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DISPLACEMENT, IDENTITY AND FICTIONAL FORMATION IN SELECTED RECENT ZIMBABWEAN NOVELS

RANKA PRIMORAC

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ABSTRACT

The thesis analyses narrative displacement in relation to identity construction and fictional formation in selected recent Zimbabwean novels in English: Chenjerai Hove's *Bones* (1988), *Shadows* (1991) and *Ancestors* (1996); Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988); Nozipo Maraire's *Zenzele* (1996); Shimmer Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns* (1989); Alexander Kanengoni's *Echoing Silences* (1997) and Yvonne Vera's *Nehanda* (1993), *Without a Name* (1994), *Under the Tongue* (1996), *Butterfly Burning* (1998) and *The Stone Virgins* (2002). Chapter One problematises the concept of fictional formation, and argues that these twelve novels – published in English after Zimbabwe's independence, and known and acclaimed both locally and internationally – are a key part of the continuity of the Zimbabwean pre-independence '*non-axiological*' novelistic formations. The thesis understands 'displacement' as a narratively-constructed movement across a boundary, and argues that identities produced by narrative fictional texts are closely bound up with the manner in which the texts construct such movement, and therefore also with the models of space-time that they bring into being. Chapters Two and Three problematise the notion of the textual boundary, and argue that semantic boundaries constructed by novels are always spatial, but that they are never *only* spatial – in other words, that novelistic space-times are inseparable from novelistic ideologies. Chapter Two situates the theoretical apparatus adopted by the thesis in relation to the existing critical frameworks for the reading of Zimbabwean fiction, while Chapter Three outlines a model of the wider intertextual/social context against which Zimbabwean fictional space-times may be viewed. Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven analyse displacement and narrative space-times in the novels themselves, grouping them according to chronology, the authors' gender and the spatio-temporal structuring of their narrative worlds. Among the concluding remarks contained in Chapter Eight is the view that these recent Zimbabwean novels may be read as expressions of the lack of certain basic spatio-temporal rights in post-independence Zimbabwe.

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS i

PROLOGUE iii

CHAPTER ONE
The Novel in a House of Stone: Recategorising Zimbabwean Fiction 1

CHAPTER TWO
Critical Frameworks for the Reading of Zimbabwean Fiction 28

CHAPTER THREE
Zimbabwean Novels and the Production of Space-time: Writing Against the Rhodesian Chronotope 57

CHAPTER FOUR
The Dead are Loved in a Different Way: Chenjerai Hove 82

CHAPTER FIVE
Stories of the Unsaid: Tsitsi Dangarembga and Nozipo Maraire 110

CHAPTER SIX
The Ambivalent Spaces of War: Shimmer Chinodya and Alexander Kanengoni 135

CHAPTER SEVEN
Crossing Into the Space-time of Memory: Yvonne Vera 159

CHAPTER EIGHT
Conclusion 189

APPENDIX 199

BIBLIOGRAPHY 204

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PROLOGUE

In 1958, a well-known researcher of African literatures attended a weekend course on 'Writing and Society in Africa,' held at the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia. It was a gathering of educators, authors, journalists and publishers. In the published report of the event, entitled 'African Writing Seen from Salisbury,'[1] Gerald Moore explains that lectures and discussions were organised around four main topics, yet he deems only two of those topics – the outputs of black Francophone and white Anglophone African writers – worthy of detailed comment. For him, the central question raised by the event was one of comparative evaluation, and the main part of his text is devoted to speculations about why the quality of black African writing in English lags behind that of French-speaking black writers from West Africa. Of the other two topics – the lecture on the traditional uses of the vernacular, delivered by a speaker called M. Mutswairo, and the problems of publishing and selling vernacular literature, discussed by representatives of Literature Bureaus – Moore says nothing. And there was nothing either he or the Salisbury gathering *could* have said about the subject-matter of this thesis, the Anglophone fiction produced by the natives of the country hosting the course. At the time, no substantial body of such texts existed.

And yet only twenty years later it was possible to see the same country in an entirely different literary perspective. In 1979, Musaemura Zimunya - a black Rhodesian postgraduate student at the University of Kent in Canterbury, on his way to becoming one of the most prominent poets and literary critics of independent Zimbabwe – published a review of the novel *Mapondera: Soldier of Zimbabwe*.[2] The novel had come out in America in 1978 and had been written in English by the Zimbabwean writer Solomon M. Mutswairo. Mutwairo was also the author of two novels in his native Shona published under the auspices of Rhodesia's Literature Bureau, and possibly the very speaker whose lecture Moore did not particularly remark on, two decades previously. In the review, Zimunya could confidently assert the existence and importance of both the vernacular and Anglophone literary

[1] G. Moore, 'African Writing Seen from Salisbury,' *Presence Africaine*, English edition, 3 (31), 1960, pp. 87-94.
[2] M. B. Zimunya, review of Solomon M. Mutswairo's *Mapondera: Soldier of Zimbabwe*, *Okike*, 15, 1979, pp. 104-106.

traditions in his country, and Mutswairo's place at the point of contact between the two. In the decades separating Moore's visit to Salisbury and Zimunya's stay in England, a small group of black Rhodesian novelists had reached international audiences by publishing in English and abroad. When the M.A. dissertation on Zimbabwean literature in English that Zimunya wrote at Kent was published in book form (as *Those Years of Drought and Hunger: The Birth of African Fiction in English*),[3] his approach resembled Moore's in that it sought to evaluate Zimbabwean novels in English and place them within the African novelistic canon.

Exactly a decade after Zimunya's review, and nine years into Zimbabwe's history as an independent country, a German literary researcher, Dieter Riemenschneider, was able to take both the existence of an English-language tradition and its centrality to the Zimbabwean national literary project for granted. Nevertheless, in an essay on short Zimbabwean fiction,[4] Riemenschneider uses a bibliography compiled by Zimunya and Rino Zhuwarara[5] as a starting point in emphasising (in a strangely non-literary turn of phrase) the astonishing speed of this development. 'Independence,' he states, 'did indeed bring about the firm establishment of Zimbabwean literature in English, which, incidentally, boasts one of the highest annual growth rates in Africa.'[6]

In the third decade of Zimbabwe's independence, the recurring motifs highlighted above - the separation of vernacular and Anglophone fiction, the centrality of English-language writing and the speed of its literary-historical process, and the critical efforts at canon-forming evaluation - continue to resonate within academic research into Zimbabwean fiction. They are also present in the pages that follow, where I question and discuss some of their historical and theoretical implications. Juxtaposing the perspectives of researchers writing from different spatio-temporal and cultural locations, such as Moore, Zimunya and Riemenschneider, might also produce a sense of displacement. The displacement of characters in Zimbabwean narratives in English, and some of the meanings it produces, is the central topic of this thesis. It will be seen that textual displacement is linked to various other kinds of

[3] M. B. Zimunya, *Those Years of Drought and Hunger: The Birth of African Fiction in English* (Gweru, Mambo Press, 1982).
[4] D. Riemenschneider, 'Short Fiction from Zimbabwe,' *Research in African Literatures* 20 (3), 1989, pp. 401-411.
[5] R. Zhuwarara and M. Zimunya, 'Zimbabwean Literature in English, 1966-85: A Bibliography,' *Research in African Literatures* 18 (3), 1987, pp. 340-342.

displacement that are not purely discursively constituted. Among them are the geographical dispossession enforced by colonialism, the exile of texts and writers, the spatio-temporal circlings of those waging a guerrilla war, and the displacement of identities within a body involved in spirit possession. All of these are discussed in the chapters that follow.

[6] Reimenschneider, 'Short Fiction from Zimbabwe,' p. 401.

CHAPTER ONE

The Novel in a House of Stone: Recategorising Zimbabwean Fiction[1]

> The word, directed toward its object, enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgements and accents, weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group: and all this may crucially shape discourse, may complicate its expression and influence its entire stylistic profile. [2]

1.

There exist three bodies of novelistic texts that today's Zimbabwe could claim to have produced before 1980; I have found that critics most readily refer to them in terms of a series of intersections between language and race. The largest and oldest (dating back to the 1950s) of these bodies comprises novels written in African languages, Shona and Ndebele, by black African writers such as Patrick Chakaipa and Paul Chidyausiku, and published with the aid of the Rhodesia Literature Bureau. Then there were the English-language novels written by black novelists such as Stanlake Samkange and Dambudzo Marechera, and published outside the country in the 1960s and 70s in defiance of Rhodesian censorship laws. (At the time, the choice of English as a medium of novelistic expression amounted in Rhodesia to a declaration of intellectual and political equality.) Finally, there were novels written in the same period by white, English-speaking settlers who typically had careers in policing, the army and mining. Texts published in what was then Salisbury by the likes of Paul Tingay and Peter Armstrong had an openly propagandist function at a time of escalating civil war.

If we attempt a literary textual understanding of the period between 1950 and 1980 based on the novelistic and critical texts in existence *today*, then a Rhodesian writer's choice of novelistic language may be seen as the choice of a textual tradition. This may in itself appear to be reason enough for the three groupings to be considered

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[1] An earlier version of this chapter was published in *The Journal of Southern African Studies* 29 (1), 2003, pp. 49-62. I am grateful to Jocelyn Alexander the anonymous *JSAS* referees for their comments.
[2] M. M. Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel,' in M. Holquist (ed), *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin* (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1987), p. 276.

comparatively. But the depth and rigidity of social, political and cultural divisions in Rhodesia made such a study difficult before independence. Even after 1980, when majority rule and improved publishing conditions brought about a flurry of writing activity and an interest in Zimbabwe's written literary heritage, there is a sense in which academic research into the three novelistic groupings has itself remained divided. This chapter argues that the Zimbabwean pre-independence novelistic groupings need to be studied more systematically and comparatively than before. The chapter aims to outline a comparative methodology that might be used to re-categorise Zimbabwean fiction, and to use a new set of concepts in order to explain the thesis' selection of primary texts for analysis.

I do *not* mean to state that there exist no valid and useful comparative statements about texts belonging to the three traditions. What I *do* mean to imply is a twofold absence. *Firstly*, critical studies referring to groups of novels have concentrated on one or two traditions at a time. Some, driven partly by a need to systematise and evaluate, offer assessments of groups of texts based on their formal, thematic and aesthetic properties. These acknowledge the existence of multiple traditions by implication, passing reference and digression, but select a single fictional grouping as the main focus of their attention. (See, for example, studies by George Kahari, Musaemura Zimunya, Anthony Chennells and Rino Zhuwarara.)[3] Others, for example the work of Rudo Gaidzanwa and Flora Veit-Wild, who adopt a literary-sociological approach,[4] juxtapose texts written by black authors in different languages but do not discuss those authored by settlers. Yet others, such as Preben Kaarsholm's study of Rhodesian and Zimbabwean war novels,[5] refer to texts from all three groupings, but concentrate on those written in English. *Secondly*, the three fictional traditions have yet to be studied as *textual formations* – that is, not simply as

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[3] G. P. Kahari, *The Search For Zimbabwean Identity: An Introduction to the Black Zimbabwean Novel* (Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1980), *Aspects of the Shona Novel and Other Related Genres* (Gweru, Mambo Press, 1992) and *The Rise of the Shona Novel: A Study in Development, 1890-1984* (Gweru, Mambo
Press, 1995); Zimunya, *Those Years of Drought And Hunger*; A.J. Chennells, 'Settler Myths and the Southern Rhodesian Novel' (PhD thesis, University of Zimbabwe, 1982) and R. Zhuwarara, *Introduction to Zimbabwean Literature in English* (Harare, College Press, 2001).

[4] R. B. Gaidzanwa, *Images of Women in Zimbabwean Literature* (Harare, College Press, 1985); F. Veit-Wild, *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers: A Social History of Zimbabwean Literature* (Harare, Baobab Books, 1993).

[5] P. Kaarsholm, 'From Decadence to Authenticity and Beyond: Fantasies and Mythologies of War in Rhodesia and Zimbabwe, 1965-1985,' in P. Kaarsholm (ed), *Cultural Struggle & Development in Southern Africa* (Harare, Baobab Books, 1991), pp. 33 – 60.

strings of texts linked by language/race (and, in some studies, theme) and capable of becoming the objects of cumulative but nevertheless *individual* acts of interpretation, but as textual groupings potentially united *also* by sets of underlying structural/semantic and generic traits, which may be isolated and used as a basis of comparison with parallel traditions.

Section two of this chapter juxtaposes all three pre-independence novelistic groupings and the ways in which they have been studied. It attempts, furthermore, to read these traditions as *separate* but also *interrelated* textual formations whose ideological properties are determined not only by a combination of language, race and/or theme, but also by structure and, crucially, genre. It will be seen that there is as yet much that is unknown about the generic properties of Zimbabwean novels. This is especially true of the white settler novel, which has been studied by fewer researchers than the other traditions and has, for obvious ideological reasons, remained outside the syllabi of Zimbabwean schools. For this reason, my discussion of it remains more open-ended than that of the other groupings. I will argue that there is a need to study this tradition further, moving away from discussions of the convergence of discourses 'about Rhodesia' within this category of writing, and towards sketching an outline of the body of texts that might be regarded as part of the fictional history of today's Zimbabwe and included among the precursors of the nation's literary canon. However, no more than a preliminary description will be possible here.

Applied, as above, to novels, I use the term 'ideology' in the Bakhtinian sense: informed in particular by Bakhtin's long essay 'Discourse in the Novel,' this usage understands it to mean a pattern of evaluative accents configuring the combination of discourses that make up a novel. So understood, textual ideologies (or 'world views') are inseparable from novelistic meaning; they should therefore not be regarded as something stable or 'objective,' but as semantic complexes constructed dialogically under specific historical circumstances. A Bakhtinian concept of the novel is employed here for several reasons. Firstly, it links literary history, ideology and *genre*, something that I argue still remains to be done in the context of Zimbabwean literature. Secondly, the inter-relatedness of the pre-independence fictional formations I refer to above may be seen as part of an ongoing process of *dialogue*,

not only between texts and readers, but also, in the manner described in the epigraph above, between individual texts and broader textual formations. Thirdly, establishing the outline of such an intertextual dialogue enables the critic to see the Zimbabwean literary-historical process in terms of categories which, though obviously only to an extent, go beyond language and race. To attempt to establish such categories is the chief aim of this chapter. Their introduction would eventually facilitate the writing of a historical survey of twentieth-century Zimbabwean fiction that would reject as its central organising principle a set of categories inherited from the country's colonial past. Although the writing such a survey is not my present purpose, in section five below I use the categories established in the rest of this chapter to explain the selection of primary texts that this thesis will focus on.

This is not to say that I envisage a survey that could afford to *ignore* categories tied to race, language and their socio-ideological implications, nor do I propose to ignore them in this thesis. I simply wish to outline a possibility of going *beyond* them, by bringing to bear on the study of Zimbabwean fiction (and thus superimposing *across* them, as it were) a set of categories of an entirely different order and origin. My approach is informed by the concept of literary *function*, as formulated by Jan Mukarovský[6] and applied historically by the Croatian critic Aleksandar Flaker in his 1976 book *Stilske formacije* [*Stylistic Formations*].[7] In section three below, I make an attempt to appropriate the conceptual apparatus Flaker applies to the literatures of Eastern Europe and use it in the Zimbabwean context, for reasons which I will detail below.

As a literary historian writing in the context of former Yugoslavia, Flaker did not escape an awareness of the literary-historical conventions that extended *across languages*. In this chapter, I make use of the manner in which the concept of function – which is not tied to either language or race – can, via the concept of stylistic formation, be used as the basis of literary periodisation, and therefore the writing of a

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[6] See J. Mukarovský, *Aesthetic Function, Norm and Value as Social Facts* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan, 1979 [1970]).

[7] A. Flaker, *Stilske formacije* (Zagreb, Sveucilisna naklada Liber, 1986 [1976]). Flaker, a comparative literature scholar and expert in Russian literature was born in Poland in 1924. He is a prominent member of the first scholarly generation of the Zagreb school of literary theory. For a short description of the Zagreb school in English, see E. Mozejko's entry on pp. 94-95 of the *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory* (I. R. Makaryk (ed), Toronto, University of Toronto, 1993). Translations of Flaker's work in this chapter are my own.

literary history which would include texts in several languages. Flaker's typology of social functions of literature is a typology of potential practical *uses* of fictional texts. Below, I also use Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia to distinguish between what Flaker calls the *axiological* and *socio-analytical* literary functions.

Arguably, the cultures and literatures of central and eastern European nations that Flaker discusses resemble African ones in that they experienced the rise of bourgeois nationalism long after the western European countries had solved their 'national questions.' That means that their nationalist/cultural elites were *simultaneously* aware of the possibility of striving for 'horizontal' continuity - that with the established western cultural traditions and canons (in the case of the novel, most of the Bakhtinian 'already spoken' was also *foreign*), *and* of the need to mobilise all available resources in the service of strengthening/inventing 'vertical' continuity with locally produced texts and traditions, used in building one's *own* nation. Flaker uses the term 'accelerated development' to describe the cumulative effect of some of the hybrid genres and textual configurations which resulted from the tension between the two possibilities. I try to show here that an analogous kinds of textual striving may have come into being in Rhodesia and Zimbabwe.

Still as regards Flaker's relevance to the Zimbabwean context, his work grew partially out of a need to *defend* fiction and counter the kind of Marxist theory exemplified by the direct causality of Plekhanov's socio-genetic interpretations of literature. This kind of thinking, ironically, resurfaced in Zimbabwe in the 'socialist' 1980s. In the studies of Zimbabwean literature, the need – expressed by Bakhtin in the 1930s – to 'overcome the divorce between an abstract "formal" approach and an equally abstract "ideological" approach'[8] is, I would argue, still urgent. Flaker's work, which makes use of Bakhtin's study of Dostoyevsky, is partly an attempt to construct a model of literary history that would overcome this divorce. It is, like Bakhtin's, compatible with the theoretical standpoint which regards novels as semiotic mechanisms bringing into being possible worlds, comparable with but not ontologically subordinated to other such worlds (including whatever is held to constitute the 'real' one).

[8] Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel,' p. 259.

All of this does not mean that I consider a direct application of Flaker's conceptual apparatus to the Zimbabwean context to be either possible or desirable. Aspects of his work needed to be modified and elaborated in order to be applicable to a colonial/postcolonial context. I will therefore co-ordinate the key points made in sections three and five about the ways in which Zimbabwean fiction relates to extra-fictional events and discourses (and on which the assignment of Flakerian functions depends), with statements made on the same subject by other authors, most notably Anthony Chennells, Emmanuel Chiwome, George Kahari and Flora Veit-Wild. Section four of this text contains a reading of three pre-independence novelistic texts in the light of concepts outlined in previous sections, whereas section five turns to the post-independence period. If the basic outline of my argument is accepted, then the Zimbabwean literary-historical process will emerge as neither linear, nor determined by chronology. I also hope to highlight the potential value of bringing different kinds of 'periphery' (here, Eastern Europe and Zimbabwe) into dialogue, despite the irony contained in the difficulty of bypassing the mediation of the 'centre' (namely, Britain).

2.

The first novel written in Shona, Solomon Mutswairo's *Feso*, appeared in 1956. For the period between that date and 1981[9] George Kahari's *Plots and Characters in Shona Fiction* lists 71 novels, written by 46 authors and published by four publishing houses.[10] The most prolific and prominent author was Patrick Chakaipa who wrote five novels in the 1950s and 60s. Kahari's *The Rise of the Shona Novel* mentions a total of 44 Ndebele novels published during the same period.[11] Such numbers would not have been possible had the creation and publication of novels in Shona and Ndebele not been facilitated by the Rhodesia Literature Bureau.

The Bureau, founded in the early 1950s, had an ambiguous role: it functioned as a literary agency with an inbuilt, multi-layered censorship mechanism.[12] The Bureau

[9] The period, that is, spanning the era of the disappointment of black reformist hopes tied to the political experiment that was the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, the subsequent rise of right-wing Rhodesian and militant black nationalisms and independence.
[10] G. Kahari, *Plots and Characters in Shona Fiction 1956-1984* (Gweru, Mambo Press, 1990).
[11] Kahari, *The Rise of the Shona Novel*, p. 3.
[12] The role of the Bureau is described by Veit-Wild in *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers*, pp. 72-74, and E. M. Chiwome in *A Social History of the Shona Novel* (Harare, Juta, 1996), pp. 21-47. Chiwome distinguishes between four kinds of censorship imposed by the Bureau, only one of them direct.

encouraged would-be writers through literary contests and sponsored the publication of manuscripts through commercial publishers. Its declared aim was to promote literacy, create a body of work in the native languages and transform Shona and Ndebele into fully-fledged parts of school curricula (schools became the greatest market for Bureau-sponsored books). At the same time, however, it controlled the structure and thematic range of such manuscripts in order to discourage Shona and Ndebele texts politically unacceptable to the state. The Bureau's editors encouraged narratives constructed around elaborate but schematic plots dealing with love, crime and family intrigue. It is difficult not to agree with Emmanuel Chiwome's denunciation of the attitude of its officials as paternalistic: on the eve of independence (and at the end of the decade which saw the publication overseas of internationally acclaimed English-language texts by writers such as Marechera and Mungoshi), the Bureau's Walter Krog still found it possible to write a report on the 'progress' of Shona and Ndebele literature.[13] A speaker at a Bureau-sponsored conference over a decade earlier advised would-be black African writers to limit their ambition and not to aspire to prominence overseas.[14] It was impossible for a black-authored manuscript to go directly to the publisher, bypassing the Bureau;[15] all entries to the Bureau were vetted by Native Commissioners.[16]

This, combined with the writers' missionary-school education, meant that a large majority[17] of novels in Shona and Ndebele lend themselves to being read as vehicles of moral instruction in the service of Christianity, and therefore the hegemonic settler discourse.[18] This is not to say that this is a body of texts that is monolithic; neither are critical assessments of it. George Kahari, who was the first to research the Shona novel systematically (and whose detailed description/translation of its various aspects allow the non-speakers of Shona to have some insight into the texts' concerns, style and construction), has introduced several categorisations. His basic division, between

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[13] W. Krog, 'The Progress of Shona and Ndebele Literature,' *NADA, The Annual of the Ministry of Home Affairs* 12 (1) 1979, pp. 66-71. See also J. W. Krog, 'Ex-Messenger Wins Top Literary Award,' *NADA, The Rhodesian Ministry of Internal Affairs Annual* 9 (5), 1978, pp. 523-524.
[14] See B. H. Atkinson, 'Technique in the Writing of the Short Story,' in W. Krog (ed), *African Literature in Rhodesia* (Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1966), pp. 26-43.
[15] Interview with T. Tsodzo, quoted in Chiwome, *A Social History of the Shona Novel*, p. 24.
[16] See Veit-Wild, *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers*, p. 74.
[17] For a quantitative assessment, see Kahari, *The Rise of the Shona Novel*, p. 363, and *Aspects of the Shona Novel*, p. 101. Veit-Wild's *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers* and Chiwome's *A Social History of the Shona Novel* are less specific but are in general agreement.
[18] See Veit-Wild, *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers*, p. 229.

Old World and New World narratives is tied to theme and setting; a plot typology in *Aspects of the Shona Novel* distinguishes between romances, epic novels, picaresques, satires, historical novels, social novels, thrillers and detective novels. Although the categories overlap, the typology is suggestive. The presence of the last two categories seems especially interesting, since they indicate a link with European popular genres, detectable also in settler fiction.[19] The predominant didacticism of the pre-independence novel in the African languages, however, appears to be beyond dispute.

Black Rhodesians who authored novels in English rather than in Shona or Ndebele resembled in their social origins the authors of the vernacular novel in that they, too, were part of the gradually expanding, missionary-educated black middle-class elite.[20] The first Anglophone black novel to be published in book form inside the country was Geoffrey Ndhlala's *Jikinya*, which came out in 1979. But in the late 1960s and the 1970s (at the time when the guerrilla war intensified and eventually came to dominate every aspect of Rhodesia's daily life), seven black authors published a total of eleven novels outside their native country and in the coloniser's language. The most prolific was Stanlake Samkange who wrote three novels in the pre-independence period; the best known internationally is still Dambudzo Marechera.

Like the non-fictional texts written by Zimbabwean black nationalists in the same period, these novels escaped the constraints imposed by both the censorship mechanism of the Rhodesian state[21] and the Literature Bureau, and gained potential access to Anglophone audiences world-wide. By the same token, however, they became inaccessible to the vast majority of readers inside Rhodesia - until after independence, when most of them were re-issued locally. These novels can therefore now be seen as having been written simultaneously for 'real,' physically existing, foreign audiences and for an imagined, 'virtual' readership in a future, free Zimbabwe. It is this rejection of the physical realities in Rhodesia and the faith (implied in the novels' very existence) in the possibility of unimpeded dialogue

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[19] Kahari, *Aspects of the Shona Novel*, pp. 143-144.

[20] Although, as Flora Veit-Wild has shown, those writing primarily in English were educationally the elite of the elite. See F. Veit-Wild, *Survey of Zimbabwean Writers – Educational and Literary Careers* (Bayreuth, Bayreuth African Studies, 1992), p. 33.

[21] On the legal implications of censorship both before and after independence, see B. Patel, 'Freedom of Literary Expression and Censorship in Zimbabwe,' *Zambezia* 24 (1), 1997, pp. 51-67.

between text and local readers, that forms a large part of the reason why they should be seen as the seedbed of an unfettered national literary tradition.

And yet, despite such faith, there exists a curious thematic absence within this grouping of novels. Veit-Wild's *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers* divides Zimbabwean writers who published before independence into two generations. The first – comprising Stanlake Samkange, Solomon Mutswairo and Ndabaningi Sithole – wrote novels which combined a Christian moral stance with political judgement.[22] Novels by the second generation – Wilson Katiyo, Dambudzo Marechera, Charles Mungoshi, Stanley Nyamfukudza and Geoffrey Ndhlala - are harder to categorise, though a sense of greater artistic importance is connected to them. Viet-Wild thus conveys an impression of development compressed into a short time period.[23] Moreover, with the exception of Ndhlala (whose *Jikinya* revives the moralism of the previous generation), the novels by authors of the second generations share two broad similarities: firstly, they all create fictional worlds which expose, to varying extents, some of the social and economic mechanisms on which the functioning of a colonial society is based, without subjecting them to prolonged authorial commentary. Secondly, as post-independence Zimbabwean critics have noted (and often disapproved of),[24] there is in many of them a notable bleakness of outlook and lack of optimism about the future. But despite the contrast between the generations, what connects all the pre-independence novels in English is an absence of direct thematisation of the military aspects of Zimbabwe's guerrilla war and those waging it. Pre-independence black novels in English do not describe the war through the eyes of characters directly involved in the fighting or through a quasi-impartial, omniscient narrator.

Most black anglophone writers were not directly connected to the struggle.[25] Partly, however, the thematic absence may be explained by viewing the pre-independence Zimbabwean novel in English as a form of writing *back*. In a paradoxical inversion

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[22] See Veit-Wild, *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers*, chapters 10 – 13. I have excluded authors whose texts declare themselves as non-fiction.
[23] See Veit-Wild, *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers*, p. 267.
[24] See, for example, R. Zhuwarara, 'Zimbabwean Fiction in English,' *Zambezia* 14 (2), 1987, pp. 131-147, and V. G. Chivaura, 'Zimbabwean Literature in English: Its Place, Status and Identity in the History, Culture and the Arts of Zimbabwe,' in T. Spencer-Walters (ed), *Orality, Literacy and the Fictive Imagination* (Troy, Michigan, Bedford Publishers, 1998), pp. 341-368.
[25] See Veit-Wild, *Survey of Zimbabwean Writers*, pp. 48-49.

of a famous post-colonial term, these novels may be read as answers (in the coloniser's language and from a position of displacement) to fictional manifestations of the Rhodesian discourse – to a permutation, that is, of the discourse of the empire which had assumed a local guise and was manifesting itself partly in local languages. One such manifestation was the novel in Shona and Ndebele, whose relative uniformity of outlook was countered by the black Anglophone novel's formal diversity and by the absence from the novels by the second generation of writers of explicit moral or political evaluation. The other was the white settler novel – the only pre-independence novelistic grouping that dealt freely and explicitly with the Zimbabwean guerrillas and their struggle. The settler novelists' appropriation of the armed struggle as a subject matter was, before independence, effectively countered by black novelists' rejection of it. They chose to concentrate on its social causes instead.

In 'Settler Myths and the Southern Rhodesian Novel,' Anthony Chennells analyses dozens of white-authored, English-language novels published in several countries between the 1890s and 1978 and thematically connected to the geographical area of today's Zimbabwe. He isolates in them a validating mythology used by white settlers to justify their presence and behaviour in the region. It is the main thrust of Chennells' argument that this mythology had no basis in historical truth. His other work[26] on the subject emphasises the same point and retains the thematic approach. The most recent text, 'Rhodesian Discourse, Rhodesian Novels and the Zimbabwe Liberation War' makes it clear that the divergence between fact and myth was not due to the ignorance of isolated individuals but a deliberate attempt at closure by a discourse which sought to suppress all counter-discourses. Chennells' criteria of text selection and, by implication, definition of 'Rhodesian novel,' are retained by Preben Kaarsholm in his study of the war novel.

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[26] See J. Pichanick, A.J. Chennells and L. B. Rix, *Rhodesian Literature in English – A Bibliography (1890-1974/5)*, (Salisbury, Mambo Press, 1977) and A. J. Chennells: 'The Treatment of the Rhodesian War in Recent Rhodesian Novels,' *Zambezia* 5 (2), 1977, pp. 177-202; review of *The Yellow Mountain* by L. Burton, *Spotted Soldiers* by C.E. Dibb and *Operation Zambezi: The Raid Into Zambia* by P. Armstrong, *Zambezia* 7 (1), 1979, pp. 121-124; 'The White Rhodesian Novel,' *New Statesman*, 90 (7), 1979, pp. 872-874 and 'Rhodesian Discourse, Rhodesian Novels and the Zimbabwe Liberation War,' in N. Bhebhe and T. Ranger (eds), *Society in Zimbabwe's Liberation War* (Harare, University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1995), pp. 102-129.

This chapter will use the term 'Rhodesian' to refer to the *settler* novel – more specifically, to the self-enclosed body of novels written by white settlers and published *inside* Rhodesia between the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) and independence proper. Though some settler novelists published in two or even three countries, after 1965 'a stricter control on foreign currency allowances reduced the number of imported novels' and '[i]n the absence of anything else to read, Rhodesian novelists read one another's works.'[27] Settler writers, texts, readers and acts of reception within Rhodesia therefore became united by a sense of exclusion from the outside world (brought about by the international economic sanctions and the escalating guerrilla war). However, although such texts may have been *intended* for white audiences, they were also *potentially* available to non-white Anglophone readers inside the country at a time when it was harder for imported texts to filter through. The novelist Yvonne Vera, for example, remembers reading Daniel Carney's *Whispering Death*, a copy of which she found in the public library of the Bulawayo township of Luveve where she grew up, before independence.[28]

Under such conditions, mostly male[29] settler novelists published (sometimes through small, independent outlets set up for the purpose by the authors themselves)[30] novels that featured Rhodesian characters and were often, but *not always*, set in Rhodesia. If they were successful, they could hope to sell three to five thousand copies at the most.[31] Some of the locally published settler texts I have had access to (I exclude children's stories)[32] have not previously been studied. But – and this is of interest to

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[27] Chennells, 'Settler Myths and the Southern Rhodesian Novel,' p. xv.
[28] R. Primorac, interview with Yvonne Vera, Bulawayo, 25 January 2001. The relevant part of the interview, as well as the parallel segments from my interview with Shimmer Chinodya which took place later in the same year, are reproduced in the Appendix.
[29] The implications of their maleness are discussed by P. Kaarsholm in 'From Decadence to Authenticity and Beyond.' The vast majority of black pre-independence novelists were also men.
[30] Such as Penn Medos Publishing and Welston Press.
[31] I am grateful to Barbie Keene, formerly a bookshop owner and publishers' representative in Harare, for lending me out-of-print books from her library and discussing them with me.
[32] They are: D. Carney, *The Whispering Death* (Salisbury, Graham Publishing, 1976) (originally published in Salisbury by The College Press in 1969); P. Stiff, *The Rain Goddess* (London, New English Library, 1976) (originally published in Salisbury by Jacaranda Press in 1973); R. Early, *A Time of Madness* (Salisbury, Graham Publishing, 1977); L. Burton, *The Yellow Mountain* (Salisbury, Regal Publishers, 1978); C.E. Dibb, *Spotted Soldiers* (Salisbury, Leo Publications, 1987); P. Armstrong, *Operation Zambezi – The Raid Into Zambia* (Salisbury, Welston Press, 1979); K. Walker, *The Barrier* (Salisbury, Galaxie Press, 1972); P. Armstrong, *The Iron Trek* (Salisbury, Welston Press, 1978); D. Carney, *Under a Raging Sky* (Salisbury, Graham Publishing, 1980); P. Tingay, *Night of the Rukh* (Salisbury, Graham Publishing, 1975); P. Tingay, *Emerald Run* (Salisbury, Galaxie Press, 1979); J. Watson, *Conspire To Kill* (Salisbury, Penn Medos Publishing, 1976); P. Armstrong, *Hawks of Peace* (Borrowdale [Salisbury], Welston Press, 1979) and P. Armstrong, *Cataclysm* (Borrowdale

me here - they *all* share a set of *textual* distinguishing features previously obscured by thematic reading. Firstly, they all have fast-paced, intricate plotting as the structural dominant. In this they resemble novels in Shona and Ndebele. Secondly, they are all linked to European popular genres.[33]

A discussion of white settler genres can here be entered into only briefly. The main plots of all the settler novels discussed here are shaped as quests, in which the heroes strive towards objects of value. This links them to imperial adventure fiction.[34] At the same time, however, there is among them no 'perfect' example of that or any one other genre. This is because they *all* have *multiple* plots; in each of them, various plot lines contain structural and thematic elements referring to *different* European popular genres. Thus settler quests for hidden treasures, goldmines, land or large sums of money often involve *also* finding and punishing perpetrators of crimes (e.g. 'terrorist' leaders), or uniting with an object of affection. It would be hard to claim for the Rhodesian novel any kind of generic purity because hybrid blends of elements derived from various genres are combined differently in each text. Some texts contain clusters of elements reminiscent of the thriller (*The Rain Goddess*, *A Time of Madness)*; the popular romance (*Spotted Soldiers)*; science fiction *(Hawks of Peace)* or a natural disaster narrative (*Cataclysm*). But none of them is *only* that, even though the presence of the Rhodesian mythology described by Chennells is detectable in all.

3.

In this section I turn to the problem of recategorising Zimbabwean pre-independence fiction. Unlike the work of African structuralist scholars such as Sunday Anozie,[35]

[Salisbury], Welston Press, 1980).This list does not aspire to being a complete bibliography of the locally published Rhodesian settler novel.

[33] This is in keeping with Chennells' passing remarks about some of the war novels (see, for example, 'The Treatment of the Rhodesian War in Recent Rhodesian Novels,' p. 201) and consistent with the findings of David Maughan-Brown's study of white-authored fiction dealing with colonial Kenya. See D. Maughan-Brown, *Land, Freedom and Fiction – History and Ideology in Kenya* (London, Zed Books, 1985).

[34] See E. Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 76.

[35] See S. O. Anozie, *Structural Models and African Poetics: Towards a Pragmatic Theory of Literature* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981).

the work of Aleksandar Flaker does not reduce the novel to a linguistic text message, and is interested in studying, intertextually and comparatively, historical change. Although Flaker's Marxism is evident in his book, his work differs also from the work of African Marxist critics. The continuity between metropolitan and African Marxist literary debates has been outlined by Georg M. Gugelberger.[36] In Africa, texts by Marxist critics have often been united by two similarities: a mimetic view of literature which sets fictional texts against ideologically privileged views of 'authentic reality,' and a separation of literary 'form' and 'content'[37] analogous to the opposition between 'empty' form and 'formless' ideology that Bakhtin speaks against in 'Discourse in the Novel.' Such a theoretical position has, inevitably, led to (prescriptively flavoured) critical disappointment with writers whose 'formal' mastery is seen to be in contradiction with the unacceptable 'content' of their texts. In such a context, adopting a Flakerian approach means rejecting repressive evaluation, and foregrounding instead the ideological dimension of genre.

Flaker uses the term 'stylistic formation' to refer to large intertextual groupings united by the presence of three interlocking sets of hierarchies: the generic, the structural/stylistic and the functional. The formation of realism is, for example, characterised by the dominance of prose genres, especially the novel. In realist novels, plot as a structural dominant becomes eclipsed by the prominence of socially and psychologically motivated characters, grouped and interrelated through complex networks of parallelisms and oppositions. Although such novelistic narratives are, like all texts, potentially multi-functional, they are particularly suited to *socio-analytical* functionality.

Flaker borrowed the concept of function itself from the Czech critic Jan Mukarzovský and his followers; my understanding of it here is informed by Raymond Williams' reading of Mukarzovský in *Marxism and Literature*.[38] Function, in this understanding, is not something *possessed* by a fictional text and therefore

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[36] G. M. Gugelberger, 'Marxist Literary Debates and Their Continuity in African Literary Criticism,' in G. M. Gugelberger (ed), *Marxism and African Literature* (Trenton, N.J, Africa World Press, 1985).
[37] Examples of both tendencies can be found in Gugelberger's *Marxism and African Literature* and Chidi Amuta's *The Theory of African Literature* (London and New Jersey, Institute for African Alternatives/Zed Books, 1989). In Zimbabwe, both were in evidence in the early critical reception of Dambudzo Marechera, to which *Emerging Perspectives on Dambudzo Marechera* (F. Veit-Wild and A. Chennells (eds); Trenton, NJ, and Asmara, Africa World Press, 1999) is in part a reaction.
[38] See R. Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 151-158.

'objectively' deducible from its structure or style. It is, rather, a text's potential to be used for a specific practical purpose, by a specific set of readers under particular historical circumstances. It may, therefore, be assessed and contested (by critics, or that other kind of professional readers of function, state censors) on the basis of juxtaposing a reading of dominant textual traits with a knowledge of the social context and the text's actual or projected readership. Flaker's typology lists five functions altogether. It sets the *expressive/impressive*, *socio-analytical*, *axiological* and *ludic* functions against the *aesthetic*. It refers to the first four as *social* functions and defines the *aesthetic* as a negation of immediate practical functionality due to a hypertrophy of aspects of a text's formal organisation.

I will here set aside the *ludic* and *expressive/impressive* functions. The former is linked by Flaker to popular genres and will become relevant in a future discussion of the white settler novel. The latter refers to a text's ability to provide information about its sender and/or receiver: it seems obvious that anyone familiar with the Zimbabwean context might easily arrive at a conclusion about the author's race and class based on a pre-independence novel's language, subject matter and theme alone. I will, instead, concentrate on the tension in the pre-independence texts between the dominant *axiological* function on the one hand, and *socio-analytical* and *aesthetic* on the other.

For Flaker, the *axiological* function is dominant in texts that lend themselves to being used as vehicles of moral or political evaluation, whereas *socio-analytical* functionality characterises those texts that use the analytical method and may thus become instruments of rational knowledge about society. Flaker does not give an explicit definition of 'analytical method,' although he implicitly associates 'analysis' with class analysis. Some elaboration is in order here. A potential for *socio-analytical* functionality may be understood to consist in a novel's separation of its semantic material into elements (characters, social groups, narrative space-time etc.) whose inter-relatedness is seen by the critic as articulating the process of social change at ground level. One might consider here, for example, Preben Kaarsholm's remark about some Zimbabwean texts' depiction of 'the brutal unevenness of settler-

colonial modernisation.'[39] I consider the presence of *socio-analytical* functionality to entail *also* the presence of Bakhtinian heteroglossia – the textual representation, that is, of a multiplicity of social discourses and the tensions/convergences among them. As the critical work of Chiwome, Chennells, Kahari and Veit-Wild indicates, such multiplicity is absent from the pre-independence settler novel and the novel in Shona and Ndebele. These novels can, instead, be seen as the vehicles of transmission of what Bakhtin would have called authoritative discourses. The two textual groupings conventionally divided by language and race can therefore be regarded as having an important aspect – a shared social function – in common. Because such novels account for a vast majority of Zimbabwe's pre-independence novelistic output, it might be said that the colonial period of Zimbabwe's novelistic history is marked by the dominance of a single, structurally and stylistically heterogeneous *axiological* functional grouping.

