In attempting to find an adequate form for expressing the violent and alienatory experience of war, Hove makes use of a combination of different narrative voices and points of view. The figure of the peasant women is constructed through these narrative voices, through fragments of experience.

Hove constructs the image of the peasant woman as a repository of rural knowledge and collective memory: "Now that you are dead, Marita," cries Janifa, "who will tell me stories".⁵⁰

Marita suffers, but is resilient:

She has carried the water-pot from the well for a long time.... There are other things she still has to carry.... She will carry them silently as she has done before, resolute.... Her lips are too busy containing the pain to go shouting behind the hills and streams of the farm. Nobody will listen. Nobody is used to listening to her.⁵¹

In nationalist discourses, the image of the peasant women is overloaded with significance. The concerns of racial, cultural and sexual purity and the social and moral organisation of a future independent state are focused largely on the body of the peasant woman.⁵² Catherine Nash contends that:

While the idea of 'woman' remained the embodiment of the national spirit and the allegorical figure for the land... this land now became the domain of the overtly masculine.... The discourse which confined women within the domestic sphere simultaneously conferred on them the responsibility of maintaining the national

⁵⁰Hove, *Bones* 18.

⁵¹Hove, *Bones* 15.

⁵²Catherine Nash, "Remapping and Renaming: New Cartographies of Identity, Gender and Landscape in Ireland," *Feminist Review* 44 (1992): 45.

population. Women's function was to reproduce the bodies of the 'body politic', represented as masculine.⁵³

Hove's portrayal of Marita's body as barren, with many wounds and scars, "Most of us women are one big scar",⁵⁴ serves to deconstruct the image of the peasant women's body as a healthy productive and reproductive body. The construction of Marita's identity is a deconstructive act which operates on two different levels. On one level, Hove deconstructs the idealised image of the peasant women and rural life through his portrayal of the conflicts that beset this rural community and through the hardship Marita endures at the hands of her own community and two successive governments. While, on another level the construction of Marita's identity entails a deconstruction of Janifa's character.

This narrative act of doubling serves to create a schizophrenic narrative of identity. (Re)constructing Marita involves the deconstruction of Janifa. By communicating with Marita, Janifa enters into communication with her(self). Much like the characters of Tambudzai and Nyasha in Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, the double is internalised in Janifa's character, brought to the surface through her relationship with Marita. This fragmentation of Janifa's character points to the conflict between socially sanctioned behaviour and that behaviour that resists the imposition of societal norms. For example, Marita is ostracised because she could not bear children:

Mother does not know the type of worm which has entered me since you flew away like a bird with a broken wing.... Look what Chisaga has done to me. My mother says women without children are bad worms, without wings to fly.... My child, do not talk too much with Marita. She has holes in her stomach. She is barren land that cannot make seed become restless. The seed in her belly dries up and weeps to its death.⁵⁵

⁵³Nash, "Remapping" 47.

⁵⁴Hove, *Bon* 13.

⁵⁵Hove, *Bones* 89.

Like the images of bodies that continually surface, Janifa's repressed desires to escape and to resist are revealed. Her internal fragmentation is externalised through the fragmentary form of the novel, and through the characterisation of the two fictional heroines. According to Lan White: "it is clear that all these voices exist in Janifa's disturbed mind. She exists in chains in the local asylum, reliving the tragedy of a war which destroyed her and the woman she most cared for though neither of them witnessed any fighting".⁵⁶

Hove highlights the predicament of peasant women who have little access to the state's resources on a number of different levels. Rajeswari Sunder Rajan has observed that the state in all postcolonial nations, envisaged as the guarantor of rights to its citizens, "has invariably emerged instead as a major perpetrator of injustices",⁵⁷ while according to Anne McClintock:

No nation in the world gives women and men the same access to the rights and resources of the nation-state.... All too often in male nationalisms, gender difference between women and men serves to symbolically define the limits of national difference and power between men. Excluded from direct action as national citizens, women are subsumed symbolically into the national body politic as its boundary and metaphoric limit.... Women are typically construed as the symbolic bearers of the nation, but are denied any direct relation to national agency.⁵⁸

Although Hove represents the figure of the peasant woman as being denied direct access to the workings of the state and institutions of power, he also shows the ambiguity of the exercise of power. While the peasant women of *Bones* are denied a space in which to participate in the workings of their own community and society, they still are able to create a space for their own resistance. Marita leaves the farm in search of her son's body, "she

⁵⁶Lan White, "War Poem," *Southern African Review of Books* 3, 12 (1990): 3.

⁵⁷Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, *Real and Imagined Women: Gender, culture and postcolonialism* (London: Routledge, 1993) 6.

⁵⁸McClintock, "Family Feuds" 61-62.

is a strong woman who thinks her own way".⁵⁹ Janifa's resistance is in her 'madness' which allows her to escape the oppressive confines of her family and community.

Characterisation: ambiguities of power

Hove's characters are delineated through shifts in narrative voices. Through the use of interior monologues, Hove explores the conflicts taking place among individuals within the peasant community. While the focus of these monologues is on the conflicts that take place within personal relationships, Hove gestures towards their political and national implications.

The peasant community is characterised by disunity which is fuelled by gossip and betrayals. For example, the women gossip behind the anthill, "How could Mungai's husband be caught with such a slim ugly women despised by everybody in the village"⁶⁰ and Marita is sold out to the Rhodesian soldiers by people in her community: "some workers who did not like you because of your hard work mocked all the time. They said you were full of stupid stories about your child who was coming to kill the baas boy one day".⁶¹

Rukato boasts of "having slept with so-and-so's daughter or so-and-so's wife"⁶² and is stabbed to death. His corpse "lay there like a bag of mealie-meal dropped from the tractor by Manyepo's driver".⁶³ The medicine-men of "these days can cheat you into poverty. Do not trust them"⁶⁴, and the herbalist is "a bad man" who wants to "do bad things"⁶⁵ to

⁵⁹Hove, *Bones* 26.

⁶⁰Hove, *Bones* 8.

⁶¹Hove, *Bones* 60.

⁶²Hove, *Bones* 62.

⁶³Hove, *Bones* 63.

⁶⁴Hove, *Bones* 44.

⁶⁵Hove, *Bones* 95.

Janifa. Janifa believes that her mother was "behind what Chisaga did to me".⁶⁶

Hove presents the reader with the complexities of a peasant community who suffer from the violence of colonialism and its consequences as is illustrated by the "baasboy" who uses his position of favour with the white farmer to exercise his control over the farm workers.⁶⁷ Marita's husband is one of his targets: "We were together in school, and I used to beat him up even in the forest fights we had when we herded cattle. But now he kicks me around like a small boy because he was able to stay at school much longer than me".⁶⁸

Relationships between male and female characters, between the peasantry and the Rhodesian and the Zimbabwean state, between rural and urban, provide paradigms within which to view personal relationships. However, the focus on the personal disassembles these paradigms and in so doing shows how the exercise of power is ambiguous, neither uniform nor uniformly held by individuals or institutions.

Through the character of Chisaga, the cook, Hove provides an explication of J.C. Scott's thesis regarding "everyday forms of resistance", or informal resistance. Scott contends that in looking at the exercise of power and deference to this power, a distinction needs to be made between "onstage" and "offstage" behaviour, "to the extent that deference expressed in public, power-laden situations, is negated in the comparative safety of offstage privacy".⁶⁹

This "offstage" behaviour is also exhibited through the characterisation of the peasant women who go behind the anthill "when they have a few words to share about the mischief of their

⁶⁶Hove, *Bones* 90.

⁶⁷Hove, *Bones* 19.

⁶⁸Hove, *Bones* 27.

⁶⁹J.C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Connecticut: Yale UP, 1985) 25.

husbands",⁷⁰ and Muringi and Chatora who give their "shit to Manyepo's dogs? You even went around the compound saying a dog is a dog, give it shit it will eat it and ask for more".⁷¹

Chisaga is the cook for the white farmer, Manyepo. His is a position of power in comparison to the other peasant characters. As Janifa recalls: "The men are all castrated, you used to say. They cannot lift their heads against one man who uses the baas boy as his whip".⁷²

Chisaga is "as fat as a baobab from eating the leftovers"⁷³ from Manyepo's table. To his white 'master' he is the obedient and compliant servant, while, to others in the peasant community, he is a cruel taskmaster, a powerful figure. Chisaga's frustration concerning his relative powerlessness is vented upon his own community, and it is only within this community that he is able to exercise formal power. In a similar way, Marita's husband complains of his own powerlessness, his impotence, acknowledging that, "a chief's son is a stranger, a commoner, in other lands"⁷⁴ while he takes out his frustrations concerning his son on his wife, pouring "out all the dirt he can allow to pass through his mouth without vomiting".⁷⁵

The impotence that Chisaga feels in the relationship with his white master is expressed through his desire for power within his own community. This desire becomes sexual, and is most clearly expressed in the act of rape. Chisaga rapes Janifa in order to validate his own power. The white farmer's speech is filled with sexual allusions which serve to illustrate the extent to which the master-servant relationship has emasculated Chisaga.⁷⁶ The obedient servant should have no other desires except for pleasing his master: "My cook cannot do

⁷⁰Hove, *Bones* 8.

⁷¹Hove, *Bones* 41.

⁷²Hove, *Bones* 19.

⁷³Hove, *Bones* 20.

⁷⁴Hove, *Bones* 25.

⁷⁵Hove, *Bones* 14.

⁷⁶Hove, *Bones* 26.

such things. Leave him alone.... You catch Muringi and Chatora, the bastards who have given enough trouble to my workers.... I will castrate the bloody fools in front of everybody".⁷⁷

Informally and "offstage", Chisaga resists his master through tampering with the food that he cooks. Wylie criticises Hove's technique of characterisation arguing that, this "relativism", "blurs the moral lineaments of the characters".⁷⁸ For Wylie, the presentation of Chisaga's own interior monologue allows for the "extension of a certain sympathy", to a character who is a sellout and a rapist.⁷⁹ Ironically, it is precisely this relativism that adds dimensions to Hove's characters, individuating them through their own personal conflicts.

The relationship between Chisaga and Manyepo clearly demonstrates that those who have the power are not totally in control of the stage.

Chisaga, the fat cook who sometimes puts all sorts of things in your food when you make him angry. Be careful, Manyepo. You must not make Chisaga angry. He will put dreadful things in your food and then watch you eat.⁸⁰

In this context, and as is most often the case, "neither outright collective defiance nor rebellion is likely or possible"⁸¹ and therefore it is only through a thorough examination of the ways in which power is exercised, both formally and informally, "onstage" and "offstage", that one is able "say something meaningful about class consciousness, everyday resistance and commonplace class relations".⁸²

⁷⁷Hove, *Bones* 92.

⁷⁸Wylie, "Language" 48.

⁷⁹Wylie, "Language" 48.

⁸⁰Hove, *Bones* 25.

⁸¹Scott, *Weapons of the Weak* 27.

⁸²Scott, *Weapons of the Weak* 27.

Everyday forms of resistance like false compliance, pilfering, slander, sabotage, feigned ignorance and silence avoid direct confrontation with authority: "Nothing beats a closed mouth.... A closed mouth is a cave in which to hide".⁸³ However, these acts also serve to constantly undermine authority in the consciousness of the actor as Scott argues:

The fact is that, for all their importance when they do occur, peasant rebellions, let alone peasant 'revolutions', are few and far between. Not only are the circumstances that favour large-scale uprisings comparatively rare, but when they do appear the revolts that develop are nearly always crushed unceremoniously. To be sure, even a failed revolt may achieve something: a few concessions from the state or landlords, a brief respite from new and painful methods of production and, not least, a memory of resistance and courage that may lie in wait for the future. Such gains, however, are uncertain, while the carnage, the repression, and the demoralization of defeat are all too certain and real.⁸⁴

Scott contends that regardless of what revolution can achieve, it almost always results in the creation of a more coercive state. Often, the peasantry finds itself in the ironic position of having helped to empower a ruling group, whose plans for industrialisation, taxation and collectivisation are very much at odds with the goals for which the peasants had fought.⁸⁵

The nationalist perspective - breaking continuity

Critics have remarked that the voices of the spirits in "The Spirits Speak" serve to link the present story to the national history of suffering and resistance, evoking the mythical guidance of spirit mediums during the first and second *chimurenga*.⁸⁶ However, the chapter titled "The

Hove, *Bones* 33.

Scott, *Weapons of the Weak* 29.

Scott, *Weapons of the Weak* 29.

Veit-Wild, "Dances" 8 and Wylie, "Language" 48.

Spirits Speak", is placed at the centre of the text and serves to break the continuity of chapters through the introduction of a collective narrator. This break in continuity is symbolic as it serves to question the links between the first *chimurenga*, and the nationalist struggle for independence. In addition to this, the sub-title of the chapter, "1897 My Bones Fall", points to the failure of the first uprising to adequately resist colonial intervention. This is no heroic narrative of resistance, but rather serves as an omen for the future.

Arise my children. Do you not see the vultures flying over the corpses that are not yet?
See the clouds which fake the flight of the vultures. Many clouds hiding vultures with
large beaks, all waiting for the many corpses that are not yet.... I stood on the cliff of
a mountain rock and saw the bones of my people falling like feathers from the bird
high up in the sky. Who would save them crashing on to the hard soil, the hard rock
beneath?.... The children have come, and they have been killed.⁸⁷

"The children" refer to the guerilla soldiers and Hove suggests that the struggle has already been lost because of the disease and suffering that ravages the country. The narrative is broken by the narrator's voice, "In my sleep... I heard many voices of war, war-songs revived and war-songs made for the great fight of my people.... Rising bones".⁸⁸

my bones will rise in the spirit of war. They will
sing war-songs
with the fire of battle. They will compose new
war-songs and fight on
until the shrines of the land of their birth
are respected once more. My bones will rise
with such power
the graves will be too small

Hove, *Bones* 47-55.