Differently from Flaker's analysis of the Eastern European nationalist novel as *axiological* (he shows how writers modified forms taken over from the West in order to put texts in the service of nation-building), there operated in pre-independence Zimbabwe not one but two competing nationalisms. Flora Veit-Wild's findings may be used as a guideline in asserting that, broadly speaking, the first generation of Anglophone black novelists sought, in terms of textual function, to fight fire with fire: their texts resist the Rhodesian discourse by means of direct moral and political counter-evaluation.[40] Because they offer, as it were, *their* version of both Christian and political morality, I would argue that these texts can be placed in the same functional grouping as the settler and the vernacular novelistic strands.

Quite differently, the small group of English-language novels by the second generation of black Zimbabwean writers broke new ground by inaugurating a canon that made a sharp turn away from immediate *axiological* functionality and became the kernel of a new textual tradition. I would argue that this tradition is marked by a strengthening of *aesthetic* and *socio-analytical* functionality, and that it connects the

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[39] P. Kaarsholm, review of F. Veit-Wild's *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers* and *Dambudzo Marechera: A Source Book on his Life and Work* in *Journal of Southern African Studies* 20 (2), 1994 p. 328. Arguably, Zimbabwean novels' socio-analytical potential entails the dimensions of race, generation and gender as well as class.

Zimbabwean novel with the mainstream of the African literary-historical process. The opposition between the Rhodesian and the African nationalist discourses thus further complicates Zimbabwe's pre-independence literary landscape by cutting across the borders of functional unities. The tension between the *socio-analytical* and *aesthetic* functionality in second-generation black Zimbabwean novels is best exemplified by the relative difference between fiction by Charles Mungoshi and Dambudzo Marechera.[41] (While it is easily described as polyphonic, Marechera's prose also fits Flaker's description of aesthetically-dominated texts whose formal complexity impedes easy communication and thus obstructs immediate social/practical functionality.) Because between them they also wrote poetry, short stories and plays (in the case of Mungoshi, in both Shona and English), and because they continued publishing after independence, they deserve to be regarded as the founders of a unique tradition within written Zimbabwean literature. Pointing as it did to a concept of freedom that went beyond mere political expediency, their *aesthetic/socio-analytical* functional formation was, in its opposition to the trilingual *axiological* functional conglomerate, truly revolutionary in the Zimbabwean context.[42] Because of its indebtedness to an alien tradition, the African novel is described by Simon Gikandi[43] as a genre in exile: doubly exiled, then, were the novels of the second generation black Anglophone elite in Rhodesia. They brought into being, in a series of imaginative acts, an emancipatory discourse not directly expressive of nationalist politics. Flaker's use of the term 'aesthetic revaluation' underscores the fact that texts that reject direct instrumentality may function as indirect but powerful ideological statements; Zimbabwe's tiny formation of aesthetically and analytically dominated fiction problematised the discourse of Zimbabwean nationalism long before its historiography did so.[44] The thematic

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[40] Generations of authors, however, do not translate neatly into generations of texts, and neither overlaps completely with a functional formation. Geoffrey Ndhlala's *Jikinya* is an example of a predominantly axiological text produced by a writer of the second generation.

[41] See C. Mungoshi, *Waiting for the Rain* (Harare, Zimbabwe Publishing House 1996 [1975]) and D. Marechera, *The House of Hunger* (London, Heinemann, 1993 [1978]) and *Black Sunlight* (London, Heinemann, 1980).

[42] The exact opposite, in fact, of unpatriotic, which is what Veit-Wild calls some of these texts in *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers*, p. 7.

[43] S. Gikandi, *Reading Chinua Achebe* (London, James Currey, 1991), p. 14.

[44] See B. Raftopoulos, 'Problematising Nationalism in Zimbabwe: A Historiographical Review,' *Zambezia* 26 (2), 1999, pp. 115-135.

absence referred to above thus acquires the status of a deliberate shifting of focus.[45] Didacticism and propaganda are, after all, best countered either by analysis, or, more radically, a text's insistence on drawing attention to its own construction.

4.

Peter Armstrong was the most prolific of the settler novelists: *The Iron Trek*, the first of the four novels he wrote before independence, is set in Rhodesia in 1923. This was the year in which Rhodesian settlers voted against forming a union with South Africa: in chapter four, the novel's hero comes across a public notice warning Rhodesians 'to manage your own affairs and Country, which will prove, in the future, a big and great historical heritage for your children.'[46] It was also a year in which 'very few people had noticed the fact that four years ago [Jock Smith] had produced a son, but in later years, the name of Ian Douglas Smith would echo round the world.'[47] This novel consciously reproduces what Chennells has called the myth of Rhodesian national identity.[48]

The hero of *The Iron Trek*, the former cockney Sidney Mason, is looking for adventure and a fortune: he obtains, through trickery, a half-share in a gold mine in exchange for delivering a steam locomotive ('The Trojan Whore'), its tracks, trucks and sleepers, to the mine's owner near the town of Sinoia (today's Chinhoyi) within a fixed period of time. The novel's main plot (according to its cover, 'an action packed adventure so typical of the lives of the spirited men that made this country') narrates Mason's overcoming of a series of obstacles as he strives to complete this task. Among these obstacles is the cowardice of his partner, the aristocratic Briton Michael de Vere. Also standing in the way of Mason's success are a city-based solicitor, an Afrikaans farmer, the unreliability of Africans who are meant to be helping him, and various natural obstacles such as thick vegetation and a deep river. The overcoming of each of these obstacles establishes or confirms different aspects of Mason's identity as a Rhodesian and a white man: chief among them are resourcefulness and the ability to withstand physical hardship. The space of the African bush, where all of

[45] And therefore an act of resistance. I cannot agree with Veit-Wild's assertion that 'the concept of a close link between literature and resistance, valid for other African countries, has been shown to be invalid in the case of Zimbabwe.' (*Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers*, p. 341).
[46] Armstrong, *The Iron Trek*, p. 17.
[47] *Ibid*, p. 23.
[48] See Chennells, 'Settler Myths and the Southern Rhodesian Novel,' chapter four.

this takes place, is sharply opposed to that of the city. Its only inhabitants besides Mason and de Vere are missionaries given to drunken orgies and greedy African villagers prone to 'sordid debauchery.'[49]

The formal and semantic construction of *The Iron Trek* correspond to Bakhtin's definition of the subspecies of adventure novel he calls *the novel of ordeal.*[50] This novel is constructed as a series of *tests* of the main heroes, designed to confirm their virtue or merit.[51] Such novels' heroes however remain static and unchanging: their narratives occur in 'adventure time,' effectively empty just like the space in which the heroes' adventures take place.[52] In *The Iron Trek*, de Vere and Mason are tested for the 'virtue' of possessing a Rhodesian identity: the former fails the test and the latter passes it, but both do so without changing or developing in any way. In keeping with their static characters and the schematic nature of space-time they inhabit is the monolithic quality of discourse permeating this novel. Bakhtin uses the term 'character zone' to describe a zone of 'infection' of a novel's narrative voice with characters' discourses.[53] Armstrong's entire novel comprises a single character zone: it is one solid discursive bloc, unpunctuated by any intrusions. The novel evaluates all other discourses (i. e. serves an *axiological* purpose) by the simple monologic act of excluding them.

Terence Ranger reads Stanlake Samkange's *The Mourned One*,[54] set in 1933, as an 'extraordinary assemblage of [the author's] family's experiences.'[55] Partly it is based on a Rhodesian court case that took place in the 1930s.[56] (*The Iron Trek*, too, claims a kind of referentiality: its cover states that it is based on an 'actual event in Rhodesia's history'). Using the convention of 'found manuscript,' Samkange's novel narrates the story of an African child who was brought up by missionaries as a white person, while his twin brother remained in his home village and retained a

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[49] Armstrong, *The Iron Trek*, p. 54.
[50] M. M. Bakhtin, 'The *Bildungsroman* and Its Significance in the History of Realism (Toward a Historical Typology of the Novel),' in C. Emerson and M. Holquist (eds), *M. M. Bakhtin: Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1986), pp. 10 – 59.
[51] Bakhtin, 'The *Bildungsroman* and Its Significance,' pp 11 - 13.
[52] On adventure time, see also M.M. Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel,' in Holquist, *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 84 – 158.
[53] See Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel,' pp. 316 - 23.
[54] S. Samkange, *The Mourned One* (London, Heinemann, 1975).
[55] T. Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?* (Harare, Baobab, 1995), p. 49.

'traditional' African identity. As an adult, the adopted twin (the Mourned One, whom the missionaries have named Lazarus Percival Ockenden) is charged with and executed for the rape of a white woman he did not commit. Although most of the novel's narrative is told by the Mourned One himself, its structure is pervaded by a duality. This is because its first-person narrator functions as both a memoirist who relates his own mission upbringing and later life, and a disembodied omniscient narrator recounting episodes of African village life he himself did not experience or witness. In 'Doubles and Others in Two Zimbabwean Novels,' Neil ten Kortenaar analyses the implications of this duality: because it leads to a split and *static* identity ('every action in the narrative stands on its own')[57] he regards it as an aesthetic flaw. Samkange's novel, thus, for ten Kortenaar, compares unfavourably with a novel showing the continuity of its narrator's *development* such as Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*.

But the semantic and structural discontinuities ten Kortenaar talks about may be given a different reading. It seems to me that *The Mourned One* belongs to a genre Bakhtin calls *the biographical novel*. This type of novel narrates the 'typical aspects of any life course; birth, childhood, school years, marriage, the fate that life brings, works and deeds, death and so forth.'[58] The heroes of such novels resemble the heroes of novels of ordeal in that they remain essentially unchanged; they differ from them in that they exist in Bakhtinian *biographical time*, the time that is 'impossible outside a larger epoch, which goes beyond the limits of a single life, whose duration is represented primarily by *generations*.'[59] Samkange's novel may be read as a colonial-native inversion of this genre,[60] the purpose of which is *axiological*: the moral evaluation of missionary discourse. The 'typical aspects of any life course' Bakhtin talks about are impossible for a missionary-educated African such as the Mourned One. Despite the missionary claims to a 'civilising' intervention, for him the 'fate that life brings' turns out to be a life of anxiety in an unjustly *dual* moral system. In his role as the narrator, he therefore positions himself in an in-between

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[56] See N. ten Kortenaar, 'Doubles and Others in Two Zimbabwean Novels,' in Derek Wright (ed), *Contemporary African Fiction* (Bayreuth, Bayreuth African Studies, 1997), pp. 19 – 41.
[57] Ten Kortenaar, 'Doubles and Others,' p. 26.
[58] Bakhtin, 'The *Bildungsroman* and Its Significance,' p. 17.
[59] Bakhtin, 'The *Bildungsroman* and Its Significance,' p. 18 (emphasis in the original).
[60] Bakhtin cites the confessions of the early Christian period as the biographical novel's antecedents; ten Kortenaar describes *The Mourned One* as an inversion of a Christian romance. Bakhtin, 'The *Bildungsroman* and Its Significance,' p. 17, and ten Kortenaar, 'Doubles and Others,' p. 22.

discursive space, allowing his own voice to be 'contaminated' by echoes of both the 'traditional' African and the missionary discourses with which it is in dialogue (respectively: 'When my mother was, as we say in our tongue, "carrying herself," that is, expecting me'; 'If I hang and die, the brotherhood of man, peace and racial harmony in this land will die with me').[61] Ostensibly, readers are invited to choose between the two. In this choice, they are, however, firmly guided: hence the sharp discontinuity marking the construction of a novel geared towards *axiological* social functionality. In the words of Terence Ranger, 'far from showing the raising of Africans through Christian enlightenment, the novel argued for the *superior* wisdom of the uneducated and the unbaptized.'[62] While *The Iron Trek* served the purpose of promoting Rhodesian nationalism, *The Mourned One* was capable of arousing strong African nationalist feelings.[63] Both seem to me to have been precisely the result of the texts' intended *axiological* social function.

Preben Kaarsholm has described Stanley Nyamfukudza's novel *The Non-Believer's Journey*[64] as an 'aesthetically meaningful representation'[65] – this in contrast to ten Kortenaar's assessment of the aesthetic value of *The Mourned One* and Chennells' dismissal of Rhodesian novels' aesthetic worth.[66] It is tempting to relate Nyamfukudza's novel to Bakhtin's definition of the *Bildungsroman*: but although Nyamfukudza's narrative follows its hero – the 'non-believer' Sam Mapfeka, who, in 1974, travels from an urban township to a war-torn rural area to attend a family funeral – to the very brink of Bakhtinian personal emergence, this, in fact, does not happen. Nor can Sam's journey towards the site of the armed struggle be described as any other kind of 'progress' – although it in effect dismantles the concept of absolute difference between 'African' rural and 'European' urban spaces established by the likes of *The Iron Trek* and still discernible (although already undermined) in *The Mourned One*. The chief difference between Nyamfukudza's novel on the one hand and Armstrong's and Samkange's on the other, is the fact that *The Non-Believer's Journey* is constructed around constant criss-crossing of a multitude of voices

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[61] S. Samkange, *The Mourned One*, pp. 6, 146.
[62] T. Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men*, p. 136 (emphasis added).
[63] See T. Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men*, p. 204.
[64] S. Nyamfukudza, *The Non-Believer's Journey* (Harare, Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1980).
[65] P. Kaarsholm, 'Quiet After the Storm: Continuity and Change in the Cultural and Political Development of Zimbabwe,' *African Languages and Cultures* 2 (2), 1989, p. 192. See also Kaarsholm, 'From Decadence to Authenticity and Beyond.'
[66] Chennells, 'The Treatment of the Rhodesian War in Recent Rhodesian Novels,' p. 177.

debating the subject of African nationalism and Africans' social status in Rhodesia, and that none of these voices is singled out as the carrier of a privileged discourse. Sam's journey through space (the topography of which describes in meticulous detail the physical conditions of African lives in Rhodesia) is, in fact, also a series of *dialogues*. They involve Sam's friends and acquaintances, strangers on a bus, an armed Rhodesian soldier, a lover and family members. Sam participates in them with his own fractured voice, combining a colonial subject's anger and defiance with a triple lack of faith: in the wholesale validity of 'African tradition,' in solidarity between members of his own family and in the unity (and therefore soundness) of the nationalist armed struggle. Although most of the novel is told from Sam's point of view, there are sections (e.g. the beginning of chapter four) in which the voice of the omniscient narrator takes over and is added to the texture of this novel's heteroglossia. Sam's final dialogue - with an armed guerrilla at a *pungwe* (a night-time meeting aimed at political mobilisation) - goes beyond words and ends with his death. At this point, the narrator takes over once more and, addressing the readers directly, draws them into the debate: 'A worthwhile death – to use Sam's words – was what he wanted. But if, as the saint asserted, cowardice is an active quality, too, how might he have described Sam's end?'[67] The rhetorical quality of this question combined with the impossibility of a 'correct' answer points at this novel's potential for *socio-analytical* functionality.

Each of the three pre-independence Zimbabwean novelistic formations, seen as circumscribed by language and race, could, in a previously unremarked manifestation of Bhabhian doubling and splitting, be seen as shadowed by a parallel 'other,' sharing with it either language or race but never both. Section three above outlined a possibility of viewing fictional formations as articulations of *simultaneously* growing areas of social activity, transcending both language/race *and* chronology as the only tools of literary classification. The 'dual' semantic structuring and *axiological* functionality of *The Mourned One* may be linked, on the one hand, to Geoffrey Ndhlala's *Jikinya* (published a year before *The Non-Believer's Journey*)[68] and non-Anglophone texts such as and Bernard Chidzero's *Nzvengamutsvairo* as analysed by

[67] Nyamfukudza, *The Non-Believer's Journey*, p. 113.
[68] G. Ndhlala, *Jikinya* (Harare, College Press in Association with the Literature Bureau, 1984 [1979]).

George Kahari.[69] Nyamfukudza's text, on the other hand, shares *analytical* functionality with Mungoshi's *Waiting for the Rain*, but also with a post-independence white-authored novel like Angus Shaw's *Kandaya*.[70] Thus, I would venture, within a materialist structuralist framework such as that of Flaker, in the novelistic landscape of independent Zimbabwe language and race become less useful as indicators of the kind of novel an author is likely to have written. The following section looks briefly at the post-independence era, and outlines the main aims of this thesis.

5.

After 1980, the hermeneutic frameworks for reading Zimbabwean fiction changed, as the formerly proscribed African nationalist discourse became dominant inside the country. Predictably, the war of liberation became a favourite theme of novels of all kinds, in all languages. Also, women increasingly voiced their concerns in fiction, and some (like Tsitsi Dangarembga and Yvonne Vera) achieved international acclaim. Although the pre-independence censorship laws remained in place, writers gained new freedoms in their choices of fictional form of expression. In addition to continuing the Anglophone aesthetic/analytical pre-independence tradition, black novelists could now also tackle popular genres in English, and some produced axiological texts which bore more than a passing resemblance to the pre-independence Shona *and* settler novels (see, for example, R. Machingauta's *Detective Ridgemore Riva*).[71] Some settler writers continued in the pre-independence vein (Peter Armstrong continued publishing after 1980),[72] or produced more light-hearted popular novels which emphasised thematic concerns formerly relegated to secondary or tertiary sub-plots of settler texts (such as R. K. Hill's popular-romance inflected *Burnt Toast on Sundays*).[73] But they could now also – like the pre-independence exiled Anglophone black novelists – publish artistically ambitious texts with a

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[69] G. Kahari, 'Intellectual and Social Development in Bernard Chidzero's *Nzvengamutswairo*,' in *Aspects of the Shona Nove and Other Related Genres* (Gweru, Mambo Press, 1992), pp. 30 – 51.
[70] A. Shaw, *Kandaya: Another Time, Another Place* (Harare, Baobab Books, 1993).
[71] R. M. Machingauta, *Detective Ridgmore Riva* (Harare, Zimbabwe Publishing House 1996 [1994]). I discuss the nationalist ideology of Machingauta's novel in 'Behaving Badly in Postcolonial Zimbabwe: the Case of Detective Ridgemore Riva,' presented at *Whodunnit?* – the second annual SOLON Behaving Badly Conference held in Nottingham, 11-13 September 2002.
[72] See, P. Armstrong, *The Last Movie* (Borrowdale [Harare], Welston Press, 1981) and *The Pegasus Man* (Borrowdale [Harare], Welston Press, 1983).
[73] R. K. Hill, *Burnt Toast on Sundays* (Harare, HarperCollins Publishers, 1995).

pronounced socio-analytical potential such as Angus Shaw's *Kandaya* and Tim McLoughlin's *Karima*.[74] In the vernacular novel, Charles Mungoshi continued to add stylistically complex and aesthetically dominated structures to the body of vernacular texts still under the sway of its Literature Bureau-influenced history, and some younger writers followed suit.[75] The axiological, aesthetic and analytical fictional formations continued, but increasingly included texts by writers of different races and in different languages, thus diminishing the importance of the race/language distinctions. The fiction of the country whose name means 'house of stone' thus came to resemble a house of intertextual mirrors and echoes, where different traditions merged and began to cross-fertilise.

As for the Rhodesian discourse, the hope that it would die a sudden death at independence[76] was not realised. In David Lemon's 1983 thriller *Ivory Madness,* for example, there is an ominous ambiguity about the character of the former Rhodesian soldier who fights a corrupt former guerrilla in order to defend the country's wildlife heritage.[77] However, by the end of the second decade of independence, things had begun to change. Lemon's *Killer Cat* and Paul Freeman's *Rumours of Ophir* resemble the pre-1980 settler fiction in that they feature tough white male policemen (aided by a seasoned hunter and an old-time miner respectively) who seek to avenge the brutal killings of their wives.[78] But in Lemon's and Freeman's thrillers, neither wife is white – and the respective heroes' principal helpers are black women: a glamorous game ranger and tough young former prostitute. This would have been unthinkable before independence. Zimbabwe's struggles to overcome both the ideological legacy of its colonial past *and* the binary ways of thinking that went with it were increasingly articulated through identities constructed in fiction.

This thesis cannot undertake to outline in detail the interplay between the Zimbabwean fictional formations as they continued and were modified in the post-

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[74] Shaw, *Kandaya*; T. McLoughlin, *Karima* (Gweru, Mambo Press, 1985).
[75] See Veit-Wild, *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers*, pp. 276-279 and 304.
[76] Expressed by Chennells, in *Rhodesian Discourse, Rhodesian Novels and the Zimbabwe Liberation War*, p. 129.
[77] See D. Lemon, *Ivory Madness* (Harare, College Press Publishers, 1994 [1983]).
[78] D. Lemon, *Killer Cat* (Harare, College Press Publishers, 1998) and P. Freeman, *Rumours of Ophir* (Harare, College Press Publishers, 1998).

independence era. Instead, I will concentrate on the most prominent of the post-1980 inheritors of the pre-independence aesthetic and socio-analytical fictional formations.

This thesis analyses identity construction with relation to narrative displacement in twelve key novels published between 1988 and 2002 by six Zimbabwean Anglophone novelists who have become nationally prominent after independence, and who have *also* gained recognition (in the form of publication, translations and literary awards) outside Zimbabwe.[79] They are: Chenjerai Hove's *Bones* (1988), *Shadows* (1991) and *Ancestors* (1996); Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988); Nozipo Maraire's *Zenzele* (1996); Shimmer Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns* (1989); Alexander Kanengoni's *Echoing Silences* (1997) and Yvonne Vera's *Nehanda* (1993), *Without a Name* (1994), *Under the Tongue* (1996), *Butterfly Burning* (1998) and *The Stone Virgins* (2002).[80]

The three male and three female novelists whose work I have selected for analysis share a key aspect of their social and biographical backgrounds: they continue the pre-independence trend spotted by Veit-Wild by being, educationally, the elite of the elite. All have had access to university education. (Interestingly, all three women – Dangarembga, Maraire and Vera – attended universities outside Zimbabwe; this makes them an even more select group). All are ethnically Shona (although Vera grew up and is now based in Matabeleland). Three of them live in Zimbabwe: Shimmer Chinodya works as an editor and textbook writer, Alexander Kanengoni is employed by the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation and Yvonne Vera is the director of the National Gallery in Bulawayo. The others are based outside their country of birth. Chenjerai Hove (a poet, performer and political columnist as well as

[79] As in the discussion of the pre-independence period, texts that do not declare themselves as fiction (e.g. the memoirs/autobiographies by Doris Lessing, Peter Godwin, Ian Smith, Alexandra Fuller and others) are here deliberately excluded. It will be seen that the theoretical apparatus I adopt for the analysis of individual novels (outlined in Chapter Two) is not fully applicable to non-novelistic narratives.

[80] This list contains complete novelistic opuses in English by Hove, Dangarembga, Maraire and Vera, and the internationally published novels by Chinodya and Kanengoni. Chinodya's and Kanengoni's other work is mentioned in Chapter Six of this thesis, but is, for reasons of space, considered only briefly.

a novelist) has recently left Zimbabwe after threats and harassment by government agents.[81] Tsitsi Dangarembga is a film-maker who spends most of her time outside Zimbabwe,[82] and Nozipo Maraire is, as far as I am aware, a neurosurgeon in the USA.[83] All six novelists have had books published internationally; some – notably Hove and Vera - have been widely translated, and all have won awards and honours at home,[84] overseas[85] or both.

In being available to audiences both inside and outside Zimbabwe, my selected texts resemble the novels of Mungoshi, Marechera, Nyamfukudza and the other pre-independence writers in English mentioned in section two above. More importantly, they share *textual* traits with the pre-independence non-axological fictional formations. All of them are marked by the textual presence of Bakhtinian heteroglossia (albeit to different extents, as the chapters that follow will argue). The novels by Hove, Kanengoni[86] and Vera continue the experimental (aesthetically dominated) textual formation started before independence by Dambudzo Marechera, while texts by Chinodya and Dangarembga may be designated as socio-analytical. (Maraire's *Zenzele* is something of an exception within this group: while it also has socio-analytical potential, this is tempered by the textual presence of strong axiological elements. In this, *Zenzele* resembles the pre-independence work of Wilson Katiyo.) This thesis will aim to place the twelve selected internationally-known texts within their less well-known *Zimbabwean* contexts: I will, to the extent that space allows, relate them to the Zimbabwean axiological literary discourses, to other Zimbabwean non-axiological texts, to the Zimbabwean non-fictional

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[81] See D. Muleya, 'Chenjerai Hove's literary works stolen,' *Zimbabwe Independent*, 24 May 2002, p. 4.

[82] See H. Zharare, 'Tsitsi Dangarembga chronicles Africa's untold stories,' *Weekend Mirror* (Harare), 12-18 January 2001, p. 1.

[83] See C. Shufro, 'The many worlds of Nozipo Maraire,' http://www.Yale.Medicine-Profile.htm

[84] Hove's *Bones* won the Zimbabwe Book Publishers' Association Prize for Literature in 1988-89; Vera's *Without a Name* and *Under the Tongue* won the Zimbabwe Publisher's [sic] Literary Award in 1995 and 1997 respectively; Kanengoni's short story collection *Effortless Tears* won the same award in 1994.

[85] Hove's *Bones* won the Noma Award for Publishing in Africa in 1989; Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* was included in a list of Africa's best 100 books by an international panel of judges in 2002; Maraire's *Zenzele* was the New York Times notable book of the year in 1996; Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns* won the 1990 Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Africa Region; in 1997, the same prize was won by Vera's *Under the Tongue*. Vera received Sweden's 'Voice of Africa' award in 1999; her novel *The Stone Virgins* was the winner of the first Macmillan Writer's Prize in 2002.

[86] Here I am referring only to *Echoing Silences*. Kanengoni's other novel, *When the Rainbird Cries*, is socio-analytical.

authoritative ('official') discourses and to the identities socially produced within Zimbabwe's borders.

In choosing narrative displacement as my focus of interest, I am not referring to it as a literary 'theme' or 'motif,' nor as an event that novels simply lift from non-literary 'life.' I will approach it, instead, as a narratively constructed movement of characters across a semantic boundary, as I explain in more detail in Chapter Three. The readings of pre-independence novels in the previous section may be used as an indication of the importance of the narrative displacement of characters (Sid Mason across the bush towards Sinoia, The Mourned One from the village to the mission, Sam Mapfeka from the township to the rural areas) for the construction of narrative ideologies. I have found that an analysis of such displacement involves (re)constructing the space-times of the narrative worlds that the characters inhabit: what Bakhtin would have called their novelistic *chronotopes*.

In an essay on the types of narrative space-time in the novel, Bakhtin describes a chronotope as 'the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature,'[87] affecting decisively both the individual and generic meanings of texts and the construction of identities within them. Central to this thesis are two ideas related to narrative space-time as expressed by Bakhtin in this long essay. The first is the insistence on the inseparability of space and time;[88] the second is the assertion that '[t]the chronotope in literature has an intrinsic *generic* significance.'[89] According to Bakhtin, forms of narrative space-time are mutually determined with the novelistic form of expression, which, crucially, includes generic conventions. The previous section briefly related three pre-independence texts to a Bakhtinian understanding of some novelistic genres. In the chapters that follow, these and other genres are related to post-independence textual material.

In the following chapter, I attempt a theoretical explanation of how novelistic chronotopes are constituted. In doing so, I rely mainly on the work of Gajo Peles, a Zagreb school theorist whose work is usefully compatible with Flaker's. Chapter

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[87] Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel,' p. 86.
[88] *Ibid.*
[89] *Ibid*, pp. 84-85 (emphasis in the original).

Three relates the term 'chronotope' to extra-textual realities, referring, among others, to the French Marxist theorist Henri Lefebvre. Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven contain analyses of texts by Hove, Dangarebga and Maraire, Chinodya and Kanengoni, and Vera, respectively. (As will be seen, I have grouped my selected Zimbabwean texts in this manner using the criteria of chronology, the author's gender and the texts' chronotopic structure.) Chapter Eight is the Conclusion.

CHAPTER TWO

Critical Frameworks for the Reading of Zimbabwean Fiction

> If words and concepts receive meaning only in sequences of differences, one can justify one's language, and one's choice of terms, only within a topic (an orientation in space) and an historical strategy. The justification can therefore never be absolute and definitive.
>
> J. Derrida [1]

1.

In the previous chapter, when I introduced a Bakhtinian reading of concepts developed by the Marxist structuralist Aleksandar Flaker to the study of the Zimbabwean novel, I focused primarily on questions of literary history. This was done in order to delimit, at the outset, the field of primary texts that the thesis will focus on. In doing so, however, I have committed the thesis to a certain theoretical understanding of the novel as a genre and, by implication, to a particular methodology of reading. The aim of this chapter is to make these theoretical assumptions explicit, in part by enlarging on statements that chapter one made briefly, or in passing.

In what I have said so far, four basic premises have been implied. Firstly, my reliance on Bakhtin, and on the concept of literary function points at a materialist understanding of literature: a view, that is, of novelistic texts as semantic constructs that exist and function within historical social and discursive (intertextual) contexts. This view is tied to the assumption, however, that the two kinds of context are not identical, and that the former is not reducible to the latter. In this respect, I would align myself with the formulations of a Marxist scholar like David Harvey, who has written that 'It is (...) one thing to say that texts (discourse) internalize everything there is and (...) quite another to insist that the whole world is nothing other than a text needing to be read and deconstructed.'[2] That is to say, although there are no aspects of social/material life that can be understood *separately* from discourse (texts, representations), it is misleading to think that the deconstruction of texts can

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[1] J. Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore, Md, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 70.
[2] D. Harvey, *Justice, Nature & the Geography of Difference* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1997), p. 6. Similar views are expressed in F. Jameson's *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1981) and T. Eagleton's *Against the Grain: Essays 1975-1985* (London, Verso, 1988).

therefore be privileged as the only path to undertanding, or that social life should be seen as purely discursively constituted. I return to this view in the following chapter, in my discussion of socially produced space as the social context of Zimbabwean novels.

Secondly, in my discussion of the functional potential of Zimbabwean novels, I have implied that the manner in which novels are used indicates the manner in which they participate in power relations. (That narratives do participate in such relations has been shown, in a broader context, by Edward Said, who has examined how colonial power struggles are 'reflected, contested, and even for a while decided in narrative').[3] Like the exiled aesthetic/analytical formation in pre-independence Zimbabwe, novelistic narratives may herald, represent, and even contribute to, social change. Alternatively – like white settler fiction in Rhodesia – they may resist it. While not enough is known about readerships and actual uses of the post-independence Anglophone novels analysed by this thesis, I return to this question in my conclusion.

Thirdly, in referring to textual ideologies (whose interpretation has a decisive bearing on function), I have adopted the view that neither novelistic ideologies, nor novelistic meaning, should be regarded as fixed or objective. They are, rather, following Bakhtin, better understood as sets of dialogically constructed semantic complexes that come into being under specific historical circumstances. With relation to this, and in discussing the need to overcome the Africanist versions of the twin theoretical pitfalls that Bakhtin refers to as abstract ideological and formal approaches, I have referred to 'the theoretical standpoint which regards novels as semiotic mechanisms bringing into being possible worlds' (page five). It is this feature of my approach to Zimbabwean writing that this chapter seeks to elaborate on in some detail. I will be doing this by referring to the work of Gajo Peles, a Croatian scholar whose work both complements and interrogates Flaker's, and whose grounding of fiction in possible world theory I have used to complement and develop the Flakerian concept of function.[4] Before I turn to my fourth premise (to do with the concept of novelistic textual wholeness), a few words must be said about the inclusion of Peles and his work.

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[3] E. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London, Chatto & Windus, 1993), p. xiii.

The reasons for relying on Peles are strategic. Like Flaker's, his work came into being under the historical, cultural and academic circumstances comparable to those in today's Zimbabwe. In this case I am referring not only to the need to resist reductionist Marxist views of the social role of fiction, but also to Peles's attempt to counter-balance post-structuralist conceptualisations of the production of meaning which privileged the role of readers' intertextual activity at the expense of textual structures. Peles's solution is Bakhtinian: for him, novelistic meaning is both an intertextual and an interpersonal construct. In the Zimbabwean context, Pelesian concepts may therefore be used to counter/supplement a cluster of analogous critical tendencies currently prominent in studies of individual novels. His work also provides a theoretical basis for analysing *individual* Zimbabwean novelistic space-times, and relating them to the spatio-temporal categories Bakhtin developed with novelistic *genres* in mind – such as the chronotope.

In order to elaborate this further, the second section of this chapter provides a mapping of the critical landscape of Zimbabwean writing (here I am referring to readings of individual novels, as opposed to textual groupings). Section three then locates my reading of a Pelesian conceptual apparatus within this landscape. Prior to that, however, the remainder of this section problematises the fourth theoretical premise that was deployed in the previous chapter, and that is crucial to my understanding of the novel as a genre: the concept of novelistic wholeness. As the following chapter relates in some detail, I regard novelistic chronotopes as structured semantic configurations that come into being through narratives contained within textual frames or boundaries: the beginnings and endings of novels. Such an understanding is, I would argue, Bakhtinian; but the kind of textual coherence it implies requires some elucidation.

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I understand both 'heteroglossia' and 'chronotope' – the key Bakhtinian terms in this thesis – as relational concepts. In 'Discourse in the Novel', Bakhtin explains how social languages are transformed upon entering the novel, and how they derive their meaning both from their difference and their being represented together – i.e. brought into dialogic contact – within a specific novelistic text. A heteroglot novel

[4] It is hoped that the introduction of these two non-western theorists might contribute to diversifying the field of African literary studies.

(or 'novelistic hybrid'), he says, is '*an artistically organized system for bringing different languages in contact with one another.*'[5] His theory of the chronotope, resting as it does on the inseparability of space and time in novels, is also based on a relational view. But speaking of relations between objects or entities implies a boundary or framework within which they take place. Central to Bakhtin's description of how heteroglossia works is the distinction/contrast between text and social/linguistic contexts. He speaks, for example, of the distinction between the 'organized microcosm' that is a heteroglot novel, and its contrast with the 'macrocosm' of 'national' or even 'European heteroglossia.'[6] In the early pages of 'Discourse and the Novel', he refers to social languages *entering* (i.e. crossing the boundary of, or being represented *inside*) novels.[7] He then explicitly equates the notion of novelistic (stylistic) unity with the notion of 'the work as a whole':

> These heterogeneous stylistic unities, upon entering the novel, combine to form a structured artistic system, and are subordinated to the higher stylistic unity of the work as a whole, a unity that cannot be identified with any single one of the unities subordinated to it.[8]

Here, Bakhtin is evoking the idea of an over-arching whole (a 'higher stylistic unity') and an inter-relation of its constituent elements ('the unities subordinated to it'). What he does *not* do, however – either here or elsewhere – is to make 'unity' synonymous with homogeneity, freedom from contradiction, or a unified, monolithic meaning. Indeed, the very notion of heteroglossia (either literary or social) depends on the ideas of difference, heterogeneity, conflict and contradiction. Fredric Jameson captures the Bakhtinian insistence on multiple forms of antagonism-within-wholeness, when he speaks of 'opposing discourses *fight[ing] it out* within the *general unity* of a shared code.'[9]

A further dimension of this antagonism – the potential for the *fragmentation* of novelistic meaning – may be discerned in Bakhtin's description of the '*dispersion* [of novelistic theme] into the *rivulets and droplets* of social heteroglossia.'[10] Elsewhere, he stresses that students of the novel as a genre should not presuppose the existence

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[5] Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel,' p. 361 (emphasis in the original).
[6] *Ibid*, p. 295.
[7] An explicit expression of the importance, for Bakhtin, of external textual boundaries is contained in his essay on speech genres, where he states they are 'demarcated by a change of speaking subjects.' See 'The Problem of Speech Genres,' in Emerson and Holquist, *Speech Genres*, p. 75.
[8] *Ibid*, p. 262.
[9] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, p. 84 (emphasis added).

within it of either the unity of a narrative language, or the 'unity of the individual person realizing himself [sic] in this language,'[11] and writes of the constant 'processes of centralization and decentralization, of unification and disunification'[12] of novelistic meaning.

There are, then, two senses that 'Discourse and the Novel' assigns to the word 'unity,' while maintaining a constant tension between them. Firstly, there is the 'higher' novelistic unity, resulting from the fighting-it-out of diverse and contradictory components within the boundaries of a single text. Secondly, there is the monoglossic, 'centralizing' unity, seen as a stylistic, semantic and ideological homogeneity and non-contradiction. The former, according to Bakhtin, is the key distinguishing mark of the novel as a genre: he faults the traditional linguistics, stylistics and philosophy of language of his day for largely disregarding it, and for looking, in novels, for the latter instead.[13]

For the purposes of this thesis, I propose to use different terms for the two Bakhtinian senses of 'unity.' I will adopt 'wholeness' for the first (the hetoroglot, novelistic dialogue-with-difference), and reserve 'unity' for the second (the 'traditional,' 'centralised' unitedness). In doing this, I am taking inspiration from an article by Mieke Bal, 'De-disciplining the Eye' which is replete with Bakhtinian resonance. The article differentiates between 'realistic' and 'textual' readings of narratives.[14]

Acknowledging that reading 'with a preestablished assumption that the work is a whole, that it is coherent and well-structured, has now come under attack,' Bal agrees that 'the convention of unity' ('unity' as understood in the previous paragraph) is a powerful ideological weapon because it exerts pressure on readers to choose one interpretation over another, presupposes unitary authorship and the authority that this entails, and encourages the projection of 'masterplots' that colonize/erase the marginal.[15] Her article then goes on to delineate and contrast two

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[10] Bakhtin: 'Discourse in the Novel,' p. 263
[11] *Ibid*, p. 264.
[12] *Ibid*, p. 272.
[13] See *Ibid*, p. 274.
[14] M. Bal, 'De-disciplining the Eye,' *Critical Inquiry* 16 (3), 1990, pp. 506-531. See also M. Bal, 'Textuality and Realism' in *Reading 'Rembrandt': Beyond the Word-Image Oposition* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 216-246.
[15] Bal, 'De-disciplining the Eye,' p. 507.

modes of reading: 'realism' – which commits the 'unifying fallacy' by promoting a self-evident wholeness, that is not noticed but merely assumed by readers, and textualism, a mode of reading Bal calls 'reading for the text.' 'A text,' she states, is 'what we make of a work when reading it: roughly, a meaningful, well-structured whole with a beginning and an end. But as a mode of reading, textuality allows for constant activity, a continual shaping and reshaping of sign-events.'[16]

Bal's description of 'realist' readings is in line with Bakhtin's 'monoglossic' unity, whereas her 'textualism' seems to me to relate to the Bakhtinian 'higher' stylistic unity, or wholeness. Her evocation of a constant semantic flow within a text – 'a constant shaping and reshaping of sign-events' - resonates with the Bakhtinian never-ending 'centralization and decentralization, unification and disunification.' In a sentence that replicates the wholeness/unity distinction I made above, Bal argues that 'reading for a sense of textuality, and for the *wholeness that this simple textuality entails*, does not necessarily preclude awareness of a fundamental lack of textual *unity*, while reading for the effect of the real (...) tends to do so.'[17] Although the two modes of reading are incompatible, they may profitably be brought to bear on the same text, and Bal argues in favour of critical endeavours that would activate *both*: their very incompatibility helps one to avoid the unifying fallacy. 'Textual and realist readings are a problematic and thereby productive combination.'[18]

In Chapter One, I linked the distinction between the analytical and axiological novelistic functions with the presence in a text of Bakhtinian heteroglossia. This may be rephrased by borrowing the term 'novelness' from a commentary on Bakhtin's thinking. Thus, isolating the dominant function of a fictional text is predicated on reading for *novelness*"[19] - novelness (or 'wholeness') here understood as a version of Bal's 'textuality.' Reading for function, then (or, as I'll argue later, reading for chronotope), entails reading novels as, roughly, meaningful, well-structured wholes with beginnings and an ends – but without escaping an awareness that acts of such reading are deliberate acts of *construction*, and that they can never be either

[16] *Ibid*, p. 508.
[17] *Ibid*; emphasis added.
[18] *Ibid.*

[19] 'The potential for dialogue latent in all art, but which is most often found in particular examples of the novel.' See J. Holloway and J. Kneale, 'Mikhail Bakhtin: Dialogics of Space,' in M. Crang and N. Thrift (eds), *Thinking Space* (London, Routledge, 2000), p. 76.

definitive or exhaustive. No group of Zimbabwean novels has, to my knowledge, yet been subjected to such parallel (re)construction. But before this can be further explained, the dominant tendencies in Zimbabwean novelistic criticism must be outlined, in order to situate the textualist approach within the field of Zimbabwean literary criticism.

2.

Critics working in the field of the Zimbabwean novel have, at different times, associated themselves or been associated with various combinations of theories and methodologies: close reading, sociology of literature, formalism, structuralism, Afrocentrism, Marxism, post-colonialism and feminism. It is not the aim of this section to pay systematic attention to the labelling or self-labelling of critical trends within Zimbabwean literary scholarship. Instead, I will attempt to outline two broadly conceived critical/theoretical tendencies that run *across* such labels and also across various genres, formats and functions of critical texts - sometimes, surprisingly, uniting opponents in heated literary-ideological debates. In naming such tendencies, their implications and the critical texts in which they may be discerned, I cannot aspire to being exhaustive, and will of necessity adopt a considerable level of generalisation.

The first tendency I want to isolate may be called mimetic. Whether explicitly or not, a significant number of critical texts dealing with individual Zimbabwean novels relates readings of these texts to privileged views of 'authentic' and/or 'objective' reality. Extreme conflict over constructs of 'the real' is inextricably linked with the process of the anti-colonial struggle in Zimbabwe. 'When Blacks took up arms against the settler order,' – Anthony Chennells has written – 'they were challenging the accuracy of every perception the settlers had ever had about their own role and status in Rhodesia and their destiny as a people.'[20] Settler perceptions were challenged not only with guns but also in texts: an article in a 1974 issue of *Zimbabwe Review*, for example, proclaimed:

> It is unbelievable that Smith and his fascist henchmen really think that the African people of Zimbabwe need protection against freedom fighters. The Africans need liberation and protection from the Smith

[20] Chennells, 'Settler Myths and the Southern Rhodesian Novel,' p. xvi.

> regime and not from their own liberators. Smith will learn this *objective reality* by bitter experience.[21]

After independence, echoes of the wartime contestation of settler discourses could be heard in texts about novels; they remained discernible, in various guises, in Zimbabwean literary criticism well into the 1990s. In 1982, Chennells himself wrote of fictional 'distortions,' although his language is leavened with the understanding that *all* fiction contains them: 'That some such distortion [as is contained in settler fiction] should occur is, of course, inevitable. Any work of literature is selective of the features of the society it purports to describe.'[22] He locates his understanding of 'the real' in texts 'by reputable historians'[23] and, elsewhere, in his own experience of events.[24] Other critics of the Zimbabwean novel are less precise: several of them imply that the location of 'reality' is self-evident. By 'mimetic tendency' I therefore mean, in short, the critical procedure which locates the source of fictional validity (quality, convincingess) in a form or 'reality' outside the individual fictional text itself. The proponents of this tendency often adopt a prescriptive attitude towards Zimbabwean writing.

A number – although not all – of 'mimetic' acts of interpretation take inspiration from Soviet-style Marxism (writers such as Plekhanov and Lukacs, as well as the 'many collections put out by Progress Publishers when the Soviet Union still provided massively subsidised translations of politically correct scholarship'),[25] as well as 'Afrocentrist' critics such as Chinweizu, Jemie and Madubuike.[26] Exact

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[21] Article, author not named, *Zimbabwe Review* (official organ of ZAPU, Lusaka) 3 (2), 1974, p. 9 (emphasis added). The political discourse on 'objectivity' has survived in Zimbabwe until today. See, for example, T. Mahoso's article 'BBC misinforming the British on land' (which refers to 'a normal world, governed by principles of impartiality, fairness and objectivity') in *The Sunday Mail*, Harare, Feb 4, 2001, p. 11.

[22] Chennells, 'Settler Myths and the Southern Rhodesian Novel,' p. xvii.

[23] *Ibid.*

[24] 'At the time I shared a house with one of the defence team and was able to see just how little information had been given to the local press – Chennells, 'Rhodesian Discourse, Rhodesian Novels and the Zimbabwe Liberation War,' p. 221.

[25] *Cf.* G. V. Plekhanov, *Art and Social Life* (Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1977). Plekhanov chastises artists who end up '*hopelessly at odds with their social environment*' (p. 18, emphasis in the original). The Lukacsian critique of modernism (see G. Lukacs, 'The Ideology of Modernism' in T. Eagleton and D. Milne (eds), *Marxist Literary Theory: A Reader* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1996), pp. 141-162, and T. Eagleton, *Marxism and Literary Criticism* (London, Methuen & Co, 1976), esp. pp. 21-36) is, in Zimbabwe, often hybridised with 'Afrocentrist' ideas. The citation is from A. Chennells, 'Marxist and Pan-Africanist Literary Theories and a Sociology of Zimbabwean Literature', *Zambezia* 20 (2), 1993, p. 111.

[26] See Chinweizu, 'Prodigals, Come Home!', *Okike*, 4, 1973, pp. 1-12, and 'Beyond European Realism,' *Okike*, 14, 1978, pp. 1-3, as well as Chinweizu, O. Jemie and I. Madubuike, *Towards the Decolonization of African Literature: African Fiction and Poetry and Their Critics* (London, KPI,

sources of critical procedure are often hard to ascertain, partly because critics do not always refer to them in their texts, and partly because of the confluence, mediation and hybridisation of approaches. The version of socialist realism offered by the programme for the production of 'socialist art' and criticism of the Zimbabwean critic Emmanuel Ngara[27] appear to have influenced some critics (e.g. Vambe, Kupe, Zhuwarara), whereas others (Chivaura, Furusa, Chiwome) combine 'socialist' and 'Afrocentrist' ideas. Yet others (Chennells, Veit-Wild) have, in recent years, adopted the critical banner of post-colonialism. It should be noted that many mimetic readings take place within the context of reviews, overview-type articles and surveys of literary production.

Some 'mimetic' critics accuse novelists of misrepresentation on the grounds of not including privileged versions of 'the historical truth' in their work. Rino Zhuwarara, for example, writing of texts by Mungoshi and Marechera, claims that they unduly play down 'the vitality and versatility of a people who *we know from history* struggle relentlessly to readjust and cope with the peculiar demands of the twentieth century.'[28] In a different article, Zhuwarara accuses Chenjerai Hove's *Bones* of portraying workers and peasants as passive, 'when we know from history that these were the backbone of the revolutionary struggle in Zimbabwe.'[29] Other authors use similar phrases: Maurice Vambe speaks of 'historical falsification' by a group of English-language war novels, while Tawana Kupe claims that Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* is not 'able to see the *real* struggle in Zimbabwe.'[30]

Flora Veit-Wild's influential *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers* also makes reference to fictional 'distortion' related to thematic selection. In the chapter on Chenjerai Hove's *Bones*, she comes close to aligning herself with Zhuwarara's

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1985). Their advocacy of orature and 'tradition' as a source of privileged 'reality' is echoed by several Zimbabwean authors.

[27] Separating form and content, Ngara proposed three sets of criteria for the evaluation of fiction as 'socialist art': readability, the 'appropriateness of the writer's linguistic choices' and the 'content value and aesthetic quality of the artistic creation as a whole.' See E. Ngara, *Art and Ideology in the African Novel: A Study of the Influence of Marxism on African Writing* (London, Heinemann, 1985), p. 6.

[28] Zhuwarara, 'Zimbabwean Fiction in English,' p. 134; emphasis added.

[29] R. Zhuwarara, 'Men and Women in a Colonial Context: a Discourse on Gender and Liberation in Chenjerai Hove's 1989 NOMA Award-Winning Novel – *Bones*,' *Zambezia* 21 (1), 1994, p. 14. The article is reprinted as 'Gender & Liberation: Chenjerai Hove's *Bones*,' in E. Ngara (ed), *New Writing From Southern Africa: Authors who Became Prominent since 1980* (London, James Curey, 1996), pp. 29-44, and 'Bones' in R. Zhuwarara, *Introduction to Zimbabwean Literature in English*, pp. 217-233.

position when she writes: '[Hove] *does not acknowledge* the changes in society, the disruptions and the contradictions in people's lives as reflected in their language, in the modern urban slang or new forms of oral culture.'[31] (Although Veit-Wild dissociates herself from the 'Marxist-Leninist school of criticism' exemplified in Zimbabwe by Emmanuel Ngara, she here echoes its position on 'typicality.' Anthony Chennells has written of her attitude towards Hove: 'Where has one heard that before? In the Soviet theory, of course').[32] In her discussion of Stanlake Samkange's *Year of the Uprising*, on the other hand, Veit-Wild's wording is close to that of Chennells himself: 'He creates the joint procession of Shona and Ndebele chiefs and religious leaders (...) *of which there is no historical evidence*.'[33] In a similar vein, T. O. McLoughlin juxtaposed Solomon Mutswairo's *Feso* with the work of the Zimbabwean historian D. N. Beach, and concludes that *Feso*'s view of 17th century Shona society is '[p]atently untrue.'[34]

As for the Zimbabwean 'Afrocentrist' critics, in implicitly subscribing to the idea of Afrocentrism as 'a movement for the reformation of the consciousness of blacks perceived to be hamstrung by centuries of racist European thinking,'[35] they essentialise European and African cultural identities, and fault texts which they perceive as 'un-African' with being insufficiently Zimbabwean. Vimbai Chivaura has produced an entire list of novels whose views 'contradict[...] Zimbabwean history and life.'[36] One of them is Yvonne Vera's *Without a Name*, whose characters, for Chivaura, lack '*true* identities': '[i]n Shona, Ndebele and other African cultures, everybody and everything has an identity. There is no need for artificial labels. Ways of establishing hidden paternity are there.'[37] Similarly, Emmanuel Chiwome accuses a number of post-independence novelists in Shona of 'ignor[ing] the gestures of peasant resistance' and failing to critique 'the early [Shona] writers' mythisization

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[30] M. T. Vambe, 'Surviving the Myths from the War and Historical Reconstruction,' MS, Department of English, University of Zimbabwe, undated; T. Kupe, MS, 'Paper presented at the Colloquium on Zimbabwean Literature, Department of English, University of Zimbabwe, 1989' (emphasis added).
[31] Veit-Wild, *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers,* p. 317 (emphasis added). See also her '"Dances with Bones": Hove's romanticized Africa,' *Research in African Literatures* 24 (3), 1993, pp. 5-12.
[32] Veit-Wild, *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers*, p. 3 (see also p. 319); Chennells, 'Marxist and Pan-Africanist Literary Theories,' p. 129.
[33] Veit-Wild, *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers*, p. 126 (emphasis added).
[34] T. O. McLoughlin, 'The Past and the Present in African Literature: Examples from Contemporary Zimbabwean Fiction,' MS, Department of English, University of Zimbabwe, 1984.
[35] T. Olaniyan, 'Afrocentrism,' *Social Dynamics* 21 (2), 1995, p. 94.
[36] V Chivaura, 'Zimbabwean Literature in English,' p. 347.
[37] *Ibid*, emphasis added.

[sic] of literacy and numeracy.'[38] Informed, likewise, by 'Afrocentrist' ideology, Munashe Furusa refers to Norbet Mutasa's (and other Shona novelists') 'distortion of Shona culture.'[39]

In all of these instances, the practical outcome of the critical texts' implicitly mimetic stance is a privileging of selected Zimbabwean novelists over others on the grounds, generally, of verisimilitude. This privileging ranges from commendation - Rosemary Moyana, for example, praises Shimmer Chinodya because he realistically '*registers* "the pains and joys of national rebirth"'[40] - to programmatic exclusion from the national literary canon. In a text published in 1998, Chivaura dismisses some of the best-known novels in English as un-African, and therefore also non-Zimbabwean:

> Heroes from African history and culture contrast sharply with the dwarfish, confused, morally sapped fictional absurdities like Lucipher [sic] in Waiting for the Rain [sic], Sam in *The Non-Believer's Journey*, Tambudzai in *Nervous Conditions*, Marita in Bones [sic], Mazvita in *Without a Name* and the Narrator in *The Black Insider*. These are forged from the creative imaginations of European novels depicting lives spiritually exhausted by their insatiable, morally barren cultures[.][41]

(It should be emphasised here that, in Zimbabwe, prescriptive critical attitudes do not always amount to a straightforward critical promotion of literary conventions associated with novelistic realism over those associated with experimental, modernist writing. Veit-Wild, for example, extols Marechera but adopts what Preben Kaarsholm has called a 'schoolmistressly'[42] attitude towards his fellow experimentalist Hove; Chinodya's realism-influenced *Harvest of Thorns* is praised by Moyana for its life-likeness but dismissed by Chivaura as 'European.' What unites the critical texts referred to above is the broad subordination of fiction to

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[38] E. Chiwome, 'The Response of Zimbabwean Oral and Literary Artists to Missionary Teachers,' in Spencer-Walters, *Orality, Literacy and the Fictive Imagination*, p. 150.
[39] M. Furusa, 'The Direction of Innovation in the Shona Novel,' in Spencer-Walters, *Orality, Literacy and the Fictive Imagination*, p. 195.
[40] R. Moyana, 'Literature &Liberation...the Second Phase – Shimmer Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns*' in Ngara, *New Writing from Southern Africa*, p. 45 (emphasis added). See also Moyana's praise of Tsitsi Dangarembga in 'Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*: an Attempt in the Feminist Tradition,' *Zambezia* 21 (1), 1994, pp. 23-42.
[41] V. Chivaura, 'European Culture in Africa and Human Factor Underdevelopment,' in V. G. Chivaura and C. G. Mararike (eds), *The Human Factor Approach to Development in Africa* (Harare, University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1998), p. 108.
[42] See P. Kaarsholm, the review of F. Veit-Wild's *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers* and *Dambudzo Marechera: A Source Book on his Life and Work*, p. 327.

variously understood realities external to it: unsurprisingly, the word 'reflection' appears in several of them).

The critical debate surrounding the work of Dambudzo Marechera provides several instances of the mimetic tendency, and may also provide illustrations for the separation of 'form' and 'content' (in the manner I described in the previous chapter) that occasionally goes with it. The Nigerian critic Juliet Okonkwo, for example, appreciates Marechera's genius in the manipulation of language ('form'), but deplores his nihilistic view of life ('content') which, in her view, betrays the 'experiences that emanate from Africa and Africans.'[43] Musaemura Zimunya and the South African critic Mbulelo V. Mzamane, on the other hand, disapprove of both formal and thematic ('content'-related) elements of *The House of Hunger*. For Zimunya, Marechera's exclusion of depictions of 'family or love as we understood them then [in the rural-based past]' and his concentration instead on 'a community pervaded by depraved selfish attitudes and values which encourage the principle of the survival of the fittest'[44] is problematic. The 'form' (here understood primarily as composition) of his texts is also deficient: Zimunya describes *The House of Hunger* as shapeless and unfinished.[45] Consequently, 'the social and moral undertaking is cynically dismissed at the expense of the aesthetic motive,' and Marechera as a writer is consigned to being 'European.'[46] For Mzamane, Marechera would have done well to write about 'dedicated revolutionaries in the struggle for independence in Zimbabwe,' and to employ a style intertextually linked to other African rather than European texts. All of this is taken to rob Marechera's work of 'a Zimbabwean authenticity.'[47]

In 1999 – a year after the publication of Chivaura's text cited above – a volume co-edited by Chennells and Veit-Wild, entitled *Emerging Perspectives on Dambudzo Marechera*, sought to reverse Marechera's critical reputation, chiefly, as the Introduction explains, by repudiating essentialising notions of 'Africanness' through

[43] J. Okonkwo, review of D. Marechera's *The House of Hunger*, *Okike*, 18, 1981, p. 91.
[44] M. Zimunya, *Those Years of Drought and Hunger*, pp. 97 and 98 respectively.
[45] *Ibid*, p. 118.
[46] *Ibid*, p. 126.
[47] M. V. Mzamane, 'New Writing from Zimbabwe: Dambudzo Marechera's *The House of Hunger*,' *African Literature Today: Recent Trends in the Novel*, 13, 1983, pp. 208 and 212 respectively. The form/content binary does not appear only in the texts referred to in this paragraph, or only in 'Afrocentrist' work on Marechera. See also articles by Furusa, Chivaura and Zhuwarara, and a post-colonial theory-inspired text by David Buuck, 'African Doppelganger: Hybridity and identity in the work of Dambudzo Marechera,' *Research in African Literatures* 28 (2), 1997, p. 119.

re-assessing his work in the light of post-colonial theory.[48] If only for its sheer bulk (it contains eighteen critical essays, and five additional texts), the volume represented a breakthrough: such concentrated, detailed critical attention had not been paid to a Zimbabwean writer before. But the mimetic critical tendency remains discernible in *Emerging Perspectives*. This is because some contributors seek to 'write back' to Marechera's detractors by arguing that their misreading of Marechera is tied to a misreading of colonial reality. Rather than being linear and closed – the counter-argument goes – this reality is, in fact (as post-colonial theory has shown) fragmented, fluid, discontinuous, contradiction-laden and open-ended, so Marechera, far from distorting it, in fact represents it correctly.[49]

In a discussion of *Black Sunlight*, for example, Anthony Chennells writes: 'The authority to which realism lays claim derives not *from the real*, but from the realist's definition of the real.'[50] For Veit-Wild, '[a]n abnormal reality demands an abnormal form and language.'[51] For David Pattison, the discontinuities in Marechera's literary form 'reflect' (he uses the word repeatedly in his essay) the writer's biography and his state of mental health.[52] Daniela Volk is the most explicit: after stating that '[t]he stories of Dambudzo Marechera show an admirable obsession with reality's complexity,' she uses, with reference to *Black Sunlight*, the word 'mimesis' itself: 'The narrative which rejects nineteenth-century realism for example is an effective mimesis of the contradiction and open-endedness of life.'[53] Similar formulations are to be found in 'pro-Marechera' texts not collected in *Emerging Perspectives*: for Huma Ibrahim 'Marechera's vision is an attempt at realistically rendering *history's abandonment* of both the young men and women of Zimbabwe.'[54] Although these texts are in ideological opposition to those by Marechera's Marxist and Afrocentrict ('nationalist') critics, there is a sense in which they merely stand the debate on its

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[48] See F. Veit-Wild and A. Chennells, 'Introduction' in Veit-Wild and Chenells, *Emerging Perspectives on Dambudzo Marechera* pp. xiii-xiv.
[49] Some of the formulations in my discussion here of 'the Marechera debate' and *Emerging Perspectives on Dambudzo Marechera* have been taken over from my review of the volume in *Interventions* 2 (2), 2000, pp. 294-296.
[50] See A. Chennells, 'Unstable Identities, Unstable Narratives in *Black Sunlight*,' in Chennells and Veit-Wild, *Emerging Perspectives* p. 46, emphasis added.
[51] F. Veit-Wild, 'Carnival and Hybridity in Marechera and Lesego Rampolokeng,' in Chennells and Veit-Wild, *Emerging Perspectives*, p. 102.
[52] D. Pattison, 'The Search for the Primordial I in the Novels *Black Sunlight* and *The Black Insider*,' in Chennells and Veit-Wild, *Emerging Perspectives*, pp. 193-208.
[53] D. Volk, ' "In Search of my True People": Universal Humanism in Marechera's Writing,'in Chennells and Veit-Wild, *Emerging Perspectives*, pp. 300 and 305 respectively.
[54] H. Ibrahim, 'The Violated Universe: Neo-Colonial Sexual and Political Consciousness in Dambudzo Marechera,' *Research in African Literatures* 2 (2), 1990, pp. 80-81, emphasis added.

head. The two ideologically opposed Marechera 'camps' remain in partial methodological overlap as long as they agree to adopt privileged versions of 'historical reality' as the starting point of literary evaluation. And so a dialogue about a body of literature risks being overtaken by conflicted versions of political correctness.

What concerns me here is that proponents of both Marechera 'camps' downplay the continuity between his work and the rest of the Zimbabwean fiction at the expense of the 'horizontal' alignment of his work with that of novelists outside Zimbabwe. Continuing Mzamane, Okonkwo and Zimunya's view of Marechera as 'un-Zimbabwean,' the epilogue to *Emerging Perspectives* states: 'Our putative critical perspective would therefore have to be founded on a global history, rather than harnessed to a merely Zimbabwean boundary.' Later, it also speaks of 'Dambudzo's improbable uniqueness – a singularity which (...) makes him intrinsically *un*available to proponents of a 'national literature.'[55] David Pattison expresses a similar view in an article entitled 'Dambudzo Marechera: a Zimbabwean Writer or a Writer from Zimbabwe?'[56] A body of novelistic work is, yet again, excluded from an affiliation to a national tradition. But, of course, the assignment to Marechera of the status of a 'global' writer is not the result merely of mimetic framework on the part of critics.[57] It points at the second tendency underlying the critical approaches to the Zimbabwean novel that I want to isolate in this section: I will call it the intertextual approach.

In *Emerging Perspectives on Dambudzo Marechera*, Stewart Crehan makes the following observation: 'It is always tempting in discussions of Marechera's writing (...) to argue a "case" from general statements based on quotations *from the essays*

[55] D. Wylie, 'Taking Resentment for Wisdom: A Posthumous Conversation between Marechera, N. H. Brettell and George Grosz,' in Chennells and Veit-Wild, *Emerging Perspectives*, pp. 328 and 329 respectively. In the imaginary posthumous dialogue between writers, the quoted phrases are assigned to George Grosz. Emphasis is in the original.

[56] D. Pattison, 'Dambudzo Marechera: A Zimbabwean Writer or a Writer from Zimbabwe?', *Wasafiri*, 33, 2001, pp. 18-21.

[57] It is partly the result of critics taking at face value the writer's own pronouncements on the merits of writing for a particular nation. As I tried to argue in the previous chapter, Marechera's work can today be read as the seed of the aesthetically-dominated Zimbabwean textual tradition. In view of that, his refusal of being 'representative' (of *anything*) while alive now appears as a complex form of what the Russian Formalists would have called a 'minus-device' – and is, in any case, compatible with the ideological implications of socio-analytical texts such as those by Mungoshi and Nyamfukudza.

and the fiction.'[58] This sentence points at a critical procedure which constructs novel-related meanings by bringing together signifiers from a variety of texts belonging to different genres, both fictional and non-fictional. Indeed, the contributors to *Emerging Perspectives* critics combine semantic complexes derived from his fiction, poetry, plays, public statements, clothing, personal habits and biography, as well as critical theory, in constructing meta-texts related to various parts of his opus.[59] This is, it seems to me, in part the result of the fragmentedness of Marechera's opus, and in part of the post-structuralist disregard for the boundedness (wholeness) of texts, combined with its assertion of the primacy/autonomy of the textual in the construction of 'the real.'[60] Similar reading procedures have been employed in critical work related to other Zimbabwean novels, as in the recent reader devoted to the work of Yvonne Vera (arguably, in terms of language and composition, one of Marechera's Zimbabwean successors), entitled *Sign and Taboo.*[61]

In *Sign and Taboo*, several chapters range freely among Vera's novels and short stories, juxtaposing themes and motifs on the basis of similarity. In doing so, they minimise the importance of boundaries separating individual texts in order to establish networks of parallels and analogies that range across them. If the key word linking mimetically-inclined critical texts was 'reflection,' then here in the case of the intertextual approach it is 'association.' In an essay entitled 'The Voice of Cloth,' Jessica Hemmings points out the presence of motifs to do with fabric, cloth and weaving in Vera's works. She juxtaposes motifs from different texts, and endows them in part with generalised meanings.[62] Black and white thread in the hem of an apron thus become symbolic of the colonialist racial tensions in Zimbabwe, while 'the structures of cloth evoke the web of social exchange.'[63] In two separate essays in the same volume, Carolyn Martin Shaw discusses the theme of mother-daughter relationships and the recurrence of a cluster motifs (the colour red, water, sky, earth)

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[58] S. Crehan, 'Down and Out in London and Harare: Marechera's Subversion of "African Literature",' in Chennells and Veit-Wild, *Emerging Perspectives*, p. 270 (emphasis added).
[59] See, for example, G. Gaylard, 'Marechera's Politic Body: The Menippeanism of a "Lost Generation" in Africa?' and J. Bryce, 'Inside/out: Body and Sexuality in Marechera's Fiction,' in Chennells and Veit-Wild, *Emerging Perspectives*, pp. 75-91 and 221-234 respectively.
[60] See "The Exorbitant. Question of Method" in J. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, pp. 157-164.
[61] R. Muponde and M. Taruvinga (eds), *Sign and Taboo: Perspectives on the Poetic Fiction of Yvonne Vera* (Harare, Weaver Press, 2002).
[62] For example: the structure created out of thorns by a female character in *Butterfly Burning* is likened to a sieve, which is then – via a text by an author writing on textiles, quoted in a text to do with Australian and Cypriot artefacts – linked to ambiguity, uncertainty and anxieties about the dissolution of identity. See J. Hemmings, 'The Voice of Cloth: Interior Dialogues and Exterior Skins,' in Muponde and Taruvinga, *Sign and Taboo*, p. 61.

in a similar vein: the motifs are lifted out of the texts and juxtaposed, occasionally accompanied by generalisations ('In the United States, it is often thought that children never accept their parents as sexual beings').[64] In locating Vera's verbal equivalents of various cinematic techniques Jane Bryce, too, ranges across Vera's opus, treating it, by implication, as a single intertextual entity.[65]

Vera's work, like Marechera's, lends itself to such readings, and they contribute to – or make possible - readers' perceptions of the webs of meaning spanning her 'poetic fiction' (as the volume's subtitle puts it). And yet such readings – in addition to diminishing the semantic role of textual boundaries – to a large extent set to one side the embeddedness of novelistic semantic units ('themes' and 'motifs') within their *intra*-textual context. They relativise, in other words, the role of boundaries *within* the text also, and by doing so, the possibility of constructing the text as a hierarchically organised semantic *whole* – which can then be compared to other wholes. In *Sign and Taboo* (writing about *Butterfly Burning*) Lizzee Attree makes this explicit: 'Symbols permeate *all levels* of the text, blurring visual and linguistic *boundaries*.'[66] What I wish to argue here is that, in the field of Zimbabwean literary studies, the critical tendency towards the weakening of the two kinds of boundaries – the textual and the intra- textual – has gone hand in hand not only with the decline in the historical and social contextualisation of texts, but also of the concept of local literary intertextual links between texts by different writers – the Flakerian vertical continuity.

'Mimetic' readings contextualised prescriptively, which means, by implication, *comparatively*. They argued, in effect, that some representations of Zimbabwe's national experience were more suited to its 'real' historical nature than others, and that therefore certain kinds of representations should be encouraged, and others suppressed. They take textual unity for granted, and indeed, deem it 'natural' (as in Zimunya's complaints regarding its absence from Marechera's novella). Such readings may therefore be taken as extreme examples of Bal's 'realism.'

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[63] *Ibid*, pp. 60 and 62 respectively.
[64] See, in Muponde and Taruvinga, *Sign and Taboo*, C. Martin Shaw's, 'A Woman Speaks of Rivers: Generation and Sexuality in Yvonne Vera's Novels,' p. 87, and her 'The Habit of Assigning Meaning: Signs of Yvonne Vera's World,' pp. 25-36.
[65] J. Bryce, 'Imaginary snapshots: Cinematic Techniques in the Writing of Yvonne Vera,' in Muponde and Taruvinga, *Sign and Taboo*, pp. 39-56.
[66] L. Attree, 'Language, Kwela Music and Modernity in *Butterfly Burning*,' in Muponde and Taruvinga, *Sign and Taboo*, p. 64, emphasis added.

'Intertextual' readings, on the other hand, relativise the notion of contexts by relativising the notion of boundaries – and promote, in effect, various forms of textual *interweaving*. Such readings have also focused on texts by internationally-acclaimed writers which they treat, by implication, as Zimbabwean *exceptions* (the work of Marechera, Vera and Dangarembga has become the subject of dedicated edited volumes, or 'readers'). This has meant an absence of prescription (the very selection of a text as the object of critical attention implies a positive value judgment) and a drawing of attention to the constructedness of texts and meanings. But it also means a distancing of novels from other Zimbabwean texts, and therefore, arguably, from the fictional formations which, taken together, express the 'unique but multiple historical experience [of Zimbabwe] as a nation.'[67] Within the geographical boundaries of today's Zimbabwe, the historical processes of the social production of identities have been distinct from those taking place outside those boundaries, as I argue in more detail in the following chapter

To illustrate further. In a discussion of Chenjerai Hove's *Bones*, Caroline Rooney transposes Lacan's reading of (meanings attached to) Sophocles' character Antigone directly onto Hove's character Marita. She remarks that Marita is 'another character in another text to be sure,' but makes the link anyway. [68] She does not articulate how the two characters and their deaths (the motif that links them) are embedded (contextualised, motivated) within their respective narratives, thereby implying – like the texts on Vera I refer to above - a 'loosening' or diminished relevance of this embeddedness. Similarly, in an article on Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, Carl Plasa reads clusters of meaning derived from the text and context of Charlotte Bronte's *Shirley* into Dangarembga's novel (which he otherwise interprets in Fanonian terms). Plasa, not unlike Rooney, makes the distant intertextual connection despite an awareness that '*Shirley*'s disorderly female eaters cannot (...) be placed in straightforward or unproblematic alliance with the Nyasha [sic] of *Nervous Conditions*."[69] Now, I do not wish to argue here that such intertextual undertakings are objectionable as a matter of general principle, or that they necessarily produce misreadings ('distortions') of Zimbabwean novels. I would contend, though, that *in practice, in the area of Zimbabwean studies*, they have replaced systematic attempts

[67] Chennells, 'Marxist and Pan-Africanist Literary Theories,' p. 127.
[68] C. Rooney, 'Re-Possessions: Inheritance and Independence in Chenjerai Hove's *Bones* and Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*,' in A. Gurnah (ed), *Essays on African Writing 2: Contemporary Literature* (Oxford, Heinemann, 1995), p. 124.

to situate novels in their local intertextual contexts - among, that is, other, *whole* (in Bal's sense), texts/novels (and textual/novelistic formations) with which they share a space-time of origin. Such studies are, in other words, by implication, non-materialistic and a-historical: they treat Zimbabwean novels and novelistic opuses as if they existed in a placeless, timeless location of unconfigured intertextuality.[70]

A further variant of this critical trend is discernible in *Emerging Perspectives on Tsitsi Dangarembga*, co-edited by Ann Elizabeth Willey and Jeanette Treiber, another reader, dedicated to the Zimbabwean novelist who has become a global name more than any other Zimbabwean writer.[71] In the Introduction, the volume signals its commitment to what another post-colonial reader has called 'reading from theory.'[72] In practice, this means that the narrative of *Nervous Conditions* is related to meanings produced in texts as different as the works of the Russian linguist Lev Vygotsky, Timothy Burke's study of commodification and consumption in Zimbabwe, and the body of knowledge about the Xhosa-specific affliction called *Amafufunyane*.[73] An example of the kind of text the novel is *not* related to, here or (and this is my point), to my knowledge, *anywhere else*, is a novella entitled *Woman in Struggle* by I. R. R. Mahamba - even though it was written in English by a black Zimbabwean woman, and published in Zimbabwe four years before *Nervous Conditions*. Moreover, it tells (in the first person) the story of a teenage girl who escapes the strictures of rural 'tradition' and obtains an education at the mission home of her uncle, aunt and 'glamorous' male and female cousins.[74] *Emerging*

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[69] C. Plasa, 'Reading "The Geography of Hunger" in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*: from Frantz Fanon to Charlotte Bronte,' *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 33 (1), 1998, p. 39.

[70] Occasionally, surprisingly, intertextuality and prescription co-exist: in a study of intertextuality in two historical novels, Nana Wilson-Tagoe objects to Yvonne Vera's reliance on myth and ritual because 'rituals *by their very nature* create and reinforce secure areas of tradition and culture,' incompatible with transformative histories initiated by liberation struggles. See N. Wilson-Tagoe, 'Narrative, History, Novel: Intertextuality in the Historical Novels of Ayi Kwei Armah and Yvonne Vera,' *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 12 (2), 1999, p. 165, emphasis added.

[71] A. E. Willey and J. Treiber (eds), *Emerging Perspectives on Tsitsi Dangarembga: Negotiating the Postcolonial* (Trenton, NJ, and Asmara, Africa World Press, 2002). At the outset of the volume's introduction, its editors state that *Nervous Conditions* is increasingly replacing Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* as *the* novel that introduces Americans to African fiction (see p. x).

[72] This is the title of part six in P. Williams and L. Chrisman (eds), *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory* (New York, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994).

[73] In Willey and Treiber, *Emerging Perspectives* see, respectively: L. E. Chown, ' "Two Disconnected Entities": The Pitfalls of Knowing in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*' (pp. 233-250), S.A. Murray, 'Some Very *Nervous Conditions*: Commodity, Culture and Identity in Dangarembga's novel' (pp. 190-219) and B. Nicholls, 'Indexing her Digests: Working Through *Nervous Conditions*' (pp. 99-134).

[74] See I. R. R. Mahamba, *Woman in Struggle* (Gweru, Mambo Press, 1986 [1984]). A further example is a Zimbabwean female-authored novel entitled *The Trail* in which a young woman is being educated

Perspectives on Tsitsi Dangarembga also occasionally distances its object from that object's cultural and sociological contexts, in part by misconstruing the narrative's (and Rhodesia's) basic spatial configurations.[75] And so, although *Emerging Perspectives on Tsitsi Dangarembga* will, undoubtedly, strengthen Dangarembga's status as a hyper-canonised 'post-colonial' writer, it does little to add to its readers' understanding of how her work relates to its various *national* (local, 'vertical') literary contexts. Both she and Yvonne Vera may thus be seen to be in the process of acquiring a Marechera-like status of a Zimbabwean literary exception – a form of exclusion which, paradoxically, some of their 'Afrocentrist' critics would be keen to underwrite.

Between them, the 'mimetic' and the 'intertextual' critical tendencies have, to a large extent, configured the field of the study of Zimbabwean fiction and readers' understanding of Zimbabwean novels. Mimetic readings have drawn attention to the unusualness, within Africa, of the Zimbabwean literary-historical process. The references of some mimetic critics to the un-Africanness, bleakness, or lack of patriotism of the Zimbabwean aesthetic/analytical novelistic formation points usefully (despite unwelcome prescriptiveness) to the fact that, for Zimbabwean novelists, what has been the called the 'mourning after' – the literary disenchantment with the emancipatory potential of independence – came *before* the 'great expectations' inaugurated by independence itself.[76] Intertextual readings have, on the other hand, played a role in 'de-naturalising' the process of reading Zimbabwean narratives, highlighted their semantic complexity, and helped their authors win international acclaim. Both tendencies have also underscored the originality and personal tragedy of a figure such as Dambudzo Marechera in the post/colonial context such as the Zimbabwean.

Given that these two conflictual tendencies represent, essentially, the contrast between reductionist materialism and idealism, as well as between oppositional nationalism and a globalist view, this thesis seeks to position itself in-between them.

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at a mission school *after* independence. See Lilian Masitera, *The Trial* (Harare, Now I can Play Publications, 2000).

[75] Some essays also take the Shona honorifics used by Dangarembga for characters' given names. See R. Primorac, review of Charles Larson's *The Ordeal of the African Writer* and A. E. Willey and J. Treiber (eds), *Emerging Perspectives on Tsitsi Dangarembga*, *Interventions*, forthcoming.

[76] See 'Great Expectations and the Mourning After: Decolonization and African Intellectuals,' in N. Lazarus, *Resistance in Postcolonial African Fiction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 1-26.

I want to attempt a series of textualist readings of Zimbabwean texts which will *also* offer a basis for comparisons between them, and between Zimbabwean novelistic formations. By proposing to look at the ways in which my selected texts structure their space-times, I have undertaken to take a detailed look at a fundamental level of their narrativity and textuality; but I also propose to take into account – in as much as space allows – their national contexts. The work of Gajo Peles – unlike that of any Zimbabwean critic, to my knowledge – makes available some of the theoretical tools needed for such an attempt. The following section takes a brief look at these tools.

3.

The Zagreb theorist Gajo Peles belongs to the scholarly generation following Flaker's.[77] In intellectual terms, this means that, while old enough to feel the need to resist Soviet theory (which was imported into then-Yugoslavia in the 1950s and 60s in much the same shape as into Zimbabwe in the 1980s), he was also aware of the post-structuralist questioning of the concept of literary/textual interpretation, which he wished to counter, from the materialist structuralist theoretical position comparable to Flaker's and relying in part on Bakhtin and the work of the Tartu semiotician Jurij Lotman. This section paraphrases some of the content of his last two books to date, untranslated into English: the 1989 *Prica i znacenje* [*Story and Meaning*], and its popularised version, *Tumacenje romana* [*Intepreting a Novel*], published in 1999.[78] The books have not been translated into any western language. The paraphrase of Peles's ideas and the translation of his terminology in this section are mine. Ironically, despite his consistent reiteration of the dialogic nature of reading, Peles formulated his own theory of 'novelness' in a hermetic, convoluted style, and by means of original, but dense and complex, sets of technical terms. For the sake of clarity, these are here largely omitted.[79]

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[77] Peles was born in 1931 in Croatia. Although I refer to Flaker and Peles as 'Croatian' theorists (both write in Croatian), Flaker is, in fact, of Polish-Russian-German parentage, while Peles is part Serbian. Both have spoken of a sense of being outsiders in their academic environment. In the 1990s, in newly-independent Croatia dominated by the monologic nationalism propagated by the ruling party of Franjo Tudjman, Flaker came under attack for his continued Marxism, while Peles was harassed for being 'Serbian.' Their concepts that I adopt in this thesis were formulated before the fall of Yugoslavia, and they are based on an understanding of national literature that accommodates difference. This is the kind of understanding that I wish to apply to the Zimbabwean context.

[78] G. Peles, *Prica i znacenje (semantika pripovjednog teksta)* [*Story and Meaning (the Semantics of a Narrative Text)*] (Zagreb, Naprijed, 1989), and *Tumacenje romana* [*Interpreting a Novel*] (Zagreb, Artresor, 1999).

[79] Peles did, however, endorse a previous draft of this chapter.

Peles's basic premise is that a novel exists as a meaning-generating object only interpersonally or in dialogue with an interpretative text. It is the reader, in other words, who endows a novelistic text with the ontological status of fiction by recreating its semantic structure and bringing it (or parts of it) to bear on extra-textual entities, or other texts. And yet to say this does not mean to state that the construction of meaning happens haphazardly or is a purely subjective process – or that textual boundaries are arbitrary or non-existent. Reading is an inter-subjective as well as intertextual process, and the reader is guided by the text to a significant extent. British author Mark Currie summarises Peles's position precisely, when (in a book published nearly ten years after Peles formulated his theory of the novel), he writes:

> Stop me if I am stating the obvious, but a narrative and its reading are in a kind of dialogue with each other. A kind of a mutually dependant pair. A narrative does not speak for itself. It needs to be articulated by a reading, and a reading will always be a kind of rewriting , but the reading cannot interpret the text in complete freedom, cannot say anything it likes. There is always a kind of oscillation between objectivity and subjectivity in reading: the reading invents the narrative no more than it is invented by it.[80]

The oscillation Currie refers to involves two relatively separate processes: Peles calls them the construction of meaning and the construction of sense. I return to these below. By emphasising the interactive nature of the production of novelistic meaning, Peles signals his disagreement with the proponents of deconstruction and reception theory who de-emphasise the role of textual structures in meaning-generating processes. In the present context, the dialogic approach provides an alternative to the 'intertextual' tendency in readings of Zimbabwean novels in that it takes into account the Bakhtinian 'change of speaking subjects,' i.e. textual boundaries. As for the alternative to 'mimetic' approaches, it is here provided by Peles's view of novels as possible worlds. In order for these theoretical departure points to be properly elucidated, I turn first to his approach to the problem of 'form' and 'content.'