Hove, *Bones* 53.

to contain them.⁸⁹

The chapter "The Spirits Speak" is a lament over the failure of the nationalist struggle and contains within it hope for a future form of resistance. This idea is reinforced further on by a point that is made about strategies of resistance: "To fight on is all right, but a good fighter knows when to postpone the fight for another day".⁹⁰ The following chapter, titled "The Unknown Woman: My Bones Rise And Fall", points to the possibility of the individual act of resistance as rescuing the meaning of the struggle for independence, where collective action seems doomed to fail. This is made evident by Hove's portrayal of the peasant community as disunited, and plagued by its own internal struggles and grievances with each other.

Hove represents the peasant populace as being divided in their support for the guerilla struggle. Hove portrays this by constantly referring to peasant characters' views on the guerilla fighters. The "Unknown Woman's" husband sells out the guerillas to the Rhodesian soldiers. He asks his wife, "How can you call armed gangsters, thieves, robbers, you call them your children?"⁹¹ Marita is known as the "Mother of terrorists"⁹² by the other farm workers, the woman with "a terrorist for a son".⁹³ She is betrayed by someone in her community, which results in her interrogation and rape by the Rhodesian security forces. Even Janifa wonders, "How can I marry a terrorist... a killer".⁹⁴ The only positive portrayal of the guerillas is in their meeting with Marita and the other farm workers, where they defend themselves to the peasant community.

'But Marita, do you remember the days the fighters came to the farm? They just

⁸⁹Hove, *Bones* 53.

⁹⁰Hove, *Bones* 100.

⁹¹Hove, *Bones* 55.

⁹²Hove, *Bones* 21.

⁹³Hove, *Bones* 19.

⁹⁴Hove, *Bones* 10.

arrived like sunrise, no guns, nothing.'

'You have heard about us, from dirty mouths full of hatred for us. Now we want to tell the story from our side.'⁹⁵

It is the guerilla fighters themselves who break the continuity between the two 'nationalist' struggles, by saying: "The time will come when you can see your son.... But now he is a people's soldier. The people sent him away to go and learn how to fight without running away as our ancestors did",⁹⁶

Thus, there are numerous references in the text which support the idea that the relationship between guerillas and peasants was anything but harmonious and that the disunity within the peasant community served to impede any attempts at collective resistance, or at building alliances.

Erasing time?: the post-independent state

T.O. Mcloughlin points to similarities between Hove's **Bones** and other recent novels that attempt to deal with the experience of war saying that **Bones** is about "how the war alienated people from society".⁹⁷ Mcloughlin writes:

Particular characters see that the war has achieved little change for the poor and the peasantry of Zimbabwe; like the writers themselves, the characters have come to an historical understanding, through the pain of war, which distances them from the mundane post-Independence preoccupations of their community besieged as it is by the importunities of economic survival. The principal characters are outsiders in the

⁹⁵Hove, **Bones** 63.

⁹⁶Hove, **Bones** 63.

⁹⁷Mcloughlin, "Men at War" 148.

Marita's journey from the rural into the urban landscape is a journey that marks the transition from the pre-independence period to the post-independence period. The rural landscape is a landscape of war and violence, littered with bones and bodies and the scars of a protracted guerilla war. The rural landscape is also one in which nothing fundamental has changed in terms of who is still in power and how this power is exercised, despite the awareness that independence has come and gone. It is interesting to note that Marita, who is given the opportunity to get rid of Manyepo by complaining to the guerillas, refrains from doing so and that Manyepo remains in control of his farm, his attitudes unchanged:

'There is nothing the government *in the city* can do. I rule here', says Manyepo. 'If *your* government wants to run the farm, let them bloody take over. Then we will see if they can run a farm,' Manyepo says in his way of speaking badly about things he doesn't like.⁹⁹

Hove makes a distinction between these two periods in his portrayal of two distinct (political) landscapes through comments such as: "You people of the city do not know what war was all about".¹⁰⁰ The urban landscape contains the institutions of the state - the mortuary, the police and government officials - and the exercise of state power mediated by these institutions.

It is strange that this independence of our's has brought into some peoples' heads. This stubbornness couldn't have been heard during the time of the white man's rule.... But now anybody can stand up and say they rule the piece of land on which they stand.¹⁰¹

McLoughlin, "Men at War" 148.

Hove, *Bones* 100. (emphasis added)

Hove, *Bones* 75.

Hove, *Bones* 80-81.

Continuities between these two periods are portrayed through the exercise of power and violence, and the struggles over the control of the body. However, these are discontinuous in that they take on different forms in different landscapes. In the rural landscape, control over the body is exercised through struggles over labour, over productive and reproductive capacities. Power is ambiguous in its exercise as women's bodies and guerilla bodies are struggled over both by members of the peasantry, the white farmer, and the Rhodesian soldiers, who all seem to compete in different ways for control. In the post-independence urban landscape, the state's continued attempts to control the body are emphasised and the state, as represented by its institutions and institutional practices, seems to intervene directly in the lives of its citizens.

According to McLoughlin,

while at times the reader may well be confused as to whether the action takes place before or after Independence. What is clear, however, is the severe indictment of post-Independence Zimbabwe. The writer, like Marita and Janifa, is a lonely voice in a society seemingly independent but still scarred by its history.¹⁰²

It seems evident that Hove chooses to merge these two periods in order to contrast the suffering and hardship and the pains of war experienced by the rural populace with the meagre gains of independence. By doing this, Hove completely shifts away from a positive nationalist text, as the focus on independence is constantly measured against its costs, showing how while these two periods are distinct, they are inseparable when it comes to trying to understand either one.

Burying the bones

Hove's *Bones* is torn between two contending arguments. The text is a dialogue of voices. On the one side is Hove's commitment to a positive portrayal of the need for nationalist

¹⁰²McLoughlin, "Men at War" 149.

struggle, while on the other are his own experiences during the war.

While Hove expresses sentiments that can be regarded as being ideologically supportive of the need for the war and its liberatory effects, it is obvious that his own experience of living among the peasantry, and witnessing the suffering and hardship that the war engendered serves to question the cost of war itself. These two arguments rage on side by side throughout the novel.

The suffering of a fighter is a medal, they said. You, our parents, were told to baptize your children with water so that they can enter the kingdom of god. But we, the fighters of the land of our people now tell you to baptize your children with the pain of war.... How can people fear death when they are dying slowly of poverty, disease and ignorance?.... To refuse to die for the motherland is to refuse to wear the medal of birth which gave us this land.... So the fighters would speak long into the night.¹⁰³

Sentiments like these are juxtaposed with the suffering of the rural populace which resulted from the war.

Flora Veit-Wild contends that,

Although Hove belongs to the second generation of Zimbabwean writers... he does not reflect in his writing the experiences of his generation, the process of deracination which they underwent as children. He ignores the fundamental crisis of the 1970s to which writers like Mungoshi, Nyatafukudza, and Dambudzo Marechera have given expression. Hove's analysis of human suffering circumvents an examination of the social predicament of the Zimbabwean people, either before or after Independence. Thus it avoids any kind of distinct, debatable criticism. Whereas the attempts of other writers since the mid-1980s to come to terms with past experiences and changed conditions and to demythologise the "national" history reflect the disparateness and

¹⁰³Hove, *Bones* 74.

fragmentation of perception in independent Zimbabwe, Hove's concept of collective memory and collective history presents a monolithic view of African society.¹⁰⁴

Veit-Wild questions the concept of a national literature in the light of this argument, positing that writers and critics in "1990s Africa should find new ways and new terms to describe the multi-faceted nature of postcolonial experience".¹⁰⁵

Veit-Wild's argument is inherently contradictory. At one and the same time Veit-Wild criticises Hove for a monolithic portrayal of the peasant experience of nationalist struggle, and questions this in the light of other texts emerging out of this period, while arguing that the concept of a national literature is obsolete, and that criteria used to assess this type of literature, are by implication redundant. However, the attempt to put writers into generational categories is an attempt to assess writing on the basis of sameness rather than difference, an attempt to create a historical picture, which becomes a national picture, where everybody experiences nationalist struggle and guerilla warfare in the same way. The underlying assumption here is that the notion or concept of identity is monolithic or one-dimensional.

The kind of criticism that Veit-Wild's levels at Hove's *Bones* serves to "write out cultural acts of self-definition and resistance"¹⁰⁶, as it denies the validity of the peasant experience of war. Her search for continuity between texts written in the same period is an attempt to create a national picture, while denying both the aim of this search and failing to define its theoretical paradigm or context. Ironically, this type of critique serves to create an homogenous picture of nationalism.

Chenjerai Hove's *Bones* gives centrality to a peasant woman's experience of guerilla war and nationalist struggle. What is central here is the peasant experience. Hove shows how the peasantry as a class, like any other class, is not an homogenous grouping, and that peasant identity is the combination and interaction of a number of competing and intersecting

¹⁰⁴Veit-Wild, "Dances" 10.

¹⁰⁵Veit-Wild, "Dances" 10.

¹⁰⁶Slemon, "Monuments of Empire" 5.

identities.

In the character of Marita, Hove creates a vehicles through which the reader is able to apprehend the experiences of the peasant woman at the hands of two successive governments. No matter what centrality Hove accords her, Marita is an outsider in her community and in her nation and her country. The war has not brought the changes that it promised. It "poses haunting questions in post-Independence Zimbabwe", precisely because "the necessity for the war was little compensation for the mental and physical anguish it brought to individual guerillas and rural people".¹⁰⁷ Hove's *Bones* rescues individual acts of resistance from anonymity, validating his view that there are "many fronts" to the struggle for independence.

¹⁰⁷McLoughlin, "Men at War" 152.

CHAPTER FIVE

On the Warpath

Irene Staunton's *Mothers of the Revolution* and Charles Samupindi's *Pawns* both document experiences of the guerilla war for independence in Zimbabwe. In focusing on both of these texts, this final chapter seeks to examine the contradictions inherent in the use of: "armed resistances to governments, regimes or comparable powers felt by large numbers of ordinary people to be so unjust, arbitrary and oppressive as to call for self-defence by a counter-violence.... 'the politics of armed struggle'".¹

Basil Davidson offers a definition of a liberation war as being aimed at the removal of the colonial system, and the development of a new consciousness and a new culture.² The requirements for success dictate the development of an "ideology of liberation".³ Patrick Chabal elaborates this definition by showing how "people's wars" - that is, conflict between a nationalist political movement and a colonial (foreign) power of occupation - "have assumed the form of a guerilla war in which the indigenous resistance movement has sought to mobilise the largest possible section of the (largely) rural population to challenge and eventually eliminate foreign political and military control".⁴

Chabal emphasises that "the aim of nationalists is independence, not revolution" and that, despite the fact that revolution may be an aim of a struggle, there is no reason to believe that

¹Basil Davidson, *The People's Cause: A History of Guerillas in Africa* (Essex: Longman, 1983) 4.

²Davidson, *The People's Cause* 10.

³Davidson, *The People's Cause* 10.

⁴Patrick Chabal, *Amílcar Cabral: Revolutionary Leadership and People's War* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983) 188.

the requirements of a successful nationalist struggle are synonymous with the process of revolution.⁵

With this in mind, Staunton's *Mothers of the Revolution* and Samupindi's *Pawns* are texts that foreground the experience of armed struggle and its implications, demonstrating how the violence that permeates the colonised society and is responsible for its fracturing is the same violence that propels the colonised towards armed struggle. However, this violence, now directed against the coloniser, does not remain within the limits of the armed struggle. Rather, the use of violence serves to magnify previous areas of conflict within the colonised community and lends these cleavages new dimensions in the context of war.

Violence, as represented in both of these texts, does not possess the redemptive qualities claimed for it in the work of Fanon. In "Concerning Violence", Fanon maintains that colonialism is "violence in its natural state, and it will only yield when confronted with greater violence".⁶ Fanon theorised that the period of colonialism is a static period for the native, and that it is only when the colonised direct their violence against the coloniser in the form of an uprising that they are ready to go forward and make history.⁷ While Fanon acknowledged that the violence of colonialism leaves its traces on all relationships - affecting the relations between the coloniser and the colonised, and among the colonised themselves - he advocated opposing the violence among the colonised by directing violence against the coloniser, towards liberation.⁸ Fanon writes:

For the native, life can only spring up again out of the rotting corpse of the settler.... The mobilization of the masses, when it arises out of the *war of liberation*, introduces into each man's consciousness the ideas of a common cause, of a national destiny and

⁵Chabal, Amílcar Cabral 190.

⁶Fanon, *The Wretched* 48.

⁷Fanon, *The Wretched* 54.

⁸Renate Zahar, *Frantz Fanon: Colonialism and Alienation* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974) 76.

of a collective history.⁹

At the core of Fanon's theory stands the belief that the authentic revolutionary class in the Third World is the poor peasantry. These victims of impoverishment, or as Fanon referred to them, "The Wretched of the Earth", were the class who would be prepared to give protection to the urban militants pursued by security forces. They would be prepared to "reclaim soil and dignity by violence".¹⁰

Fanon saw acts of violence as redemptive for the colonised as they are symbolic of overthrowing the present, of taking an existential leap of faith, where the idea of effective social action liberates and renovates the individual.¹¹ Fanon's claims for the redemptive powers of violence are, however, unresolved in his text, *The Wretched of the Earth*, where he documents both the need for violence to overthrow all facets of colonialism whose violence is military, psychic, cultural and political and the dehumanising effects of violence on the individual actor.