Peles follows Chatman and others in adopting Louis Hjelmslev's elaboration of de Saussure's distinction between the two aspects of a linguistic sign (the signifier and

[80] M. Currie, *Postmodern Narrative Theory* (New York, St Martin's Press, 1998), p. 133.

the signified)[81]. He therefore does not refer to 'form' and 'content' alone, but adopts the more complex cluster of terms, based on four cross-combinations of these two terms with the concepts of substance and expression. Peles discusses novels in terms of form and substance of expression, and form and substance of content.

By *form of expression* or the syntactic substructure of a novel, Peles means the combination of linguistic and narrative devices of various orders employed in an individual narrative. (He discusses them under the following headings: story outline and plot construction, composition, type of narrator and narrative point of view, language/style and narrative techniques). The *substance of expression*, on the other hand, is the historically extant repertoire of such devices from which an individual novelist chooses a unique combination for an individual text. This gradually expanding repertoire is defined intertextually. It can be seen as a series of textual matrices containing not only individual devices but also their combinations amounting to conventions governing the very concept of literariness, genre codes and stylistic/structural conventions belonging to various kinds of textual formations. Every individual selection implies the existence or absence of entire paradigms and their combinations; in this sense, every novel implies a set of intertextual relations. The first generations of Zimbabwean novelists, discussed in chapter one, resemble other novelists operating in cultures marked by the Flakerian 'accelerated development' in that much of the *substance of expression* available to them (the Bakhtinian 'already spoken' referred to on page five of Chapter One) was foreign, and marked by its Western/European origin.

Similarly, *substance of content* is a repertoire of themes, motifs or topics (what is commonly referred to as 'content' or 'subject matter' of a fictional text) to which an individual novel relates to in constructing its own particular combination of referents. This particular, individual combination, on the other hand, is a novel's *form of content* – its 'theme' as shaped by the *form of expression*. Like the *substance of expression*, the repertoire that is the *substance of content* is also arrived at intertextually and is being augmented with the passage of time. A novel's *substance of content* may be drawn from other linguistic texts – fictional (novelistic and non-

[81] See L. Hjelmslev, *Prolegomena to a Theory of Language* (Wisconsin, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1961) and S. Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1983). Fredric Jameson's *The Political Unconscious* also appropriates Hjelmslv's terminology.

novelistic, written and oral) and non-fictional - as well as from non-linguistic texts, lived experience or any combination of these. One of the demands of the Nigerian 'Afrocentrist' school of literary criticism, led by Chinweizu, was that African writers draw from the *substance of content* related to African pre-colonial rural life.

The introduction of the Hjelmslevian quartet of terms into the Zimbabwean literary-historical context helps to further clarify the 'Marechera debate' by pinpointing the inconsistency (and ultimate arbitrariness) of the 'Afrocentrist' critics' concept of 'Africanness'. While Okonkwo praises the *form of expression* of *The House of Hunger* (its style), Zimunya and Mzamane criticise it (specifically and respectively, its composition and its intertextual evocation of a European *substance of expression*). Furthermore, while Okonkwo objects to the novella's *form of content* (Marechera's 'view of life'), Zimunya and Mzamane dislike his *substance of content* (the novella's thematic selection).

Together, the linguistic and narrative procedures associated with literary *form of expression* represent the 'physically' (visually, aurally, etc) accessible aspect of a narrative, which, it is generally agreed, is obviously structured. What is less obvious is that each of these syntactic devices has semantic 'repercussions' or possesses what Peles calls semantic continuity. *Form of expression* and *form of content* are, in other words, mutually determined. In the context of this thesis, this is important. If 'reading for textuality' means assigning meaning to specifically *novelistic* procedures of *form of expression*, then it also means constructing meanings that are impossible to derive from non-novelistic texts, and which also have the potential to interrogate non-novelistic semantic complexes. This, of course, is also stressed in Bakhtin's discussion of the novel as unique, in its heterogeneity and unfinishedness, among genres.[82] Put differently: when, in 'The Problem of Speech Genres,' while referring to complex secondary genres that include novels, Bakhtin writes of 'special internal boundaries that distinguish this work from other works connected with it in the overall processes of speech communication,'[83] the internal boundaries he is talking about are both syntactic *and* semantic. It seems to me that Peles's greatest claim to usefulness in the Zimbabwean context lies in his assertion that the semantic ('thematic') substructure of a fictional narrative – its *form of content* - is as

[82] See M.M. Bakhtin, 'Epic and Novel,' in Holquist, *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 3-40.
[83] Bakhtin, 'The Problem of Speech Genres,' p. 75.

complexly structured as the syntactic one. His theory elaborates units of semantic structures which enable us to apply to *individual* narratives the terms that Bakhtin used in the *generic* sense – for example, 'the chronotope.'

Peles's theoretical contribution to the treatment of individual narratives breaks down in three ways. Firstly, he grounds fictional universes ontologically in the theory of possible worlds elaborated by the German philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz.[84] Leibniz – as he is described by David Harvey, who also relies on his work - mixed a modernist passion for science and reason with a medieval ontology of how the world was constructed.[85] He conceived of a multitude of independent, logically-grounded possible worlds, each with its own space-time and its own laws of movement. The actual world is only one possible world; others are contained in dreams, and in novels. The actual world is, according to Leibniz, one of possible worlds. But there are also other, non-actual ones: these are not situated in physical but in conceptual space-time. Novels bring into being non-actual possible worlds. By adopting the Leibnizian explanation of novelistic referents, Peles opens up the possibility of a set of criteria for the evaluation of their validity that does not ignore various kinds of contexts, yet escapes the reductionism of the Zimbabwean mimetic tendency.

Secondly, Peles uses Leibniz's definition of a possible world as a theoretical platform for developing a methodological and terminological apparatus for analysing and discussing the semantic substructure of fictional narratives. This apparatus contains tools that may facilitate a discussion of the spatio-temporal aspects of individual novelistic narratives, as well as intertextual links among different novels (e.g. Vera's). And thirdly, he 'steps outside' individual fictional worlds and theorises the nature of fictional worlds' relation to their social context ones by centring these on the reader. In doing so, he escapes the trap of implying that fictional truth is tied to direct referentiality, without simultaneously being forced to conclude that a textual

[84] This aspect of Peles's work was influenced by the work of the Canada-based Czech critic Lubomir Dolezel. See, for example, L. Dolezel, *Heterocosmica: Fiction and Possible Worlds* (Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998). Collectled extracts from the writing of Leibniz may be found in: G. H. R. Parkinson (ed), *G. W. Leibniz, Philosophical Writings* (London, J. M. Dent, 1995). Chapters explaining and commenting on Leibniz' conceptualisation of possible worlds are contained in N. Rescher, *Leibniz: An Introduction to his Philosophy* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1979) and B. Mates, *The Philosophy of Leibniz: Metaphysics and Language* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1986).

[85] D. Harvey, *Justice, Nature & the Geography of Difference*, p. 250.

construct is an end in itself, or that texts are the only 'reality' there is. Below, I enlarge on each of these three points in turn.

Peles understands identity as a set of relations within a boundary or a frame delimiting a segment of space-time. Leibniz, he explains, defined a possible world as a maximum set of complete compossible ('capable of being realised together and conjointly')[86] individual concepts. A complete concept – the constituent unit of a possible world – is a maximum set of compossible attributes. In a possible world, concepts are compossible because they share attributes. They are thus defined by a network of interrelations to the other concepts within the whole. It follows that it is impossible for an identical concept to belong to two possible worlds.

For Peles as for Leibniz, the concept of truthfulness encompasses both the actual and the non-actual worlds. In answer to Zimbabwean critics who favour mimetic interpretations, Peles would say that the criterion of the validity of a non-actual possible world is not its similarity to (whatever is considered to be) an actual world but its completeness and the compossibility of its constituent parts; in case of a novel – the internal logic of its own semantic organisation. Leibniz does not distinguish between different kinds of complete concepts. Peles, on the other hand, elaborates a system of different kinds of semantic constituent units of fiction. He does this because he seeks to integrate the narratological pillar of novelistic meaning – the concept of character - with other kinds of semantic configurations, traditionally referred to as themes and motifs. In providing examples for different kinds of semantic units, he refers to the 'classical' texts firmly entrenched in the Euro-American and Croatian novelistic canons (Flaubert, Dostoyevsky, Kafka, Proust, Faulkner, Joyce, the Croatian novelist Krleza, etc). In my exposition below, I will not reproduce those, but will, instead, substitute references to my own readings of Zimbabwean novels contained in chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven of this thesis.

Peles calls the basic semantic unit – the novelistic equivalent of the Leibnizian complete concept – a narrative figure. Narrative figures are bundles of what Peles calls sememes – the smallest units of novelistic meaning.[87] There are two kinds of

[86] Rescher, *Leibniz: An Introduction to his Philosophy*, p. 48.
[87] The term is a modification of Levi-Strauss' 'mytheme.' See C. Levi-Strauss, 'The Structural Study of Myth' in *Structural Anthropology* (New York, Basic Books, 1963). In her translation of Derrida's *Of Grammatology*, G. C. Spivak uses the form 'semanteme.' See Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 126.

sememes: semantic *nuclei* (names, key words or phrases) and *attributes* grouped around them. Attributes are a result of a network of relations between nuclei; this means that they are isolated (and a hierarchy of narrative figures is gradually constructed) by readers as they follow the narration in which names and other key words occur. An example of a semantic nucleus of Chenjerai Hove's novel's *Bones* is the character name 'Marita'; other nuclei in that particular novel are 'the farm,' 'farm workers' and 'spirits.' When, in my reading of *Bones* in Chapter Four, I associate 'Marita' with a certain kind of memory-inspiring wilfulness, I am, in Pelesian terms, establishing (what I consider to be) a key attribute of a particular narrative figure. This attribute is shared by the character of 'the unknown woman,' and provides a semantic link between the two figures. One of the more obvious attributes of 'farm workers' is 'physical hardship,' whereas 'spirits' may be associated with 'timelessness.'

When, in her comparative article on Yvonne Vera's *Without a Name* and Hove's *Bones*, Carita Backstrom associates Vera's character 'Mazvita' with 'freedom,' 'loneliness,' 'body' and 'fragility,' and Hove's 'Marita' with 'sacrifice,' 'longing' and 'independence,' she is establishing and comparing attributes attached to narrative figures in two Zimbabwean novels.[88] Each figure, as I imply above, has a paradigmatic and syntagmatic aspect; in a narrative, an event (the key syntactic component of a story) can be described as a syntactic mode in which one semantic distribution is replaced by another. Thus, in *Bones*, 'Marita' leaves the farm, she dissociates herself from the 'physical hardship' uniting her with the group 'farm workers' and forms a separate sub-group of figures, together with the 'unknown woman' (this sub-group may be called 'rebellious women'). Each narrative figure is as unique as the fictional world it helps bring into being; no figure can be exactly repeated in different novelistic texts.[89]

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[88] See C. Backstrom, 'In Search of Psychological Worlds: On Yvonne Vera's and Chenjerai Hove's Portrayal of Women,' in M. Eriksson Baaz and M. Palmberg (eds), *Same and Other: Negotiating African Identity in Cultural Production* (Stockholm, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2001), pp. 83 and 85.
[89] Peles uses inverted commas with semantic nuclei to signal their ontological status of fictional constructs and their belonging to specific possible worlds (to distinguish, for example, between the historical figure Napoleon and Tolstoy's 'Napoleon' in *War and Peace*). He does not use inverted commas with attributes, although logically he should, in order to indicate that there is nothing 'natural' or 'universal' about their meaning either. Peles suggests that attributes tend to lend themselves to being grammatically articulated as adjectives. This is more true of the Croatian than of the English language.

When, on page fourteen in Chapter One, I referred to the 'separation of [novelistic] semantic material into elements,' I had in mind Pelesian narrative figures, and mentioned characters, social groups and narrative space-time as examples of such 'elements' by design. There are, in Peles's system, three kinds of hierarchically interrelated narrative figures. They are, (starting from the lowest level of abstraction): figures of individuality (characters), collectivity (groups of characters; the 'social structure' of a narrative) and existence (figures to do with concepts governing the mode(s) of existence constructed by the narrative, including fictional time, space and ideology). In this thesis, I am interested in particular in the latter; that is, in how Zimbabwean novels construct narrative figures of space-time.

Examples such of narrative figures in Zimbabwean novels are: in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, 'the mission,' "the homestead" and "England"; in Nozipo Maraire's *Zenzele*, 'pre-independence time,' 'post-independence time' and 'generation'; in novels by Shimmer Chinodya and Alexander Kanengoni, 'the space-time of war' (see chapters Five and Six). The three kinds of figures are interlinked both within and across levels. In Chapter Five, I will attempt to show how, in *Zenzele*, the temporal figure 'post-independence time' derives part of its meaning from the link to the key figure of existence 'African culture,' which, in turn, is linked to the group figure 'African women' partly through the attribute 'resilience.' In *Nervous Conditions*, 'England' is associated with the group figure of 'relatives who *return*'; in Alexander Kanengoni's war novel *Echoing Silences*, the attribute 'suffering' links the figure 'post-independence time' with the figure of existence '*ngozi*.' This multiple interlinking is crucial to my readings of individual Zimbabwean chronotopes: Peles's system treats the construction of narrative space-time as *constitutive* of novelistic meaning, rather than – as 'traditionally' understood – as a *background* to (presumably, more central) semantic processes. I am, in other words, proposing to look at Zimbabwean narratives at the fundamental level of their novelistic textuality.

Narrative figures are not stable or 'objective': different readers and acts of reading construct them differently (this is the constitution and reconstitution of sign-events described by Bal). This is because not all attributes are directly present in the text in the form of lexemes. Many are realised by the reader based on 'clues' scattered

across the text's syntactic substructure or *form of expression*.[90] Different readings realise different possible attributes and establish different versions of individual narrative figures and the links between them. This is particularly true of figures of existence, since they are derived from figures at the other two levels. The figure 'the space-time of memory,' for example, that I use in discussing Yvonne Vera's work in Chapter Seven, is a critical construct: is not 'found' in any of Vera's texts – as a recent article on *Butterfly Burning* appears to be implying.[91]

Peles would contend, however, that to say this does not meant that figures are fully *subjective*, either. His insistence on dialogue means a refusal to concede that an interpretation of a novel can say 'anything it likes,' as Currie puts it. Peles is therefore prepared to speak of readings of novels that are invalid. In the context of Zimbabwean literature as elsewhere, I would go along with him in saying this. In the previous section, I refer to critical errors in the construction of spatial narrative figures in *Nervous Conditions*, and will go on to defend this in Chapter Five. A reading of Vera's *Nehanda* that does not endow the nucleus 'Kaguvi' with the attribute 'spirit medium' is also to my mind critically mistaken – as chapter twenty-three of *Nehanda* demonstrates.[92] Given the intricate textual detail regarding the temporal location of events in *Nervous Conditions*, it is unclear how readers could have arrived at the conclusion that the novel '*apparently* takes place in the late 1950s or early 1960s (it is, in fact, situated in the 1960s and the early 70s).[93] It is one of the tasks of a literary historian to establish models of the substructure of meaning of individual texts, and following that, in what Peles calls textual systems (in this thesis, Flakerian formations). An attempt at drawing some conclusions regarding the

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[90] Mieke Bal has pointed out that, when it comes to narrative space, these 'clues' are to be found mostly in the aspects of the syntactic substructure to do with plot construction and focalisation. See M. Bal, 'From Place to Space,' in M. Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1997), pp. 132-142.

[91] See V. Lunga, 'Between the Pause and the Waiting: the Struggle Against Time in Yvonne Vera's *Butterfly Burning*', in Muponde and Taruvinga, *Sign and Taboo*, pp. 191-202. Lunga cites the published version of Chapter Seven of this thesis, and refers to three kinds of 'chronotope space-time' found in *Butterfly Burning*: space, time and 'a third chronotope, memory time, which characters constantly negotiate in an attempt to make sense of their present realities.' (p. 191) She does not explain how 'memory time' (in this thesis, 'the space-time of memory') is textually constituted, and this may leave the impression that it is found as a 'ready-made' category in Vera's text.

[92] Such a reading was offered by a participant in the debate following the panel dedicated to Vera's work during the 'Versions and Subversions' conference on African literatures held in Berlin, 1-4 May 2002.

[93] B. Bravman and M. Montgomery, 'Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*,' in M. J. Hay (ed), *African Novels in the Classroom* (Boulder, Co, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), p. 98; emphasis added.

commonalities between the figures of space-time in novels analysed in this thesis is made in its final chapter.

The (re)construction of narrative figures is called by Peles the construction of *meaning*. It provides the reader with a new set of referents, which they may use to make sense of their lived experience, compare to figures from other narratives, or reconfigure (translate) into a new set of semantic units, informed by an extra-novelistic (e.g. scientific, theoretical etc) body of knowledge, or episteme. This is the process of using novels comparatively or intertextually, or constructing *sense*.[94] Once the meaning of the figure 'Marita' has been established, it may be profitably compared to, say, Lacanian readings of 'Antigone,' or various interpretations of 'Mazvita.'[95] Obviously, the distinction between meaning and sense cannot be absolute: Peles regards them as always being in a state of dialectic tension.

Peles' body of work has been the subject of debate. Fellow Zagreb scholar Josip Uzarevic has remarked of Peles's conceptual/terminological system (represented here in a rudimentary form) that its complexity occasionally threatens to make it seem like an end in itself.[96] This objection seems valid: because of their stylistic impracticality, I do not use Peles' names for various narrative figures in my readings of Zimbabwean novels. I speak, instead, of narrative space-time and fictional chronotopes. My analyses of the novels are, however, informed by Peles's concepts - especially by his understanding that the novelistic production of meanings and the production of novelistic space-time are mutually dependent processes. In the next chapter, this understanding is briefly related to the social production of space-time, and what I will call the Rhodesian chronotope.

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[94] Peles would, for example, welcome a comparison between Bakhtin's reading of the spatio-temporal figure 'the threshold' in Dostoyevsky, and Slavoj Zizek's Lacanian reading of the analogous figure in Kafka – despite the differences in theoretical aims and methods between him and the much younger Slovenian Zizek. See M. M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1999) and S. Zizek, 'The Postmodernist Break' in E. Wright and E. Wright, *The Zizek Reader* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1999), pp. 39-52.

[95] Elleke Boehmer's article 'Types of Yearning: Same-Sex Desire in Zimbabwean Women's Writing' (forthcoming, *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 29 (3), 2003) does precisely that when it interprets instances of the narrative figure 'paired women' in the light of queer theory.

[96] J. Uzarevic, 'Znanost o knjizevnosti i teorija interpretacije' [Literary Theory and Theory of Interpretation] in V. Biti, N. Ivic and J. Uzarevic (eds), *Trag i razlika: citanja suvremene hrvatske knjizevne teorije* [Trace and Difference: Readings in Contemporary Croatian Literary Theory] (Zagreb, Naklada MD/HUDHZ, 1995), pp. 13-37.

CHAPTER THREE

Zimbabwean Novels and the Production of Space-time: Writing Against the Rhodesian Chronotope

> [A]n event always involves the violation of some prohibition.
>
> J. Lotman[1]

> [C]olonization develops a writing which 'captures' space by establishing boundaries and limiting passage across them.
>
> J. Noyes[2]

> At all events, a criticism of space is certainly called for inasmuch as spaces cannot be adequately explained on the basis either of the mythical image of pure transparency or of its opposite, the myth of the opacity of nature; inasmuch, too, as spaces conceal their contents by means of meanings, by means of an absence of meanings or by means of an overload of meanings; and inasmuch, lastly, as spaces sometimes lie just as things lie, even though they are not themselves things.
>
> H. Lefebvre[3]

1.

Writing about the process of researching human geographies, Edward Soja has referred to a particular kind of 'linguistic despair' attached to the production of discourse about space. 'What one sees when one looks at geographies is stubbornly simultaneous, but language dictates a sequential succession, a linear flow of sentential statements.'[4] In Chapter Two, I tried to show that the perception of space and time of novelistic possible worlds takes, following Peles, exactly the opposite route. Taking as their starting points linear sequences of sentential statements, textual readings of novels assemble semantic configurations whose interconnectedness transcends the linearity of language. Here I argue that such configurations – fictional possible worlds – are profitably seen as spatio-temporal *models* of wider social contexts. Novelistic narratives, in other words, construct their own versions of the

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[1] J. Lotman, *The Structure of the Artistic Text* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press), p. 236.
[2] J. Noyes, *Colonial Space* (Chur, Harwood Academic Publishers, 1992), p. 106.
[3] H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1998) p. 92.
[4] E. W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies* (London, Verso, 1993), p. 2.

stubborn (social) simultaneities that Soja talks about, rather than - as mimetic readings of fiction would have it - merely reflecting them.

This means that what was said earlier about the impact of the discursive makeup of texts (the difference between Bakhtinian monoglossia and heteroglossia) on textual function, may here be taken to imply a difference in the kinds of models that narratives produce. In Chapter One, I stressed the link Bakhtin makes between spatio-temporal aspects of narrative worlds (chronotopes) and fictional genres. In his book on Bakhtin, Tzvetan Todorov explains this link by using the concept of modelling. Writing about Bakhtin's understanding of genre, Todorov refers to fictional model construction and narrative space-time as mutually constitutive. 'Genre, then, forms a modeling system that proposes a simulacrum of the world. (...) This modeling is analyzed at the same time into its constitutive elements, which turn out to be two: space and time.'[5]

Jurij Lotman of the Tartu semiotic school relied on the concept of textual boundaries (whose importance for the textual understanding this thesis adopts was stressed in the previous chapter) in explaining how fictional narratives become models.[6] There are, according to Lotman, two ways in which textual boundaries endow a fictional text with the properties of a 'finite model of an infinite universe.'[7] This happens, firstly, through the non-inclusion of events in the narrative (this is the function of what Lotman calls 'the frame'), and secondly, through the process of defining what, in an individual narrative, constitutes an event (this is effected by intra-textual boundaries).

The frame of a novelistic narrative consists of two elements: the beginning and the end.[8] A non-inclusion of events within the frame – that is, in the narrative sequence - implies their non-existence in the world of the novel. In the chapters that follow, I hope to show how strategies of narrative inclusion and exclusion bear crucially on Zimbabwean novels' appropriation of European novelistic genres and meanings. (This will, perhaps, be most visible in the modification of the *Bildungsroman*

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[5] T. Todorov, *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1995), p. 83.
[6] See Lotman, *Structure*. Lotman's work was/is known to, and is compatible with the writings of, Bakhtin, Flaker and Peles.
[7] Lotman, *Structure*, p. 210.
[8] *Ibid*, p. 212.

effected by the events left *untold* by Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, discussed in Chapter Five). However, Lotman's explanation of the constitution of an event – the building block of a narrative – is more important for my present purpose. This is because it involves intra-textual boundaries between different/opposed semantic fields within the textual frame, and because it specifies that, in fictional narratives, such semantic fields are always also *spatial*. An event, for Lotman, is always also *a displacement across a boundary*. It is not something mechanically lifted from the 'outside' world, or from tradition. Neither is it simply character movement *within* a spatial field.

If – through the process of selection - the frame delimits the scale of narrative space, the internal boundaries configure it. Each plot can be reduced to a basic episode describable in terms of 'the crossing of the basic topological border in the plot's spatial structure.'[9] This is easily illustrated by recalling some Zimbabwean texts: for example, Hove's Marita going to the city, Dangarembga's Tambudzai going to school, Chinodjya's Benjamin Tichafa going to war, or Vera's Nehanda mentally reaching the space-time of the ancestors. These examples may also serve to underline Lotman's key point: that an event – 'that which did occur, though it could also not have occurred'[10] – always involves the violation of a prohibition. A fictional plot, for Lotman, always narrates an act of transgression.[11] However, the prohibition and the transgression are, of course, never *only* spatial. By looking at displacement in post-independence Zimbabwean novels, this thesis claims to be analysing also aspects of these novels' cultural, political and ethical meanings – their ideologies. Lotman's work emphasises the view, shared by Peles, that narrative space cannot be reduced to 'a description of the landscape or a decorative background';[12] it is, instead, like time, central to the very concept of narrativity. More to the point in the present chapter, his concepts may help us to juxtapose and compare fictional possible worlds with their social contexts.

In a book on the colonial space of German South-West Africa (present-day Namibia), John Noyes describes how establishing spatial boundaries and the rules of

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[9] *Ibid*, p. 238.
[10] *Ibid*, p. 236.
[11] *Ibid*, p. 238.
[12] *Ibid*, P. 231.

their crossing is a key aspect of colonisation.[13] In a chapter entitled 'Boundaries,' Noyes writes: 'the spatial regime of boundaries and their crossing, which is so essential to colonialism, is also that which allows us to speak of a spatiality of a narrative.'[14] This is in keeping with Lotman's views, and Noyes evokes Lotman and the concept of modelling when he refers to colonial novels.[15] It seems to me that an implication of the spatial homology between colonialism and narrative is that spatial constructs of different orders – for example, the colonial regime of boundaries imposed on a geographical area, and the model constructed by a reading of a fictional narrative - may be juxtaposed, compared, and mapped onto each other. In keeping with this, my thesis argues that spatio-temporal models constructed by non-axiological Anglophone Zimbabwean novels stand in opposition to the model of space-time that colonialism imposed on the territory of today's Zimbabwe. I offer a description of this model in section three below, where I call it the Rhodesian chronotope.

When referring to a model of Zimbabwean colonial space-time, however, I do not intend this to mean a purely textual construct, the equivalent of a Leibnizian non-actual possible world. I am, instead, attributing to the Rhodesian chronotope the physical as well as a social and discursive dimension. In order to give some indication of how a construct such as this comes into being, and how it may be opposed through fiction, the following section makes a detour and discusses briefly the concept of the social production of space. This concept is central to both Noyes' and Soja's books, which have contributed to bringing about a change in the prevalent theoretical attitude in the study of space.[16] Space is no longer understood as an objective physical surface with fixed characteristics upon which social categories are mapped out, but as both a social product and a shaping force in social life. In the case of Zimbabwe, this means that colonial space and Rhodesian society were mutually constituted.

2.

In the postmodern era, space has reasserted itself as a source of emancipatory insight in critical social theory. For a number of reasons, as Soja explains in *Postmodern*

[13] Noyes, *Colonial Space.*
[14] *Ibid*, p. 108.
[15] *Ibid*, p. 19.

Geographies, it had been neglected for at least a century, while the wilful making of history was represented as the driving force of social existence. As he calls for a proper interpretive balance between space, time and social being, Soja credits the French Marxist scholar Henri Lefebvre with being both a pioneer and the staunchest defender of the re-conceptualised relationship between space and society.

In his masterwork, *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre writes: '*(Social) space is a (social) product.*'[17] This means that empty space, pre-existing the social relations of production and reproduction, does not exist. Instead, space embodies and enacts social relationships. Each society – each mode of production – produces its own space, which in turn contains, underpins and helps to reproduce it. In capitalism, social space assigns meanings to the three interlocking levels of social reproduction: biological reproduction (the family), the reproduction of labour power (the working class per se) and the reproduction of social relations of production. Neither ideologies, nor representations, nor power can exist or be reproduced outside such space. In the words of David Harvey: 'the production of spatial relations (and of discourses about spatial relations) is a production of social relations and to alter one is to alter the other.'[18]

In claiming that society and space are dialectically inter-related, Lefebvre was making a stand against two established conceptions of space, between which philosophers and geographers have shuttled for centuries. He calls them the realistic illusion and the illusion of transparency.[19] The proponents of the realistic illusion see space as no more than materiality, or a collection of things. This illusion tends to be accompanied by the belief that 'things' have more of an existence than 'subjects,' and by appeals to the naturalness, substantiality and opacity of space. The illusion of transparency, on the other hand, renders space transparent and intelligible, because it assumes a rough coincidence between social and mental space – the space of thoughts and utterances. This view reduces social practices to various forms of the spoken and written word (i.e. various kinds of discourse and representation). Although the two illusions appear contradictory (they have a kinship with mechanistic materialism and idealism respectively), they are, in fact, often combined.

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[16] For a discussion of this change, see 'Space and Society,' in G. Valentine, *Social Geographies: Space & Society* (Harlow, Prentice Hall, 2001), pp. 1-15.
[17] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 26. Italics in the original.
[18] Harvey, *Justice, Nature & the Geography of Difference*, p. 112.

Lefebvre transcends them both by stressing that the social production of space involves both materiality and ideation.[20] This is the kind of reality that I would ascribe to the Rhodesian chronotope.

In refusing to see space as something purely formal - as a separate, non-ideological structure with its own autonomous laws of construction and transformation – Lefebvre's approach towards human geographies is comparable to Bakhtin's stance on formalism in the study of literature, because both reject mechanistic separations of form and meaning. In the context of Zimbabwean literary criticism, the two critical tendencies that the previous chapter has called the mimetic and the intertextual may, in their socio-spatial implications, be aligned with the two illusory views of social space described by Lefebvre. Mimetic readings of Zimbabwean novels are akin to the realistic illusion in that they assume, by implication, the existence of an empty, opaque materiality, filled with social processes that novels are expected to reflect without distortion. Intertextual readings, on the other hand, may be related to the illusion of transparency in that they situate Zimbabwean texts mainly within discursive spaces, whose luminosity[21] throws material differences into the shade, and where even the most distant semantic links may be made visible without obstruction.[22] This thesis assumes rather that fictional spatial models are produced through the interaction between texts and readers, and that they function (in the Flakerian sense) in socially produced space-times.

The spaces of art and literature feature prominently in *The Production of Space*, as does the realisation that all art is ideological. Lefebvre refers to them repeatedly in connection with the conceptual triad with which he sought to capture the key moments of social space. Of this spatial triad, the central epistemological pillar of *The Production of Space*, Andy Merrifield has written: 'Unfortunately – or fortunately – [Lefebvre] sketches this out only in preliminary fashion; he leaves us to

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[19] See Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, pp. 27-30.

[20] For a reformulation of the two illusions, see Soja, *Postmodern Geographies,* chapter five. For a brief overview of their presence in the classical texts of contemporary post-colonial theory, see A. Moore, 'Postcolonial "Textual Space": Towards an Approach,' *SOAS Literary Review*, 3, 2001, http://www.soas.ac.uk/soaslit/home.html.

[21] 'Here space appears as luminous, as intelligible, as giving action free reign.' Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 27.

[22] In a different context, Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose have written: 'Lefebvre too suggests that transparent space tends toward homogeneity, toward a denial of difference.' A. Blunt and G. Rose, 'Introduction: Women's Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies,' in A. Blunt and G. Rose (eds),

add our own flesh and to re-write it as part of our own chapter or research agenda.'[23] The present chapter attempts just such a rewriting, by modifying one of the elements of Lefebvre's triad in order to accommodate fictional heteroglossia. The three Lefebvrian aspects of the social production of space are spatial practice, representations of space and representational space: *The Production of Space* discusses these moments most fully in its opening chapter.

The *spatial practice* of a society, Lefebvre says, 'secretes that society's space'[24] by embodying the forces and relations of production and reproduction characteristic of each social formation. It ensures a degree of spatial continuity and cohesion, and implies certain levels of spatial competence and performance on the part of members of society. Spatial practices 'structure everyday reality and broader social and urban reality, and include routes and networks and patterns of interaction that link places set aside for work, play and leisure.'[25]

Representations of space are knowledges, signs, codes and semantic constructs tied to the relations of production, and therefore also to spatial practices. This is conceptualised space; the space of scientists, planners, social engineers and 'a certain type of artist with a scientific bent.'[26] Representations of space intervene in and modify the process of the production of space: they are spatial interpretations, and are therefore a part of the history of ideologies. The conception of space as a mental and social void, for example, is in fact no more than a representation of space (I return to the colonial versions of this below). Characteristically, representations of space iron out the contradictions inherent in the configurations of produced space, and 'confuse matters precisely because they offer an already clarified picture.'[27]

Finally, the category of *representational space* refers to the lived experience of socially created spatiality. This is both concrete and abstract at the same time; while representations of space deal with concepts, representational space is the space of direct experience as expressed through images and symbols. Unlike representations of space, these expressions need not obey the rules of consistency and cohesiveness.

Writing Women and Space: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies (New York, The Guilford Press, 1994), pp. 5-6.

[23] A. Merrifield, 'Henri Lefebvre: a Socialist in Space,' in Crang and Thrift, *Thinking Space*, p. 173.

[24] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 38.

[25] Merrifield, 'Henri Lefebvre,' p. 175.

[26] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 38.

Representational spaces therefore tend towards 'more or less coherent systems of non-verbal symbols and signs.'[28] They overlay physical space, making symbolic use of its objects, and 'may be linked to underground or clandestine sides of social life.'[29]

Lefebvre emphasises that his spatial triad is not a mechanical typology, but a dialectical simplification, and that the manner in which its elements internalise, oppose, contradict and co-operate with one another is never simple or stable. Nevertheless, in capitalist societies what is lived (representational spaces) and what is perceived (spatial practice) is of secondary importance compared to what is conceived – the representations of space. And what is conceived usually amounts to an objective abstraction that Lefebvre calls abstract space: an oppressive space both fragmented and homogenous, which renders less significant both spatial practices and lived experience.[30]

In discussing abstract space, and the kinds of produced space that preceded it, Lefebvre does not discuss the nature of space-times produced by novels. Although he mentions Rabelais, and although his description of the quasi-carnivalesque rebellion of the living body against abstract space has Bakhtinian undertones,[31] the Bakhtinian notions of heteroglossia and dialogic art are alien to Lefebvre. In a discussion of a pre-capitalist form of produced space, he states explicitly: 'texts written for the theatre (...) are composed of dialogues, rather than (...) poetry or *other literary texts, which are monologues*.'[32]

However, the difference between monoglossia and heteroglossia – between axiological and non-axiological fictional representations – is crucial in adapting Lefebvre's comments in this reading of Zimbabwean narratives. As I explained in the first chapter, axiological novels transmit dominant or authoritative discourses. When it comes to space, this means dominant/authoritative spatial models. John Noyes touches on this when he talks about German colonial fiction dealing with South-West Africa – the Namibian equivalent of Rhodesian settler novels. In the introduction to

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[27] *Ibid*, pp. 188-189.
[28] *Ibid*, p. 39.
[29] Merrifield, 'Henri Lefebvre,' p. 174.
[30] *Cf Ibid*, p. 175.
[31] See Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, chapter four.
[32] *Ibid*, p. 224; emphasis added.

Colonial Space, he stresses that the colonial novels he is about to analyse (and which he later finds to be the mediators of state repression) are 'bad' ('pulp') literature posing as *belles lettres*.[33] (This description echoes Chennells' opinion on Rhodesian settler novels). When he evokes Bakhtin and discusses the chronotopes of the colonial novels he is analysing, Noyes confirms their monologic nature through a reference to their spatiality. Referring to the realist convention of the omniscient narrative perspective, he argues that each novel's chronotope produces a *single* 'subjective space which the reader shares with the actant(s).'[34] In contrast to this, Jurij Lotman's description of a famous heteroglot novel suggests multiple models of space-time clashing within the boundaries of a single text: 'In [Tolstoy's] *War and Peace* the clash of various characters is simultaneously a clash between their respective ideas *regarding the structure of the world*.'[35]

Through a multiplicity of social discourses they contain, heteroglot novels introduce the idea of plurality, and the possibility of choice, in the human creation of a world. Readers of such novels must construct narrative figures of space-time (or: novelistic representations of space) out of the overlapping, contrasting and contradictory chronotopes put forward by the text's many voices. In Nyamfukudza's *The Non-Believer's Journey*, Sam Mapfeka's dialogues with the other characters probe and contest different versions of Rhodesia, even as he moves towards the forbidden boundary that marks the territory of the armed struggle. At the boundary itself, Sam's final confrontation – with a guerrilla soldier – starts with an exchange about space: '"So you live in Highfield, huh? Where exactly, where do you work?" "Highfield, in Engineering, and I teach at the secondary school, near…" "I know where it is. I used to live there, you know."'[36] Much of the conversation that follows is about life in Salisbury's township of Highfields, and the reasons for leaving it behind and joining the war. In the end, the schoolteacher and the soldier cannot agree, and readers are forced to construct their own models of the colonial chronotope inhabited by the two characters.

Although Lefebvre does not remark on the specificity of heteroglot spatial representations, other contemporary geographers have done so. Considering

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[33] See Noyes, *Colonial Space*, p. 3.
[34] *Ibid*, p. 133.
[35] Lotman, *Structure*, p. 231; emphasis added.
[36] Nyamfukudza, *The Non-Believer's Journey*, p. 108.

Bakhtin's contribution as a thinker on space, Julian Holloway and James Kneale write: 'the novel (...) has the potential to rewrite language and social space; it represents a centrifugal opposition to the centripetal, ordering attempts of monologues.'[37] Similarly, David Harvey, in thinking through issues to do with space and social justice, makes a Bakhtinian statement regarding the semantic unfinishedness of the novel as a genre: 'The novel is not subject to closure in the same way that more analytic forms of thinking are.'[38] Like Peles, Harvey views novels as versions of Leibnizian possible worlds, and therefore as possible contestations of dominant notions of spatio-temporality and the processes that produced them.[39]

My intervention into Lefebvre's spatial triad, then, would be to elaborate his category of representations of space, in order to include into it the specialised, 'rebel' genre of heteroglot fiction. Such fiction should be credited with the ability to go against the grain of dominant constructions of space, and to create what Harvey has called 'new forms of representation of the possible.'[40] By doing so, it may have an impact on aspects of all elements of Lefebvre's spatial triad. Fictional spatial models may result in the production of further representations of space (i.e. critical and theoretical discourses, other novels); it may also alter the construction of readers' representational spaces, and even help to modify spatial practices (e. g. in situations when texts and interpretations are used within the interactions of institutions, as in the building of monuments and libraries, the organisation of field trips and research trips, etc.) In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre writes about the possibility of the production of differential space, a counter-space to what he calls the abstract space of advanced capitalism. In forthcoming chapters, I attempt to show that the spatial models of my chosen novels may be regarded as post-colonial Zimbabwean counter-spaces. Although none of them constructs a model of Zimbabwean differential space, all intimate the possibility of its existence.

A product of capitalism and neocapitalism, abstract space is characterised by both fragmentation and homogenisation: Lefebvre writes about a spatial fracturedness united by force, and held together by political power. Such space operates positively

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[37] Holloway and Kneale, 'Mikhail Bakhtin,' p. 81.
[38] Harvey, *Justice, Nature & the Geography of Difference*, p.28.
[39] See 'Leibniz on Space and Time,' in Harvey, *Justice, Nature & the Geography of Difference*, pp. 250-256.

with relation to technology, applied science and knowledge bound to power, and negatively towards lived experience, the wholeness of the human body, and time – which becomes subsumed to readability and visibility. It is the space of exchange, instituted by the state. Always a product of violence and war, abstract space serves those forces which would 'make *tabula rasa* of whatever threatens them – in short, of differences.'[41] Thus, paradoxically, abstract space is both violated and violent: its tendency is to crush all opposition. In colonial Zimbabwe, representations which were not 'in thrall to both knowledge and power'[42] were, as I suggested in Chapter One, banned from the territory of the state.

Lefebvre further calls spaces which are transformed and mediated by technology (such as those containing fortifications, dams, or motorways) dominated spaces.[43] In his analysis of the space of a colony, John Noyes makes it clear that colonial spaces, which came into being as a result of the global spread of capitalism, involves both domination and the process of making-abstract. He details how (through practices which were simultaneously physical, social and discursive), the space of South-West Africa was enclosed and emptied out. This was necessary because, as it spread, abstract space encountered spaces that were already socially produced, and attempted to erase all traces of this fact – that is, of other social production. Imperial conquest and expansion involved new concepts of space-time (as well as value, personhood and the body) being violently imposed on societies which had developed significantly different forms of manufacturing the experience of 'the real.'[44] For example: in the 1960s Rhodesia, a colonial official 'Chick' Fowles complained of the difficulty of assessing 'African criminal cases' in the High and magistrates' courts, because of the differences in the concepts of time and distance held by 'our local indigenous people.' He found it 'particularly irritating and time-wasting to have to try and estimate points given in evidence from witnesses who may have never been to the town or station before, having been brought in by official transport.'[45]

As this example indicates, colonial representations of space were in constant conflict with native representational spaces. But Fowles' irritation also shows that, in

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[40] D. Harvey, 'Afterword,' in H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 431.
[41] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 285.
[42] *Ibid*, p. 50.
[43] See *Ibid*, p. 164.
[44] *Cf* Harvey, *Justice, Nature & the Geography of Difference*, chapter nine.

Rhodesia, the imposition of the alien spatio-temporal matrix was not entirely successful. Lefebvre stresses that abstract space 'depends on consensus more than any space before it';[46] Noyes shows how colonial boundaries need constant policing, re-drawing and maintenance. Colonial constructs of space-time are precarious, contested and always needing to re-assert themselves. Lefebvre's description of the space-time of difference as always ready to erupt from the margins is perhaps especially true of a colony, precisely because of the violence involved in establishing one:

> Differences endure or arise on the margins of the homogenized realm, either in the form of resistances or in the form of externalities (...). What is different is, to begin with, what is *excluded*: the edges of the city, shanty towns, the spaces of forbidden games, of guerrilla war, of war.[47]

In Rhodesia, it was the production of the space of guerrilla war that finally put an end to the colonial state. Although it was the chief stated aim of the war to appropriate[48] colonial space and reconfigure it in order to remove the social inequalities that it produced, it is arguable that in the first two decades of independence this happened only to a limited extent. The racially-determined distribution of agricultural land inaugurated by the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 remained largely in place;[49] Zimbabwe's towns and cities retained the imprint the colonial north-south divide separating affluent from high-density accommodation.[50] This was, perhaps, unavoidable. 'It is not the work of a moment for a society to generate (produce) an appropriated social space in which it can achieve a form by means of self-presentation and self-representation,' writes Lefebvre.[51]

In the field of literature, this means that Anglophone novelists writing after 1980 could hardly escape an awareness that Zimbabwean post-independence spatial practices remained to a large extent unchanged. Earlier generations of novelists built

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[45] C. Fowles, 'Time and Distance,' *NADA, The Rhodesian Ministry of Internal Affairs Annual* 9 (5), 1968, p. 81.
[46] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 57.
[47] *Ibid*, p. 373.
[48] For Lefebvre's use of the term, see *The Production of Space*, p. 165 *ff.*
[49] On the reasons for this, see S. Moyo, 'The Political Economy of Land Acquisition and Redistribution in Zimbabwe, 1990-1999,' *Journal of Southern African Studies* 26 (1), 2000, pp. 5-28.
[50] This is elaborated in D. Tevera, 'Cities, Past, Present and Future,' lecture delivered during the Britain Zimbabwe Society 2002 Research Day, St. Antony's College, Oxford, 15 June 2002. See also M. F. C Bourdillon, 'Street Children in Harare,' *Africa* 64 (4), 1994, pp. 517-532.
[51] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 34.

spatio-temporal models which related to colonial ones through inversion (like Stanlake Samkange) or exposure (like Nyamfukudza or Marechera). My first chapter outlined how those exiled models were only able to 'return home' after 1980. The post – independence writers that concern me here join their predecessors in writing about the experience of colonialism. However, they do so with physically existing Zimbabwean audiences in mind, and from the vantage point of having crossed a socially produced *temporal* boundary: the ambivalent moment of independence. The time or writing accounts for the broadened repertory of themes that these texts have at their disposal. My point, however, is that they keep looking back, and contemplating colonial space-times. 'In space, what came earlier continues to underpin what follows,' says Lefebvre.[52] This is perhaps one way of explaining why none of the novels I analyse in the forthcoming chapters could avoid grounding its chronotope in the colonial era.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to attempt to show the manner in which segments and layers of earlier spatial formations and practices – pre-colonial, colonial, post-independence – have co-existed within Zimbabwean boundaries since 1980, or how exactly spatial practices, representations of space and representational spaces clashed and combined to produce the space of colonial Zimbabwe. What seems beyond doubt is that the space-time produced by the settler state of Rhodesia was characterised by an unequal and conflictual duality, imposed first and foremost by various forms of racial segregation and discriminatory social practices. It is against this space-time – the Rhodesian chronotope – that my forthcoming analyses of displacement in twelve Zimbabwean novels may be read. In the following section, I attempt to describe a model of this chronotope.

3.

Colonial Space details how colonial appropriation and domination turned African space into a functional network of discrete fragments divided by boundaries. (This was achieved discursively, through the twin activities of looking and writing, prior to the use of physical force in specific spatio-temporal locations.)[53] Rules of crossing the boundaries were also established and enforced, as well as the geographical

[52] *Ibid*, p. 229.
[53] For an illustration of the role of looking and writing in creating a colonial landscape of Zimbabwe, see L. Stiebel, 'Creating a Landscape of Africa: Baines, Haggard and Great Zimbabwe,' *English in Africa* 28 (2), 2001, pp. 123-133.

locations at which crossing might occur. Taking inspiration from Soja, Noyes calls such locations nodal points, and defines them as 'points of transformation which have the power to separate one quality of space from another by defining the principle of passage.'[54] Networks of transport and communication (roads, railways) maintained connections between such points. Like boundaries, nodal points (railway stations, border posts, bridges, 'growth points,' etc) were to a large extent textually established. Colonial representations of space constructed models that blocked (excluded, discouraged) certain existing pathways and manners of crossing space, and traced alternative ones instead. Nodal points and boundaries allowed for a regime of control to be established across the space of a colony.

The construction of colonial boundaries involved erasing from the land all traces of natives, as well as separating their bodies from the spaces that they inhabited. This was done in the first instance conceptually (through the European academic disciplines of anthropology and ethnography), and then physically, through the creation of 'native reserves' – a demonstration of how spatial practice and representations of space may coercively interact. Although the purpose of this process of enforced enclosure was to introduce and facilitate the functioning of the capitalist economic system, colonial discourses conceived of it as the imposition of order and civilisation onto unruliness and chaos.[55] Spatial fragmentation was essential for the purposes of exploitation, administration and surveillance of a colony; nevertheless, constructions of settler identity were crucially dependent what Noyes calls the myth of the colonial mastery of space: the discursively maintained idea of unlimited settler mobility across boundaries.[56]

The society of the self-governing colony of Rhodesia was marked by an especially rigid set of boundaries. In 1975, an article in the popular geographical journal

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[54] Noyes, *Colonial Space*, pp. 19-20.

[55] For a discussion of the importance of 'orderliness' in landscape for constructions of English national identity, see D. Lowenthal, 'European and English Landscapes as National Symbols,' in D. Hooson (ed), *Geography and National Identity* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1994), pp. 15-38. For an example of the concept of orderliness being imposed on Zimbabwean rural landscape both before and after independence, see S. L. Robins, 'Contesting the Social Geometry of State Power: A Case Study of Land-Use Planning in Matabeleland, Zimbabwe,' *Social Dynamics* 20 (2), 1994, pp. 91-118. This process is represented by the chronotope of Shimmer Chinodya's first novel *Dew in the Morning* (Gweru, Mambo Press, 1996 [1982]).

[56] See Noyes, *Colonial Space*, pp. 146-163.

National Geographic used a spatial metaphor to describe Rhodesia as 'a house divided.'[57] As David Drakakis-Smith explains, this division was the result of

> a gradual but deliberate spatial restructuring of rural production which began in the 1920s, when Southern Rhodesia was formally annexed by Britain, and reached its early peak in 1930 with the Land Apportionment Act which divided the country between the races. The area reserved for Europeans encompassed much of the best agricultural land and all of the principal mining and industrial sites; a small area of freehold land was allocated to a few small-scale black commercial farmers; the rest was designed Tribal Trust Land (TTL). This geographical proportionment was reconfirmed by the Land Tenure Act of 1969 which gave each of the races some 18.2 million hectares each (...), despite the 19:1 numerical ration in favour of the black population.[58]

The Rhodesian state, in other words, manipulated space on behalf of the white minority. In 1965, the Prime Minister of Rhodesia and his cabinet signed a document declaring unilaterally their country's independence from Britain. In it, they spoke of preserving 'those very precepts upon which civilization in a primitive country has been built.'[59] Following Noyes' understanding of the production of colonial space, and Drakakis-Smith's description of the production of Rhodesian space, this phrase may be read as a reference to a socio-spatial model in which the different 'qualities of space' are defined primarily in racial terms. I would maintain that the socio-spatial model that Ian Smith's government sought to legitimise was based on four chronotopic assumptions. Firstly, it assumed a fixed link between identity and location, and therefore also a discreteness of Rhodesian national identity; a qualitative difference, that is, between social spaces and identities formed inside and outside Rhodesia's borders. Secondly, it posited, within Rhodesia's geographical boundaries, a qualitative difference between 'black' and 'white' (native and settler) spaces, which were separated by boundaries. Thirdly, it took for granted an obvious and 'natural' qualitative difference between rural and urban spaces, and understood urban spaces as essentially 'white'. And fourthly, it assumed a discreteness of colonial *time*. That is to say, it assumed a drastic qualitative change (a relapse into barbarism) would occur in colonial space with the arrival of majority rule. I would

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[57] A. C. Fisher, 'Rhodesia, a House Divided,' *National Geographic* 147 (5), 1975, pp. 641-671.

[58] D. Drakakis-Smith, 'Urbanisation in the Socialist Third World: the Case of Zimbabwe,' in D. Drakakis-Smith (ed), *Urbanisation in the Developing World* (London, Croom Helm, 1986), p. 144.

[59] 'Unilateral Declaration of Independence,' *Rhodesian.Net*, http://rhodesian.server101.com/unilateral_declaration_of_indepe.htm

regard the various permutations of some or all of these four premises, as endorsed by Zimbabwean colonial texts, as variants of what I call the Rhodesian chronotope. In each of these variants, the rules of crossing spatio-temporal boundaries are likely to be constructed differently for settlers and natives, and for men and women.

As a model, the Rhodesian chronotope is both static and hierarchical. It assumes its own permanence in time (in the 1970s, a popular settler song claimed that 'Rhodesians never die'); furthermore it rests on the premise that settlers *naturally* relate to natives from a position of power. It consequently always implies an evaluative imbalance between the poles of binaries that it rests on: black/white spaces, inside/outside Rhodesia, city/country and before/after majority rule. Texts that reproduce the Rhodesian chronotope often contain contradictions, especially when faced with the need to explain the necessity of the presence of natives in 'white' spaces. Despite this, and despite the political defeat of Rhodesia more than two decades ago, as a mental construct the Rhodesian chronotope has turned out to be remarkably resilient. It is still reproduced as a possible world in cyberspace, where sites devoted to maintaining Rhodesian identities deem it perfectly feasible to refer to 'Rhodesia' and 'Zimbabwe' as co-existing spatio-temporal realities.[60]

The outlines of the Rhodesian chronotope may be discerned in the pre-independence axiological writings discussed in Chapter One. Flora Veit-Wild and Emmanuel Chiwome have noted that the sharp contrast between country and city represents the basis of Shona novels' constructions of morality. (The city is often represented as the site of moral decay and danger for Africans, in opposition to the simple security of rural tradition).[61] A similar contrast exists in pre-independence settler novels, but there the city represents first and foremost a place where settler heroes are constrained by the forces of 'civilisation', from which they are free only while roaming the empty bush in search of adventure. Chennells' study of Rhodesian settler myths is in part also a study of the Rhodesian chronotope. In the third chapter of his thesis, entitled 'The Search for Place,' he discusses the Rhodesian myth of the empty bush, punctuated only by the architectural remains of long-gone great

[60] See, for example, *Rhodesian.Net*, http://rhodesian.server101.com/ and *Rhodesians Worldwide – contact site for folk from Rhodesia*, http://www.rhodesia.com/

[61] See Veit-Wild, *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers*, pp. 84-86, and E. Chiwome, 'African Townships as Sites of Struggle: the Evolution of Images of Urban Areas in the Shona Novel,' paper presented at *Scanning our Future, Reading our Past*, a symposium on Zimbabwean Literature, held at the University of Zimbabwe, Harare, 10-12 January, 2001.

civilisations, such as the ruins of Great Zimbabwe. In chapter four, 'The Search for a Rhodesian Identity,' he discusses the myth of the absolute discreteness of settler identity, while chapter six ('The Liberation War') outlines settler fears tied to the imminent arrival of majority rule.[62]

A particularly memorable illustration of the temporal aspect of the Rhodesian chronotope (a belief in the discreteness of colonial time) is a novel not analysed by Chennells, Peter Armstrong's *Hawks of Peace*. Published in 1979 but set mostly in a futuristic mid-1990s, the novel outlines the inevitable decline of independent Zimbabwe, run by a greedy and incompetent black president who is no more than a puppet of foreign corporate interests.[63] Settler novels listed in Chapter One also provide a good illustration for what Noyes calles the myth of the colonial mastery of space; together with the Shona texts analysed by Veit-Wild and Chiwome, these texts point at colonial differences in the construction of rules of boundary-crossing. While, in Shona novels, the country-city displacement is tied to difficulties and danger (and is, on the whole, a path best not undertaken), settler texts' heroes (policemen, sanctions busters, miners, etc) move between bush and city, townships and overseas, with the greatest of ease.[64]

The key features of the Rhodesian chronotope are even more clearly outlined in post-UDI non-novelistic texts. I will refer here to a sampling of such texts: a historical narrative, a geographical text and a children's book, repectively: James Barber's *Rhodesia: the Road to Rebellion* (1967), George Kay's *Rhodesia: a Human Geography* (1970), and R. E. Cole Bowen's self-illustrated *World to World on Rhodesia's Magic Carpet* (1974).[65]

In his first chapter, entitled 'The Origins of a Divided Society,' Barber adopts the Rhodesian settler viewpoint, despite stressing that he is himself an outsider.[66] In the

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[62] See Chennells, 'Settler Myths and the Southern Rhodesian Novel,' pp. 160-220, 221-308 and 421-465 respectively.
[63] See Armstrong, *Hawks of Peace*.
[64] This freedom of movement is later replicated in some post-independence war novels, discussed in Chapter Six.
[65] J. Barber, 'The Origins of a Divided Society,' in *Rhodesia: The Road to Rebellion* (London, Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 1-19; G. Kay, *Rhodesia: a Human Geography* (London, University of London Press, 1970); R. E. Cole Bowen, *World to World on Rhodesia's Magic Carpet* (Bulawayo, Books of Rhodesia, 1974).
[66] See 'Author's Preface and Acknowledgements,' in *Rhodesia: The Road to Rebellion*, pp. vii-xii.

book's opening pages he outlines a belief in the apartness and uniqueness of the social space inside Rhodesia's borders. Rhodesia, he explains, is on the border between 'black' and 'white' Africa, and open to pressure from both camps. Although there are similarities between it and its southern neighbour, South Africa, the settler dominance of the government and the economy 'has never been translated into the ideological claims of South Africa.'[67] Despite this, the social space inside the country is racially divided: 'There are almost no social contacts between Africans and Europeans.'[68] George Kay's wording offers a Rhodesian version of what Noyes has called different qualities of socially produced space: 'Segregation and white supremacy thus became the basis of race relations in Rhodesia largely as a consequence of a natural gulf between the races.'[69] Both authors describe how the entire territory of the country is divided between the races (into white farmland/National Parks land on the one hand, and 'Tribal Trust Land' and 'Native Purchase Area' on the other). Although aware of the huge disparity in the relative population density in 'black' and 'white' spaces, Kay asserts that this is, despite appearances, 'not the outcome of a sinister plotting to deprive Africans of a reasonable share of the natural resources and assets in the country.'[70] Barber states that 'Native Reserves' were created in order to 'protect the Africans' from uncontrolled settler spatial expansion.[71]

The key implication of such racial spatial segregation is that 'the two races would live apart and therefore could be administered and governed apart'[72] (Barber's wording here echoes the justification of colonial spatial fragmentation pointed out by Noyes). The racial make-up of cities, however, contradicted this apartness. Although all of Rhodesia's cities were in 'white' parts of the country (near roads and rail links), all had segregated accommodation areas housing significant native populations. Kay resolves the contradiction by referring to urban native residents as an aberration. They inhabit, he explains, a social space 'in between' the two Rhodesian socio-spatial 'worlds':

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[67] Barber, *Rhodesia*, p. 2.
[68] *Ibid*, p. 1.
[69] Kay, *Rhodesia*, p. 32.
[70] *Ibid*, p. 54.
[71] Barber, *Rhodesia*, p. 6.
[72] *Ibid*, p. 8.

> There are, in fact, *two worlds or more* within this country: the developed sector associated with European-dominated money economy and the tribal sector associated with African rural areas and various transitional stages, including tribesmen in townships, *in between*.[73]

Barber notes that it was precisely at this 'transitional' location (the Lefebvrian margin, spawning differential space), that the main threat to the Rhodesian space-time came into being, as black township-dwellers – whose representational spaces were in increasing conflict with dominant spatial representations - began to organise politically.[74]

Architect and cartoonist Cole Bowen mentions no such political upheavals, although the title of his book – *World to World on Rhodesia's Magic Carpet* - echoes Kay's formulation cited above. The book's style and format betray a strongly axiological purpose: it was written, and richly illustrated, for the education and entertainment of children. Ostensibly, it is for *all* children: the Foreword contains a dedication 'to those people a part of whose emergence I have tried to illustrate' (Rhodesia's natives).[75] The back inside cover would lead potential readers to believe that the text is primarily to do with enumerating and illustrating various modes of transport. In fact, the book provides – presumably, primarily for white children – a brief spatial history of colonisation, described, from a native viewpoint, primarily as a process of *learning*:

> The hunters came with their wagons and their oxen... and the traders came too. And the missionaries they also came and some from very far away, but they came to teach us new songs and to give us new names (...). And so from these people we came to learn about the wheel and the wagon, and about the trek chain (...) and how (...) to pull wagons of our own.[76]

It also explains for them life in Rhodesia's other 'world' – the native reserves – which the characters reach by means of what the back cover calls 'the tribal bus.' 'We are the people who live in two places,' states the narrating voice. '[O]ur villages in the Reserves with our tribes and cattle, and in the City in our townships or kias

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[73] Kay, *Rhodesia*, p. 11. Emphasis added.
[74] *Cf* Barber, *Rhodesia*, p. 12.
[75] Cole Bowen, *World to World*, p. 1.
[76] *Ibid*, pp. 12-14.

wherever we work.'[77] *World to World on Rhodesia's Magic Carpet* tells the story of one such journey. As a representation of space, it aims to construct a model of Rhodesian natives' representational space, and communicate the model to its readers on the natives' behalf.

As the above examples show, the text purports to speak with the voice of 'those people' themselves: the narrative is told throughout in the first person plural. Although the consistency of the grammatical form belies several shifts of focus, it turns out that the textual 'we' stands mostly for young black men who work in the city. By implication, Cole Bowen's book points at some of the rules of crossing boundaries within the Rhodesian chronotope. Although native women are shown in the illustrations, the text never adopts their point of view. This is because they don't commute between city and country: their place is 'at home', in the reserves, where they are happy to work the land. On arrival in the country, the narrative 'we' is able to 'join the ladies, who are already working in the lands. (...). Our Mother is strong, the oxen pull hard, and the disc cuts deep.'[78]

Other rules of native spatial movement are expressly stated. The city is represented by stylised drawings of the business centre of Salisbury (today's Harare). But the text informs readers that the buses for the reserves 'start in the Townships, and if you do not catch them there then you must wait for them in the suburbs'[79] - in other words, start the bus journey from a nodal point on the city's margins.[80] Once the commuters have reached their rural home, most of their time is spent singing, dancing, and drinking beer. The book implies that this is what natives like best, and that such activities form the essence of their rural lifestyle. 'So we all drink beer and we sing and we dance and the dust rises, so that we can forget the cities and the towns and we are happy, oh, happy, for we are tribesmen again.'[81] Life in the city is temporary: Africans' *real*, happy existence is in their allocated piece of the countryside. Cole Bowen's book does not mention the war, roadblocks, searches of people and

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[77] *Ibid*, p. 20.
[78] *Ibid*, pp. 35-37. For references to gender, see also pp. 4, 7, 20 and 34.
[79] *Ibid*, pp. 22.
[80] By way of contrast, one of the key rules governing the spatial movement of *settlers* is explicitly formulated in Alexandra Fuller's account of her life in Rhodesia. She writes: 'They [the hitchhikers] aren't Rhodesians either, we can tell, because they are walking along the road and white Rhodesians don't walk anywhere on a road because that's what Africans do and it is therefore counted among the things white people do not do to distinguish themselves from black people.' See A. Fuller, *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight: An African Childhood* (New York, Random House, 2001), p. 100.
[81] Cole Bowen, *World to World*, p. 41.

luggage, or the presence of armed soldiers by the roadside. In the novel *The Non-Believer's Journey* all of these things feature in Sam Mapfeka's bus journey from city to country, which Nyamfukudza situates in 1974 - the year of publication of the story about 'Rhodesia's magic carpet.'[82]

The Rhodesian chronotope was instrumental in essentialising colonial identities by infusing spaces with fixed, polarised meanings, and tying them to social identities.[83] But efforts to enforce and police its boundaries were uneven, in part contradictory and never entirely successful. From the earliest days of Rhodesia, for example, black women found ways to leave the countryside and establish themselves permanently in towns.[84] Pushing the natives to the outskirts of the city also didn't always work: John Pape's study of Salisbury domestic workers and the liberation war recalls a period in the late 1960s when more blacks than whites lived in the 'white' areas of Rhodesia's capital.[85] The same study usefully underlines the connectedness of the rural and urban areas in the last two decades of settler rule. The two colonial 'worlds' were, from the perspective of those who alternated between them, not separable[86] - and Africans' existence in Tribal Trust Lands was, of course, far from the carefree happiness depicted by Cole Bowen.[87] The defeat of the Rhodesian state through both internal and external pressures showed that, contrary to the hopes of Ian Smith and his government, the space inside Rhodesia's colonial boundaries proved not to be absolutely separable from its continental and global surroundings.[88]

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[82] By way of indicating the possibility of further comparisons, I should say that the year in which Barber's book on Rhodesia was written saw the publication of Stanlake Samkenge's *On Trial for My Country* (Oxford, Heinemann, 1989 [1966]), whereas Kay's book was published two years before Charles Mungoshi's *Coming of the Dry Season* (Harare, ZPH, 1991; first published by Oxford University Press, 1972).

[83] See G. Rose, 'Place and Identity: a Sense of Place,' in D. Massey and P. Jess (eds), *A Place in the World? Places, Cultures and Globalisation* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 87-132.

[84] See D. Jeater, 'No Place for a Woman: Gwelo Town, Southern Rhodesia, 1984-1920,' *Journal of Southern African Studies* 26 (1), 2000, pp. 29-42, and T. Barnes, '"We are Afraid to Command our Children": Responses to the Urbanisation of African Women in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1930-44,' in B. Raftopoulos and T. Yoshikuni (eds), *Sites of Struggle: Essays in Zimbabwe's Urban History* (Harare, Weaver Press, 1999), pp. 95-112.

[85] J. Pape, '*Chimurenga* in the *Kia*: Domestic Workers and the Liberation Struggle in Zimbabwe,' in Raftopoulos and Yoshikuni, *Sites of Struggle*, pp. 257-271.

[86] On the same topic, see also J. A. Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the Rural-Urban Connection: Migration Practices and Socio-Cultural Dispositions of Buhera Workers in Harare,' *Africa* 71(1), 2001, pp. 82-112.

[87] For studies of peasant farmers' adaptation to the harsh conditions in Communal Lands, see K. W. Nyamapfene, 'Adaptation to Marginal Land amongst the Peasant Farmers of Zimbabwe,' *Journal of Southern African Studies* 15 (2), 1989, pp. 384-389, and K. B. Wilson, 'Trees in Fields in Southern Zimbabwe,' *Ibid*, pp. 369-383.

[88] On the interconnectedness of African and wider spaces even before the era of 'globalisation,' see F. Cooper, 'What is the Concept of Globalization Good For? An African Historian's Perspective,' *African Affairs* 100 (399), 2001, pp. 189-213.

By the same token, however, the drastic spatio-social change that settler texts feared would arrive with majority rule did not materialise either. In as much as it was tied to the discourse on 'civilisation,' the meaning of colonial boundaries was reinterpreted, and some segments of Zimbabwean space were renamed (Tribal Trust Lands became Communal Lands). Independence did bring some changes – and, unavoidably, new spatio-social struggles.[89] But although the differences between segments of Zimbabwean colonial space were not what they claimed to be, they were not constituted purely discursively, either; and although they were constantly undermined, that is not to say that they did not exist at all. After 1980, the social inequalities between different parts of a city like Harare, between different parts of the countryside, and between city and country, did not disappear. In that sense, the skeleton of the Rhodesian chronotope continued to exist after independence. In 1989, Preben Kaarsholm described the social geography of independent Zimbabwe with the words:

> The social geography is split between urban and rural areas, the countryside is divided between regions of very different fertility, and towns spread out between the affluence of low-density and the poverty of high density suburbs. Different cultures and opportunities are available to English and Shona and Ndebele speakers.[90]

Although Kaarsholm was careful to substitute linguistic designations for racial ones, the fact remained that the majority of native speakers of English were white, and that most white Zimbabweans continued to live in northern, low-density parts of towns and on large, privately owned commercial farms.

The lack of large-scale change was especially noticeable in the first decade of independence, when the Zimbabwean government declared that it was following the socialist path to development. In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre is doubtful of East European socialist projects because they did not plan for radical spatial restructuring. 'A social transformation, to be truly revolutionary in character, must manifest a creative capacity in its effects on (...) space.'[91] Writing about socialist struggles in the Third World and using Zimbabwe as a case study, Drakakis-Smith

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[89] See, for example, V. Dzingirai and E. Mazudzo, 'Big Men and Campfire: A Comparative Study of the Role of External Actors in Conflicts over Local Resources,' *Zambezia* 26 (1), 1999, pp. 77-92.
[90] P. Kaarsholm, 'Culture, Democratisation and Nation Building in Scandinavia and Africa,' in E. Ngara and A. Morrison (eds), *Literature, Language and the Nation* (Harare, ATOLL in association with Baobab Books, 1989), p. 145.

echoes his sentiments. After stating that 'socialist politics directed towards resolving the problems of socio-spatial equality in Zimbabwe have been limited in both their scale and intensity,'[92] he argues that Zimbabwe's 'principal problem is that all contemporary changes are occurring in the absence of a comprehensive (socialist) plan for rural/regional development.'[93]

Accompanying Drakakis-Smith's article is a diagram of Zimbabwe's 'space, mode of production and class fragments.'[94] Its top row is a representation of a version of the Rhodesian chronotope, dividing the Zimbabwean social space into rural and urban, and each of those into European (core) and African (periphery). Because the diagram's temporal component divides Zimbabwean time into only two periods - before and after 1950 – it also conveys a sense of relative temporal stasis. In the first two decades of independence, despite expectations, the social construction of Zimbabwean space-time did not change in a revolutionary way. In particular, the question of the ownership of commercial agricultural land, which remained largely in the hands of white commercial farmers despite being the key point of mobilisation during the liberation struggle, remained a part of the 'unfinished business' of Zimbabwe's identity as a nation.

In 2000, however, Zimbabwe's ruling party came under increasing political pressure from the gathering forces of the opposition. Throughout the 1980s and 90s there had been a continuous demand for land by those still crowded in the former colonial 'reserves.' In the beginning of the third decade of independence, through a series of contingencies and shifting threats and alliances, the government announced that it would redress the colonial wrongs and, in effect, dismantle the Rhodesian chronotope for good through a programme of 'fast-track' land resettlement.[95] In 2003, most white farmers have been forced off the land. (Exactly who has replaced them is the object of study and debate – but there is reason to believe that, as a group,

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[91] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 54.
[92] Drakakis-Smith, 'Urbanisation in the Socialist Third World,' p. 154.
[93] *Ibid*, p. 155.
[94] *Ibid*, p. 148.
[95] For a discussion of the historical circumstances and nationalist ideologies involved, see J. Alexander, '"Squatters," Veterans and the State in Zimbabwe,' paper delivered at the Britain Zimbabwe Society 2002 Research Day, St Antony's College, Oxford, 15 June 2002, and S. Chan, *Robert Mugabe: A Life of Power and Violence* (London, I. B. Tauris, 2003).

government-related elites may have benefited more than the land-hungry inhabitants of the Communal areas.)[96]

Although the take-over of farmland is meant to represent a 'fast-track' movement of Zimbabwe's national identities into the *future*, the official government rhetoric has, paradoxically, conceptualised it as a return into *the past*. The government has revived the discourse on race, and has fought the opposition by identifying it with colonial-era nationalist enemies, the white settlers and the former colonial power. Government propaganda continues to refer to the land re-allocation as the third *Chimurenga* (liberation struggle) and even speaks of food shortages that have resulted from the land seizures as a 'return to socialism' (which was officially abandoned in the 90s).[97] The official representations of space thus deliberately overlap with hard-core Rhodesian ones, in order to be able to claim that the government has effected their reversal. In 1997, a die-hard ex-settler envisaged the possibility of 'another "Rhodesia," where [the former white settlers] can all be together again.'[98] Four years later, a Zimbabwean 'war veteran' showed his support for the government by holding up a placard that read: 'No to Rhodesia and Rhodesians.'[99] In both cases, the 'Rhodesia' that is being referred to is a 'virtual' entity, a non-actual possible world. However, in its efforts to construct and enforce a simple narrative of colonial possession and subsequent repossession, the Zimbabwean government has, ironically, re-defined but also *reinforced* some of the spatial oppositions of the Rhodesian chronotope, rather than removing them. The opposition between the inside and the outside of the country is now as distinct as in the 1970s, thanks to food and petrol shortages and the political violence in Zimbabwe. And although the bulk of fertile farmland can no longer be designated 'white,' it no longer functions as 'fertile farmland' either: hunger and local terror rule the countryside and roadblocks have cut it off from the cities, thus reinforcing the rural-urban opposition. At a time of the supposed final historical defeat of the Rhodesian chronotope, some of the key spatial contradictions it instigated are still in place.

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[96] See Mirror Reporter, 'Govt land consultant leaked audit report,' from *The Sunday Mirror*, 16 March, as posted on www.zwnews.com on 17 March 2002.
[97] See M. Hartneck, 'Mugabe's land of penury and propaganda,' *The Times*, as posted on www.zwnews.com on 24 December 2002.
[98] C. Gregory, 'Rhodesians in the 90s,' *Rhodesians Worldwide* 12 (3), January-April 1997, p.13.

The chronotopes of non-axiological black Anglophone Zimbabwean fiction published before independence may be read as writing back to the Rhodesian chronotope by simply showing – to paraphrase Lefebvre's assertion quoted at the outset - that this chronotope was a lying one. Wilson Katiyo created a black nationalist hero who leaves Rhodesia and confidently negotiates the social spaces outside, learning to feel at home in England, the country of origin of most Rhodesian settlers.[100] In *The House of Hunger*, Marechera depicted the city as a primarily *black* space. Mungoshi's fragmented and depleted Tribal Trust Lands in *Waiting for the Rain* stand in opposition to Europe, where its hero is going, rather then to the Rhodesian cities. In Stanley Nyamfukudza's *The Non-Believer's Journey*, there is an unbroken continuity of social space between the city and the country. This thesis argues that non-axiological black novels in English written after independence also relate to the Rhodesian chronotope, but in a more complicated way, since they are directed at post-independence readers. The chapters that follow offer detailed analyses of how novels by Hove, Dangarembga, Maraire, Chinodya, Kanengoni and Vera construct models of space-time. I return to the notion of the Rhodesian chronotope in my conclusion.

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[99] C. Dondo, 'War Veterans' (2001), photograph exhibited at the *Artists for Zimbabwe* exhibition, Gallery 27, Cork Street, London W1, 3-8 March 2003.
[100] W. Katiyo, *A Son of the Soil* (Harlow, Longman, 1976) and *Going to Heaven* (Harlow, Longman, 1979).

CHAPTER FOUR

The Dead are Loved in a Different Way: Chenjerai Hove

> What I wanted to say is, I don't think there's an effort, you know. It's not something he struggles to do. It comes naturally from him, himself as a man, as a person. He grew up differently from some of the men his age, his generation. He'd been around the fires, around with women, and he became a storyteller because of that.
>
> Yvonne Vera[1]

1.

The words quoted above were spoken by the latest Zimbabwean novelist to rise to international fame after independence, about the first: Yvonne Vera was, during an interview with me in 2001, praising warmly the personality and literary achievement of Chenjerai Hove. Together with some of the work of Alexander Kanengoni, Hove's and Vera's texts constitute the post-independence continuation of the experimental, aesthetically-dominated strand of Zimbabwean Anglophone fiction, initiated in 1978 by Dambudzo Marechera's *The House of Hunger*, as I argued in Chapter One.[2] Like Marechera and Kanengoni, Hove and Vera have created fiction that is filled with violence.[3] Unlike the work of Marechera and Kanengoni, however, the substance of content and the narrative perspective of Hove's and Vera's novels are firmly women-centred. In having written a series of novels that focus on the experiences of women, Chenjerai Hove is still unique among male Zimbabwean writers. This chapter analyses identity construction in relation to narrative space-time in his English-language novels *Bones* (first published in 1988), *Shadows* (1991) and *Ancestors* (1996).[4]

Apart from their female-centredness, the most immediately noticeable feature of Hove's novels is their suggestive, 'poetic' style and quasi-modernist narrative

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[1] Y. Vera, in an interview with R. Primorac, Bulawayo, January 2001.

[2] In the same interview, Vera said of Marechera: 'I've only met him once for two minutes, in '87. And I'm glad for that meeting. But I think I miss him – Marechera, who I didn't know. Because I think he would have understood why we write.'

[3] For a historical positioning of Yvonne Vera's work with regard to Marechera and Hove, see K. Muchemwa, 'Language, Voice and Presence in *Under the Tongue* and *Without a Name*' and R. Primorac, 'Iron Butterflies: Notes on Yvonne Vera's Butterfly Burning,' in Muponde and Taruvinga, *Sign and Taboo*, pp. 3-14 and 101-108 respectively.

[4] C. Hove, *Bones* (Harare, Baobab Books, 1994 [1988]), *Shadows* (Harare, Baobab Books, 1991) and *Ancestors* (Harare, College Press, 1996). Subsequent references to the three novels are to these editions, and will be cited in the text. Their titles will be abbreviated as *B*, *S* and *A* respectively.

technique. Since the appearance of *Bones*, reviewers and critics have invariably referred to, and drawn conclusions from, Hove's handling of the English language.[5] In this, too, his work stands out within Zimbabwean Anglophone fiction, and this is perhaps one of the reasons why it has provoked several comparisons and contrastings with texts by other Zimbabweans.[6]

In all of his novels, Hove makes use of relatively simple syntax and vocabulary: he relies on short sentences and clauses and frequent repetition of lexical items directly linked to African rural life. His metaphors, symbols and imagery are largely drawn from the world of nature, and he incorporates translations of Shona proverbs, sayings, folktales and folk songs into the linguistic texture of his novels. He thus creates, in English, a mode of expression which to some extent gives the impression of the style of rural, spoken Shona. In a detailed analysis of the language of *Bones*, Dan Wylie has shown how various features of Hove's style amount to 'a richly creative *illusion* of Shona-ness.'[7] He stresses the word 'illusion' because Hove's style of necessity replicates features of the Shona oral style selectively, and blends them with features of a formal, 'slightly ponderous, faintly archaic' register of English that Wylie illustrates with a reference to H. Rider Haggard.[8] Hove thus creates what Wylie calls an 'interlanguage': *Bones* and (in my opinion) Hove's other novels are works 'whose intertextuality looks simultaneously to the (Shona) mother-tongue and culture *as well as* to the target-language and culture (English).'[9] In keeping with this statement, Shona native speaker Rino Zhuwarara has pointed out that Hove's 'transposition' of Shona proverbs in *Bones* includes modification: he paraphrases the meaning of the proverb according to his contextual purpose, and

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[5] See, for example, J. Bryce, '*Bones*: A Truly African Novel,' *New African*, 276, 1990, p. 42; B. Cooper, review of *Voices Made Night* by Mia Couto, *Bones* by Chenjerai Hove and *The Theory of African Literature* by Chidi Amuta, *Social Dynamics* 16 (2), 1990, pp. 91-95; E. D. Jones, 'Land, War & Literature in Zimbabwe: A Sampling,' *New Trends and Generations in African Literature*, 20, 1996, pp. 50-61, and L. White, 'War Poem,' *Southern African Review of Books* 3 (3&4), 1990, pp. 3-4.

[6] In addition to L. White's 'War Poem,' which compares the style of *Bones* to that of Isheunesu Mazorodze's *Silent Journey from the East*, see also L. Gunner, 'Power, Popular Consciousness, and the Fictions of War: Hove's *Bones* and Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns*,' *African Languages and Cultures* 4 (1), 1991, pp. 77-85, the comparison between the language of *Bones* and that of *The House of Hunger* in D. Wylie, 'Language Thieves: English-Language Strategies in Two Zimbabwean Novellas,' *English in Africa* 18 (2), 1991, pp. 39-62, Rooney, 'Re-Possessions,' and Backstrom, 'In Search of Psychological Worlds.'

[7] Wylie, 'LanguageThieves,' p. 50; emphasis in the original. For remarks on Hove's style, see also the chapter on *Bones* in Veit-Wild's *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers* and Veit-Wild, '"Dances with Bones".'

[8] Wylie, 'Language Thieves,', p. 58.

[9] *Ibid*, p. 42.

does not strive to recreate the rhythm or grammatical form of the original. (It is perhaps significant that Emmanuel Chiwome does not mention Hove at all in his study of the orality/literacy interface in the Zimbabwean novel).[10] The 'in-betweenness' of Hove's style, and, therefore, its pronounced *artificiality* – despite its '*appearance* of translation from a Shona "original"'[11] – exerts a decisive influence on the chronotopes of his novels, as I attempt to demonstrate in section two below.

Hove's composition and narrative technique may be called quasi-modernist. He is interested primarily in the psychological lives of his characters; in narrating events, his novels deliberately break up causal and temporal sequences. In addition to that, the discursive form of his prose has been called polyphonic.[12] Each novel's narrative is divided into short sections or chapters, and is related through multiple viewpoints and narrating voices that foreground characters' internal lives. Although these voices or viewpoints belong to characters that differ in age and gender, in all of Hove's novels they are united by style (all employ the linguistic form of expression described above), and class: Hove's overriding interest is in the experiences of rural peasants. In addition to that, Hove's novels privilege voices associated with or belonging to, Shona ancestral spirits (both *vadzimu*, family ancestors, and *mhondoro*, royal ancestors). These factors diminish (although they do not, I think, destroy entirely) the polyphonic effect of the texts. Instead of a configuration of radically different discourses/ideologies, none of which is reducible to the author's mouthpiece, *Bones*, *Shadows* and *Ancestors* contain variations on the theme of Shona peasant suffering and possible reactions to it, delivered in a style which suggests a collectively-created and ancient world-picture or ideology. Wylie calls the character-speakers' ideological common ground 'the moral baseline of Shona culture'; Veit-Wild speaks of a 'communal voice' and 'collective history.'[13] I will relate the communality of their experience to the fact that Hove's characters (especially those of *Bones*) inhabit static, 'frozen' chronotopes. Furthermore, the monotony of violence in peasant lives, and the consistency with which narratives of such lives

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[10] Zhuwarara, 'Men and Women in a Colonial Context,' 'Gender & Liberation or 'Bones,' and E. M. Chiwome, 'The Interface of Orality and Literacy in the Zimbabwean Novel,'*Research in African Literatures* 29 (2), 1998, pp. 1-22.
[11] Wylie, 'Language Thieves,' p. 56; emphasis in the original.
[12] See E. Boehmer, 'The Nation as Metaphor in Contemporary African Literature,' in R. Clark and P. Boitani (eds), *English Studies in Transition* (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 323, and P. Dodgson, review of Hove's *Shebeen Tales*, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 24 (3), p. 592.
[13] Wylie, 'Language Thieves,' p. 60, and Veit-Wild, *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers*, pp. 314-315.

have been omitted from official histories, are represented by Hove's texts as precisely the reasons why stories of worlds such as theirs need to be told.