We cannot be held responsible that in this war psychiatric phenomena entailing disorders affecting behaviour and thought have taken on importance where those who carry out the 'pacification' are concerned, or that these same disorders are notable among the 'pacified' population.¹²

In *Mothers of the Revolution and Pawns*, armed struggle itself is shown to be fraught with contradictions. This is demonstrated by the focus on *struggles within the struggle*. These include: internal differentiation of the colonised on the basis of class, gender and age; conflicts between two guerilla armies, ZIPRA and ZANLA; the idea of personal rather than heroic motivations for joining the guerillas; the naming of spirit mediums and the blaming

⁹Fanon, *The Wretched* 73. (emphasis added)

¹⁰David Caute, *Fanon* (London: Fontana, 1970) 72.

¹¹Caute, *Fanon* 87.

¹²Fanon, *The Wretched* 200.

of witches and illouts. It is these struggles that serve to compound and exacerbate the fracturing started by colonial intervention, reinforcing the breakup of family structures, the reordering of traditional patterns of authority, and the use of coercion to produce consent.

While the attainment of independence is a nationalist goal, Samupindi's *Pawns* and the oral testimonies recorded by Irene Staunton, show how the idea of independence is interpreted on a personal level, and how the nationalist struggle is appropriated as a personal struggle. Both texts are concerned with showing what motivated participation in the guerilla war. Whether fighting as recognised soldiers or on other fronts, the element of personal motivation in some cases, and fear and coercion in others, is shown to play a major role in inducing participation. The image of entrapment in the fabric of war and in familial and community relations is also predominant.

Both of these texts explore the condition of war and are concerned with finding an adequate form which can express the violence of this experience. While *Pawns* deals with a young man's experience of guerilla warfare, *Mothers of the Revolution* is concerned with women's experience of war. For Samupindi, no unitary narrative structure is able to express the disassembling effects of violence and war. He therefore makes use of a variety of narrative practices and devices to express the lack of coherence of the political project of armed struggle. The novel moves between 'history' and 'fiction', embroidering its tales with the help of testimonies, eye-witness accounts, newspaper reports, 'historical evidence' and the narrator's account. Like *Mothers of the Revolution*, in its use of oral testimony, *Pawns* writes back to orthodox ways of recording history. In so doing, both of these texts challenge the practices of historiography and the generic institutionalised conventions of history and fiction.

Women on the warpath

Irene Staunton's *Mothers of the Revolution* is a collection of oral testimonies that tell of the war experiences of 30 Zimbabwean women. Most of the women whose stories are documented in this text lived in rural villages during the war and their experience thus

provides an idea of the effect of the war on the peasantry. The purpose of Staunton's collection is to rescue these women's experiences from anonymity. By giving them a space in which to express their ideas and perceptions concerning the war, Staunton gives a voice to individual experiences of war and shows the differentiation between these. At the same time, these testimonies serve to challenge the ways in which conventional histories have recorded, or failed to record, the role of women in war and women of the peasantry in particular, and the effect and implications of war on those who do not carry the guns.

Eileke Boehmer has noted that, through claiming a text, women's voices lay claim to a narrative territory. Simultaneously, they sign into and at the same time subvert a nationalist narrative that previously excluded them. Boehmer argues, that where women tell of their own experiences, they map their own geography and their own history and in doing so, they necessarily contest official representations of nationalist reality. This implicitly challenges the nation's definition of itself through territorial claims, reclamations of the past and the canonization of heroes.¹³ In her introduction to *Mothers of the Revolution*, Staunton writes:

Many people suffered and died during Zimbabwe's war of liberation and many accounts of that struggle have already been written. But the story of the women, the wives and the mothers who remained behind, has not yet been told. These are their stories: stories that reveal courage, endurance, humour and wisdom. They are stories that celebrate the fortitude and strength of the mothers of the struggle.¹⁴

Staunton records the testimonies of women who did not fight as guerillas. The role that they are being remembered for is their role as mothers. In the iconographies of nationalism, images of mothers have traditionally invited symbols that are suggestive of primal origins - birth, hearth, home, roots - as encapsulated by terms like "motherland", "mothertongue", and "mothercountry". However, to women, the notion of a "motherland" often means neither a

¹³Boehmer, "Stories of Women and Mothers" 10-11.

¹⁴Irene Staunton, introduction, *Mothers of the Revolution* (Harare: Baobab Books, 1990) xi.

source nor home. Though national ideals wear a feminine face, the idea of nationhood usually bears a masculine identity.¹⁵

In Staunton's view, these women have fulfilled their biological role and destiny in exceptional ways. Staunton writes:

These women, the mothers, were both victims and actors. Throughout the war, over and over again, they fed and protected the freedom fighters and they risked their lives to do so. This they know and it is a fact of which they are proud. "The men were around, but they only used to say 'Hurry up [with the food] before the soldiers come and beat you up!' They regarded the *vakomana* as their children, everybody's children, with needs which they as women, as mothers, had a responsibility to meet. This is the underlying theme which emerges strongly from these interviews and which now needs to be asserted: "Without the women, the war could not have been won".¹⁶

In the title and in her introduction to the text, Irene Staunton sets out the framework within which she gathered a collection of oral testimonies to do justice to the nurturing and caring role of women who took part in the war for liberation. However, by stressing their biological role rather than their individual acts, it could be argued that Staunton's introduction further marginalises the contributions made by these women, as well as highlights the ambiguities of the role and place of women in war. Staunton's collection points to the difficulty of starting with a premise and then trying to prove it by using oral testimony, instead of drawing conclusions from the testimonies themselves, as the 30 oral testimonies succeed in subverting the claims made for them by Staunton in her introduction. The testimonies exhibit a pre-occupation with the violence of the war and its effects. As for the idea of support on the basis of their biological responsibility as women and mothers, and not on their political consciousness, support for the armed struggle or elements of fear or coercion, the women interviewed display an understanding of the politics of war that surpasses Staunton's.

¹⁵Boehmer, "Stories of Women and Mothers" 5.

¹⁶Staunton, *Mothers* xi-xii.

Several common preoccupations and themes emerge from these stories, such as fear. Fear for the lives of their children who have gone to join the struggle; fear for the survival of their homes and their children who had remained behind; fear of 'contacts' between the freedom fighters and the Rhodesian security forces; fear of soldiers; fear of sellouts.¹⁷

While Staunton does recognise that fear and coercion surface as concerns in most of the testimonies recorded, she places emphasis on "a remarkable sense of persistence and acceptance: acceptance of war, of situations over which they had little or no control, but which they continued to believe would, ultimately, bring a better life - freedom and independence for everyone".¹⁸ Staunton points to a larger ultimate goal of freedom and independence that motivated support for the nationalist struggle. However, the testimonies themselves show a shift away from larger public gains to private and individual concerns. For example, in her oral testimony, Juliet Makande relates that:

During the war, a lot of woman had a lot of problems. I was not saying that men didn't but for women it was very difficult. If you had a son in the liberation struggle - even if he was with the Rhodesian forces - you never knew whether he was dead or alive. Most mothers were always worried about their children and their husbands. Even if your daughters were *chimbwidos* you never knew what might happen to them and if they would return home. When you heard that somebody had been killed, a mother always wondered if it was her own son and daughter. I think the women really suffered. Now that we have got independence, I personally feel that all the things I thought would happen are not what I am seeing today. Since I was a *chimbwido*, I did do a lot of important things during the war and I thought I would receive more than what I am seeing today.¹⁹

¹⁷Staunton, *Mothers* xi.

¹⁸Staunton, *Mothers* xi.

¹⁹Staunton, *Mothers* 58.

The public, historical, nationalist struggle taking place is only important insofar as it has direct/indirect bearing on individual experience. The testimonies show women being entrapped in the fabric of war and violence and in familial relations which often accounts for their participation in the struggle. This sentiment is echoed by Samupindi in his novel, *Pawns*.

In the villages

As already demonstrated in the previous chapter, interpretations of the armed struggle and the relations between the peasantry and the guerilla forces have been fiercely contested. While many accounts of the war in Zimbabwe depict a largely united African rural population and generally positive relations between it and ZANLA guerillas, there are also other accounts which emphasise that, while the guerillas did organise support from the rural populace, this was based on compliance with guerilla demands rather than on enduring widespread popular support. Norma Kriger's study endorses this latter view. Kriger's argument rests on two propositions. The first is that the failure of the guerilla forces to create fully liberated zones had negative consequences for the mobilization and organization of rural peoples; the second is the threat and fear of guerilla violence being directed against the peasant populace.³⁰ In her testimony, Margaret Nkomo relates an incident which seems to support this latter proposition. However, at the same time Nkomo's view of the guerillas is tempered by a measure of sympathy:

Three of them arrived at the school.... Once all the children had gone, they told us to give them wrist-watches, radios and so on, but we did not have such things.... We had nothing they wanted.... So the school was burnt down with everything still in the classrooms... the boys gave all the other teachers a thorough beating. They beat them so hard that our headmaster almost died.... That was the first time I met the guerillas.... Personally, I think the guerillas acted out of anger. They wanted us to

³⁰Norma Kriger, *Zimbabwe's Guerilla War: Peasant Voices* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992) 212-219.

respond to their demands and when we couldn't, they retaliated.²¹

Kruger places emphasis on structural distinctions such as wealth, power, gender, and generation which she traces as being the source of intense conflicts that served to mar the efforts of the guerilla forces to unify the peasant population. Ironically, however, while these internal grievances often seemed to obstruct nationalist organisation within the peasant populace as a whole, Kruger points out that they frequently provided a basis on which alliances and pacts could be formed between different groupings among the peasantry and the guerillas. This will be demonstrated further on by the example of the relationship between the youth of Shona society and the guerilla soldiers.

The war served to create the opportunity for the "underdogs" in Shona society to challenge its structural inequalities. With the destruction of local administrative bodies, the guerillas eliminated a critical source of support for royal clans and traditional Shona society. Further, the willingness of the guerillas to intervene on the part of the disaffected groupings that saw in the war an opportunity to restructure Shona society, served to alter the balance of power in their favour.²² Kruger's study emphasises the cleavages that existed in peasant society, the different sets of unequal power relations that existed between groupings differentiated by lineage, class, gender, education and age. These divisions deconstruct the notion of a united or homogenous peasantry, while emphasising peasant agency in the war for liberation.

In *Mothers of the Revolution*, many of the testimonies portray a concern with the breakdown of familial relations and of traditional hierarchies and relations of authority within peasant society. Through their involvement with the guerillas, acting as messengers, the youth of Shona society were accorded power that was never theirs traditionally. In many cases, this access to power and privilege, and the opportunity to challenge authority served as a motivation for their involvement with the guerillas in the armed conflict. Thema Khumalo, interviewed by Staunton, comments on the role played by the male youth, or *mujibas*:

²¹Staunton, *Mothers* 108-109.

²²Kruger, *Zimbabwe's Guerilla War* 93-115.

It was a really difficult time. Another problem was the *mujibas*.... The *mujibas* came into our houses and demanded we prepare food for their 'brothers'. Sometimes they weren't even sent by the comrades. Some of the *mujibas* turned into hooligans and cheats and they lied about many things.... Those *mujibas* caused a lot of people to die because they told untruths to both the comrades and the parents.²³

The guerilla soldiers established direct links with young people in rural villages with the purpose of creating a network for logistical support. Young men and women served as informants and as go-betweens for the guerillas. However, the names given to male and female youth imply gendered treatment. The term, *mujiba* was used to describe male youths. In *Mothers of the Revolution*, this is translated as: scouts/messengers/look-outs; young men and boys who acted for the freedom fighters. The term comes from *mujiba*, a dance requiring great physical strength. The term *chimbwido* is translated as: errand girl; also a name of a wild fruit and thus a term that "can be used to suggest beauty, ripeness".²⁴

These gendered definitions serve to highlight the ambiguity of the role of women in war. In cases where war is defined as essentially a male activity, and where highly valued masculine characteristics are often associated with war, a female warrior must be seen as inherently unsettling to the dominant social order. As potentially disruptive figures, the actions of women fighters are limited and often forgotten. Sharon Macdonald contends that there is an interrelationship between imagery and society, where images of women play an important role in "symbolically articulating" the social order and its values.²⁵

Macdonald argues that the image of women warriors remains outside the boundaries of patriarchal classification because of its intrinsic disruptiveness. It is for this reason that the

²³Staunton, *Mothers* 79.

²⁴Staunton, *Mothers* xiii.

²⁵Sharon Macdonald, "Drawing The Lines - Gender, Peace and war: An introduction," *Images of Women in Peace and War: Cross-Cultural & Historical Perspectives* eds. S. Macdonald, P. Holden & S. Ardener (London: Macmillan Education Limited, 1987) 6.

social roles of women often during and certainly after armed conflict, will to an extent be mapped onto previous social models and classificatory systems.²⁶

What happens in the new society, it is argued, is not that women are forced *out* of political roles, but that traditional female roles *become* political and are given increased importance.... Motherhood and family life do, of course, have a very real practical and symbolic importance after a conflict, in that they re-establish stability and promise a future for the people.²⁷

In her testimony, Juliet Makande speaks about how young women were coerced into having sexual relations with the guerilla fighters that came to their villages. Villagers were expected to provide food, shelter and, in many cases, women for the use of the guerillas:

It was unfortunate that we had to sleep with the comrades because sometimes we had sex with them. You couldn't even tell a friend about it because it might be said you were a prostitute or because the story would reach the freedom fighters and you would be in trouble. They always told us that we should never tell anyone. "We don't want *sell-outs*," they said.... Some of the girls fell pregnant. The unfortunate thing was that we didn't know the real names of the freedom fighters. And, in our culture, you must have a totem for your child from its father.²⁸

The war had as its aim the restoration of the state, of the family and of coherent social relations. However, as Makande's testimony shows, the relations between guerillas and women in fact contradicted this aim, and further contributed to the breakdown of family relations. Makande's testimony is particularly striking because of her reference to the manipulation of interests through the threat of being labelled a sellout, an issue which will be dealt with in more detail further on. Flora Sibanda points to the long-term effects on many of the children

²⁶Macdonald, "Drawing" 7-9.

²⁷Macdonald, "Drawing" 10.

²⁸Staunton, *Mothers* 49.

fathered by guerillas during the war:

Children were born into the district as a result of the war but I've never heard of anyone whom a comrade returned to marry after the war. It was like a bad seed that was sown and now we have the fruits of that bad seed. I have never heard of either a comrade or a soldier who returned to claim their children. It is painful to have a child whose father is unknown.²⁹

Many of the testimonies in Staunton's collection seem to undermine claims that give prominence to unity between the guerillas and the peasant populace. They portray a concern with showing that, where rural people did provide logistical support, this was often motivated by something other than support for the nationalist goals of the armed struggle. They also show how the issue of support was a complex one as it was a source of potential conflict for the peasant populace because the risks were high and the resources scarce.

Like Samupindi's *Pawns*, Staunton's collection points to fear and coercion as being major factors that explain rural support for the guerillas. It is interesting to note, however, that in many cases the testimonies give prominence to the struggles within the peasant populace itself and show how fear and coercion were very much a part of peasant relations themselves. As Meggi Zingani recalls:

My husband was one of the people who was sold out to the comrades.... I did not blame the comrades. I knew that it was because of the other people, neighbours, certain village people who did not like my family.... I was very hurt and worried, not by the comrades but by the behaviour of my fellow people.³⁰

The emergence of civilian organisations to feed and shelter the guerillas, opened opportunities for groups within peasant communities to pursue and further their own interests. Peasant

²⁹Staunton, *Mothers* 40.

³⁰Staunton, *Mothers* 128-129.

grievances and resentment against inequalities with other Africans seems to have provided even more powerful drives to participate in the nationalist guerilla war than did peasant hostility to colonial policy and white settlers.³¹

Naming and blaming: spirit mediums, witches and sellouts

Many of the testimonies recorded by Staunton display a concern with the prevalence of witchcraft accusations and the naming of sellouts during the war, which points to a high level of conflict and resentment within peasant communities. The figure of the witch/sellout and that of the spirit medium serve to highlight the ambiguous position that women occupied during the war. They seem to be almost interchangeable as they are shown to be manipulations of female identity. While the figure of the spirit medium represents continuity between struggles, it also affords women a privileged status. The figure of the witch, in contrast, represents the antithesis of the values embodied in the figure of the spirit medium. The naming of witches serves to politically sanction violence against women.

Witches are socially determined and labelled. As figures they are hated and feared, as they represent the very image of a traitor.³² Witchcraft accusations during the war seem to have predominantly been made against women, and by women, which undermines the notion of unity among women in the struggle for independence. At the same time the naming of witches presents a case for cohesive communities as "witchcraft charges act as a cohesive force, a safety valve for venting social pressures".³³ They allow for the airing of grievances and frustrations by means of a scapegoat. Mafico argues further, that:

Witchcraft therefore acts as a unifying factor.... the accusation and execution of a

³¹Kruger, *Zimbabwe's Guerilla War* 51.

³²David Hammond-Tooke, *Rituals and Medicines* (Johannesburg: AD. Donker, 1989) 81.

³³T.J. Mafico, "Witchcraft: Belief and Realities: A Debate," *Zambezia* ii. XIII (1986): 126-128.

witch served a useful purpose in that it was cathartic - it purged the *community* of certain anxieties for the time being.... Witchcraft allegations provide the ultimate answer to inexplicable and enigmatic circumstances.... Misfortune, jealousy and malice foster and provide for the creation or intervention of witches.³⁴

The figure of the witch and that of the spirit medium serve as doubles of one another. While the witch symbolises *disunity*, the spirit medium is a symbol of continuity. David Lan argues that pre-colonial Shona religious symbols and rituals had been successfully incorporated into the ideologies of resistance because they had always existed in structural opposition to colonial rule. According to Lan, the guerillas entered into a pact with local spirit mediums during the war. The *mhondoro* or tribal spirits legitimized the political authority of guerillas by making them new chiefs. By the involvement of guerillas in possession rituals and ritual prohibition, Lan contends that mediums facilitated the assimilation of guerillas into the rural population. In this way, mediums gave their "moral authority" to armed resistance and violence.³⁵

The 'witchdoctors' of Dande had a range of other abilities which they put at the disposal of the ZANLA guerillas. They shared with them their intimate knowledge of the countryside, guiding them by little-used paths out of sight of the gravel roads patrolled by Security Forces. They led columns of weapon-bearers in and out of the country and showed them where these weapons could be concealed.³⁶

For Lan, the relationship between *mhondoro*, mediums, guerillas and peasants was a remarkable act of co-operation between the ancestors and their descendants, the dead and the living, the present and the past. However, while it is clear that spirit mediums did play a role in the guerilla struggle, it is difficult to distinguish between the extent of their role and the nationalist use of 'spirit mediums'. Terence Ranger observes that academic and scholarly material ranging from colonial travel documents from the 1880s, to academic works on ritual

³⁴Mafico, "Witchcraft" 128.

³⁵Lan in Kriger, *Zimbabwe's Guerilla War* 129-133.

³⁶Lan, *Guns and Rain* 157.

and the Shona religion and history "flowed into nationalist use of the Chaminuka myth".³⁷ Writing of the symbolic figure of the spirit medium, Ranger contends that "In the 1950s Mashona reaction looked to the past for comfort and took as tribal hero the tall bearded prophet Chaminuka", "a great prophet and a symbol of resistance... a binding factor in resisting the settlers".³⁸

Ranger also offers an example of the manipulation of the identity of a particular spirit medium and the ways in which co-operation between guerillas and spirit mediums were of mutual and practical benefit.³⁹ The references to the role played by spirit mediums during the war seem to point to a re-invention of a tradition of resistance. As figures, spirit mediums are able to represent the continuity between the two *chimurenga* and reference to them establishes continuity between the struggles and their purpose. For example, in her testimony, Elina Ndlovu mentions that: "When I was young the ancestral spirits were not very popular, but they regained their popularity during the war".⁴⁰

Norma Kriger has noted that Lan's argument ignores the disunity and pre-existing conflicts in rural society. It was this disunity that led to the manipulation of both peasant and guerilla interests. In-keeping with traditional religious practices, the guerillas' sworn determination to eliminate witches - who occupied a place in the Shona belief system as symbolically opposed to the moral order and authority for which the *mhondoro* stand - resulted in witch-killings which were also pragmatically motivated. It was a way of identifying sellouts who betrayed the guerillas, with devastating consequences.⁴¹ Kriger points to the dangers inherent in this system of belief, and argues that political repression brought with it a rise of witchcraft allegations.

³⁷Terence Ranger, "The Death of Chaminuka: Spirit Mediums, Nationalism and the Guerilla War in Zimbabwe," *African Affairs* 81. 324 (1982): 355.

³⁸Ranger, "The Death of Chaminuka" 356.

³⁹Ranger, "The Death of Chaminuka" 358-367.

⁴⁰Staunton, *Mothers* 32.

⁴¹Kriger, *Zimbabwe's Guerilla War* 129.

In her oral testimony, Margaret Viki recalled that:

You could be killed for nothing, just because someone wanted you dead, and told lies about you.... It was common, especially among women, for them to sell out on each other. For instance, if one worked very hard and acquired some possessions, one could be branded a 'witch' by those who were jealous. The freedom fighters were against witchcraft, so that was a sure way of having someone killed. Witches were killed mercilessly.... In most cases it was due to nothing but jealousy.⁴²

The killings of so-called witches and sellouts feature prominently in many people's recollections of the experience of the guerilla war, both in fictional accounts and in oral testimonies. Thema Khumalo claims that "the sell-out business was a way that some people used during the war to get rid of others they didn't like".⁴³ The accusations and the killings point to the contradictions inherent in the armed struggle, where the violence that is supposedly reclaimed by the colonised, is ironically, used against others in the colonised community.

Looking forward to independence?

Many of the testimonies in Staunton's collection testify to the existence of internal divisions and grievances among the peasant community that preceded the war. From the testimonies it is evident that, in many cases, it was these divisions and grievances that provided a source for channelling violence and conflict. However, the concern with these and their emphasis in many of the recollections needs to be placed in the context of the post-independence period where the disappointment experienced with the non-delivery of the fruits of independence provides a contrast against which to view the sacrifices made. In addition, it is in the post-independence period that the pre-existing cleavages and divisions within and between different communities become most visible.

⁴²Staunton, *Mothers* 152.

⁴³Staunton, *Mothers* 77.

While almost all of the testimonies affirm that the guerilla struggle was necessary for the attainment of independence, many question the sacrifices and costs of the war itself, and the manner in which the armed struggle was carried out. Loice Mushore recalls her experience of the war as being "very tough. I had many nasty experiences.... When I think of the war, and especially of my husband's death, I sometimes feel it was all futile because in our area the comrades harassed and killed more civilians than the soldiers did".⁴⁴ While Margaret Viki relates that:

We wondered if we would ever lead a normal life again. Sometimes we comforted ourselves by saying that, once the freedom fighters won the liberation war, we would sit pretty.... We said, surely the *vakomana* will not forget us, after we have done so much for them. Such a thought would comfort us for a while and yet we were still quickly gripped by fear.... Now some of those freedom fighters are in high places and they have forgotten how we helped them. Today when we talk among ourselves we remember how we suffered and lived under such hardships and yet those freedom fighters have forgotten us.⁴⁵

This questioning takes place in the context of the newly independent state. This sense of disillusionment, and ambiguity in regard to the guerilla struggle is even more strongly expressed in Charles Samupindi's *Pawns*.

Pawns in the game: ambiguity and disillusionment

Charles Samupindi is concerned with the idea of authenticity and to this end, the narrative of *Pawns* is a combination of a variety of sources and narrative techniques. In combining historical narrative with fictional accounts, Samupindi's aim is to create what will seem to be a balanced picture of the experience of guerilla war and nationalist struggle. However, this only serves to create a discontinuous narrative. Historical and fictional narratives are

⁴⁴Staunton, *Mothers* 93.

⁴⁵Staunton, *Mothers* 151.

interwoven in an attempt to produce a valid account of the war, where history - the recording of events, framed within a particular discursive paradigm - is the only means of authenticating this account. The author is concerned with documenting the 'truth' about the war, yet he admits too that: "The truth will never be known. As if it is this knowing that authenticates the pain, the suffering, the holocaust. Without the knowing, it all did not happen. No. Nothing much happened".⁴⁶

In *Pawns*, Samupindi attempts to narrate the effects of violence. However the search for coherence is premised by a lack of it, and consequently the novel ends where it begins, in a series of fragments. Violence serves to disrupt the coherence of Samupindi's narrative, while at the same time the narration of violence then serves to neutralise the effects of violent acts.

Throughout the novel, Samupindi registers a tone of disillusionment, of ambiguity towards the guerilla struggle that led to independence. While the novel begins and ends in the post-independent state, it spans the period from 1974 to 1986. The protagonist undertakes a journey from the present back into the past in an attempt to understand his predicament. The journey takes the protagonist back to his war experiences. It is a journey that comes full circle back to the streets of Harare, where nothing has changed and yet everything has changed.

The novel opens with the words "I am time", and introduces the narrator who is time itself:

I can neither be wrong nor right. I cannot be pleased, angry or emotional. I cannot hate or love. I can neither be partial nor impartial. I cannot be guilty of any infraction. I cannot err. I do not have an obligation to any man or cause.... I am just here. Always and everywhere.... This is why I must tell all.... Because I am blind I will collide with things and stamp on toes. When I have the last word, heads may roll.⁴⁷

⁴⁶Samupindi, *Pawns* (Harare: Baobab, 1992) 108.

⁴⁷Samupindi, *Pawns* 5.

This passage creates the framework for telling the story. Time has observer status. It is an 'objective' witness to the inexorable processes of history and events, the transcendent force to which all else is subjected. Here, time is history and history is destiny and all are victims.

I tell this tale of two tales. Two tales contained in one. Like myself. The tale of what was and what is. Oh, yes, I have a history too. History has me - has it that all the efforts of my life came to this. this present. The *present* of hand-stump, skin-black, scaling with time-dirt and grease. Lice.

It is not so much the hand-stump (testimony of history's snares) that wrecks me. It's the mind-stump, amputated by the irreconcilable - the citadels of my psyche. This is my present - personality schism.⁴⁸

The "present" is both a reference to time and a reference to a gift or legacy. The narrative is split, a narrative of what is and what was. It can be considered as a classic narrative of nationalism in its encapsulation of both past and present in a single impulse. The tale of two tales serves to blur cause and effect that result in change. The lack of concrete visible change cheats the narrator, as time always holds the promise of change.

For the protagonist, both narrative and personality are split in two - mirroring Mandaza's classification of the post-colonial state as schizophrenic - torn between the democratic forces of the people and imperialist forces of international financial oligarchy. The post-colonial state is a state of being caught between two different and competing sets of demands, of independence and dependence.⁴⁹ Like Fanon's colonial world it is cut in two and compartmentalised.

Samupindi situates the first and last chapter in Harare, where the protagonist Fangs, (his *chimurenga* name) roams the streets. "Harare. She is a church".⁵⁰ The city is described by the narrator's reference to a cluster of images: the church, gargoyles, Livingstone House -

⁴⁸Samupindi, *Pawns* 15. (emphasis added)

⁴⁹Mandaza, *Zimbabwe* 13-14.