A consequence of the opacity of language in Hove's novels combined with their interest in psychology, is a diminished sense of the characters' corporeality, as well as of the physicality of space and historicity of time.[14] Liz Gunner's statement that *Bones* fails to give its readers 'any clear sense of events in a specific time or place'[15] is less true of *Shadows* and *Ancestors*. Even so, the combination in all three novels of orature-influenced style and quasi-modernist narrative technique produces considerable and deliberate indeterminacy in the construction of narrative space-time. This chronotopic vagueness contributes to the texts' hypnotic quality, and a sense of other-worldliness and perhaps even exoticism that they may communicate to readers. Flora Veit-Wild has suggested that these might be some of the reasons behind their success in the West.[16]

Texts such as these may be variously interpreted; *Bones* in particular has provoked a range of critical responses. Possibly because of its date of publication and its references to Zimbabwe's liberation war, many of them explore the novel's relationship to Zimbabwean nationalism. Liz Gunner is of the opinion that the novel belongs to the kind of fiction that works 'against the grain of a complacent nationalist discourse eager to mythologise key events of the past,' because it differs from earlier (axiological) representations of the coming of independence.[17] Veit-Wild, on the other hand, accuses Hove of fostering precisely such complacent nationalist discourse through a combination of mystification and simplification in his representation of characters.[18] Elleke Boehmer praises Hove for undermining essentialist views of the nation through his polyphonic technique, [19] whereas Rino Zhuwarara implies that the consciousness of Marita, *Bones*' heroine, is embarrassingly pre-nationalist in its inability to direct undiluted hatred at white

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[14] In 'Language Thieves,' Wylie remarks on the absence of physical distinction among characters in *Bones* (see p. 48). As I point out in section three below, the character of Johana in *Shadows* is a notable exception.
[15] Gunner, 'Power, Popular Consciousness, and the Fictions of War,' pp. 78-79.
[16] Veit-Wild, *Teachers, Preachers, Non-believers*, p. 318.
[17] Gunner, 'Power, Popular Consciousness, and the Fictions of War', p. 81.
[18] See Veit-Wild, 'Dances with Bones,' esp. pp. 8-9.
[19] See Boehmer, 'The Nation as Metaphor,' p. 324.

settlers.[20] In direct response to Veit-Wild, Matthew Engelke explores the intertextual links between *Bones* and Hove's other texts, and concludes that 'Hove's work shows us how writers can use ideas of the nation with which to open up a space for the recognition of alternative national consciousnesses.'[21]

The variety of critical opinion is not surprising. *Bones* refers to the second *Chimurenga* and to the period of Zimbabwe's transition to independent nationhood, but it does not – like the novels discussed in Chapter Six - include a construction of the space-time of the armed struggle. Furthermore, its 'poetic' style and many indeterminacies work against direct axiological functionality. This chapter aims to approach the question of how Hove's texts construct national and other identities through (re)constructing their spatio-temporal aspects. With regard to this, several generalisations can be made.

All three of Hove's novels in English highlight the parallels between different generations of characters (especially women), whose entire biographies are sketched by the texts. All three narratives are centred on rural spaces – more specifically, commercial farms – but also feature cities, visited always by solitary and exceptional characters. All the novels feature *double* or repeated displacements of some of the characters. Perhaps most significantly: all of these novels tell stories about remembering the dead. In this chapter, I argue that, through focusing their attention on the need to mourn and remember the past, as well as through their texture and their spatio-temporal structuring, Hove's narratives imbue the pre-colonial Shona customs of honouring and consulting the dead with new, post-colonial meanings.

Bones, *Shadows* and *Ancestors* put different emphases on these components of their narrative worlds, and combine/contextualise them differently in order to produce different semantic nuances and possibilities. *Shadows* and *Ancestors* are built around closely related patterns of spatio-temporal movement, and are therefore discussed together in section three below. The following section deals with *Bones*.

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[20] 'Marita's consciousness, advanced as it is in relation to that of other workers, remains painfully inadequate for her to cope with the demands of a colonial situation which is dynamically changing.' Zhuwarara, 'Men and Women in a Colonial Context,' p. 11.

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Bones is constructed around the relationship of two women of different generations, told in a complex manner by several narrating voices. The novel's several plot-lines[22] converge on the character of Marita; she is a privileged object of narration, although she does not herself assume the role of narrator. The privileged (in the quantitative sense) narrative voice in the novel belongs to Janifa, a woman young enough to be Marita's daughter, who meets and befriends her on a large, white-owned commercial farm where they are both working as labourers.[23] Apart from Janifa, who narrates seven of the novel's fifteen sections, the character-narrators in this novel are: the Unknown Woman who meets Marita in the city (she narrates three sections, one featuring also an omniscient narrative voice); Chisaga, the cook on the farm (two sections); and Marume, Marita's husband (one section). Two sections are also spoken by the spirit of Mbuya Nehanda who inspired the first *Chimurenga*, an uprising against white rule in 1896, and the collective voice of ancestral spirits, respectively. (The figure of Nehanda is also central in Yvonne Vera's first novel, discussed in Chapter Seven). The titles of the fifteen sections that make up *Bones* state the identities of the sections' narrators.

After having lived in a 'native reserve,' – the 'black,' rural part of the Rhodesian chronotope - Marita and her husband Marume, plagued by their inability to have a child, move to the farm owned by Baas Manyepo where much of *Bones* takes place. There they have a son, who joins the freedom fighters while he is still of school-going age. Marita is beaten and raped by the Rhodesian security forces who want to know his whereabouts. She also stands up to the farm 'baas-boy,' (the black overseer of farm labourers) but refuses to denounce Manyepo himself to the guerrillas, despite his cruelty to farm workers. She befriends Janifa, to whom her absent son has written a love-letter before he disappeared. After independence, she goes to the city in order to find out whether her son has survived the war. On the bus, she meets the Unknown

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[21] M. Engelke, 'Thinking about the Nativism in Chenjerai Hove's Work,' *Research in African Literatures*, 29, 2 (1998), p. 41.

[22] All of Hove's novels have multiple plot lines, although these tend to appear rudimentary and open-ended when judged by western realist novel standards. (In this, too, Hove's work resembles Vera's.) In *Bones*, there are three sub-plots related to the main plot which is initiated by Marita: they are the stories of Janifa, Chisaga and the Unknown Woman. Chisaga's sub-plot, for example, contains only two events (not counting the pre-fabulary events of his childhood and youth, recounted in flashbacks): stealing money from Manyepo and the rape of Janifa. Neither is *shown* in the novel.

[23] Marita and Janifa are 'Shona-ised' versions of the English names Martha and Jennifer. As for the other names in *Bones*, 'Chisaga' means 'sack,' 'Marume' means 'big man' (as opposed to 'murume,'

Woman, who unsuccessfully tries to claim Marita's body from the mortuary after she dies in the city, and who subsequently dies there herself. Meanwhile, Chisaga, the farm cook – whom Marita has misled by promising him sexual favours in return for money – rapes Janifa on the farm. Janifa's mother tries to make her marry Chisaga. Janifa refuses, and ends up in a mental institution. In the end, the text does not make it clear whether Marita's son's return, and his proposal to Janifa, is real or a part of Janifa's disturbed imagination.[24]

The temporal structure of *Bones* has also been interpreted differently. To Landeg White, it has seemed obvious that all of the novel's voices exist in Janifa's disturbed mind. Dan Wylie has disagreed, since even internally, Hove's characters' monologues 'seem not to issue from a fixed point in time.'[25] In my opinion, textual evidence supports Wylie's reading. However, establishing the exact time-structure of *Bones* is difficult, for several inter-related reasons.

Firstly, while the time of narration of sections by Marume and Chisaga may be roughly situated in narrated time (that is, relative to narrated events),[26] the time of narration of Janifa's sections – and they account for nearly half the novel – may be understood in at least two ways. The novel's ending sees Janifa psychologically disoriented and in a mental institution. Because of this, the near-identical sentences, spoken by her, with which the text of *Bones* opens and closes may be interpreted as referring to a physical event, or to a mental recurrence.[27] On reaching the end of the text, readers may allow this ambiguity to affect, retroactively, all of Janifa's sections. Her use of the present tense ('Marita quickly finishes my small bit and then goes to weed her share' – *B*, 45) may thus, on re-reading, be interpreted as either 'historical' or 'real' – or different in different parts of the text. Accordingly, the narration of her sections may be understood as having been started in different points of narrated

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husband), and 'Manyepo' is the plural of 'inyepo,' a lie. I am grateful to Paul Danisa for translations and explanations of Shona expressions in *Bones*.

[24] On this, see Bryce, '*Bones*' and Rooney, 'Re-Possessions,' p. 128.

[25] See White, 'War Poem,' p. 3, and Wylie, 'Language Thieves,' p. 47.

[26] For example: Marume narrates section three on the day that Marita has told him that she is going to the city (see *B*, 24), while Chisaga tells section five as he is preparing to steal Manyepo's money (*B*, 41). The time of narration of both is, in other words, before Marita has left the farm, but they cannot be temporally related to each other.

[27] 'She asked me to read the letter for her again today, Marita, every day she comes to me, all pleading' – *B*, 7; '...Marita...she asked me to read the letter for her again today, every day she comes to me, all pleading.' - *B*, 112.

time,[28] or as taking place in an unspecified time period *after* the events that the novel narrates. (Individual readers may, of course, arrive at their own specific combinations of the two temporal possibilities.)

Secondly, most sections contain flashbacks ('I knew it from the way I ran away from school' – *B*, 27), anticipations ('"Baas, Marita has disappeared' – *B*, 26), digressions ('I remember one day when two women came to share the secrets of their husbands' – *B*, 8) and generalisations ('Marita, those who eat the eggs of the hen say the eggs are not good for young mouths' – *B*, 97). Some, like section twelve, told by Chisaga, contain a kind of temporal sliding, and narrate events *as they happen* (on p. 83, Chisaga does not yet know Marita has left; he learns this on p. 84). And thirdly, certain sections – for example section eight, spoken by the Unknown Woman, and section fourteen, voiced by the ancestral spirits – contain no temporal markers at all, and are impossible to place temporally in relation to narrated time.

Moreover, the novel refrains almost entirely from referring to markers of historical time. Readers can presume, from the presence of guerrillas and security forces on the farm (as in section nine, spoken by Janifa), that most of the main plot is probably situated in the 1970s. In section one, it is said that Marita's son has been away for four years – but readers have no way of relating this figure to any kind of a temporal benchmark. The sub-title of section seven refers to bones and includes the evocative date of 1897, thus signalling that the speaker is the spirit of Nehanda. In section four, spoken by Janifa, Marita refers to Hitler (Hikila) (*B*, 31). But that is all. Most pointedly, the moment of the arrival of independence is not in any way – thematically, compositionally or temporally – singled out by the text. (In this respect, *Bones* and Hove's other novels are unique among the texts analysed in this thesis.) Independence is mentioned, in passing, in section eleven. (*B*, 80) In section three Marume says: 'a very long list of names is hidden somewhere – where, if you are lucky to get someone who can read and who is full of patience, they can read the long list for you and tell you if your son is dead or not.' (*B*, 24) This implies that Marita's decision to visit the city is taken in or after 1980. But answers to questions to do with when exactly this is, how long she has lived on Manyepo's farm, or the age of Marita and the other characters, are not provided by the text of *Bones*.

[28] In such a reading, for example, section two would be understood to have been narrated after sections one and three.

The consequence of these different narrative devices is a text that enables its readers to establish with certainty only the basic causal/temporal relationships on which (re)constructing the outline of the main plot depends. In the process of reading, it is possible to work out, for example, that Marita goes to the city *after* she is raped by the security forces, or that Chisaga steals Manyepo's money *before* she leaves – but not, say, how the chronology of the Unknown Woman's life (including the moments of narration) is related to that of Janifa's. As such indeterminacies are then threaded through with violence and death, and because moments of violence and death occur both before and after Marita goes to the city – before and after, that is, the 'submerged' moment of independence - the chief impact of Hove's 'temporal technique' in this novel is to convey the impression of an *absence of change*. Combined with the uniform artificiality of the novel's language, the absence of change endows the world of *Bones* with an eerie sense of temporal stasis.

By this I mean that the attempts to establish the exact temporal interlocking of parts of the text therefore give way to (or, at least, co-exists with) the possibility of reading Hove's novel as an assemblage of acts of telling that are ideologically, compositionally and *temporally* equivalent. Put differently: the uniformity of style and the absence of change may be seen to undermine the sense of a hierarchy or order of moments in time (that is: the sense of progression between beginning and end) underpinning the concepts of both 'story' and 'progress.'[29] In *Bones*, the distinction between beginnings and endings - between stretches of time *before* and *after* independence - loses importance. Instead, the sequence of compositional segments that make up the novel begins to function as a series of equivalent (equally ideologically valid) textual present moments. The tellers of *Bones* may thus be imagined as being locked in a separate temporal plane - the time of telling – from which the non-telling characters are excluded.

Something similar happens with the evocation of narrative space. The events of *Bones* take place in two locations: on a large, white-owned commercial farm, and in the city. (Both are regarded as 'white' by the Rhodesian chronotope). For Marita and her fellow-labourers, the farm and its landscape – 'the trees, the rocks, the soil' (*B*,

18) - are associated with hard physical work, poverty, violence and colonial inequality. 'They say there is very little to talk about on the farm except Manyepo's latest victims, those he has beaten or kicked in front of their own wives or children.' (*B*, 29) The city, on other hand, has the reputation of a dangerously attractive place. 'But Marita, do not be attracted by the many things people say about the city. What is bad will remain bad even if people say many good things about it' – Marume warns (*B*, 24). For Marita, though, the city is the location of hope: despite its materialism, the city may hold information about her son, and her son, if alive, is the bearer of *change*. She tells Janifa; 'Since [city dwellers] like money more than people, I will tell them I have the money to give them if they can read the names for me. If they tell me that my son's name is not there, I will even give them some more.' (*B*, 30) In the end her hope proves vain. Change does not come, and the farm and the city turn out to have a lot in common.

Although it refers to geographical locations as sparsely as it does to the historical, the text of *Bones* makes it clear that its rural space is divided. In section five, Chisaga remembers how "the whole Muramba village came here to look for work when they heard a new farmer was coming here to open a new farm [.] Some came with their children, their dogs and cats and all they could carry." (*B*, 39) Marume, too, recalls leaving his village and coming to 'this forest where baas Manyepo is chief.' (*B*, 28) They have, like many others, left the Tribal Trust Lands (a 'native reserve') in search of a better life. (The fact that they have not found it – that, within the chronotope of *Bones*, there is no space where they *could* have found it – is potentially the key source of sympathy for all the African characters in *Bones*, from the generous Marita to the self-serving Chisga.) The white-owned farm is thus established as a space that attracts newcomers, and that is capable of modifying identities (the former villagers now inhabit the farm 'compound' – *B*, 41). In this it resembles the city. Making the crossing between the two spatial poles of *Bones* is difficult for a peasant. From the bus taking her to the city, Marita sees

> large farmlands which nobody farms. The owners are frenzied or vicious when they see someone walking through these unspoiled forests that are their farms. But there is no bus or car to take the walker away from the roads through the farms. So, one does not know how to leave the farmlands and reach the bus stop. (*B*, 69)

[29] This may be one of the reasons why Hove's text has been experienced as a 'war *poem*' (the title of White's 1990 review).

It is as if, between settler farmland and the city, there is a spatial vacuum; and just as settlers control the 'unspoiled forests' outside the city, so the key holders of power in the city itself are bureaucrats.[30]

Unlike novels by Wilson Katiyo, Stanley Nyamfukudza and Shimmer Chinodya, *Bones* does not represent city as a space of racially segregated residential areas. For Hove's characters, it is first and foremost the seat of the post-independence government. For the settler farmer Manyepo, this makes it antithetical to the farm: '"There is nothing the government in the city can do. I rule here".' (*B*, 99-100) The unknown woman, on the other hand, on hearing that the government has power, automatically assumes that the government is *male*: '"Where does the government stay so that I can visit him and ask for the body?".' (*B*, 68) The space of the city has never been directly invaded by war: "'You people of the city do not know what war was all about'" (*B*, 75), Marita tells the Unknown Woman. But although she claims to have some knowledge of city life (*Ibid*), Marita, on reaching it, disappears from the other characters' view. Readers do not learn anything about the manner of her death: it is as if the city has swallowed her up.

In *Bones*, therefore, a relationship of equivalence is established between the city and Manyepo's farm. Both are represented as spaces capable of drawing people in and subsuming them: chapter eleven refers to the homeless crowds swarming around the railway station (*B*, 81). But they also have limited capacity for accommodating newcomers: *Bones*, in fact, constructs both spaces as *constricting*, constantly exerting an inward-pulling pressure on its inhabitants. Whenever the characters of *Bones* leave either the farm or the city, they are, conspicuously and near-instantaneously, *replaced* by others. On the farm, Janifa is loved by Marita in place of her absent son;[31] she is also raped by Chisaga in place of Marita.[32] In the city, the Unknown Woman's dead body replaces Marita's as the unclaimed corpse at the mortuary.[33] Both spatial poles of *Bones* draw people like magnets, then work towards keeping them, literally, in their place. Retaining this place is difficult enough. ("Manyepo told [Marume] he was pretending to be ill so that he could *stay on the farm for nothing*" –

[30] The novel does not mention the city's name. Because of the reference to the tall buildings (*B*, 76), I am assuming it is the capital.
[31] 'You took my place when I left my mother to work alone for Manyepo.' (*B*, 109)
[32] 'Marita left you all the things of her womanhood. Know what that means.' (*B*, 85-86)

B, 39; 'If I were the police I would arrest [the poor and the hungry] and imprison and hang them so that *the city is not defiled*' – *B*, 81; emphases added). Exercising outward or lateral movement against the force of the centripetal spatial pull is well-nigh impossible, and poses a risk to those who stay behind. This spatial voracity seems to me to be one of the most violent aspects of the violence-filled narrative that is *Bones*. When what has been said above about the novel's temporal characteristics is also taken into consideration, the bi-polar chronotope of Hove's text emerges as coercive, constricting and static: a frozen world.

This 'frozenness' is challenged by the guerrillas. They exist, miraculously, somewhere outside both the farm and the city. When describing to the Unknown Woman their method of fighting, Marita refers to repeated, *circular* spatio-temporal movement – something that no peasant character in *Bones* is able to execute. 'Fight and run away so that you can wake up the following morning to try and *come back* and fight *again*.'(*B*, 74; emphasis added) Similarly, when questioned by the security forces about her son's whereabouts, she evokes a circular trajectory and a spatio-temporal freedom that she herself has never experienced: '"They say other children have run away *to another country* so that they can *come back* with guns to fight".' (*B*, 59; emphasis added).[34] But *Bones* does not represent the space-time of the armed struggle: this is not a story about the guerrillas, but about the people – and especially women – who have had to live in their proximity. As Caroline Rooney has put it

> *Bones* is close to the concerns of many non-literate or semi-literate, non-elite Zimbabwean women of a certain generation. That is, it addresses the sufferings of (...) *women who have been forgotten*, and it engages with the need for consolation, mourning and remembrance, and for the paying of respects.[35]

Put differently: *Bones* foregrounds the kind of narrative that official histories suppress. In telling the story of Marita, it represents an unofficial and gendered form of resistance.

Like the guerrillas, Marita challenges the limitations of the bi-polar, frozen, self-enclosed space-time she inhabits. The very action of leaving the farm – moving

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[33] '[S]he has nobody to ask for her body from where she asked for Marita's body.' (*B*, 104)
[34] Novels that concentrate on representing precisely that spatio-temporal circle are discussed in Chapter Six.
[35] Rooney, 'Re-Possessions,' p. 120; emphasis added.

outwards - is an act of rebellion against inward-pressing space. Furthermore, she is the only human character in *Bones* who focuses on the *future*. While Janifa, Marume, Chisaga and the Unknown Woman are to a large extent preoccupied (and weighed down) by reminiscing about the past, Marita moves into the spatio-temporal unknown without regard for precedent or pragmatism. In the future, she says, she will 'no longer be working for Manyepo.'(*B*, 30) But when Janifa asks what she will do if she finds her son, it turns out that the only plan she has for the future is encapsulated in the words: 'I will be happy.' (*B*, 43). She also wants to find out whether the myths about the fighters are true: 'I want to ask him if it is true, those things we heard once happened.' (*Ibid.*) In leaving the farm, Marita demonstrates a faith in the possibility of change implied in the word 'independence,' and *initiates* change herself. It is as if she is testing the Rhodesian chronotope, so see if it is still in place. She is the only human character in the novel to do so; the others, frozen like the space-time they inhabit, merely *react* to events triggered off by others.

The character of Marita is unique in several other ways. Constantly addressed and spoken about, she nevertheless does not belong to the group of the novel's narrators. She is omnipresent in the text, yet her voice is heard only through the voices of others. Although she dominates the narrated time, she is excluded from the time of telling. She is ectopic (after leaving the space where she can claim a place of her own, she does not find another) and, from very early on in the novel, is associated with death (*Cf B*, 7). Her positioning in the space-time of *Bones* is curiously ambivalent: she is both present and absent, included and excluded. This links her to Nehanda and the ancestral spirits.

In the seventh section of *Bones*, the voice of Ambuya Nehanda sketches the history of the colonial conquest and the first *Chimurenga*, and calls for another uprising. Nehanda is a *mhondoro*, a Shona royal ancestral spirit, and her speaking voice resonates from the realm of the supernatural, outside of the space-time of the living.[36] And yet, as a textual construct, she resembles Marita in several respects. Like Marita, Nehanda is ectopic with regard to physical space. She is also orientated towards the future: her words are a prophecy. She, too, is central to the novel's narrative (her words pull together the novel's thematic strands and endow them with a generalised,

symbolic significance) while at the same time being excluded from it (she does not participate in narrated events). In a reversal of what has been said above about Marita, Nehanda participates in the time of telling, but is absent from the narrated time. Caroline Rooney's reading of the novel takes the parallel even further, and sees Marita herself becoming a spirit after death, and possessing Janifa.[37] In as much as they both resist colonial space-times, Marita can be seen as a version of Nehanda.

Nehanda's status as a spirit and as a symbol of anti-colonial resistance gives special prominence to the fact that she envisages such resistance as a collective, multi-voiced undertaking. In her evocation of the second *Chimurenga*, she explicitly mentions the participation of women and children – the bearers of unofficial, forgotten histories: 'Mothers, children, trees, insects, birds, animals, they all joined in the war songs of the people.'(*B*, 52) In section fourteen, the collective, omniscient voice of the spirits explicitly endorses Marita's actions by remembering and mourning her alongside Janifa and the Unknown Woman, the women in whom she has inspired the spirit of rebellion. (Because Nehanda is also a *nationalist* symbol, this seems to me to indicate a belief, on the part of Hove's text, in a broader, more inclusive kind of nationalism – 'an alternative national consciousness,' as Matthew Engelke has put it.) But despite the endorsement by the spirits and the parallels between her and the guerrillas, Marita's resistance is represented as firmly gendered. She cannot send Manyepo to his death because she is a woman and a mother: '"Child, what do you think his mother will say when she hears that another woman sent her son to his death?"' (*B*, 64). Instead of countering violence with violence, she relies on the trait most valued in Hove's worlds: a wilfulness that inspires memory.

Her resistance is not immediately successful: *Bones* does not show the emergence of a chronotope which would allow for character movement and growth.[38] But through inspiring a memory of resistance, Marita has inspired hope, and the novel ends on an optimistic note. In the end, it is as if the very language of *Bones*, in its artificiality and repetitiveness, serves the function of what Rooney calls 'the paying of respects' to the honoured dead. The words of M. M. Bakhtin are applicable here: 'The dead

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[36] Liz Gunner has written that Nehanda here becomes a means of linking the narrative of *Bones* with a stream of oral memory and the collective consciousness about past struggles in a way that is 'outside linear, chronological time' – Gunner, 'Power, Popular Consciousness, and the Fictions of War,' p. 79.
[37] See Rooney, 'Re-Possessions,' pp. 125-127.
[38] I am in disagreement with Elleke Boehmer's reading which sees in the novel a 'reconciliation' between the city and the rural areas. See Boehmer, 'The Nation as Metaphor' p. 325.

are loved in a different way. They are removed from the sphere of contact, one can and indeed must speak of them in a different style. Language about the dead is stylistically quite distinct from the language of the living.'[39]

Bakhtin was, of course, not describing *Bones*. He was referring to the style of epic poetry and its relation to the temporal category he calls 'the absolute past.' Carita Backstrom has suggested that *Bones* is governed by the Bakhtinian 'folklore time,' 'a time which grows in the soil and bears fruit, a cyclic time where the individual is part of the collective.'[40] I disagree with the mimetic implications of this reading, on the grounds that, while it may govern the lives of communities on farms, the cyclical time measured by the rhythm of the seasons is not actually textually constructed (represented) in *Bones*. I do think, however, that what I have called 'the time of telling' is in some respects comparable to Bakhtin's 'absolute past.' I am not suggesting that Hove's novel creates a full approximation of epic time.[41] But the 'otherness' of epic style referred to by Bakhtin is associated with the narrating of events which are, in the temporal sense, conceptualised as absolutely cut off from listeners' experience. This seems to me to be true also of the 'sonorous tone'[42] of *Bones*' moments of telling, from which not only the novel's heroine but also its readers remain excluded.

The novel, Bakhtin explains, undermines the hierarchical, isolated, 'frozen' quality of epic time through carnivalesque laughter. But laughter is conspicuous by its absence from Hove's worlds.[43] Instead, they construct characters for whom freedom means movement. Marita is the only character in *Bones* who chooses to relocate *twice*. By doing so she widens the scope of *mental* movement that is possible in and about her world, by introducing into it the memory of someone who looked towards the future.

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[39] Bakhtin, 'Epic and Novel,' p. 20.
[40] Backstrom, 'In Search of Psychological Worlds,' p. 92.
[41] If such an approximation exists in Zimbabwean literature, it is probably to be found in 'Old World' romances in indigenous languages, such as those by Patrick Chakaipa. See the remarks on the 'pastness' of their worlds in G. Kahari, *The Romances of Patrick Chakaipa: A Study of Thematic Techniques and Mythology* (Mambo Press, Gweru, 1994), pp. 10-11.
[42] The phrase is Veit-Wild's. See 'Dances with Bones,' p. 8.
[43] The best Zimbabwean example of a carnivalesque undermining of 'a world of "beginnings" and "peak times' in the national history, a world of fathers and founders of families, a world of "firsts" and "bests"' (Bakhtin, 'Epic and Novel,' p. 13) is Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*. I analyse it in the following chapter.

3.

Shadows, Hove's second novel in English, emphasises its opposition to official histories by making it explicit. One of its dedications is to 'Johana's father' – the textual designation one of the characters in the novel – '*whom no one remembers*' (*S*, 5; emphasis added). The Acknowledgements state that the novel's story is a fictionalisation of events that the author witnessed (*S*, 7), and the Prologue links the word 'history' with 'the liars of the land,' and 'politics' with 'unfulfilled promises,' 'fiction,' 'tall tales' and 'lies.' (*S*, 9) There are several differences in formal organisation between this novel and *Bones*.

Shadows is compositionally sub-divided into forty-one short, untitled sections, visually separated but not numbered.[44] The novel is narrated by an impersonal/omniscient narrating voice, which mostly adopts various characters' viewpoints. Only occasionally – for example in section 33 [90] – does the novel adopt the convention of the first-person narrator, which dominates in *Bones*. Some parts of the text are singled out (mostly for thematic reasons) by the use of italics (see, for example, section twenty [56]). The temporal sliding described in connection with *Bones* occasionally occurs in *Shadows*, too (see, for example section seven [22]), and so does the conspicuous lack of historical temporal detail. But *Shadows* features a more developed plot, and more occurrences of character displacement, than its predecessor.

The novel opens with a love story.[45] Johana, a farmer's daughter with little formal education, loves a temperamental, impulsive youth ('the man with a civet cat mouth' – *S*, 14) who fails to fulfil his promise to marry her. She waits as years pass, until a younger man called Marko, a quiet farm hand employed by her family, expresses his love for her. For a while they are locked in echoing expressions of constancy, she waiting for her civet-cat lover, he waiting for her. When Johana finally returns Marko's love, her father disapproves, throwing an axe at him: he is only a herdboy, and younger than Johana. When they make love, Marko and Johana breach the

[44] Subsequent references to individual sections will indicate section number as established by me, and the page number of the section's beginning, in square brackets (in order to be distinguished from a quote), e.g. 'section seventeen [49].'

[45] The primacy of this plot strand is both chronological and related to the novel's semantic makeup (the young lovers represent the moral standard of the story). But it is also possible to speculate that the distribution of thematic material in the text may have been an attempt to fool the Zimbabwean censor. The last ten pages of the 'poetic' novel about doomed lovers contain a denunciation of the Zimbabwean government's handling of the 'dissident' war of the 1980s.

commands of the ancestral spirits of the area where they live ('"*This is the woman with whom I have defiled the land of Gotami*" – *S*, 50; italics in the original). Finally, they commit suicide, she by poisoning and he by hanging himself.

This story is told, in non-chronological order, in sections one [10] to seven [22], seventeen [49], eighteen [50], and twenty [56], 24 [65] to 28 [80] and 36 [99]. The first textual 'bloc' of seven sections sketches the story outline, while the others add layers of detail and concentrate on individual characters' experience of the events. In this novel, the omniscient narrative voice is able to combine narration with representing the characters' inner lives as experienced through their bodies - especially that of Johana. This is done in a manner that is foreign to *Bones*, and that anticipates the work of Yvonne Vera. In section 25, for example, Johana is bathing in the river:

> She wanted to swim in the open river, to feel that some tormented eyes were stealing in on her body, to run and search for her clothes after the wind had taken then away. She wanted to be alone with her body, not caring about clothes and people. Only the eyes of the wind and the trees were the friends she wanted to share her body with, nothing else. (*S*, 69)

It is perhaps not coincidental that the text of *Shadows*, when describing a woman's silence, uses the phrase 'under the tongue,' which five years later became the title of Vera's second novel: "*The woman's silent lips tell her the words refuse to come out of her. They remain stuck in her mouth, under the tongue where they say wells of saliva sometimes drown words before they come out of the mouth*" (*S*, 46; italics in the original). Vera's work may be related to Hove's also in terms of narrative space-time: I refer to this briefly at the end of this chapter.

Although it clearly indicates the *order* of events, the story of Johana and Marko contains no detail regarding their historical duration or positioning. The text does not state Johana's and Marko's ages, or the difference between them; we don't know how long she waited for her first love, or Marko for her, or when exactly they died. The narrative operates with adverbial phrases such as: '[t]hen one day' (*S*, 11), '[m]any years passed in their waiting' (*S*, 21), '[f]or many days' (*S*, 70) and, simply, '[t]hen.' (*S*, 88) What *is* stated, on the other hand, and emphasised through repetition, is that '[t]hat was many years ago, when the war of the forest, the war against the white man, was rumours spoken from the mouths of travellers and strangers' (*S*, 24;

see also *S*, 34 and *S*, 83). This repeated distancing of the time in which Johana and Marko lived and loved from the time of war gives their story an exceptional, far-removed temporal status comparable to that of Marita in *Bones*. This is because they turn out to be the only characters in *Shadows* whose identities are not determined by wartime violence. In the chronotope of *Shadows*, this violence functions like a temporal contagion: once it enters the plot, all identities become irreversibly affected by it. It thus defines a whole era in the history of a family. The fact that the story of Johana and Marko takes place before that era is in part what makes it unique.

This temporal distinction is combined with a spatial specification: Johana's story takes place *after a displacement*, in the geographical area that is her family's new home. Some time before she meets the boy with the civet-cat mouth, Johana's father, armed with a colonial master farmer certificate (*S*, 41) 'left the home of his ancestors in Gutu to go in search of better lands to farm.' (*S*, 37) He relocates his wives and children from one 'black' rural section of the Rhodesian chronotope to another: from a barren Tribal Trust Land in the south-central part of the country to the sandy soils of a Native Purchase Area in the north-west. 'The white man, *Nkosi*, was happy to give them farms which they could own if they worked hard. They could become buyers of land.' (*S*, 37)

The novel makes it clear that this displacement is a part of the deliberate reproduction of the Rhodesian chronotope on the part of the colonial authorities. At a time of growing nationalist unrest ('[b]lacks are fighting blacks, and the jails are full' – *S*, 38), the eldest son of the family decides 'to accept that he was prepared to go with his father *and never run away to search for jobs in the city*.' (*S*, 39, emphasis added) The privilege of becoming a *matenganyika,* the buyer of land (*S*, 41), is here seen to be part of the mechanism of controlling the movement of natives in a colony. The family's new home is the land once ruled by the legendary chief Gotami, who once fought off Ndebele warriors by using magic, and who also fought against the white invaders (*S*, 63). It is a wild, tsetse fly-infested area in the proximity of the Sanyati river (*S*, 57), where the buyers are encouraged to grow cash rather than subsistence crops (*S*, 61). Its original inhabitants (culturally and linguistically different from the newcomers) have been forcefully displaced. 'Yes, the people of Gotami had been moved further west, to the country of dry rivers. They moved to lands in which nothing grew.' (*S*, 63) The story of two young lovers is thus part of

the narrative of a family's dream of a better future, and takes place within a violence-filled chronotope in which the movement of black peasants is regulated by a combination of poverty and coercion. But it is also separate from it: by choosing death instead of life, Johana and Marko are deliberately distanced from their spatio-temporal surroundings.

In the land of Gotami, Johana is noted for her capacity for hard work (see section one [10]), her closeness to the land (pesticide, which kills her, is also killing the land), her respect for the customs of Gotami's people, in which she instructs Marko (see section twenty-seven [76]), and her constancy. But the transgressive sexual act followed by suicide associates the young couple with resistance to cultural and family pressures. Johana and Marko are marked by the same quiet wilfulness that singles out Marita in *Bones*. But Johana and Marko are the exact opposite of Marita – 'a woman of words, a tale-teller, repository of stories'[46] – in that they are unable to express themselves verbally. 'Their words refused to carry the burdens of the heart. Such things were too heavy for words. There were words which had never been found.' (*S*, 18) Instead, they shape their identities in the eyes of the community by choosing the manner of their own deaths. This causes them to be remembered later, at a time when deaths and identities are violently imposed on people. In section nine [29], children

> wish they had done what Johana did to herself long before the war came to their land. They wish they had the courage of Marko, the young boy who took life into his own hands and killed it. Oh, how strong the two were, to choose their own way of death, to do it themselves without tears on their faces, without tears in their hearts (*S*, 29-30).

The same section pictures Marko and Johana entering the space-time inhabited by the *vadzimu*, the spirit elders of their families: 'For the first time, the two families would meet in the other world to celebrate the arrival of the two who are so young, yet so brave, young and wise... They mocked at death, the elders would say in their old, hoarse voices.' (*S*, 30)

The other strand of the plot of *Shadows* tells the story of Johana's father and the rest of her family. Section seven [22] shows Johana's father remembering the young

[46] Bryce, '*Bones*,' p. 42.

couple while in the city, where he has, 'many years later' (*S*, 25), run away from the guerrillas who see him as a collaborator (*S*, 28-29). His move to the city is this novel's equivalent of Marita's, a second displacement. The farm he buys and cultivates in the land of Gotami – '*famu namba* 145' (*S*, 25) - is the central space of *Shadows*. Like Manyepo's farm in *Bones*, Gotami's lands are a gathering place of displaced families seeking to escape poverty. But farm number 145 becomes a place of suffering and death. In his absence, Johana's father's two sons are killed as traitors by two different sets of guerrillas. ('He orders the other "boys" to slice a lip, slice an ear, slice another ear, slice an eye, slice the genitals, slice the thighs, until the man collapses dead' – *S*, 29; 'they asked the sons to club their brother to death, to crush his head with big sticks, to pound his brains out of his skull' – *S*, 31). He himself lives in town as a tramp, and ends up, like Janifa, in a mental institution (see section 12 [33]). On his return, he is dragged to a forest death by a third group of armed men, the dissidents unhappy with their treatment by the new, independent government ('They said they were men who were treated badly after the war to free the land from the hands of the colonisers' – *S*, 96). He leaves behind a senior wife and young children (see sections 39 [106], 40 [107] and 41 [108]), alone and destitute in the years when even 'birds sang and danced on top of the trees, praising the new rulers for the new rule of the land.' (*S*, 108)

The sections of *Shadows* that do not deal with Marko and Johana narrate the outcome of the family's anxiety-filled decision to leave behind the space of old, 'traditional' identities (their ancestors' burial place – *S*, 84). They expect a relocation to empowerment, but conceive of new identities in colonial terms. ('Even the District Commissioner will not have power over you. You will be the masters of your own lands, obeying only the laws which the white farmers obey' – *S*, 37.) Because of this, they are seen to be upholding the Rhodesian chronotope, and external identities are violently imposed upon them: 'Even on the day Johana's two brothers were killed, they did not know what they were. They had refused to accept what people thought they were.' (*S*, 89) Moreover, in the non-chronological ordering of historically un-anchored textual segments, the moment of the coming of independence is obliterated even more firmly than in *Bones*, buried under repeated waves of violence. In section thirty-four [95], readers are merely informed that 'one day' (*S*, 96), more men with guns come to the farm, announcing that 'the enemy has changed the colour of his

skin' (*Ibid*). For farmers in remote areas, the advent of 'the big people who had taken over the rule of the land' (*S*, 97) does not put an end to war.