⁵⁰Samupindi, *Pawns* 5.

remnants of a foreign or alien culture. Here images of Christianity are inextricably tied to the processes of capitalism and imperialism. The narrator is Fangs, the "gutterboy", the forgotten, anonymous guerilla.

The church, like the state, is shown to be incapable of offering salvation or charity, two fundamental tenets of its religion. The priest that the narrator encounters in the opening chapter is a symbol of the church's and the state's moral disintegration. In *Pawns*, Samupindi is concerned with the idea of salvation, with the promise of the future. While he refers to the church, the idea of salvation can be extended to the guerilla war and the moment of independence which is marketed as offering salvation. Samupindi extends the idea of suffering and the unfulfilled and betrayed promise of salvation offered by Christianity to the promise offered by independence.

He came upon the priest.... A collar, blinding white. No, frightening white! The suit was black. He was stepping out of a BMW that gleamed like a precious stone. Fangs knelt down, not knowing what else to do, or what not to do. Say something to propitiate him, his mind urged. Say something!

"Oh, father, I have sinned," he cried....

"Our next sermon is to be held at the Monomatapa Hotel. If you give unreservedly towards the expense, God will forgive you, son, and you shall be redeemed!"....

Fangs set his fingers coursing through his rags, shaking. They found a hard, mould-tinted crust of bread. He proffered it to the preacher, shaking, speechless. He felt the preacher's eagle eyes descend on him. Then he spat on him and struck him with the back of his hand. Fangs sank down at the impact of the blow. The preacher walked back to his car and drove away without a further word. Fangs was devoid of comprehension. But then, was Harare meant to be comprehended?⁵¹

The pervasive filth of the streets of Harare emanates from the intersection of African heroism and history, represented by Samora Machel, and its betrayal by European colonialism

⁵¹Samupindi, *Pawns* 7.

represented by reference to John Moffat:⁵² "The most fascinating thing about the intersection of Samora Machel Avenue and Moffat Street is the monstrous roaches... they crawl out of the sanity of the earth".⁵³

In *Pawns*, betrayal of trust is a resounding image. History, for Samupindi, is a history of betrayal, a sentiment echoed by Marechera. From Harare, the narrative moves "back in time"⁵⁴ to "THEN".

My body belongs to ZANU

Framed by the protagonist's present experience of the post-independent state, the middle section of the text is concerned with the past, with Daniel's participation in the guerilla struggle. His journey through the past begins with his decision to go and meet Robert Mugabe and join the guerillas. The narrative then takes the reader through a brief history of the nationalist movement culminating in Daniel's commitment to the guerilla struggle. He relinquishes his individuality and hence his identity in order to be part of ZANU:

The privilege of choice had been snatched away by my decision to join the struggle. From hence, there is no me. I am only a tool in the revolution. Expendable raw material in the manufacture of an independent nation. My hands belong to ZANU. My feet belong to ZANU. My whole body belongs to ZANU. My psyche belongs to anxiety. My past life has been full of me, just me; the future is ZANU, the Revolution, the People, the Struggle. For once, I feel significant I am a small tool in

⁵²David Martin & Phyllis Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe: The Chimurenga War* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1981) 37-42. The Reverend Robert Moffat had been the first European to visit King Mzilikazi in 1829. They had formed a lasting friendship which resulted in Moffat serving as an informal diplomatic agent for the king. The Reverend John Moffat, his son, used his position to coerce Lobengula to sign a treaty that would have the way open for British territorial expansion.

⁵³Samupindi, *Pawns* 12.

⁵⁴Samupindi, *Pawns* 19.

the making of history.⁵⁵

Samupindi seems interested to show what motivated those who took part in the armed struggle. These motivations are shown to be external to the nationalist goals and objectives of armed struggle. The protagonist's primary motivation for joining the guerillas stems from his desire to escape the poverty and hardship of his home environment. He says: "All I want is to get away. I only opted to be a guerilla. I wanted to get away from the problems at home and I volunteered to help destroy the Smith regime. That's all. Simple and logical".⁵⁶

The disintegration of the family structure is a theme that is prevalent in all of the texts discussed. In *Pawns*, Samupindi uses this theme to show how the war was fought to restore these familial relations.

'Mother?' She forgot to tell him that she was not coming back.... After the war, maybe I will mean something to her. At the very least I'll be someone who has fought for the nation. I will be given a good job and a proper house and I will be able to fend for her and her children...⁵⁷

However, the disappointment of the narrator's hopes on a personal level is mirrored on a national level. While Samupindi attempts to show that many of those who were involved in the armed struggle had motivations other than nationalistic, he still makes it clear that regardless of the reasons for people's involvement, the goals of the nationalist struggle and the guerilla war were still betrayed. In the post-colonial state, those who sacrificed their lives for the political struggle, are forgotten and marginalised:

Kufa was right in the middle of its headlights. Kufa realised the enormity of what is to follow and issues a terrified cry. Almost simultaneously the car hit him squarely, propelling him into thin air. There was that thick sound of steel on pliant flesh. Kufa

⁵⁵Samupindi, *Pawns* 38.

⁵⁶Samupindi, *Pawns* 88.

⁵⁷Samupindi, *Pawns* 11 & 41.

was sprawled a few metres ahead. His blood splattered over Fangs' face and clothes. The car followed him as brakes cried in a bid to contain it, and its right front wheel flattens Kufa's head on the tarmac. Its under-limbs make awkward sounds as it crushes the body beneath it.... It was the BMW.... The man extricates himself from his car swearing with Christ. He examines the damage to his car, swearing.⁵⁸

The story of Kufa's death is told in two different tenses, the past and the present. This narrative device serves to reinforce the narrator's telling of two tales. The protagonist's friend and fellow vagrant, Kufa, is killed by the priest in the BMW. This incident serves as a metaphor for the invisibility of the marginalised. It is illustrative of their treatment by the post-colonial state. In this post-colonial state, it does not suit the state's purposes to honour or recognise the role played by the marginalised in the struggle for independence. The marginalised peoples are returning guerilla soldiers, women, and those who have been displaced as a result of political processes and protracted armed struggle. In the post-independent state, the African elite can only emerge at the expense of the marginalised.

Ibbo Mandaza, looking at the political economy of post-independent Zimbabwe, argues that the African petit bourgeoisie inherited an economic framework from colonialism:

The post-white settler colonial state acquires a special meaning... precisely because of the historical legacy of white settler colonialism; the inherited economic and social structures that are associated with it; and its persistent and pervasive role within both the state itself and the society at large, as a viable conduit through which the imperialist forces of international finance capital can compromise and control the new state. But it is a state which, in the circumstances of post-independence Zimbabwe, provides a framework within which the leading sections of the African petit bourgeoisie can also find fulfilment of their class aspirations as they enter the arena that was hitherto restricted and confined largely to the white classes.⁵⁹

⁵⁸Samupindi, *Pawns* 9.

⁵⁹Mandaza, *Zimbabwe* 15.

The post-independent state is a schizophrenic state in which the past and the present co-exist. For Samupindi, this co-existence engenders the feeling of sameness. This doubling or repetition is constantly reinforced through the use of phrases that imply a double meaning. "Spent thus... no cent of change".⁶⁰

The conceptualisation of time serves to redefine the nationalist narrative. This is because time implies change and progression. The concrete goal of the nationalist movement - independence - is displaced by the movements of time itself. In that moment in which independence is achieved, the suffering and hardships and the violence of the experience of the war that led up to this achievement are revisited and reconceptualised as being worthwhile. However, as time moves on, independence seems doomed to lag behind as change is slow to occur and cannot match the progression of time. The moment of independence is precisely that, and it is for this reason that it cannot sustain support and is cheated by the progression of events, time itself. The violence associated with war is spectacular in that it is able to stop time from moving as quickly or rather to change the ways in which those who witness or participate in war think about time: "In war people tend to stop thinking about tomorrow. It is too uncertain. People only think about what will happen in the next hour or next day. What becomes important are immediate dangers."⁶¹

Immediate dangers: struggles within the struggle

Isabel Hofmeyr argues that the guerilla war for independence was fiercely and bitterly fought and that its interpretations have been equally contested. In looking at the iconography of the guerilla in Zimbabwean poetry, Hofmeyr discerns two competing partisan interpretations of the war: the right-wing perception of 'terrorism'; and the official line of 'freedom fighters'

⁶⁰Samupindi, *Pawns* 10.

⁶¹Samupindi, *Pawns* 150.

as redeemers and as agents of a new consciousness and a new era.⁶² Samupindi opts for a different approach to documenting experiences of the guerilla war. Instead of an emphasis on "heroic portrayals of war, close male comradeship, courageous self sacrifice" and "endurance in the name of some greater cause"⁶³, the author focuses his portrayal on the hardships of the war, the often unheroic motivations for enlisting in the struggle, the disunity between the guerillas themselves and the conflicts between guerillas and the civilians, and among the civilian population themselves.

Samupindi is also concerned with portraying the difficulties experienced by guerillas in the training camps. The camps, by his account, were disorganised, lacking in supplies and basic necessities and training was continuously delayed and subject to the conflicts between the opposing factions within ZANU. Samupindi's protagonist struggles to reconcile the heroic motivations with the unheroic hardships. He observes:

It seems all we've ever known of the struggle is chaos and disarray. I see despair on the faces of all the recruits.... I did not come here to starve to death. The base was a gigantic coffin.... War is no place for babies. But then, is this war? Is wasting away in this hole war?⁶⁴

Samupindi's concern is with showing the struggles that took place within the struggle. He documents the rebellions within ZANU forces that arose as a result of class differences among the soldiers and he writes about the "Guerilla warfare within guerilla warfare".⁶⁵ The picture he creates is one of disunity. Samupindi does this by using historical references to support his claims.

⁶²Isabel Hofmeyr, *"I Am the New Man and You Are the New Woman: The Iconography of the Guerilla in Some Recent Zimbabwean Poetry,"* *English Academy Review* 3 (1985): 52.

⁶³Hofmeyr, *"I Am the New Man"* 52.

⁶⁴Samupindi, *Pawns* 52-55.

⁶⁵Samupindi, *Pawns* 100.

Chitepo has been killed?.... The body has been refused access to the country, dead as it is. I am startled, alarmed and confused. Mugabe had told us that once we reached Mozambique, Chitepo would follow and arrange things for us. But before we have even left the country he has been killed. What kind of game is this? Chitepo is killed and Kaunda arrests Tongogara and other senior ZANU men.... And now, the funeral is held at Mugabe's residence. Does he give a damn about us being killed.⁶⁶

Samupindi also documents the events leading to the split between the two nationalist parties, ZANU and ZAPU, and the consequences of this split for the war. Samupindi shows further the effect of this split on families whose allegiances were divided between the two opposing factions, such as the Chief and his two sons:

The Chief has two sons, you know. One joined ZANLA and he is operating with a cadre in Tete province. The other joined ZIPRA and, stupidly, they have allowed him to operate in his home area.... So you can see what an invidious position the old man is in!.... Where do you expect him to place his allegiance.... If we all agree that there is little the chief can do under the circumstances, let us look for a solution other than taking his life.... I feel it would be unfair to kill him.⁶⁷

For either side, guerillas and civilians, this split proved a security risk. The focus on this kind of conflict highlights the cost and effects of the war on those who were directly involved in the war and those who had no choice but to be part of the conflict.

Samupindi also looks at the how the issue of sellouts was manipulated and open to

⁶⁶Samupindi, *Pawns* 24. Martin & Johnson, *The Struggle* 158-161. Herbert Chitepo was instrumental in forming ZANU after the 1963 split that occurred within ZAPU. He was a firm believer in the path of armed struggle. On the 18th of March 1975 he was assassinated by car bomb in Lusaka. After his death, the Zambian government arrested ZANU leaders and personnel in Zambia. This incident served to disrupt the war effort for over a year. Earlier, in 1974 the Nhari rebellion took place. Soldiers were mobilized within ZANLA, their grievances being that while guerillas suffered in the bush their leaders were comfortable in Lusaka and Salisbury and were denying them better weapons with which to defend themselves.

⁶⁷Samupindi, *Pawns* 125-126.

manipulation, and how in many cases, violence was used unnecessarily.⁶⁸ Samupindi questions the idea of the sellout through his portrayal of the old man, Mudhara Sithole.

He felt he was making good progress in his cart.... He proceeded along the edge of the road. Then his eyes caught sight of a patch in the middle of the dusty road which showed signs of being recently disturbed.... His heart began to race as suspicion gained momentum in his mind.... His suspicions were confirmed.... But even as he straightened his back he heard the sound of engines.... The soldiers stared at him wordlessly.... His eyes involuntarily flicked to and fro between the soldiers and the disturbed earth. "What's wrong, *madala*?" The old man opened his mouth to speak, and closed it again. He looked at the buried landmine. The first truck was only five metres away from it.... He knew there was no time for him to get away. If they went ahead the blast would not only kill them, it would also kill him. There was only one thing to do. "Don't go on," he shouted. "There is a landmine there. Stop!"... Several soldiers disembarked and went over to have a closer look. "Je-e-sus! The old kaffir is right!"⁶⁹

Samupindi seems concerned to show the conflicts that the war generated within the civilian community. In *Pawns*, he problematises the relationship between guerillas and the civilian population who were supposed to provide the guerillas with political and logistical support, and on whose behalf the struggle was supposed to have been fought. One of the ways in which Samupindi does this is through the portrayal of the struggles over the body, specifically the female body. While guerillas were forbidden from having sexual relations, this rule was not always enforced and this, in itself, led to conflict:

But it could not be. She knew it as well as he did, that such an association, even the thought of it, was forbidden. It was logical. The comrades could not be allowed to take advantage of the *povo's* daughters. It would engender unnecessary conflict and spark animosity and mistrust.... And yet Jennifer was pregnant and secretly everyone

⁶⁸Samupindi, *Pawns* 156-161.

⁶⁹Samupindi, *Pawns* 129.

knew that it could not have been any of the little ten-year-old boys who were the only ones remaining in their homes, their elder brothers having long gone.⁷⁰

Women's bodies are presented as spoils of war for soldiers fighting on both sides of the conflict. Taking this idea further, Samupindi portrays the Rhodesian forces as being exceedingly brutal and violent in their attacks on African people. The most violent encounter in the novel is the Rhodesian Forces' attack on villagers and the rape of Angela:

The soldiers leapt at them. One grabbed hold of Angela and started to drag her outside. Another fought to set the thatch of the hut on fire.... The third struck out brutally with his gun.... Moses screamed as booted feet crushed his body. Then there was silence and the little body lay still. The soldier who grabbed Angela had other ideas. As she squirmed on the floor, she saw him undo his zip.... She tried to crawl away but her head was knocked to the floor. He came down upon her, his eyes wild with bestial, crazed excitement.... He tore her clothes.... The blow to her head had knocked some of the strength from her body. She felt her legs being forced apart. The next moment she heard her own scream shatter the air. The pain seared her being and a blanket of darkness mercifully released her as the maniac heaved into her body, growling like a jackal, saliva drooling from the corners of his mouth.⁷¹

According to Sharon Macdonald, the rape of women in warfare is one of the means by which men attempt to prove their masculinity and symbolically surmount the 'feminine' characteristics that they have been made to denigrate. While it is officially discouraged, rape fulfils the military association of masculinity, aggression and depersonalization.⁷² Women's bodies in this context form part of the territory that needs be conquered. Rape is the concretization of the practices of warfare, in its invasion and penetration of territory.

⁷⁰Samupindi, *Pawns* 135-136.

⁷¹Samupindi, *Pawns* 142.

⁷²Macdonald, "Drawing" 16.

Anthem for doomed youth

The narrative of *Pawns* is constantly disrupted by Samupindi's portrayal of violence as failing to achieve any recognisably victorious aims. War is represented as being wholly unheroic. Samupindi shows how the heroism associated with war is nothing more than violence, the ability to kill, and how this ability often has no correlation with a national political cause: "Sometimes it does not take courage to be a combatant", comments the protagonist. "Sometimes it is just that suffering and brutalization turn a simple country boy into a violent man. Some people call his actions 'brave'. But this is madness, insanity".⁷³

In *Pawns*, Samupindi registers his protest against violence and against warfare, a protest that is made even stronger by his focus on the post-independence state and the failure of the war to achieve any recognisable changes. This anti-war stance is most clearly indicated by the reference to the protagonist's encounter with a Rhodesian soldier.

Fangs suddenly found himself face-to-face with a Rhodesian soldier in the trench! They saw each other at the same time. There was the initial shock, a second of hesitation and then they were at each other's throats. The confrontation had never been so literal or so primitive.... Their eyes bulged as they tried to strangle each other to death.... He looked into the frightened eyes of the enemy.... He could not be much older than Fangs.... At that moment he began to feel pity for them both.... He probably had a wife and some lovely child back home who knew him as a loving, affectionate father. And yet now they were reduced to the most debased level of war, to kill or be killed.... Fangs felt his strength begin to fail him. He resigned himself to the fate that squatted beside him.... As his hands slipped from the enemy's throat he felt him jerk. The vice-like grip on his own throat loosened, suddenly. The man twitched. A trickle of blood flowed from the corner of his mouth to his chin.... He lay in the trench, his face directed at the heavens. He was still. He had been hit by a stray bullet.... Fangs looked down at him.... Suddenly he was angry as he had never been. Angry with the regime

⁷³Samupindi, *Pawns* 148.

that was prepared to sacrifice innocent young men *for their own greedy cause*.⁷⁴

The war is relived in the text by reference to a number of different historical events. One of these is the attack on Nyadzonja, which in the text, becomes a dominant symbol for the meaning of the war. Nyadzonja was a refugee camp in Mozambique which was attacked by the Selous Scouts on the 9th of August 1976. Over 1 000 Zimbabweans were killed or wounded. The Rhodesian government and the army claimed that it was a guerilla training camp, and it was later reported that the soldiers who took part in this massacre received bonuses for the high kill rate and were blessed by the unit's white chaplain.⁷⁵ In *Pawns*, Samupindi portrays the attack as the: "Nyadzonja holocaust - incomplete bodies; incomplete people, people so violated that they lost all sense of place, time, movement, direction".⁷⁶

According to James Young, the "Holocaust" represents an archetype of suffering. Young contends that once an event is perceived to be without precedence or adequate analogy, it is ironic that this event then becomes a kind of precedent for all that follows:

a new figure against which subsequent experiences are measured and grasped.... As writers grew increasingly frustrated and dissatisfied with their traditional lexicon of destruction, they became more likely to figure the most horrible events not in terms of the ancient past but in the tropes of their current disaster. The figure of the "Holocaust Jew" thus seems to have been born of events themselves, coming to epitomize for both Jews and non-Jews the embattled victim, the sufferer and martyr.... as new experiences are necessarily grasped and represented in the frame of remembered past experiences, "incomparable" experiences like the Holocaust will always be made - at least rhetorically - comparable.⁷⁷

⁷⁴Samupindi, *Pawns* 178-180. (emphasis added)

⁷⁵Martin & Johnson, *The Struggle* 241.

⁷⁶Samupindi, *Pawns* 69.

⁷⁷Young, "Interpreting" 99.

Samupindi's portrayal of violence in the text serves to question the guerilla struggle in terms of its human costs. Ironically, his questioning of violence as a means of liberation serves to validate the need for a response to colonial domination. Despite this, violence for Samupindi, does not, nor can it ever possess the liberatory qualities claimed for it by those who support armed struggle. In *Pawns*, the author shows the war to be beyond comprehension for those in its midst:

If the whole world had had the compassion to scream and cry loud enough when Smith made his first step, in 1965, he might have been dissuaded.... This mad killing... these hundreds of souls... would never have been wasted.... The absurdity of war brutalises everyone and everything. It cuts across comprehension. When people have been subjected to it for protracted periods they begin to accept death without rancour or regret. They die without complaint or protest.⁷⁸

Going in Circles

For Samupindi, the sacrifices made during the war were not worth the outcome. His narrative comes full circle back to streets of Harare where:

Delegates coming from so far away - there, where there are no vagabonds, prostitutes and beggars - only people with no homes scrounging for existence from refuse bins and asking for help from society: only children sold to brothels for food; hookers who have since given up trying to earn a living by other means. We will cause severe embarrassment when delegates visit our country. Zimbabwe should be presented to the delegates as it isn't rather than as it is.⁷⁹

Here Samupindi alludes to the 'clean-up' campaign in 1983, where the Zimbabwean

⁷⁸Samupindi, *Pawns* 107-108.

⁷⁹Samupindi, *Pawns* 193-194.

government rounded up 6 000 women on the pretext of smashing prostitution.⁸⁰ While **Pawns** is a severe indictment of the post-independence state, Samupindi assigns blame to everyone. **Pawns** is not the classical tale of 'post-colonial disillusionment', of the revolution that was betrayed. Instead, Samupindi indicts an entire nation for betraying themselves:

Who makes the law?

Technically, I do.

I am the man who chooses the man who makes the law.

I am the victim of my own act, of my own action.

I am a pawn. A pawn in a game I know not the rules.

As my turn comes, I look down to conceal the tears in my eyes and walk into the accused's dock.⁸¹

Parallels can be drawn between Samupindi's views on the outcome of the guerilla war for independence and the view expressed by Seri Jeni in her oral testimony in **Mothers of the Revolution** where she says:

Those years were very hard years. The war was serious. The problem now is that we are still left behind, even after all that suffering.⁸²

Charles Samupindi's **Pawns** and Irene Staunton's **Mothers of the Revolution** represent attempts to document the violent experience of guerilla war within the context of a nationalist struggle. These texts present the reader with a sense of the direct experience of transition. In narrating the experience of guerilla war and nationalist struggle, both of these texts shift away from the emphasis on leadership, idealism and romanticism of nationalist struggles, focusing

⁸⁰Elinor Batezat, Margeret Mwalo & Kate Truscott, "Women and Independence: The Heritage and the Struggle" **Zimbabwe's Prospects: Issues of Race, Class, State and Capital in Southern Africa** ed. Colin Stoneman (London: Macmillan, 1988) 169.

⁸¹Samupindi, **Pawns** 195.

⁸²Staunton, **Mothers** 9.

on the internal struggles taking place within the nationalist movement for independence.

Both texts show how the irrationality of violence undermines the rational political goal of attaining independence within this context. The sacrifices made and the losses incurred on a personal level are immeasurable, and the attainment of independence can do little to create a sense of victory on the eve of independence.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

Summing up: Nationalism and identity politics

In this study I have attempted to demonstrate the relationship between the political process of nationalism and identity formation with reference to the Zimbabwean context. I have argued that the focus on the predominant themes of disease, alienation and disintegration in contemporary Zimbabwean literature serves to illustrate the ways in which writers have constructed identities within the context of a nationalist struggle for independence. These identities have been constructed in response to a homogenising nationalist discourse, and portray a heterogeneity of interests through their emphasis on difference. Through close reading of the literary texts I have attempted to show the disparity between the ways in which nationalism articulates itself and is apprehended, and the ways in which nationalism allows for the foregrounding of particular identities in certain interests. To reiterate, nationalism involves the privileging of certain identities and the corresponding de-privileging of others. This has been illustrated by reference to the idea of a pact or alliance, where agreement was reached on the basis of the imperatives of defeating colonialism. While motivations were often disparate, this common goal allowed for a show of unity. The achievement of independence then entails a shift in priorities, where those differing identities that previously seemed homogenous, come to the fore precisely to emphasise their difference. Whether nationalism is able to transform in some way the understanding of individual identity is not subject to question, but the extent to which it is able and how it achieves this transformation depends upon the specific context in which a nationalist struggle occurs and the particular interventions - political, ideological, cultural - that are made to lay the basis for its articulation.

This perspective allows for a revision of perceptions regarding the preoccupations with the revolution betrayed and postcolonial disillusionment. In this context, nationalism itself does not fail as it achieves its goal of independence. It is the post-independence state that fails, by

its inability to address the different needs of the newly independent nation. The post-independence state is schizophrenic, torn between competing demands of dependence and independence. This split is also witnessed in the nation's desire for independence and the disappointment with its outcome. The post-independence state lacks the creativity to forge new alliances and pacts that served as the mainstay of nationalist organisation. It consolidates and maintains its power through a repressive hegemony, constantly reinforcing the idea of homogeneity which serves to create and foster illusion for its own support. The state feeds on its own illusions and fabrications of support, constantly reminding the newly independent nation of its one great achievement, independence.

The literary texts in this study - whether produced in pre- or post-independence Zimbabwe - have all been represented as portraying a concern with issues relating to identity, and with foregrounding particular conceptions of identity. Clearly, the era of nationalist politics has become synonymous with ideas relating to the construction, articulation and representation of identity. What is specific to the Zimbabwean case, is that writers have engaged with certain privileged nationalist identities in order to forge identities which, in each of the texts in this study, have been shown to be oppositional. The identities they seek to emphasise have been constructed through difference.

In **Nervous Conditions**, Tsitsi Dangarembga engages with the narratives of Shona patriarchy, colonialism, and the mission school education system in an attempt to define an African female identity. Marechera in **The House of Hunger** writes back to colonial and African national narratives in an attempt to deconstruct the definitions of his own identity. Both Dangarembga and Marechera engage with the genre of the *Bildungsroman* in order to show its inappropriateness for the African experience. In **Bones**, Hove constructs the identity of the peasant women, and the peasant community by engaging with contemporary theoretical perspectives on the role played by the peasantry in nationalist struggles. Samupindi's **Pawns** marks a shift away from the heroism and romanticism that characterises many portrayals of armed struggle through his focus on the figure of the disenchanted guerilla soldier, and the oral testimonies in Staunton's **Mothers of the Revolution** foreground a concern with defining an identity that is not subsumed by the biological category of motherhood.

its inability to address the different needs of the newly independent nation. The post-independence state is schizophrenic, torn between competing demands of dependence and independence. This split is also witnessed in the nation's desire for independence and the disappointment with its outcome. The post-independence state lacks the creativity to forge new alliances and pacts that served as the mainstay of nationalist organisation. It consolidates and maintains its power through a repressive hegemony, constantly reinforcing the idea of homogeneity which serves to create and foster illusion for its own support. The state feeds on its own illusions and fabrications of support, constantly reminding the newly independent nation of its one great achievement, independence.

The literary texts in this study - whether produced in pre- or post-independence Zimbabwe - have all been represented as portraying a concern with issues relating to identity, and with foregrounding particular conceptions of identity. Clearly, the era of nationalist politics has become synonymous with ideas relating to the construction, articulation and representation of identity. What is specific to the Zimbabwean case, is that writers have engaged with certain privileged nationalist identities in order to forge identities which, in each of the texts in this study, have been shown to be oppositional. The identities they seek to emphasise have been constructed through difference.

In *Nervous Conditions*, Tsitsi Dangarembga engages with the narratives of Shona patriarchy, colonialism, and the mission school education system in an attempt to define an African female identity. Marechera in *The House of Hunger* writes back to colonial and African national narratives in an attempt to deconstruct the definitions of his own identity. Both Dangarembga and Marechera engage with the genre of the *Bildungsroman* in order to show its inappropriateness for the African experience. In *Bones*, Hove constructs the identity of the peasant women, and the peasant community by engaging with contemporary theoretical perspectives on the role played by the peasantry in nationalist struggles. Samupindi's *Pawns* marks a shift away from the heroism and romanticism that characterises many portrayals of armed struggle through his focus on the figure of the disenchanted guerilla soldier, and the oral testimonies in Staunton's *Mothers of the Revolution* foreground a concern with defining an identity that is not subsumed by the biological category of motherhood.