The spatio-temporal centres of *Shadows* may be related to those of *Bones*: both novels refer to a farm, a city and an original rural home (although life in the 'reserve' is not shown by *Bones*); both refuse to refer to historical dates and exact temporal duration. But characters are significantly freer to *move* in *Shadows*: Johana's father escapes to the city, like Marita, finds himself in a mental hospital, like Janifa, and *returns* to the farm to be killed – something that does not take place in *Bones*. It is in that sense that the spatial centripetal pull of *Bones* is gone, and the chronotope of *Shadows* less 'frozen' than that of its predecessor. But the relative freedom of movement in *Shadows* merely underscores the absence of change in the world of the novel, and the parallelism between its various locations as spaces accommodating hardship and violence. In *Shadows* as in *Bones* and, to anticipate, in *Ancestors*, '[e]very place is the place of tears.' (*A*, 185)

The non-chronological ordering of the many short sections of the text, and the compositional intertwining of the two plot lines contribute to the impression of temporal stasis. And looking, Marita-like, into the future, offers no relief. *Bones* culminates in an image of landscape participating in the removal of constraints: 'now my legs and hands are free because the mountains and the rivers I saw with my own eyes could not fail to remove all the chains of this place.' (*B*, 112) *Shadows* does not exclude the possibility of a new beginning, but links details of landscape with a Marechera-like spatial image of a house of death:

> It would be so, for many years, even to the mountains which stared at Johana's father's bones scattered in the caves, valleys and ravines. The trees, too would stare at the bones whose owner they did not know and say, was his house the house of death? (*S*, 108)

An important difference between *Bones* and *Shadows* is the role of the guerrillas: while in the former they 'represent [...] both threat and promise,'[47] in the latter they have joined the ranks of faceless figures that stand for arbitrary violence and violation: city bureaucrats, 'the government,' asylum staff and various other 'people with uniforms.' (*B*, 104) The only action possible in the face of such forces are

[47] Boehmer, 'The Nation as Metaphor,' p. 325.

words: talking, listening and honouring the dead through telling stories about them. In *Shadows*, the opinion of the farmers is that the government and the dissidents should 'sit down in the way of ancestors and talk these things over.'(*S*, 97) Johana's father expresses the damage the war has done to him by saying: 'What does it help? I have walked there, in the maize, in the cotton fields, I cannot talk to them any more.' (*S*, 86) Many years after Johana's father's death, people sing about him, but only 'when these stories could be told without any danger to the story-tellers.'(*S*, 107) Conspicuously absent from the novel, however, are the words of the spirits: unlike in *Bones*, the *mhondoro* (as well as the *vadzimu*) remain silent. In *Ancestors*, on the other hand, the voice of a family ancestor becomes synonymous with a measure of historical justice. In Hove's novels, the audibility of ancestral voices is inversely proportional to the oppressive quality of space-times that limit speech and movement.

Like *Shadows*, *Ancestors* also features a peasant family who moves to the 'land of Gotami.' This time they leave Gatooma (*A*, 172) (present-day Kadoma, in central Zimbabwe) and start a new life 'far away near the land of the Tonga people, near the waters of the Zambezi.' (*A*, 38) Here, too, the move of the polygamous household has been engineered by an ambitious (and nameless) father of the family, who has had distinction bestowed on him by the colonial authorities in the form of a master-farmer certificate (see *A*, 21-37). But *Ancestors* ignores the theme of public politics almost completely: it mentions national political events only once, in passing.[48] Instead, it focuses on the gendered politics of family relationships.

Some time after the move to the new home, the father of the family disowns and sends away one of his wives, because she has, in his view, defied the ancestors by crying during a family ritual. But it is the father himself – the bearer of the 'official' version of family history – who has caused ancestral unrest, by suppressing two family narratives of the cruel treatment of women. One is the story of Miriro, a deaf and dumb woman who, in pre-colonial times, killed herself when forced to marry a 'drunk and worthless' man (*A*, 146). The other is a similar story of Tariro, the daughter of one of the farmer's wives, given away to an older husband in Lusaka,

[48] 'War was all over the place. A friend had warned you that you could easily die if you walked into the areas where guerrillas were fighting the white man to free our land.' (*A*, 185-6)

then Northern Rhodesia.[49] (Tariro's move to Lusaka is this novel's equivalent of the movement to the city of Marita and Johana's father. Here, too the city is a space associated with fear and homelessness. See *A*, 116). The master-farmer's wife has herself been married without choice, to a much older man, a rainmaker and carver of drums. When he died, she was inherited by his son. This is the husband, the master farmer, who later sends her away for daring to publicly mourn her lost daughter Tariro.[50]

This set of intertwined stories is told to Mucha, the exiled woman's son, by Miriro herself, who comes to him in dreams. A year after the death of his stepfather, Mucha has a vision of Tariro and Miriro, engulfed by flames: the novel ends with the hope that 'the flame that burns the homestead will die after this.' (*A*, 195)

In *Ancestors* as in *Shadows*, a man seeks to turn the structure of colonial space-time to material advantage through displacement. *Ancestors* does not narrate political violence: the master-father is successful. But as the patriarch of a family, he is responsible for inflicting violence. Just as the colonial authorities control the movement of natives within the Rhodesian chronotope, he directs the movement of the women who are dependent on him without giving them much choice in the matter. (Tariro is given away 'like a goat at the market place' - *A*, 195). In this novel, displacement empowers a man but also becomes a tool of disempowering women and children. It determines women's identities and also becomes instrumental in the process of forgetting. In this sense, the story-telling voice of Miriro works against the effects of both relocation and the passage of time.

In its spatial aspects, *Ancestors* resembles *Shadows*: it features three locations (the original homeland, the land of Gotami and a distant city), the movement between

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[49] The Shona verb kumira means 'to be still,' but also 'to wait.' The text of *Ancestors* suggests that Miriro's name means 'the one who is awaited' (*A*, 45; see also the more elaborate explanation on p. 143). George Kahari translates the name as 'significance, symbolism' (see *Plots and Characters in Shona Fiction*, p 219). Both Kahari and Hannan's Shona dictionary translate 'Tariro' as 'hope, expectation' - see *Plots and Characters in Shona Fiction*, p. 285 and M. Hannan, *Standard Shona Dictionary* (Harare, College Press, 1996).

[50] The parallels between Miriro and Tariro, and between Tariro and her mother, echo those between Marita and Janifa in *Bones*, and between Johana and her mother, and Johana's mother and Marko's mother in *Shadows*. In 'Flora Nwapa and the Female Novel of Development' (in F. Stratton, *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender* (London, Routledge, 1994), pp. 80-107), Florence Stratton observes that female African novelists frequently make use of the device of 'paired women' in order to be able to represent the differences in female responses to male domination.

which is directed largely by men. Temporally, though, *Ancestors* is unique among Hove's novels in English. The novel is divided into three parts. The seventeen chapters they contain are titled, each also bearing a temporal designation marking the historical location of narrated time (for example: '*1850 – Birth of a Deaf-and-Dumb Child*,' or '1960 – *Father (the Hearer Hears)*'). The chapters are not arranged in chronological order, but because they take place on different dates, a chronological sequence may be recovered. By assembling the pieces of this temporal 'jigsaw puzzle,' readers reconstruct the plot outline and situate it in historical time: the awarding of the master farmer certificate and the beginning of Mucha's possession take place in the 1960s, Mucha's mother is sent away in the 1970s and the master farmer dies after independence. Because the passing of historical time brings change (the emergence of new truths and identities), the space-time of *Ancestors* may be seen as having overcome (albeit with great difficulty) the static, 'frozen' condition of the chronotopes of *Bones* and *Shadows*. But the historical grounding of the narrative should not be mistaken for an attempt at historical 'objectivity.'

For one thing, there are large gaps – places of indeterminacy – between the dates: many pieces of the temporal 'jigsaw puzzle' are missing. (It should be noted that 1980 – the year of independence – falls within one of those gaps; here as elsewhere, Hove refrains from representing it as a sudden moment of change.) For another, some of the dates (e.g. '197-', '198-') are deliberately not fully articulated, whereas others ('2 July 1970') are more specific than others: this may create an impression of the passage of time as *uneven*. And finally, in combination with the novel's division into parts, the historical details create a temporal hierarchy of events which is not based on chronology.

The three parts of *Ancestors* are entitled: 'The Hearer Hears of Fathers,' 'Women' and 'Children,' respectively. These titles do not, like section titles in *Bones*, refer to the text's narrators, but to the thematic focus of each part. In Part One (to do with fathers), the chapters are both chronologically ordered and marked by a fully articulated date. In Part Two ('Women'), the chronological ordering is gone (in the text, '1966' is followed by '1958' and '1968'), but the full articulation of dates remains. In Part Three ('Children'), it is impossible to establish the exact chronology

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Hove's work is an example of a similar convention being used in the work of a *male* novelist, and a further illustration of the 'feminised' nature of his fictional worlds.

of chapters because three of the dates are not fully spelt out. The blurring of chronology and temporal specificity mirrors the decrease in the relative power of characters to control their own spatio-temporal movement, and accurately represents their place the family hierarchy of power in general.

This imbalance of power is symbolically redressed through the novel's narrative technique. In families as in war-torn states, official, quasi-objective histories are told by those in power: 'the victors are the only story-tellers.' (*A*, 21) *Ancestors* tells of how this state of affairs was overturned in one particular family. It is therefore not surprising that its narrative, which discloses to the reader the wrongdoings of men, is neither 'objective' (impersonal), nor unequivocally male. The first chapter of Part One, narrating the birth of a deaf-and-dumb girl in 1850, is told by the voice of Mucha.[51] But he is telling the story on behalf of Miriro, who has been invading his mind in dreams. He says: 'I am only a hearer to these words, a traveller who dreams about arriving, listening to this bird lost in the flight of the night many years after Miriro died.' (*A*, 11/12; emphasis added) In other words he is merely a vessel, a transmitter, for the voice of another. In this chapter, Miriro's and Mucha's voices may still be distinguished from each other: the first-person pronoun refers alternately to the ancestor ('When pain touched me, I could not cry to call for help from the other children' - *A*, 12) and the descendant ('Miriro takes my hand as if I am a child' – *A*, 20). But once the convention of voice-within-a-voice has been established, the rest of the novel (from the second chapter onwards) records Miriro's narrative largely in the form in which she delivers it to Mucha. This is why most of the novel is told in the form of *second* person narration: the narrator constantly addresses the implied listener, Mucha ('See, your father is sleepless' – *A*. 21), and the novel adopts the convention of recording her words without changing their grammatical form.

Mucha's own voice, however, is not entirely drowned out: it surfaces occasionally, as in the letter to his father which is quoted verbatim (*A*, 46-47), or in reporting clauses ('Miriro once again tells her story. She wants me to hear who lived in this village, our village, our blood' - *A*, 135). The same happens with the voices of other characters, which Miriro sometimes transmits in the same manner that Mucha is transmitting hers (see, for example, *A*, 126-133). Because of the multiple mediation

assumed in this convention, and because it implies both *transcription* and *translation*, the language of *Ancestors* may be seen as even more artificial than that of its predecessors, despite the stylistic similarities between them. It is, after all, meant to represent not only the style in which to honour the dead, but the speech of the dead themselves.

All of this makes the all-knowing narrative perspective of *Ancestors* very different from the convention of *impersonal* omniscient narration often found in European novels. Miriro's knowledge of the world is severely curtailed while she is alive; after death, however, she can *see* the entire family history, and nothing – including the previously unknown aspects of her own life - is hidden from her gaze. Her omniscience is the result of her ontological status as a spirit, i.e. the fact that her narration issues from the space-time of a parallel ontological realm. She tells Mucha: 'Do you know that I can even defeat time? My joys and sorrows cross all the rivers of time and distance.' (*A*, 17) But she cannot make her voice heard without Mucha, who articulates it in physical space-time.

The relationship between spirit and 'vessel' is thus reciprocal: Mucha tells his female ancestor's life story, while she gifts him a fuller understanding of his own. This in-built interaction makes the narrating voice of *Ancestors* inherently ambivalent and contrapuntal. It is simultaneously old and young, female and male, supernatural and human: a perfect embodiment of Hove's ideal of difference within (African) cultural sameness. The theme of verbal mediation and speaking for others recurs throughout *Ancestors*: Mucha exchanges letters with his (step)father, writes to a girl at school, is dictated a letter by his illiterate mother and reports a story of a man who courts a woman through letters he did not write (see sections beginning on pp. 45, 49, 151, 158 and 161). Each of these actions has different moral implications. In the case of spirit possession, representing the other is done by temporarily *becoming* the other, through lending the other one's own mental space-time: '"You have a story within you, and I am the story. It is that story which has made you live. Not to tell it is death.' (*A*, 20)

[51] The name 'Mucha' is a combination of prefixes for constructing the second-person plural form of the future tense of verbs ('you will') in Shona. This name echoes Marita's orientation towards the future in *Bones*.

Technically, Miriro fits the definition of a *ngozi*, an angry, offended spirit who possesses a wrongdoer or his/her descendants in search of retribution.[52] In a letter to his father, Mucha relates a nightmare in which she utters the words 'I am angry.' (*A*, 47) But while in the work of Alexander Kanengoni, discussed in Chapter Six, the appearance of a *ngozi* is sudden and violent in itself and demands a further re-enactment of violence, the spirit of Miriro is much gentler. She appears in dreams, is placated by dialogue ('*I talk to her and she begins to cry*' – *A*, 47; italics in the original), and the only retribution she demands is the telling of silenced stories.

> [T]the story of our life is the story of our male blood flowing in the veins. but [sic] there is other blood flowing in our veins, not mentioned by those who know the names of things. to name is to live. a father never lies to his children. but it does not mean that he may tell all there is to be told. to omit is to lie. (*A*, 21).

Ancestors envisages progress as the coming of a time when 'voices becom[e] the property of all who have faces and mouths.' (*A*, 142)

In a popular book discussing cultural change in post-independence Zimbabwe, M. F. C. Burdillon explains that rituals in honour of the various orders of ancestral spirits normally have a two-fold effect on the community that participates in them. They bring the community together, and they reinforce the hierarchical structure of power and authority within it.[53] Arguably, the fictional worlds of Chenjerai Hove continue to regard ritualised evocations of the dead as expressions of welcome communal/national unity. But Hove's works also depart from 'tradition' in that they endow ancestral voices with the function of pointing at (and expressing moral outrage with) the abuse of the very hierarchies of power that they are 'traditionally' taken to represent. In my view, none of the novels advocates or demands the *dismantling* of these hierarchies – as does, for example, Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*. The novels' chronotopes, however, look forward to a time when the models of social life inherited from the past will be able to accommodate difference.

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[52] 'The *ngozi* is the spirit of someone who died violently or in extreme anger or bitterness. It never finds rest until full retribution has been made; it continues to haunt until fully placated, when at least it is allowed to join the rest of the spirit world.' Author not stated, 'Paranoid Mugabe dines with ghost,' *The Standard* (Harare), 19-25 August 2001, p. 9.

[53] F. M. C. Bourdillon, *Where are the Ancestors? Changing Culture in Zimbabwe* (Harare, University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1993). See esp. pp. 71-74.

At the end of *Ancestors*, such a time seems a little closer. If in *Shadows* Johana and Marko use the act of dying as a means of expressing themselves, in *Ancestors* death endows a voiceless person with a voice in a literal sense. Johana and Marko inspire young children; Miriro is able to directly intervene in the world of the living by guiding children through physical space (*A*, 178). And so the hopeful ending of *Bones* recurs in *Ancestors*. But *vadzimu*, like fictional chronotopes, have special ontological status: the pressure they exert is on the minds of recipients of stories, what may be called 'the space-time of memory.' In the private worlds of families, this may be enough to initiate healing, and perhaps change. On the worlds affected by public political violence, *Shadows* remains Hove's last (novelisic) word.

'The space-time of memory' is a category I will use in Chapter Seven, when discussing the novels of Yvonne Vera. Vera's novels share with Hove's the violent plots and the lyrical style. In terms of narrative space-time, both writers have constructed fictional worlds that place severe constraints on character movement. Like Hove's, Vera's novels tell previously unspeakable stories of rebellious women who are denied self-expression. But while the identities of Hove's women remain firmly linked to those of men – they are first and foremost wives, mothers, daughters or, in Miriro's case, ancestors of *male* descendants, Vera's characters seek to establish their identities through other means. *Bones*, *Shadows* and *Ancestors* tell of the loss or inadequacy of fathers, sons and husbands; Vera's women demand a piece of space-time for themselves *before* they establish any such links.

CHAPTER FIVE

Stories of the Unsaid: Tsitsi Dangarembga and Nozipo Maraire

> Don't you think *Nervous Conditions* is the best book by a woman in Zimbabwe?
>
> Shimmer Chinodya[1]

> One aspect of being is the process of becoming. This process of becoming is then consolidated by the process of staying.
>
> Tsitsi Dangarembga.[2]

1.

As I argued in Chapter One, after 1980 the hermeneutic frameworks for the study of Zimbabwean fiction changed irrevocably in several ways. Various permutations of a combined reference to language and race became less useful as a source of information about novels. Zimbabwean novelists gained the freedom to thematise the war that the country had just endured from a non-Rhodesian perspective. (Some of the novels that were written as a result of this freedom are discussed in the following chapter.) Most importantly in the context of this chapter, it became easier for women to become novelists, and bring to the genre their own perspectives and preoccupations.[3] Despite the many gender-specific deterrents that Zimbabwean women are still struggling to overcome, independence brought an increase in publishing activity,[4] saw the founding of Zimbabwe Women Writers (a non-governmental organisation aimed at encouraging and promoting women's writing),[5] and, for some though not all women, brought about real change in social status and

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[1] Shimmer Chinodya in an interview with Ranka Primorac, Harare, 28 August 2001.

[2] T. Dangarembga, 'Of Sewing Machines and the Struggle for the Symbolic: Some Notes on Some Aspects of the Relationship between Language and Development,' ZIBF (eds), *Women & Activism: ZIBF Women Writers' Conference 1999* (Harare, ZIBF/ZWW, 2000), p. 81.

[3] See F. Veit-Wild, 'Creating a New Society: Women's Writing in Zimbabwe,' *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 22 (1), 1987, pp. 171-178; P. Dodgson, 'Culture and Literary Production in Zimbabwe,' in A. Rutherford (ed), *From Commonwealth to Post-Colonial* (Sydney, Dangaroo Press, 1992), pp. 248-258; F. Nyandoro, 'The women writers,' *Sunday Gazette Magazine* (Harare), Dec 19, 1993, pp. 15-16, and F. Veit-Wild, 'The Elusive Truth: Literary Development in Zimbabwe since 1980,' *Matatu*, 10, 1993, pp. 107-120.

[4] See J. Bryce, 'Women Writing,' *Southern African Review of Books* 4 (4&5), 1991, pp. 5-6.

[5] *Cf* N. Kitson (ed), *Zimbabwe Women Writers Anthology, No 1 – English – 1994* (Harare, Zimbabwe Women Writers, 1994), and ZWW (eds), *Zimbabwe Women Writers – Selections – English Potery & Short Stories 1990 – 1998* (Harare, Zimbabwe Women Writers, 1998).

access to opportunities.[6] Reflecting this, this chapter deals with two novels written by and about Zimbabwean women: Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* and Nozipo Maraire's *Zenzele*.[7]

In a survey of educational and literary careers of three generations of black Zimbabwean writers completed in 1987, Flora Veit-Wild provides evidence of some of the pressures women writers have had to endure on their way to publication and recognition.[8] A large majority of writers who took part in the survey were men; most of the women who answered Veit-Wild's questionnaire wrote in indigenous languages. Ironically, the pre-1980 aim of Rhodesia's Literature Bureau – to keep black writers 'native' – was, for a while, fulfilled in the post-independence period when it came to women writers.[9] Similarly, during most of the first decade of independence, only male Anglophone novelists were known internationally. All of this changed in 1988, when *Nervous Conditions* burst upon the international literary scene. It was first published by The Women's Press in London, one year after Veit-Wild completed her survey and two years before the founding of Zimbabwe Women Writers.

The story of how the manuscript of *Nervous Conditions* languished unappreciated at a Zimbabwean publishing house until Dangarembga asked for it back and sent it to The Women's Press, is by now well known.[10] What is striking about it is the symmetry between the publication history of Dangarembga's novel and the pre-independence black male-authored novels and nationalist (auto)biographies: all were first published outside the writers' native country. *Zenzele*, too, appeared outside Zimbabwe, and so did the autobiographical texts by Sekai Nzenza and the first book by Yvonne Vera.[11] In replicating male-authored texts' pre-independence

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[6] See C. Musengezi and I. McCartney (eds), *Women of Resilience* (Harare, Zimbabwe Women Writers, 2000).

[7] T. Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* (Harare, Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1996 [1988]); N. Maraire, *Zenzele: A Letter for my Daughter* (London, Phoenix, 1996). Subsequent references to the two novels are to these editions and will be cited in the text, where their titles will be abbreviated as *NC* and *Z* respectively.

[8] Veit-Wild, *Survey*, p. 101.

[9] For a discussion of the Bureau's post-independence role, see H. Zwicker, 'The Nervous Condition of Nation and Gender: Tsitsi Dangarembga's Challenge to Fanon,' in Willey and Treiber, *Emerging Perspectives*, pp. 3-23.

[10] See the interview with Dangarembga in J. Wilkinson, *Talking with African Writers* (London, James Currey, 1992), pp. 189-198.

[11] To my knowledge, *Zenzele* has not been republished locally, although it has been available in bookshops in Harare. The same is true of the books by Sekai Nzenza [Shand]: see S. Nzenza, *Zimbabwean Woman – My Own Story* (London, Karia Press, 1988) and S. Nzenza Shand, *Songs to an*

displacement at the precise historical moment when male Anglophone writing was 'coming home,' these Zimbabwean women's texts may be said to echo their gesture of turning to external audiences as a means of counteracting the silencing at home. Women's novels replicate also the men's texts ultimate availability to multiple audiences, although not all have been republished in Zimbabwe. And there are further dimensions to the symmetry. In terms of theme, most Zimbabwean women writers repeat the pre-independence writers' concerns, while feminising them.[12] This includes a preoccupation with colonial social inequalities, and a pointed lack of interest in representing the space-times of the war of liberation, at a time when many of their post-independence male counterparts were situating novelistic narratives in the militarised space-times of the second *Chimurenga*.[13] In terms of fictional formation, post-independence women's novels participate in the continuation of all three kinds of dominant textual functionality outlined in Chapter One.[14] (This chapter deals with the socio-analytical and axiological texts by Tsitsi Dangarebga and Nozipo Maraire, whereas the aesthetically-dominated novels of Yvonne Vera are discussed in Chapter Seven.) Questions about the relative literary worth of women's texts – such as the one directed at me by Shimmer Chinodya, and quoted at the outset – may thus be seen as gendered reflections on larger literary-theoretical debates, some of which were highlighted in Chapter Two. Within a national literature marked by accelerated development, women's writing in English may be read as the performance of a symbolic double acceleration.

With *Nervous Conditions*, Tsitsi Dangarembga wrote her way into the (male-dominated) African literary canon: the novel is now the focal point of a growing international intellectual industry.[15] *Zenzele* has, as far as I am aware, generated not nearly as much critical commentary. And yet both novels deal with families, and with mother-daughter relationships; both are centred around the act of leaving home, and the meaning that rural spaces have for African women. Most importantly, both

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African Sunset: A Zimbabwean Story (Melbourne, Lonely Planet Publications, 1997). Yvonne Vera's first published volume was a short story collection *Why Don't You Carve Other Animals* (Toronto, TSAR, 1992).

[12] *Cf* Zhuwarara, *Introduction to Zimbabwean Literature in English*, p. 259.

[13] The only female-authored novel dealing with the space-time of the armed struggle that I am aware of is Irene Ropa Rinopfuka Mahamba's *Woman in Struggle*.

[14] The parallel extends to the quantitative dominance of authors who produce axiologically-dominated texts. See, for example, N. Partridge, *To Breathe and Wait* (Gweru, Mambo Press, 1996 [1986]); T. V. Himunyanga-Phiri, *The Legacy* (Harare, ZPH, 1994 [1992]); M de la Harpe, *Msasa Morning* (Harare, Roblaw Publishers, 1992); V. Kala, *Waste Not Your Tears* (Harare, Baobab Books, 1994); V. Ndlovu, *For Want of a Totem* (Harare, Baobab Books, 1997), and Masitera, *The Trail*.

involve an interplay of presences and absences, the said and the unsaid. The following two sections analyse them in turn.

2.

Nervous Conditions is a novel about attempts at location and dislocation, and opportunities for displacement. On the first page, the narrative describes itself as a story about the 'escape' and 'entrapment' of female characters (*NC*, 1); an early review sums it up accurately as the story of 'a search for a way out.'[16] The place from which the heroine, adolescent Tambudzai Sigauke, wishes to escape is a homestead in the Tribal Trust Lands surrounding the town of Umtali in eastern Rhodesia, where she lives with her family. For Tambu, the ancestral lands are a place to get away from – despite the beauty and freedom she associates with the nearby Nyamarira river - because life there is filled with back-breaking physical work, poverty, filth and hunger.

The place Tambudzai escapes *to* is a mission school where her paternal uncle is headmaster, and which her brother Nhamo attended before her, and before his death. The homestead and the mission form the spatial polarity privileged by the novel's narrative. At the mission, Tambudzai lives with her uncle and aunt (referred to by the Shona honorifics *Babamukuru* and *(A)maiguru* – 'Great father' and 'Great mother'), and their children, her cousins Nyasha and Chido. Babamukuru's family has spent some time in England, where he and his wife obtained Masters degrees, thus becoming members of the Rhodesian educated middle-class native elite. Young Tambu is eager to live at the mission because life there represents for her a cleaner, easier, and better-fed existence, as well as the luxury of access to consumer goods and intellectual (as opposed to physical) work.[17] The mission is located 'some twenty miles away from the village, to the west, in the direction of Umtali town' (*NC*, 1) -

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[15] *Cf* Willey and Treiber, 'Introduction. '

[16] T. Broughton, 'Adolescent in Zimbabwe,' *Southern African Review of Books* 2 (1), 1988, p. 5.

[17] Critics have described in some detail the role of food/eating, dirt/cleanliness, health/disease and European-imported consumption in *Nervous Conditions*. See, for example, the chapter on Dangarembga in Veit-Wild's *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers* (pp. 331-338); H. Creamer, 'An Apple for the Tacher? Femininity, Coloniality, and Food in *Nervous Conditions*,' *Kunapipi* 16 (1), 1994, pp. 349-360; C. Sugnet, '*Nervous Conditions*: Dangarembga's Feminist Reinvention of Fanon,' in O. Nnaemeka (ed), *The Politics of (M)Othering* (London, Routledge, 1997), pp. 33-49; Plasa, 'Reading "The Geography of Hunger",' and the following chapters in Willey and Treiber, *Emerging Perspectives*: Nicholls, 'Indexing her Digests,' J. L. Geller, 'Moving Forward from Death: Cultural Autopsy as a Guide to the Living' (pp. 137-160); G. Lund, 'Dangarembga's Dirty Work: Acting Up and Speaking Out, "Good Medicine" for Africa' (pp. 161-187); Murray, 'Some Very "Nervous

not *in* the town itself as some critics have wrongly suggested (I referred to this in Chapter Three).[18] It is, however, officially 'considered to be in Umtali' (*NC*, 2), and since the communal lands surrounding the town also appear to be regarded as part of it (*Ibid*), there exists no school bus to ferry the rural students home, when one is, in fact, needed. From its very outset, this novel subverts the Rhodesian chronotope, together with the clear-cut, European-imported spatial/literary opposition between city and country. (The bus terminus and the cluster of places associated with it, 'at least two miles distance from the homestead' (*NC*, 2), further undermine the binary.) *Nervous Conditions* is not a narrative about absolute contrasts, and for its heroine the mission becomes an in-between space in more ways than one.

In terms of time, the narrative describes itself as a beginning, as it confirms at its end: "the story *I have told here*, is my own story, the story of four women whom I loved, and our men, this story is *how it all began*" (*NC*, 204, emphasis added). The narrating voice, here and in the rest of the text, is that of the heroine herself. In the final chapter, Tambudzai relocates again, after spending two years at the mission. In a move echoing her earlier displacement from the homestead, she goes to another school (another place of transition), an elite multiracial convent, situated, like the mission, just outside town but 'on the other side, to the south.' (*NC*, 178) (In the final chapter, the colonial chronotope is thus further undermined as Umtali itself is turned into a space 'in-between.' A similar textual strategy of de-centring urban spaces is employed by Yvonne Vera's *The Stone Virgins*, discussed in Chapter Seven.) The chain of events leading up to this second displacement may be described as a beginning in that it is not a story of how Tambu acquires a fixed identity. At the novel's end, she has not become an adult, integrated into society, or a non-peasant, or even the person who is the novel's narrator. *Nervous Conditions* offers the narrative of how she became the person who was *later* in a position to narrate the story that has just been told.

Although the time gap between the narrated time and the time of narration remains unspecified, and so does the spatial location of the narrator at the time of narration,

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Conditions",' and K. Donovan Wixson, 'Women and Food in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*' (pp. 222-230).

[18] For example, M. K. Booker, in the chapter on Dangarembga in *The African Novel in English* (Portsmouth, NH, Heinemann, 1998), p 192; S. Z. Andrade in 'Tradition, Modernity and the Family: Reading the *Chimurenga* struggle into and out of *Nervous Conditions*,' in Willey and Treiber,

readers do learn that the narrator has experienced space-times beyond those described in the narrative. At the beginning of chapter four, the contents of Maiguru's house are described with the benefit of hindsight, and the narrator points out that they were not as palatial as they seemed to her younger self. In the opening pages of chapter six, the narrator refers to knowledge not acquired in the course of the novel and speaks of missionaries with a scathing irony she would not have been capable of as an adolescent.[19] The separation of the narrated past and the narrating present is, of course, a condition of every narrative. But here a particular emphasis is placed on it by the adoption of the convention of self-narration coupled with the omission from the narrative of the entire sequence of events linking the identities of Tambu as she is at the end of the novel and Tambu the narrator. As Caroline Rooney has stated: 'We have got the story, but we are not to be told the story of the story.'[20]

As a result of this gap, *Nervous Conditions* is something of a paradox: a novel that narrates the tale of a becoming, but does not, in the words of Paul Ricoeur, 'equate[...] the present with the past, the actual with the potential.'[21] Unlike the heroes of the male-authored European texts that Ricoeur refers to, Tambudzai does not, by the end of the story, 'become[...] *who* [s]*he is*.'[22] *Her* becoming functions as a 'prequel' to the kind of becoming Ricoeur describes, and entails the acquisition of the 'constellation of potentialities' necessary for it to happen[23]. The story of how these potentialities are realised features in this novel only as an absence.

Other conspicuous absences from *Nervous Conditions* are spatial. The chief one is England: although as a signifier it contributes to the text an important set of meanings, in no part of the novel does it become the location of events that make up the plot. In *Nervous Conditions*, England is the non-represented space from which

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Emerging Perspectives, p. 29, and M. J. Androne in ''Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*: an African Woman's Revisionist Narrative, '*Ibid*, p. 277.

[19] This begs the question about the location of readers the narrator is addressing/implying when she says, for example: 'You might think that, after all, these were only rooms decorated with the sort of accessories that the local interpretations of British interior-décor magazines were describing as standard, and nothing threatening in that.' (*NC*, 70) Anthony Chennells has written: 'As author, [Tambudzai's] perspectives are those of modern Zimbabwe.' (See A. Chennells, 'Authorizing Women, Women's Authoring: Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*,' in Ngara, *New Writing from Southern Africa* p. 74.) B. Basu has linked Tambu with the figure of the transnational intellectual (B. Basu, 'Trapped and Troping: Allegories of the Transnational Intellectual in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*,' in Willey and Treiber, *Emerging Perspectives*, pp. 251-270).

[20] Rooney, 'Re-Possessions,' p. 139.

[21] P. Ricoeur, 'Narrative Time,' *Critical Inquiry* 7 (1), 1980, p. 186.

[22] *Ibid.* Emphasis in the original.

[23] *Ibid.*

characters *return*. Tambu's uncle's stay there with his family is the final stage of the educational/spatial journey that has previously taken him to the mission school and a South African university (*NC*, 19). The journey's completion and his return to Rhodesia reinforce Babamukuru's contradictory identity. He is the 'traditional' head of an African extended family; this status is based on his age and gender. But he is also the bearer of the added, colonial-modern, exceptional (because European, rare, *imported*) educational/professional achievement. This makes him indebted to, and places him at the disposal of, white missionaries. But it also puts him in the position to improve the material status of his family. For the Sigauke clan, then, 'England' is primarily the place where Babamukuru becomes empowered to influence other family members' fortunes even more decisively than before he went there. As will be elaborated below, different members of the family are differently affected by this power, and they perceive 'Englishness' differently.

The role of urban locations in the novel resembles to some extent that of England. Although not completely absent from the narrated chronotope, they are partial presences: spaces into which characters foray occasionally, or merely pass through. Their function is to advance the action that largely unfolds elsewhere.[24] Umtali is thus the location of the *deus-ex-machina* turn in Tambu's fortunes that enables her to pay her school fees (chapter two), the place where family members go to prepare for the ambivalent homestead wedding (chapter eight), and where Maiguru insists on buying food for Tambu to take to the convent (chapter ten). Salisbury, the capital, is even further removed from the centre of the novel's chronotope. Visits there are made only on very exceptional occasions: Babamukuru's return from overseas (chapter three), and Nyasha's seeking medical help for her eating disorder (chapter ten).[25] Neither is described in much detail. In *Nervous Conditions*, narrative space resembles narrated time in that they are both open-ended. Both contain 'virtual' segments, whose presence is outlined but not shown. Despite the intricacy of spatio-temporal and social detail it provides, the chronotope of *Nervous* Conditions is, self-consciously, a spatio-temporal *fragment*. The development of actor/narrator Tambu is an uneven series of movements towards its edges.

[24] They are not necessarily associated with 'whiteness.' The visit to the dressmaker's shop in chapter eight takes the characters to Sakubva township. (*NC* 161)
[25] Possibly also Maiguru's flight from the mission in chapter eight. The novel does not make it clear whether the brother she stays with is the same as the one mentioned in chapter ten.

The novel details Tambu's progress in minute spatio-temporal detail. She relocates to the mission in January 1969, at fourteen (*NC*, 92, 121), and to the convent two years later (*NC*, 182, 186). The sequence of events preceding that period of time can be reconstructed from the novel's opening three chapters. Tambu's brother Nhamo begins school when he is seven; Tambu, who is a year younger, follows a year later, in 1962. (*NC*, 13). Her project of growing mealies in order to earn enough money to return to school takes place in 1963 (*NC*, 21). She returns to school the following year (*NC*, 30). In 1965, Babamukuru returns from England after five years (*NC*, 6, 17), and it is decided that Nhamo should go to school at the mission (*NC*, 5, 30). Nhamo dies in 1968, when Tambu is thirteen (*NC*, 1, 5, 12). This section of the novel functions as a protracted, although not chronological, elaboration of its famous opening sentence, 'I was not sorry when my brother died.' (*NC*, 1) It is only due to her brother's death – as his *replacement* – that Tambu is able to go to the mission.[26] (The motif of character replacement also features centrally in novels by Hove, Kanengoni and Vera, as I discuss in chapters Four, Six and Seven respectively.) In that sense, the first three chapters are an explanation of the circumstances of Tambu's displacement. The last two chapters, set around Christmas 1970 and in 1971 (*NC*, 178, 181, 186-8, 197-8) play a similar role of explaining the circumstances of her leaving. These five chapters frame the novel's middle section – chapters four to eight, occupying roughly three quarters of the space of the text – which detail the events that take place in 1969 and 1970, during Tambu's stay at the mission. In the novel's middle section, narrative space-time is represented in greater detail, and the pace of the narrative slows down. The middle space of the mission, situated physically and symbolically between poverty and affluence, city and country, England and the homestead, modernity and tradition, is, for Tambu, the space of apprenticeship.

As she arrives at the mission, Tambu believes that linear movement away from the homestead will effect a radical change in her class status, and with it, a sudden and decisive change of her identity: 'When I stepped into Babamukuru's car I was a peasant. (...) This was the person I was leaving behind. At Babamukuru's I expected

[26] This implies a spatio-temporal hierarchy of narratives of development. If the story of an African woman's becoming, as narrated here, may be seen as a story about the realisation of conditions that similar stories of/by European men take for granted, then it may also be read as a *substitution* for the equivalent kind of narrative about an African man. Tambu, in effect, lives/subverts Nhamo's intended

to find another self.' (*NC*, 58) But this belief in the possibility of her own 'reincarnation' (*NC*, 92) gradually gives way to a less linear experience of space-time and a more complex grappling with identities. For one thing, she returns to the homestead between terms - in April, August and December - in order to see her family and help with agricultural work.[27] These repeated returns underline the instability of Tambu's new identity as her life straddles two different ways of measuring time: the maize year (*NC*, 6), with its cycle of planting, weeding, and harvesting, and the academic year. The fact that she participates in both means that she has not, after all, left peasant status that far behind. It also reveals that a separation between body and mind is a condition and key ingredient of undergoing the social climb that she desires.

More importantly, during her stay at the mission Tambu discovers that patriarchal gender relations she had experienced at the homestead are not, as she had assumed, a corollary of race and class oppressions. She learns this through observing the experiences of her cousin Nyasha, whose egalitarian mind and anglicised, 'non-traditional' behaviour causes her to come into conflict with her father just as Tambu has come into conflict with hers. 'The victimisation, I saw, was universal. It didn't depend on poverty, on lack of education or on tradition. It didn't depend on any of the things I had thought it depended on. Men took it everywhere with them. Even heroes like Babamukuru did it .'(*NC*, 116)

Each visit to the homestead further complicates Tambu's view of the world. Although the text indicates that Tambu makes the visits home regularly three times a year (*NC*, 128, 198), the key visits the novel highlights are those that take place at Christmas 1969, in August 1970 and at Christmas 1970. The first occasions the family *dare* related to the fate of Lucia and Takesure, problematic members of the Sigauke extended family who have arrived at the homestead during Tambu's absence. The second is the Christian wedding of Tambu's parents, ordered by Babamukuru, which Tambu refuses to attend. The third is a family discussion about whether Tambu should be allowed to go to the convent.

Bildungsroman - which is intended to be a replica of Babamukuru's. The genre of *Bildungsroman* is further discussed below.

[27] J. Treiber has written of the geographies of 'home' and 'not home' in the novel (see 'Strategic Fusions'). It is important to note that, in moving to the mission, Tambu does not swap one home for another. The homestead is the rural family seat (*musha*) to all the Sigaukes, and Babamukuru, the family head, is in charge of it. This is why, for example, the narrator is able to say, in chapter six: 'Babamukuru and family were *coming home* and Babamukuru had generously agreed to allow me to stay on at the mission until we *all went home* for Christmas.' (*NC*, 108; emphasis added)

On each of these occasions, Tambu is forced to consider the contradictory configurations of circumstances and other characters' actions: Lucia's 'manly' decisiveness at the *dare*, the Christianity of Babamukuru's 'traditional' moral stance regarding the wedding, her mother's stubborn lethargy in the face of change. What Tambu is faced with are the ways in which multiple hierarchies to do with race, class, educational status, age and gender interact and play themselves out through various members of her extended family. Neil ten Kortenaar has written a detailed analysis of how, in *Nervous Conditions*, gender combines with the hierarchies of class and age, so that 'oppression under one hierarchy can be a position of power under another.'[28] In their studies of the novel, Anthony Chennells and Jeanette Treiber show how the novel diffuses cultural essentialisms,[29] while Charles Sugnet points out that the novel adds a dimension of gender to Frantz Fanon's work on colonial cultural alienation.[30] All would agree that Dangarembga's novel moves beyond choices determined by polarities/binary opposites. For Tambu and her cousin Nyasha, 'identity will be a shifting third term, composed and recomposed from an overlay of culturally various sources.'[31] For as long as she can, Tambu resists this realisation, taking refuge in the fixed identity of the grateful poor female relative. (*NC*, 116) But by the end of the novel, she has experienced both confrontation and self-confrontation, and learned to exploit cracks between discourses: 'That's how it was. That's how it would be. If you were clever, you *slipped through any loophole* you could find.' (*NC*, 179, emphasis added)

Slipping through loopholes, however, poses the problem of memory as this relates to selfhood. Tambu's brother Nhamo (who, because of his maleness, has a sense of entitlement his sister is denied) manages to avoid self-confrontation despite performing repeated returns to the homestead. He does this by faking a loss of memory; by pretending, that is, to be on an unbroken *mental* trajectory distancing him from the homestead, his family and his mother tongue. (Tambu's mother later blames the 'Englishness' associated with Babamukuru's social climb for his death - *NC*, 202-3). Nyasha and Chido, who have travelled all the way on the imaginary spatial axis linking England and the homestead, genuinely experience the memory loss.) Despite exulting at the prospect of 'another step upwards in the direction of my freedom' (*NC* 183) at the point of entering the convent, Tambu is forced to recognise

[28] Ten Kortenaar, 'Doubles and Others in Two Zimbabwean Novels,' p. 32.
[29] See A. Chennells, 'Authorising Women, Women's Authoring' and J Treiber, 'Strategic Fusions.'
[30] Sugnet, '*Nervous Conditions*.'

that, for a native in a colony, social elevation becomes a threat to the continuity of identity. 'I was beginning to have a suspicion, no more than the seed of suspicion, that I had been too eager to leave the homestead and embrace the "Englishness" of the mission; and after that the more concentrated "Englishness" of Sacred Heart.' (*NC*, 203) Before she leaves the mission, Tambu's cousin, mother and friends urge her: 'Don't forget, don't forget, don't forget.' (*NC*, 188) As I discussed in the previous chapter, the novels of Chenjerai Hove voice a demand for the mourning of *publicly* forgotten victims in relatively static, 'frozen' worlds. In Dangarembga's novel, in contrast, personal, *private* memory is difficult, precisely because characters cross boundaries with more relative ease.