All of the protagonists in the texts are represented as being outsiders. They are portrayed as being alienated from their nation, community and even familial structures. It can be assumed that they speak for the writers themselves who are in the process of attempting to define their role and their identity in the newly independent nation - a common preoccupation in most African Literatures. The protagonists' experiences speak of heterogeneity, of fracturing and difference, of the disassembling effects of violence and of competing narratives of identity that vie for control over their subjectivity. Even their identities as outsiders are characterised by ambiguity in that there is within each portrayal, a schizophrenic impulse, an unreconciled split between desires and actions, a sense of wanting to belong and a need to escape.

Another concern that is evident in all of the texts is the effect of violence on identity. Violence is viewed from a number of different perspectives. Traced to the first encounter with colonial intervention, violence matters the framework of the nation, the community, the family and narrative. The concern with locating an identity is very much a consequence of the effects of violence. Violence is portrayed in all its different contexts and is not limited to the violence of the settler colonial state. Dangarembga looks at the effects of the violence of colonialism on the psyche of the colonised subject, and the systems of colonialism and patriarchy which conspire to impose their own values and limits on the identity of the female colonised subject. *Nervous Conditions* is concerned with the consequences of assimilation into these structures of thought, the ways in which they entail a corresponding loss of selfhood, and how the inability to effectively resist their intrusion results in nervous conditions. While Dangarembga's text was published in 1988, it is set in the period prior to Zimbabwean independence, and its lack of reference to the post-independence state represents an indictment of a state that has failed to address a legacy of gendered inequality and the psychological effects of horizontal and vertical violence on the colonised subject.

Marechera develops this idea in *The House of Hunger* by focusing on how the inability of the colonised subject to resist colonialism results in their aggression being directed towards others in the colonised community. The house of hunger is a site of violence and conflict. In *Bones*, Hove looks specifically at the gendered nature of violence in both the pre- and post-independent state, while also focusing on the violent interactions that occur within the peasant community. Samupindi's *Pawns* and Staunton's *Mothers of the Revolution* support

the idea that the violence of armed struggle is unresolved, in that whilst it is directed at ending colonial domination, the use of violence often serves to contradict its ends and to question the legitimacy of armed struggle.

The emphasis on violence in all of the texts demonstrates the fracturing power of conflict and the contradictions inherent in the use of violence. An interesting point that emerges from this literature is its attempt to move away from monolithic constructions of the binary oppositions of colonised/coloniser identities. All of the writers portray a concern with showing the relativism of power and the ways in which power is articulated by the seemingly powerful and apprehended by the seemingly powerless. References to sellouts, witches and to those who collaborate in maintaining the status quo, serve to differentiate responses to colonial rule and domination, and also demonstrate the many different ways in which people resist the imposition of control. This idea is central to understanding issues of identity construction, articulation and representation as it allows for the understanding of the ways in which the articulation of identities does not necessarily correlate to its apprehension, and to the ways in which identities are transformed to meet different needs. This has been illustrated by the focus on the ways in which people are shown to apprehend and participate in the workings of nationalism and it is these acts of difference that serve to overturn the homogeneity imposed by colonialism. The very acts that seem to undermine nationalism are central to its workings as they serve to push the struggle towards its goal of independence while at the same time consciously taking the needs and concerns with them into the post-independent state, where their expression is seen as threatening. This can be demonstrated, for example, by the foregrounding of ethnic identities in the post-independence state.

This conceptualisation of identity serves to emphasise the mutability and multiplicity of identity, demonstrating how identities are easily shifted from a primary to a secondary status, and recovered in the post-independence period where in some cases they emerge untransformed while in others not.

The emphasis on the (re)construction of identities out of fracturing and fragmentation, is a result of the complex processes entailed by the politics of colonialism and nationalism. Identity, itself, is shown to be a process, marking a shift away from the belief in the power

of historical events to define both action and actors.

In each of the texts, the protagonist undertakes a journey, either literally or metaphysically, in search of selfhood. Dangarembga's *Tambudzai* travels from the world of the rural homestead to that of the mission station and from childhood to womanhood. The narrator of the "House of Hunger" in *The House of Hunger* starts a journey that takes the reader through a series of experiences, and brings the narrator back to the start of his journey, a circularity which is echoed in the journey taken by Samupindi's protagonist. Hove's Marita travels from the rural pre-independence landscape to the urban post-independence landscape. This journey motif is also evident in other texts such as Charles Mungoshi's *Waiting for the Rain* and Nevanji Madanhire's *Goatsmell*.

The journey motif serves as an allegory for a national experience: transforming the personal into the political. The prevalence of this motif in the texts represents a search for identity that correlates to the nation's search for itself, fractured as it has been by the violence of colonialism and the war for independence. The crossing of geographical space speaks of the movement through literal and symbolic territory, textual and metaphysical space.

As an allegory, journey is a trope that in saying one thing also says some 'other' thing; it is the doubling of some previous and anterior code by a sign, or by a semiotic system, that also signifies a more immediate or 'literal' meaning. Allegory serves to mark a bifurcation or division in the directionality of the interpretive process.¹ Slemon elaborates:

Allegory can be understood as a mode of representation that proceeds by forging an identity between things, and it reads present events, whatever the signifying system in which they are found, as terms within some already given system of textualised identification or codified knowledge.... In allegory, signs are interpreted as modalities of preceding signs which are already deeply embedded in a specific cultural thematic, and they work to transform free-floating objects into positively identified and 'known'

¹Slemon, "Monuments of Empire" 4.

units of knowledge.²

The use of allegory as a narrative strategy has implications for its use as an interpretive strategy. Firstly, allegory foregrounds the fact that history, like fiction, requires an act of reading before it can have meaning, as "History must be read, and read in adjacency to, a fictional re-enactment of it, and this relocation of the received shibboleths of history into the creative and transformative exercise of reading opens a space within which new ways of formulating the past can come into being".³ Secondly, allegory is a narrative representation of splitting or doubling - a schizophrenic condition - and therefore an inversion of the colonial inheritance of binary oppositions. Allegory is a "double-figure" that creates two levels of signification, that are not parallel but are mutually constructive.⁴ "One discourse consistently represents the other and invites a double reading of narrative events".⁵ Thirdly, allegory points outwards away from containment and seamless narratives towards meanings that are constructed on a number of different levels. It provides a way of 'reading' texts, of unmasking their political unconscious. By reading the texts as allegorical, it is possible to resist closure, and to illustrate the ways in which the writers themselves point to the idea that identity is an unfinished process, always 'becoming' and shifting to meet different political prerogatives.

The impulse to bring the nation into writing was central to the institutionalisation of African Literature as a discipline. Nations have been structured by narratives. And it is precisely this narrative rendering of the nation that points to the idea of the nation as a construct, as a cumulative formation and hence, a cultural formation subject to historical, political, economic and ideological interventions and changes. Homi Bhabha has characterised the nation's "coming into being" as a system of cultural signification, as the representation of social life

²Slemon, "Monuments of Empire" 7.

³Slemon, "Monuments of Empire" 12.

⁴Doris Sommer, "Allegory and Dialectics: A Match Made in Romance," *Boundary 2* 18. 1 (1991): 63.

⁵Sommer, "Allegory and Dialectics" 63.

rather than the discipline of social polity, which emphasizes the instability of this knowledge.⁶ According to Bhabha, nation as narration establishes the cultural boundaries of the nation so that they may be acknowledged as "containing" thresholds of meaning that must be crossed, erased and translated in the process of cultural production.⁷ The nation is a creation of narration, inextricably tied to the processes through which meaning is produced, and narratives are constructed.

The construction of narrative therefore entails the practice of imagining, of creative (re)construction and (re)presentation in which a series of events are linked together in a seemingly coherent form. Jameson posits that narrative frames are strategies of containment that seek to endow their objects of representation with formal unity.⁸ The institutionalisation of African Literature was constructed through the use of nationalism as a narrative frame. The Africanisation of the syllabus in higher education from the 1960s onwards formed part of a larger process brought about by the gaining of political independence in many African countries. David Atwell refers to this as a period of "nation-building".⁹ The narrative of African nationalism characterised the pre-independence period as one which generally involved the development of an ideologically progressive form of cultural nationalism which was able to cement alliances that had been formed between nationalist leadership and the broader popular movements in the struggle to achieve independence. However, because of the power shifts taking place in the process of gaining independence, the ideological effects of cultural nationalism became more ambiguous. Instead of providing the basis for an 'organic culture'¹⁰ in which various otherwise conflicting social groups could create some form of common cause, it became associated with the newly hegemonic principle of

⁶Homi K. Bhabha, introduction, "Narrating the Nation," *Nation and Narration* ed. H. K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990) 1-2.

⁷Bhabha, "Narrating" 4.

⁸Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 48.

⁹David Atwell, "The British Legacy in Anglophone African Literary Criticism," *English in Africa* 11. 1 (1984): 87.

¹⁰Antonio Gramsci in Atwell, "The British Legacy" 87. (Here 'organic' denotes the process of ideological cementing that takes place when different social groups form alliances to rid themselves of a former repressive hegemony.)

nationhood. Simon Gikandi, writing about Chinua Achebe's works, defines the position of the African writer in general:

Obviously, narrative could offer a space in which the problems of the postcolonial state could be explored and questions about the future might be raised even when ideological solutions and answers might appear remote. While a new postcolonial narrative might not celebrate the national ideals that motivated [Achebe's] earlier texts, it could derive its force from the political necessity that prompted it. [For Achebe], the post colonial text is clearly determined by the parting of ways between the writer and the politician in regard to the future of the nation: 'Having fought on the side of the politicians, I realised after independence that they and I were on different sides, because they were not doing what we had agreed to do. So I had to become a critic.' Now writing functions as a form of critique prompted by the writer's estrangement from the realities of the nation.¹¹

The split that occurred in most African countries between the writer/intellectual and the politician¹² did not occur after Zimbabwe nationalist organisations' goal of independence was achieved in 1980, but clearly seems to pre-date this. Unlike most African Literatures produced in the context of a national(ist) struggle for independence from colonial control, Zimbabwean literature has not been the product of a concerted effort to cement alliances and produce a form of cultural nationalism that relies upon the homogenisation of identities within a nationalist context. Rather, as I have set out to demonstrate, it has catalogued the struggles of a nation that has difficulty in defining itself and in coming to terms with its violent and fractured past and dealing with its present. This perspective has reversed nationalist continuities that have been constructed between political struggles - in its lament for the lack

¹¹Simon Gikandi, *Reading Chinua Achebe: Language and Ideology in Fiction* (London: James Currey, 1991) 104.

¹²For further discussion on the relationship between writers and politics see Wole Soyinka, "The writer in a modern African state," *The Writer in Modern Africa* ed. P. Wastberg (Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1968) and Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Writers in Politics* (London: Heinemann, 1981).

of heroism, and its protest against a legacy of disease, alienation and disintegration.

Zimbabwean nationalism articulated itself through its 'homogenous' antagonism and resistance to settler colonialism. Nationalist politics was built upon overturning colonial assumptions of African identity. It is this homogeneity that writers oppose through their constructions or emphasis on difference. In this study I have attempted to demonstrate how the idea of difference is crucial to understanding nationalism. The literary texts in this study constitute a national(ist) literature through their representation of difference which contains within it the capacity to disassemble the unifying powers of colonialism that sought to create the African personality as a monolithic structure, while at the same time fracturing this unity through the violent imposition of the political process of colonialism. Texts also constitute a national literature by their reference to unifying themes or tropes. These tropes have analytic value as they provide ways of elucidating the concerns of writers in their texts. Their presence highlights the similarities of interests and the ways in which different writers foreground their concerns and particular identities - using these as unifying blocks that then allows for both a national and a nationalist literature to emerge; national in that the foregrounding of specific themes or symbols is part of dialogue between a community of writers, and nationalist in terms of a colonial master narrative which writers engage with and write back to. The dissemination of unifying blocks or images by writers and critics facilitates the creation of 'imagined communities', as writers then use these themes as historical points of reference, embellishing upon them to create layers of meaning.

Ironically it is precisely nationalism's failure or inability to successfully articulate identities to itself that serves to undermine the attainment of its goal. This kind of understanding serves to shift emphasis away from the perspective that nationalism is successful in uniformly homogenising interests, and then surprisingly betrays itself. All of the texts have been shown to exhibit a preoccupation with the idea of betrayal. Personal betrayals, historical betrayals, figures of sellouts and spies all point to disillusionment with the post-independent state, and to a sense of betrayal of the ideals for the new state. This feeling of betrayal can be traced to the disappointment with the resemblances that the post-independence state bears to the colonial state. While there is a distinct similarity between the two, it is precisely the knowledge of a

fundamental difference that accounts for the sense of betrayal and disillusionment.

The post-independence state is fragile and tenuous, built as it is upon the overturning of colonialism, of its replacement. And by its replacement of colonialism it sets itself up to be challenged by similar elements that propelled the nationalist struggle forward to its goal. To maintain its position it necessarily has to conceive of difference as a threat. This is especially evident in the case of the repression of 'dissidents' in the 1980s by the state.

Despite the heterogeneity of interests, the attainment of independence represents the expectation that the fruits of independence - concrete social, political and economic changes - will be reaped. When this does not occur, it represents a failure of the state to cement alliances formed in the period of nationalist struggle, a failure of the newly independent state to come up with a political and economic strategy that will transform the previous system and allow for new alliances to be formed with this aim in mind. The violence of the state in the post-independence period calls into question the achievements of independence, and points to the failure of the state to decolonise or deconstruct itself. Nationalism itself, however, cannot fail if it achieves its goal of independence as it cannot promise more than an historical moment of independence.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anderson, Benedict. **Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism**. London: Verso Books, 1983.

Atwell, David. "The British Legacy in Anglophone African Literary Criticism." **English in Africa** 11. 1 (1984): 79-106.

Bahri, Deepika. "Disembodying the Corpus. Postcolonial Pathology in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*." **Postmodern Culture** 5. 1 (1994). pnc@unity.ncsu.edu.

Bakhtin, Mikhail M. **The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin**. Trans. Caryl Emerson & Michael Holquist. Austin: U. of Texas, 1981.

Batezat, Elinor, Mwalo, Margaret & Truscott, Kate. "Women and Independence: The Heritage and the Struggle." **Zimbabwe's Prospects: Issues of Race, Class, State and Capital in Southern Africa**. Ed. C. Stoneman. London: Macmillan, 1988.

Beach, D.N. "Chimurenga: The Shona Rising of 1896-7." **Journal of African History** 20. 3 (1979): 395-420.

Bhabha, Homi K. "Foreword: Remembering Fanon - Self, Psyche and the Colonial Condition." **Black Skin, White Masks**. By Frantz Fanon. Trans. Charles Lam Markmann. London: Pluto Press, 1986.

- - -. Introduction, "Narrating the Nation." **Nation and Narration**. Ed. H. K. Bhabha. London: Routledge, 1990.

Boehmer, Elleke. "Stories of Women and Mothers: Gender and Nationalism in the Early Fiction of Flora Nwapa." **Motherlands: Black Women's Writing from Africa, the Caribbean and South Asia**. Ed. S. Nasta. London: The Women's Press, 1991.

- - -. "Transfiguring: Colonial Body into Postcolonial Narrative." **Novel: A Forum on Fiction** 26. 3 (1993): 268-277.

Bosman, Brenda. "A Correspondence Without Theory: Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*." **Current Writing** 2 (1990): 91-100.

Brooks, Peter. **Body Work: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative**. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993.

Bulhan, Hussein Abdilahi. **Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression**. New York: Plenum Press, 1985.

Busia, Abena P.A. "Rebellious Women: Fictional Biographies - Nawal el Sa'adawi's *Women at Point Zero* and Mariama Ba's *So Long a Letter*." *Motherlands: Black Women's Writing from Africa, the Caribbean and South Asia*. Ed. S. Nasta. London: Women's Press, 1991.

Caute, David. *Fanon*. London: Fontana, 1970.

Chabal, Patrick. *Amilcar Cabral: Revolutionary Leadership and People's War*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983.

Chavunduka, G.L. "Witchcraft and the Law in Zimbabwe." *Zambezia* viii. ii (1980): 129-147.

Dangarembga, Tsitsi. *Nervous Conditions*. London: Women's Press, 1988.

Davidson, Basil. *The People's Cause: A History of Guerillas in Africa*. Essex: Longman, 1983.

de Waal, Victor. *The Politics of Reconciliation: Zimbabwe's First Decade*. New Jersey: Africa World Press, 1990.

du Bois, W.E. *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York: The New American Library, 1961.

Eakin, P.J. *Fictions in Autobiography: Studies in the Art of Self-Invention*. New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1985.

Eley, Geoff. "Review Essay onalism and Social History." *Social History* 6. 1 (1981): 83-105.

Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skins, White Masks*. Trans. Charles Lam Markmann. London: Pluto Press, 1986.

- - -, *The Wretched of the Earth*. Trans. Constance Farrington. London: Penguin, 1990.

- - -, *Towards the African Revolution: Political Essays*. Trans. Haakon Chevalier. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1964.

Flockemann, Miki. "Not-Quite Insiders and Not-Quite Outsiders: The 'Process of Womanhood' in *Beka Lamb*, *Nervous Conditions* and *Daughters of the Twilight*." *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 27. 1 (1992): 37-47.

Foster, Kevin. "Soul-Food for the Starving: Dambudzo Marechera's *House of Hunger*." *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 27. 1 (1992): 58 -70.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. London: Penguin, 1977.

Frederikse, Julie. *None But Ourselves: Masses vs. Media in the Making of Zimbabwe*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1982.

Garlake, P.S. "Prehistory and Ideology in Zimbabwe." *Past and Present in Zimbabwe*. Ed. J.D.Y. Peel & T.O. Ranger. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1982.

Gates, Henry Louis, Jr. *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism*. New York: Oxford UP, 1988.

Geertz, Clifford. *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali*. New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1980.

George, Rosemary Marangoly & Scott, Helen. "An Interview with Tsitsi Dangarembga." *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 26. 3 (1993): 309-319.

Gikandi, Simon. *Reading Chinua Achebe: Language and Ideology in Fiction*. London: James Currey, 1991.

Goody, Jack & Watt, Ian. "The Consequences of Literacy." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* V (1962-1963): 304-345.

Hammond-Tooke, David. *Rituals and Medicines*. Johannesburg: AD. Donker, 1989.

Hobsbawm, Eric. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983.

Hofmeyr, Isabel. "*I Am the New Man and You Are the New Woman*: The Iconography of the Guerilla in Some Recent Zimbabwean Poetry." *English Academy Review* 3 (1985): 51-63.

Hove, Chenjerai. *Bones*. Harare: Baobab, 1988.

- - -. "Literary Control: The Fate of Literary Cockroaches." Conference paper to The Literary Environment. Harare: Zimbabwe International Book Fair, 1992.

Jameson, Fredric. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. London: Methuen, 1981.

JanMohammed, Abdul. "The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature." *"Race", Writing and Difference*. Ed. H.L. Gates, Jr. Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1985.

Kaarsholm, Preben. "From Decadence to Authenticity and Beyond: Fantasies and Mythologies of War in Rhodesia and Zimbabwe, 1965-1985." *Cultural Struggle and Development in Southern Africa*. Ed. P. Kaarsholm. London: James Currey, 1991.

Kipnis, Laura. "(Male) Desire and (Female) Disgust: Reading *Hustler*." *Cultural Studies*. Ed. C. Nelson & P. Treichler. New York: Routledge, 1992.

Kriger, Norma. "Popular Struggles in the Zimbabwean War of National Liberation." *Cultural Struggle and Development in Southern Africa*. Ed. P. Kaarsholm. London: James Currey, 1991.

- - -. **Zimbabwe's Guerilla War: Peasant Voices.** Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992.

Laclau, Ernesto. **Politics & Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism - Socialism - Populism.** London: Verso Books, 1977.

Lan, David. **Guns and Rain: Guerillas and Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe.** London: James Currey, 1985.

Lawyers Committee for Human Rights. **Zimbabwe: Wages of War - A Report on Human Rights.** New York: Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, 1986.

Lazarus, Neil. "Disavowing Decolonization: Fanon, Nationalism and the Problematic of Representation in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse." **Research in African Literatures** 24, 3 (1993): 69-98.

- - -. **Resistance in Postcolonial African Fiction** New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.

Macdonald, Sharon. "Drawing the Lines - Gender, Peace and War: An Introduction." **Images of War: Cross-Cultural & Historical Perspectives.** Ed. S. Macdonald, P. Holden & S. Ardener. London: Macmillan Education Limited, 1987.

Mafico, T. J. "Witchcraft: Belief and Realities: A Debate." **Zambezia** ii. III (1986): 119-137.

Mandaza, Ibbo. "Introduction: The Political Economy of Transition." **Zimbabwe: The Political Economy in Transition 1980-1986.** Ed. I. Mandaza. Dakar: CODESRIA, 1986.

Marechera, Dambudzo. **The Black Insider.** Harare: Baobab, 1990.

- - -. **The House of Hunger.** London: Heinemann, 1993.

- - -. **Mindblast.** Harare: College Press, 1984.

Martin, David & Johnson, Phyllis. **The Struggle for Zimbabwe: The Chimurenga War.** Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1981.

McClintock, Anne. "Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family." **Feminist Review** 44 (1993): 61-80

McLoughlin, T.O. "Men At War: Writers and Fighters in Recent Zimbabwean Fiction." **Current Writing** 3 (1991): 147-155.

McWilliams, Sally. "Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*: At the Crossroads of Feminism and Post-colonialism." **World Literature Written in English** 31, 11 (1991): 103-112.

Monroe, William. "Performing Persons: A Locus of Connection for Medicine and Literature."

Literature." **The Body and the Text: Comparative Essays in Literature and Medicine.** Ed. W. Aycock & B. Clarke. Texas: Texas Tech. UP, 1990.

Mouffe, Chantal. "Hegemony and New Political Subjects: Towards a New Concept of Democracy." **Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture.** Trans. S. Gray. Ed. L. Grossberg & C. Nelson. London: Macmillan, 1988.

Mudimbe, V.Y. **The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge.** Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1988.

Nairn, Tom. **The Break-up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism.** London: New Left Books, 1977.

Nash, Catherine. "Remapping and Renaming: New Cartographies of Identity, Gender and Landscape in Ireland." **Feminist Review** 44 (1992): 39-57.

Nasta, Susheila, ed. **Motherlands: Black Women's Writing from Africa, the Caribbean and South Asia.** London: Women's Press, 1991.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o. **Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language and African Literature.** London: James Currey, 1986.

- - -. **Writers in Politics.** London: Heinemann, 1981.

O'Erian, Anthony. "Against the Democracy Police: The Contradictions of Nation Language in Dambudzo Marechera's *House of Hunger*." Conference paper to the History Workshop. Johannesburg: U. of the Witwatersrand, 1994.

Phimister, Ian. "The Combined and Contradictory Inheritance of the Struggle against Colonialism." **Zimbabwe's Prospects: Issues of Race, Class, State and Capital in Southern Africa.** Ed. C. Stoneman. London: Macmillan, 1988.

Rajan, Rajeswari Sunder. **Real and Imagined Women: Gender, Culture and Postcolonialism.** London: Routledge, 1993.

Ranger, Terence. "The Death of Chaminuka: Spirit Mediums, Nationalism and the Guerilla War in Zimbabwe." **African Affairs** 81. 324 (1982): 349-371.

- - -. **Peasant Consciousness and Guerilla War in Zimbabwe: A Comparative Study.** London: James Currey, 1985.

- - -. **Revolt in Southern Rhodesia 1896-97: A Study in African Resistance.** London: Heinemann, 1967.

Riemenschneider, Dieter. "Short Fiction from Zimbabwe." **Research in African Literatures** 20. 3 (1989): 401-411.

Samuel, R. & Thompson, P. **The Myths We Live By**. London: Routledge, 1990.

Samupindi, Charles. **Pawns**. Harare: Baobab, 1992.

Sanders, David with Carver, Richard. **The Struggle for Health: Medicine and the Politics of Underdevelopment**. London: Macmillan, 1985.

Schmidt, Elizabeth. **Peasants, Traders, and Wives: Shona Women in the History of Zimbabwe, 1870-1939**. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1992.

Scott, J.C. **Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance**. Connecticut: Yale UP, 1985.

Slemon, Stephen. "Monuments of Empire: Allegory/Counter Discourse/Post-Colonial Writing." **Kunapipi** 9. 3 (1987): 1-17.

Sommer, Doris. "Allegory and Dialectics: A Match Made in Romance." **Boundary 2** 18. 1 (1991): 60-82.

Soyinka, Wole. "The Writer in a Modern African State." **The Writer in Modern Africa**. Ed. P. Wastberg. Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1968.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. **The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues**. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Staunton, Irene. **Mothers of the Revolution**. Harare: Baobab, 1990.

Stoneman, Colin & Cliffe, Lionel. **Zimbabwe: Politics, Economics and Society**. London: Pinter, 1989.

Stratton, Florence. "The Shallow Grave: Archetypes of Female Experience in African Fiction." **Research in African Literatures** 19. 2 (1988): 142-168.

Sreet, Brian. **Literacy in Theory and Practice**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

Thomas, Sue. "Killing the Hysteric in the Colonised's House: Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*." **Journal of Commonwealth Literature** 27. 1 (1992): 26-36.

Vaughan, Megan. **Curing their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness**. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991.

Veit-Wild, Flora. **Dambudzo Marechera: A Source Book on his Life and Work**. Harare: U. of Zimbabwe, 1992.

- - -, "Dances with *Bones*: Hove's Romanticised Africa." **Research in African Literatures**

24. 3 (1993): 5-12.

- - -. **Patterns of Poetry**. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1988.

- - -. **Teachers, Preachers and Non-Believers: A Social History of Zimbabwean Literature**. Harare: Baobab Books, 1993.

White, Hayden. **The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation**. Maryland: John Hopkins UP, 1987.

White, Lan. "War Poem." **Southern African Review of Books** 3. 13 (1990): 3-4.

Wolf, Naomi. **The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are Used against Women**. New York: Anchor Books, 1992.

Wylie, Dan. "Language Thieves: English-Language Strategies in Two Zimbabwean Novellas." **English in Africa** 18. 2 (1991): 39-62.

Young, James E. "Interpreting Literary Testimony: A Preface to Rereading Holocaust Diaries and Memoirs." **New Literary History** 18. 2 (1987): 403-423.

Zahar, Renate. **Frantz Fanon: Colonialism and Alienation**. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974.

Author:Taitz, Laurice.

Name of thesis:Where once our heroes danced there is nothing but a hideous stain: nationalism and contemporary Zimbabwean literature.

PUBLISHER:

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

©2015

LEGALNOTICES:

Copyright Notice: All materials on the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg Library website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be distributed, transmitted, displayed or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Disclaimer and Terms of Use: Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page)for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

The University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the Library website.