Remembering is further complicated by the fact that places are far from static, as characters, especially Tambu, move between them. Significantly, and in contrast to Hove, the descriptions of key spatial segments are kinetic: the narrator describes spaces by outlining changes they have undergone in time. Chapter one describes the spatial distance between the bus terminus and the homestead by narrating its history up to 1968: the history of the construction of District Council Houses, the shops, the beerhall and the bus terminus itself (*NC*, 3-4). (For a discussion of a comparable spatial 'nodal pont' and the reverse story of its annihilation, see the section on Vera's *The Stone Virgins* in Chapter Seven.) Chapter four of *Nervous Conditions* gives a brief history of the construction of buildings at the mission. (*NC*, 62-3) Both of these stories narrate aspects of the colonisation of African space; similarly, Tambu's grandmother is unable to tell her the family history without telling her also how '[w]izards well versed in treachery and black magic came from the south and forced the people from the land.' (*NC*, 18) The change of identity Tambu undergoes takes place in historic time and within a changing, dynamic space. Thus, by the end of the narrative, the question she faces is not how to move steadily away from a steady starting point. It is, rather, how to keep circling, leaving and returning, while simultaneously increasing the amplitude of movement and retaining the always-fluid memory of those left behind and one's former self. The existence of the novel's narrative shows that she has succeeded. Performing the difficult feat of remembering while experiencing movement and change in a changing world, is, in the end, Tambu's chief achievement. It is the culmination of her development, the only lasting aspect of her identity that the novel makes us aware of.

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[31] *Ibid*, p. 42.

What has been said so far about character movement and development brings us to a question of genre: the idea of *Nervous Conditions* as a *Bildungsroman*, the novel of a young person's development as (s)he progresses through life and interacts with various social forces. Variously defined, the genre has been described in terms of plot construction and typical narrative incident: the bringing-up of a sensitive child under adverse circumstances, schooling, progress to big city, romantic involvement, the final integration into society.[32] Critics have remarked on female and post-colonial writers' appropriations/subversions of it,[33] even as the term itself becomes 'ever more approximate.'[34] In connection with *Nervous Conditions* as a manifestation of the genre, the narrative's woman-centredness[35] and its suppression of the romantic episodes commonly present in novels of male development[36] have been emphasised by way of contrast to its male-authored/European versions. What I wish to point out in this context is related to the narrative's spatio-temporal open-endedness. I will rely on the view of *Bildungsroman* advanced by M. M. Bakhtin.

In 'The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism,' Bakhtin presents a historical typology of what he calls novels of emergence. His observations are relevant here because he does not base them only on compositional or plot-related criteria, but also on the kinds of space-time a narrative brings into being, and the kinds of identities that emerge. As I pointed out in the first chapter of this thesis, Bakhtin discusses the genre in contrast to what the calls the novel of ordeal and the biographical novel. Among the several types of *Bildungsroman* he describes, the one he considers historically the most significant may, in my opinion, be related to *Nervous Conditions*. In it, an individual's emergence is inseparably linked to historical emergence and is no longer a purely private affair.

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[32] See J. H. Buckley, *Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding* (Cambridge, Massachusets, Harvard University Press, 1975).

[33] See, for example, D. J. Mickelsen, 'The *Bildungsroman* in Africa: The Case of *Mission terminée*,' *The French Review* 59 (3), 1986, pp. 418-27; L. W. Wagner, 'Plath's *The Bell Jar* as Female *Bildungsroman*,' *Women's Studies*, 12, 1986, pp. 55-68; L. Erwin, 'The Re-Vision of History in the West Indian *Bildungsroman*, *World Literature Written in English* 33 (2) & 34 (1), 1993-94, pp. 90-102; and L. Erwin, 'Genre and Authority in Some Popular Nigerian Women's Novels,' *Research in African Literatures* 33 (2), 2002, pp. 81-99.

[34] F. Moretti, *The Way of the World: the* Bildungsroman *in European Culture* (London, Verso, 1987), p. 15.

[35] See, for example, S. Thomas, 'Killing the Hysteric in the Colonized's House: Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*' and M. Flockemann, '"Not-Quite Insiders and Not-Quite Outsiders": The "Process of Womanhood" in *Beka Lamb*, *Nervous Conditions* and *Daughters of the Twilight*, both in *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 27 (1), 1992, pp. 26-36 and 37-47 respectively, and P.A. Uwakweh, 'Carving a Niche: Visions of Gendered Childhood in Buchi Emecheta's *The Bride Price* & Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, *African Literature Today* 21, 1998, pp. 9-21.

[36] See Andrade, 'Tradition, Modernity, and the Family.'

> He [sic] emerges *along with the world* and he reflects the historical emergence of the world itself. He is no longer within an epoch, but on the border between two epochs, and the transition point from one to the other. The transition is accomplished in him and through him. He is forced to become a new, unprecedented type of human being. What is happening here is precisely the emergence of a new man. The organizing force held by the future is therefore extremely great here – and this is not, of course, the private biographical future, but the historical future. It is as though the very *foundations* of the world are changing, and man must change along with them. Understandably, in such a novel of emergence, problems of freedom and necessity, and the problem of creative initiative rise to their full height.[37]

Given Tambu's striving for radical newness of identity, and the novel's emphasis on describing historical spatial change, Bakhtin's description may – with the exception of the personal pronoun used – have been written about Dangarmbga's novel. *Nervous Conditions* shows a double emergence: the *colonial* world changing, 'in and through' the heroine and members of her family. As I have tried to show above, the 'organizing force held by the future' is indeed 'extremely great' in this novel because of the future's pointed absence from the narrative. Bakhtin's remarks help us to see that this is a *double* absence: both private and public.[38] What is left unsaid by *Nervous Conditions* may thus be seen to be multiple and complex: it is an absence of verbally articulated meanings that are spatial and temporal, public and private.

Florence Stratton has observed that African women's novels often make use of 'the convention of the paired women': a doubling of narratives centred on women who, in their response to male domination, are the antithesis of each other.[39] *Nervous Conditions*, in fact, multiplies the doubling, as it juxtaposes Tambu's mother and aunt Lucia, Tambu's mother and Maiguru, as well as Nyasha and Tambu herself. Placed along Tambu's narrative trajectory, the stories of the 'four women whom I loved' (*NC*, 204) show that, in this particular chronotope, Bakhtinian personal emergence is impossible without displacement. Married off at fifteen, Tambu's mother is denied a chance to develop: she is also the only woman in this story who does not leave the homestead. As ten Kortenaar puts it: 'What is needed *for a larger*

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[37] Bakhtin, 'The *Bildungsroman* and Its Significance,' pp. 23-4. Emphasis in the original.

[38] *Cf* Elleke Boehmer's statement that Dangarembga's novel has 'drawn domestic, private and secret languages out of the excluded (and secluded) spaces of women's experience.' Boehmer, *Colonial & Postcolonial Literature*, p. 212.

[39] Stratton, 'Flora Nwapa and the Female Novel of Development,' p. 97.

perspective is travel, the experience of changing places.'[40] Nyasha, whose understanding of space-time is superior to Tambu's although she cannot put her own words into action, would agree: '"You have to keep moving," she said. "Getting involved in this and that, finding out one thing and another. Moving, all the time. Otherwise you get trapped".' (*NC*, 96) But by itself, displacement is not enough. Tambu *initiates* spatial movement: she is the author of her own displacement. Significantly, Lucia – the only other 'escapee' in the novel - does the same. Nyasha, on the other hand, 'knew nothing of leaving. She had only been taken to places.' (*NC*, 173) The same can be said of Maiguru, who went to England with a husband who 'did not want to leave the mission' in the first place. (*NC*, 14)

The parallel between Nyasha, whom her father *takes* to England, and Babamukuru whom the missionaries *send* there points a the parallel between colonialism and patriarchy that underpins this novel's ideology. In 'Doubles and Others in Two Zimbabwean Novels,' Neil ten Kortenaar demonstrates that the use of 'paired women' is not the only instance of doubling in this novel. A symmetrical multiplication of sub-plots occurs also with male characters. The story is, after all, of 'women whom I loved *and our men*' (*NC*, 204, emphasis added), and the narrative creates parallels and differences between Jeremiah and his relative Takesure, Jeremiah and his older brother, and Nhamo and his cousin Chido. (The inevitable outcome of all this doubling is, of course, as in the case of women, the creation of parallels *across* generations also – and ultimately across the gender divide.) All the men in the Sigauke family resemble each other (and differ from Tambu) in that they may take a certain amount of mobility for granted; it is a measure of Jeremiah's and Takesure's un-manliness that they do not move from the homestead. Tambu differs from the ones who do move - Babamukuru, Nhamo and Chido - in that she does not succumb to the missionary-propagated illusion that the linearity of spatial movement (e.g. to the mission) is mirrored by the linearity of mental 'progress.' Instead, both spatially and mentally, she repeatedly alternates between advancing, returning and staying.

Contrary to Nyasha's advice, Tambu does not 'move all the time.' Unlike Takesure, who comes to the homestead and then overstays his welcome, Maiguru who leaves her family but returns too early, and Chido who avoids returning to the homestead altogether, Tambu and Lucia find combinations of leaving, returning and staying

[40] Ten Kortenaar, 'Doubles and Others in Two Zimbabwean Novels,' p. 35. Emphasis added.

which enable them to alter their identities. (Like Tambu, Lucia performs displacement twice; both women make use of opportunities to which they are 'traditionally' not entitled). In the colonial chronotope as constructed by this novel, the slipping 'through any loophole' - Bakhtin's 'creative initiative' – means finding a certain spatio-temporal rhythm: the correct proportion of movement and stillness, becoming and staying. The parallel between Tambu and Lucia indicates that, paradoxically, finding this rhythm may have been easier for Rhodesian black women than for their men, precisely because of the multiplicity of oppressions that they had to endure. (Unlike men such as Babamukuru, who have rights and obligations within both the colonial and the patriarchal systems of power, doubly marginalised women such as Tambu and Lucia can play the two power structures against each other.)[41] Tambu differs from Lucia, however, in that her story remains unfinished, and that she has been able to tell it. In this sense she is truly a 'frontier figure,'[42] poised between the said and the unsaid, the past and the future: an emblem of the kind of colonial emergence that this novel considers to be worth narrating.

In equating movement with the struggle for self-expression, and in stressing the importance of memory, *Nervous Conditions* anticipates the work of Yvonne Vera, which I discuss in Chapter Seven of this thesis. In being a form of *Bildungsroman*, yet refusing to narrate the outcome of the public emergence it represents, Dangarembga's text aligns itself with Shimmer Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns*, discussed in the following chapter. As will be seen, Bakhtin's description of the genre is also applicable to *Harvest of Thorns*; yet, as with *Nervous Conditions*, Chinodya's novel does not entirely fit the Bakhtinian blueprint of the genre.

Before I turn to the strange set of parallels and contrasts between *Nervous Condtions* and Nozipo Maraire's *Zenzele*, another intertextual parallel must briefly be drawn: that between Dangarembga's novel and Irene Mahamba's novella *Woman in Struggle*, mentioned in Chapter Two. Written by a former combatant and published in 1984, *Woman in Struggle* tells a story in many respects remarkably similar to that of *Nervous Conditions*. Mahamba's heroine, Nyevenutsai,[43] is a rural adolescent who

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[41] For a geographical study of women resorting to such spatial strategies during the liberation war, see M. Kesby, 'Arenas of Control, Terrains of Gender Contestation: Guerrilla Struggle and Counter-Insurgency Warfare in Zimbabwe 1972-1980,'*Journal of Southern African Studies* 22 (4), 1996, pp. 561-84.

[42] Boehmer, *Colonial & Postcolonial Literature*, p. 228.

[43] The name is derived from the Shona verb meaning to slacken, loosen or relax. See Hannan, *Standard Shona Dictionary*.

has been forced to discontinue her education by her 'traditionalist' father. She escapes the homestead and an unwanted marriage to an ogre-like older man, demanded of her by custom, by going to a mission where her educated uncle, aunt and cousins live. She continues her education and acquires the foundations of a changed identity. There are also formal similarities between the two texts: *Woman in Struggle* is told in the first person, and occasionally anticipates the form of expression of *Nervous Conditions* ('For quite some time that night I lay awake trying to analyse whether my cousins accepted me.')[44] The key difference between the two texts is their construction of the driving force behind social and personal change. While in *Nervous Conditions* change is the result of a complex interplay of power struggles and hierarchies, in *Woman in Struggle* social complexity is cut through by an omnipotent liberating force: the ZANU-PF freedom fighters – the 'ZANLA guys,' as the novella calls them.[45]

In Mahamba's text, the guerrillas inhabit the liberated area within which the mission is situated, and socialise without restraint with Nyevenutsai's uncle's family. They intervene in Nyevenutsai's life by mediating between her and her father, and by providing the moral standard by which *all* the relationships in this axiological text may be judged. The final aim of their actions is the 'total liberation of Zimbabwe,'[46] which will put an end to both racism and patriarchy: 'No white, no black, is going to oppress a white or a black, no black no white, and no man is going to oppress a woman.'[47] In the space-time of *Nervous Conditions*, the existence of such a universally-liberating force is inconceivable, and the manner in which the novel's chronotope is constructed precludes the possibility of sudden change. Thus, by leaving Tambu's story incomplete, and by endowing her with a fractured, uncertain identity, *Nervous Conditions* makes a powerful statement about the space-time of independent Zimbabwe that it deliberately refrains from showing.

3.

Although both Dangarembga's and Maraire's novels contain the figures of a daughter who is being educated away from home and a mother who has stayed there,

[44] Mahamba, *Woman in Struggle*, p. 34.
[45] *Ibid.*
[46] *Cf* the author's remarks on p. 50.
[47] Mahamba, *Woman in Struggle*, p. 16.

the narrating voice in *Zenzele* belongs to the mother, rather than the daughter. Shiri Shungu addresses the novel's narrative to her daughter Zenzele who is a university student in America.[48] The act of narration happens after Zimbabwe's independence, precisely the time of the realisation of African nationalist hopes that *Nervous Condition* does not show.[49] Alternating between country and city is as important in *Zenzele* as it is in *Nervous Conditions*, but in Maraire's novel the starting point of such movement is the capital, Harare, rather than the village. During the time period covering the time of narration, the narrator relocates from Harare, where she lives, to Chakowa, the village of her birth. (Although Chakowa is outside Mutare – the 'Umtali' of *Nervous Conditions*, there is, in *Zenzele*, no middle space between them. There *is* a mission in the novel, but it is Cyrene Mission outside Bulawayo, and it represents the supernatural, as I explain below.) All that is known of the daughter's location is that at the time of narration she is at Harvard. In *Zenzele*, it is the mother who has 'escaped the village' (*Z*, 22): her daughter, on the other hand, takes the elite education of the kind that Tambudzai dreams of, for granted (*Cf Z*, 71), and has no trouble in fulfilling her 'zest for something beyond Zimbabwe.'[50]

In contrast to the spatio-temporal fragmentariness of *Nervous Conditions*, the chronotope of Nozipo Maraire's novel aims to be non-fragmentary and all-enveloping. This is partly an implication of genre: *Zenzele* adopts the convention of an epistolary novel, a letter addressed by a mother to her daughter. The text therefore represents itself as a combination of a confession and a lesson, offering advice on how a young woman might conduct herself at home and abroad, in the city and the country, with regard to this life and the afterlife; in other words – with relation to all

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[48] Characters' names in the two novels contribute to their meanings. 'Zenzele,' an Ndebele word, may be translated as 'self-reliance'; the family's surname, Shungu, is Shona and may mean either emotional upset, or exhilaration. (Zenzele shares a combination of an Ndebele first name and Shona surname with the novel's author). 'Shiri' is a nickname (*Cf Z*, 48) and means 'bird.' Both Zenzele's father and Shiri's first love remain nameless. In *Nervous Conditions*, the names of the narrator's mother's surviving children – Nhamo[inesu], Tambudzai, Netsai, Rambanai and Dambudzo are traditional names associated with tribulation, worry, suffering, misfortune and separation, while Chido and Nyasha are abstract nouns (and hence, as names, missionary-influenced) and mean love and mercy respectively. Babamukuru, Maiguru and Tambu's mother remain nameless. For a discussion of Shona naming practices, see A. J. C. Pongweni, *What's in a Name? A Study of Shona Nomenclature* (Gweru, Mambo Press, 1983). I am grateful to Ben Chibisa, Douglas Chivandire, Paul Danisa and Justin and Donald Madzika for a lively discussion of names in *Nervous Conditions* and *Zenzele*.

[49] I am in disagreement with S. Z. Andrade's statement: 'At the novel's end, having completed her schooling at Sacred Heart convent and having grown into an adult, Tambu stands poised to enter the sphere of the Zimbabwean elite.' Andrade appears to uncritically equate the chronotope inhabited by Dangarembga's characters with that inhabited by its author. See Andrade, 'Tradition, Modernity, and the Family,' p. 29.

[50] K. J. Lee, '*Zenzele* by J. Nozipo Maraire,' http://www.dailycal.org./Issues/03.01.96/zenzele.txt

the main aspects of space-time.[51] The narrator makes the novel's strong didactic (axiological) component explicit in chapter one:

> I have learned something in my awkward journey through womanhood. The lessons are few but enduring. So I hope that you will pardon this curious distillation of traditional African teaching, social commentary and maternal concern. These are the stories that have made me what I am today. It is just that you are my very own, and it is an old woman's privilege to impart her wisdom. (*Z*, 5)

The novel imparts its lessons by means of loosely connected stories, and stories-within-stories. Shiri's memories of Zenzele's growing up alternate with episodes from own biography, and both contain long digressions relating events from the lives of friends and relatives. Like *Nervous Conditions*, *Zenzele* may be said to be 'about beginnings':[52] the beginnings of lives, and the beginning of the era of Zimbabwe's independence.

The interwoven stories of *Zenzele* all revolve around variations of four spatio-temporal binaries: rural/urban, Zimbabwe/world, Zimbabwe/Rhodesia and the physical/the supernatural. (The first three of these binaries exist also in the Rhodesian chronotope.) Intersecting with these is the opposition between the private and the public spheres of activity.

The rural/urban opposition is central to *Zenzele,* and all the other oppositions are in some manner linked to it. It is set up in the novel's second chapter, after readers learn of Zenzele's longing to leave Zimbabwe in chapter one. After remembering her daughter's dislike of visiting the ancestral lands at Christmas, the narrator establishes the core meanings associated with the *musha* through interlinked narratives, spanning several chapters. The village may not be 'civilised' in the western sense, but it is the seat of African spirituality: 'I have always felt that God's spirit dwells in Chakowa, far from civilization and deep in the African countryside.' (*Z*, 7) (The word 'civilised' here is another echo of the Rhodesian spatio-temporal discourse, discussed in Chapter Three. To an extent, the chronotope of *Zenzele* merely inverts the colonial one.) Zenzele is encouraged to view it as the place of origins and African cultural identity, neglected by the westernised African elites at their own peril.

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[51] It is because of this, I would argue, that some readers have found *Zenzele* not to be a 'consistently believable reading experience.' See K. R. Keim, 'J. Nozipo Maraire's *Zenzele: Letters* [sic] *to* [sic] *My Daughter*,' in Hay, *African Novels in the Classroom*, p. 173.

[52] B. Lebdai, 'Zimbabwe and Nozipo Maraire's Beginnings,' *Commonwealth Essays and Studies* 22 (1), 1999, p. 47.

> Our *kumushas* have lost their meaning. Instead of being our cultural reposits and homelands, they are where the forgotten live and the dead are buried. Even those who grew up there among the *kopjes*, the baobab trees and the Umvumvumvu River – those big businessmen and cabinet ministers with sleek, dark Mercedes, who once herded goats and cows thick in the thorny bush of the eastern highlands – have forsaken it for the concrete splendour of the gleaming high-rises in the cities. (*Z*, 9)

For a young woman, a key aspect of loyalty to the values associated with the *musha* and 'our culture' (*Z*, 12 *ff* and 31 *ff*) means retaining sexual purity before marriage. In chapter two, visits to Chakowa are presented as an antidote to Zenzele's becoming like her westernised friend Petranella Makororo, who never visits the rural areas, and who also falls pregnant while still in secondary school. ('After all, they had wanted children who were just like those in the West' – *Z*, 17). In addition to that, chapter three locates an African woman's identity in the strength and resilience nurtured by the *musha*. As part of the answer to Zenzele's question 'Mama, what do you think it means to be an African woman?' – *Z*, 39), Shiri tells the story of her future mother-in-law displaying her wizened body to her in a village hut on the eve of her wedding, with the aim of teaching the young bride a lesson in identity. The story links village, female strength and motherhood: 'This is where the strength of your man comes from. This is where he would crawl, grabbing at my blouse.' (*Z*, 43) It also represents an African woman's body as not her own: 'This is testimony to the love I have given my family. There is not a mark here that is my own. It belongs to Baba va Tapiwa, Chipo, Farai, Tawona and Ziyanai.' (*Z*, 43) As a prelude to this story, and also by way an illustration of African women's strength, Shiri refers to is their participation in the continent's liberation struggles. (*Z*, 40)

Zenzele, however, lives in the city. In order to prevent her from getting caught in the cultural 'in-between' – 'some grey zone that was neither black culture nor truly white either' (*Z*, 18), Shiri urges her to 'acknowledge our *dual* citizenship. We are urban and rural, old and new. We exist in *contradictory* timeframes" (*Ibid*, emphasis added). She assumes this process of adopting a dual identity to be a matter of choice ('If in the end you rejected it, that was fine' – *Ibid*) and anticipates no problems of personality doubling and splitting associated with it. Unlike Tambu, no character in this novel reacts to inhabiting 'contradictory timeframes' by relating how her 'mind had raced and spun and ended up splitting into two disconnected entities that had long, frightening arguments with each other.' (*NC*, 167) Memory – another difficult process in *Nervous Conditions* – is in *Zenzele* also presented as relatively non-

problematic. It is simply a function of returning to the village often enough and absorbing stories such as Shiri's. In chapter four, she brings the village into direct opposition to the west, which is described as a 'satiated world of genius and decadence.' (*Z*, 46) Byron, a talented young man of Chakowa, loses his African identity during his stay there and returns home wearing tweeds, smoking a pipe and accompanied by a white wife, only to be cursed by his dying mother. His absence from the village has been too long: fifteen years. Again, Zenzele is urged to embrace a duality: 'You, however, have dual citizenship, even global citizenship.' (*Z*, 70)

Zenzele, however, can do this more easily than Tambu or Nyasha not only because she lives in independent Zimbabwe, and has - as Shiri explains in chapter four (*Z*, 52-3) – a far greater freedom of spatial movement than a black person in Rhodesia, or any character in Dangarembga's novel. It is also the case that distinctions of *class*, the power relations they imply and the difficulties they bring when it comes to identity construction are absent from Maraire's novel. The opposition between *musha* and the city, and *musha* and the west are associated with *culture* and *race* only. Unlike Babamukuru, Byron does not transform himself from a peasant into a middle-class professional by earning a university degree in England. Unlike Tambu, Shiri does not associate the escape from the village with leaving behind the life of a peasant. (*Z*, 124) When the old village woman shows her tired body to Shiri, she links it to motherhood only. Unlike *Nervous Conditions*, *Zenzele* does not associate the rural areas with agricultural *labour*, despite making the statement that '[t]he soul of the African is deeply connected to the earth.' (*Z*, 92) Unlike Amai Tambu, then, Shiri does not tell her daughter of 'the poverty of blackness on one side and the weight of womanhood on the other.' (*NC*, 16) She relates both womanhood and blackness to culture, and treats culture as a fixed repository of knowledge and values associated with the past, and capable of guarding against the threat to stable identity caused by displacement. (*Cf Z*, 69) In comparison to *Nervous Conditions*, therefore, Zenzele is, to a certain extent, marked by the kind of moralistic typecasting that resonates not only with the pre-independence axiological fictional formations, but also – according to Emmanuel Chiwome – with Zimbabwean oral genres.[53]

I have said that, in chapter three, African women's resilience is illustrated in part by the mention of their participation in Zimbabwe's freedom struggle. Chapter nine

[53] See Chiwome, 'The Interface of Orality and Literacy,' p. 17.

takes up this theme and elaborates the Zimbabwe/Rhodesia binary. Through stories about Zenzele's aunt Linda and her female relative Tinawo, both of whom were freedom fighters, Zenzele is introduced to the racial inequalities and segregation that marked life in Rhodesia. Independence is represented a reversal of the colonial condition – and therefore, in part, also the colonial chronotope. Shiri says: 'We had paid a dear price for our hospitality to Cecil Rhodes who unabashedly named our entire country after himself! Your auntie Linda's entire life has been dedicated to reversing the conditions that his arrival spawned.' (*Z*, 94) Later, she sums up her experience of her country's history by returning to the imagery of reversal: 'I have seen the order of things turn and spin and turn again. What was white became black; what was evil became good.' (*Z*, 192) In this, *Zenzele*'s treatment of the liberation struggle is a feminised echo of the representations of the anti-colonial struggle in the novels by Garikai Mutasa and Edmund Chipamaunga, discussed in the following chapter of this thesis.[54] *Zenzele*'s chapter nine resembles them also in its use of devices favoured by popular literature, such as suspense and hyperbolic character construction. (Maraire's Rhodesian army commander shares with Mutasa's and Chipamaunga's Rhodesians the possession of extreme racism, stupidity and cruelty as the only character traits; in her unmarred bravery, cunning and resourcefulness, Tinawo, who is a spy as well as a guerrilla commander, replicates Chipamaunga's and Mutasa's male freedom fighters).[55]

For Linda and Tinawo, racial liberation they achieved at independence amounts to total liberation (*Cf Z*, 158). There is no indication in *Zenzele* that, like the women in *Nervous Conditions*, or even Mahamba's Nyevenutsai, they experience African patriarchy as a burden. In fact, when Shiri warns her daughter about the prejudice she may expect to encounter overseas, she mentions racism only ('The rest of the world got stuck in the Smith era of apartheid while we moved on,' – *Z*, 84), and gender not at all. Linda and Tinawo are held up to Zenzele as examples, and as sources of

[54] According to Linda Strong-Leek, 'Maraire's views are no doubt romanticised versions of the realities of women fighting in the liberation war, but her voice is important as it is one of the first in fiction to articulate the physical participation of women in the war.' See L. Strong-Leek, 'Emerging Womanism in the Works of Zimbabwean Women Writers,' in E. Chiwome *et al* (eds), *Indigenous Knowledge and Technology in African and Diasporan Communities – Multi-Disciplinary Approaches* (Harare, The Southern African Association of Culture and Development Studies and the National Council for Black Studies Inc. in association with Mond Books, 2000), p. 208.

[55] 'Thorn,' the name of a troublesome foreign journalist who questions Rhodesians in *Zenzele*, echoes similarly suggestive (almost allegorical) names such as 'Null' and 'Hure' ('Whore') in Chipamaunga's novels. See E. Chipamaunga, *A Fighter for Freedom* (Gweru, Mambo Press, 1983);

knowledge (*Z*, 166-7). But their wartime experiences are not shared by Shiri who feels a little alienated from them (*Z*, 166). Shiri also does not participate in post-independence public life in any way. She defines her identity as entirely private: 'Mine is to make clean, to smooth and comfort. I have done this. I have put my whole life into it.' (*Z*, 37) Zenzele's father, on the other hand, is an internationally known lawyer. Despite the advice she gives her politically-minded daughter, Shiri's direct experience of the public/private binary is firmly gendered. Together with the silence on patriarchy, this places *Zenzele* even more firmly within the kind of axiological writing that – like the work of Stanlake Samkange - challenges the Rhodesian chronotope by partly inverting it.

'Sister Africa,' the Afro-American political activist whose story is told in chapter seven, is, on the other hand, a female figure whose whole life is entirely public. And yet she, too, ultimately becomes an embodiment of female resilience and a search for origins. African Americans, the chapter suggests, derive a meaningful identity only from establishing cultural links with Africa: 'every African-American child should spend one year in Africa living among his [sic] brothers and sisters.' (*Z*, 93) Sister Africa, too, is resilient. (*Z*, 98) And since the unlikely number of African countries/liberation struggles she experiences (*Z*, 99-100) is motivated by a search for her African nationalist father, Sister Africa ultimately acquires the dimensions of an almost allegorical figure. She becomes the exact opposite of the misguided Byron, a female emblem of pan-African nationalism represented also by the father of Zenzele.

From what has been said so far about this novel's axiological quality, its static understanding of culture, and its foregrounding of purity and strength as the hallmarks of desirable female identities, it may be concluded that *Zenzele* is no more than a vehicle for the discourse of oppositional African nationalism.[56] Put differently:

G. Mutasa, *The Contact* (Gweru, Mambo Press, 1990 [1985]) and G. Mutasa, *The Bridge (Two Novellas)*, (London, Macmillan, 1996).

[56] On gender and the symbolic economy of pan-African nationalism, see E. Boehmer, 'Motherlands, Mothers and Nationalist Sons: Representations of Nationalism and Women in African Literature,' in A. Rutherford (ed), *From Commonwealth to Post-colonial* (Sydney, Dangaroo Press, 1992), pp. 229-247; for a discussion of different ways of understanding 'traditional culture' focused on the custom of *lobola*, mentioned also in *Zenzele*, see N. Ansell, '"Because it's Our Culture!" (Re)negotiating the Meaning of *Lobola* in Southern African Secondary Schools,' *Journal of Southern African Studies* 27 (4), 2001, pp. 697-716; for a useful description of nationalist appropriations of the meanings that the Shona symbolic system assigns to women's bodies, see A. Kaler, 'A Threat to the Nation and a Threat to the Men: the Banning of Depo-Provera in Zimbabwe, 1981,' *Journal of Southern African Studies* 24 (2), 1998, pp. 347-376; for a description of 'the regime of strength' governing the production of gendered identities in Zimbabwe, see C. Sylvester, 'Women in Rural Producer Groups and the

it may seem that Maraire's novel does little to 'question received notions of national character and experience,' and that in this it is the exact opposite of many African women's narratives, including *Nervous Conditions*.[57] But it is, I would argue, not quite so. The seemingly confidently articulated binaries of *Zenzele* are undermined by the interference of the ambiguous and the unsaid. Their presence within the text is the most significant point of similarity between Maraire's novel and Dangarembga's.

In stark contrast to the finely wrought if understated temporal detail of *Nervous Conditions*, *Zenzele* is, when it comes to narrated time, remarkably vague. We know that Shiri received her first advice to do with men from her mother 'almost forty years' before the time of narration (*Z*, 112). At the time she meets her first love in Chakowa, she is nearly twenty (*Z*, 117). In chapter nine, we learn that Zimbabwean independence was unimaginable twenty years before the time of narration. (*Z*, 167) All this is not enough to situate the narrative precisely in temporal terms. A temporal inconsistency also serves to lift the narrative out of Bakhtinian historical time: Zenzele's sister Joy is only five years old in chapter three when Zenzele has 'burst into womanhood' (*Z*, 36), but the sister is mentioned as already in existence in chapter eleven, when Zenzele is only six. (*Z*, 179) Most importantly, the novel *refers* to historical emergence (e.g. the coming of independence) but does not *represent* it through showing the Bakhtinian personal emergence of any of the characters.

The novel tells its readers that Zenzele's mother started her narrative/letter in Harare, in a low-density suburb (formerly 'white' space), on the first day of winter (*Z*, 1); chapter eleven is meant to have been finished some hours later on the morning of the same day (*Z*, 183). The final chapter is written in Chakowa, in the evening of another day. The conventional symbolism of morning/evening overlaps with the novel's broad thematic drift. The opening two chapters place an emphasis on beginnings: Zenzele's youth and vitality, and her intention to make a new start outside Zimbabwe (these chapters do not, in fact, inform the reader reliably whether Zenzele has actually left for America yet). The last two of the novel's twelve chapters are, on the other hand, preoccupied with the ultimate questions to do with God, spirituality and death. (Significantly, they contain the only instance in the novel of two poles of a colonial binary blending: Shiri believes both in the protective power of Shona

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Diverse Politics of Truth in Zimbabwe,' in M. H. Marchand and J. L. Parpart (eds), *Feminism/Postmodernism/Development* (London, Routledge, 1999), pp. 182-203.

ancestors and in a *black* Christian God, as represented by the murals of the Cyrene mission near Bulawayo). In these chapters, the narrator intimates that her health is failing, and what at the novel's outset may have been read as a first letter to an absent daughter, acquires the overtones of a mother's final legacy. (We now also know definitely that Zenzele is gone, and has 'already started to organize among the African students' – *Z*, 190). In the words of Benaouda Lebdai: 'The letter works as a testimony and a legacy from the colonial generation to the post-colonial one.'[58]

The emphasis on the hand-over between *generations* of women signals that the narrative of *Zenzele* unfolds in what Bakhtin has called biographical time (in this it resembles the narrative of Samkange's *The Mourned One*, analysed in Chapter One). Biographical life, he says, is 'impossible outside a larger epoch, which goes beyond the limits of a single life, whose duration is represented primarily by *generations*. (...) Generations introduce completely new and extremely significant aspect into the depicted world; they introduce the contiguity of lives taking place at various times.'[59] In *Nervous Conditions*, the emphasis was on the *simultaneity* of lives. *Zenzele*, on the other hand, insists on Bakhtinian temporal contiguity, which is echoed by the *spatial* contiguity implied in Zenzele's absence from Zimbabwe. The two kinds of contiguity point at the role of the unsaid in Maraire's novel, which, I would argue, subtly but unmistakably undermines the novel's moralistic and axiological properties.

Speaking of the biographical novel, Bakhtin says: 'The events shape not the man, but his destiny.'[60] In chapter eight, Shiri describes the event which has had this kind of an effect on her biography. Her love for a young sculptor, while still a teenager in Chakowa, triggered in her a longing for displacement not unlike that felt by young Zenzele: 'So you can imagine why, in those days, I had little interest in the rugged *kopjes* of the Zimbabwean terrain. I longed to see these celestial buildings and exotic cities.' (*Z*, 119) As a result of the sculptor's death, Shiri acquires a belief that life is predetermined. (*Z*, 172) It is also only after his death that she meets and is able to marry Zenzele's nationalist father. But because her biography contains an alternative life that she chose but could not live, Shiri remains detached from his husband's view

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[57] The cited phrase is from E. Boehmer, 'Stories of Women and Mothers: Gender and Nationalism in the Early Fiction of Flora Nwapa,' in S. Nasta (ed), *Motherlands: Black Women's Writing from Africa, the Caribbean and South Asia* (London, The Women's Press, 1991), p 9.
[58] Lebdai, 'Zimbabwe and Nozipo Maraire's Beginnings,' p. 47.
[59] Bakhtin. 'The *Bildungsroman* and Its Significance,' p. 18. Emphasis in the original.
[60] *Ibid*, p. 19.

of the world, despite verbally endorsing it. She expresses this detachment through a spatial metaphor: 'I often wondered how we had come to be one when we had such disparate maps of the world.' (*Z*, 175) The 'profound alienation' (*Z*, 128) she feels just before meeting her future husband is related to the alienation she feels from the lives of her freedom-fighter sister and cousin.

In as much as it is the result of unrealised possibilities, this holding back is the result of an absence. As a young woman, Shiri has sensed the possibility of forging an unconventional biographical trajectory that she has not been able to realise: 'for me, my sculptor was the road less travelled; he was the unknown, the possible, the mysterious and the beautiful.' (*Z*, 128) In this she resembles Maiguru in *Nervous Conditions*, who tells Tambu: 'When I was in England I glimpsed for a little while the things that could have been, the things I could have done if – if – if things were – different.' (*NC*, 101) The absence, in Shiri's case, results in a certain holding back from a full endorsement of nationalist ideology: 'I am not political, as you are painfully aware (this is a source of disappointment, I know), so I cannot truly call myself a nationalist.' (*Z*, 53).

The other significant absence in *Zenzele* is, of course, the biography of Zenzele herself: in that sense, the novel's narrative does not match its title. As the daughter of an elite nationalist family, educated overseas, she represents Zimbabwe's future.[61] In her propensity to ask difficult questions (chapter three), and her 'fervent egalitarianism and sweet idealism' (*Z*, 36), she resembles a conflict-free Nyasha. In her 'ability to create the world [she] live[s] in' (*Z*, 168), she is like Tambudzai. Will she take her mother's advice? Will she return to Zimbabwe? Is her mother's depiction of her accurate, anyway? The novel does not say. *Zenzele* is not a story of emergence: it is a novel of summing up *past* change. The story of a young woman's leaving, returning, staying and becoming set *after* 1980 - a Zimbabwean female *Bildungsroman* narrating post-independence space-times – remains, as yet, unwritten. Despite the differences between them, both female-authored novels discussed in this chapter project Zimbabwean post-colonial identities as fractured, problematic and only partly narratable.

[61] It is to *this* fictional character that an adaptation of S. Z. Andrade's statement cited in footnote 49 may meaningfully be made to refer.

CHAPTER SIX.

The Ambivalent Spaces of the Liberation War: Shimmer Chinodya and Alexander Kanengoni[1]

> I think *Harvest of Thorns* is much more than a war novel. It's about... I mean, the first hundred pages are about life in the 60s in the townships and courtship and love... It goes wrong in the end, but it's... The war is just a backdrop. Even Benjamin is not really, for me... is not really a combatant. He's just a young man who gets caught up... who runs away from school, and gets caught up. And my interest in that book was to show him becoming an adolescent. And coping with adolescence. Carrying a gun and shooting people but coping with adolescence.
>
> Shimmer Chinodya[2]

> The better our command of genres, the more freely we employ them.
>
> Mikhail Bakhtin[3]

1.

In *Colonial Space*, John Noyes explains how, in a colony, the settler seizure of land and the establishment of nodal points from which it may be quantitatively transformed is the first step towards 'the establishment of a *national* spatial system.'[4] Guerrilla warfare, on the other hand, seeks to master the colonial national space in ways that the technology of colonialism cannot (at least initially) utilise.[5] In Zimbabwe, the second *Chimurenga* – the guerrilla war fought in the 1960s and 70s in Rhodesia and some adjoining countries – is thus arguably the central event in the history of modern Zimbabwe, because it led to independence with majority rule. If the history of Southern Rhodesia can be described as 'the history of land seizure and

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[1] An earlier version of this chapter was presented at the 'Versions and Subversions' conference on African literatures held in Berlin, 1-4 May 2002, and at the 'Southern Texts and Contexts' seminar, at St Antony's College, Oxford, on 7 May 2002. I am grateful to Meg Samuelson for her detailed and pertinent comments.

[2] S. Chinodya, in an interview with R. Primorac, Harare, August 2001.

[3] Bakhtin, 'The Problem of Speech Genres, 'p. 80.

[4] Noyes, *Colonial Space*, p. 128 (emphasis added).

[5] *Ibid*, p. 242.

settlement,'[6] then a key paradox of the liberation that African nationalist guerrillas achieved in 1980 is that, for two decades, it did not undo this particular spatial aspect of the colonial system of inequalities, as I discussed in Chapter Three. And if, furthermore, the processes of colonization and its intended reversal are inseparable from *displacement*, so was the manner in which the liberation war was conducted. Individuals became guerrillas by *leaving* home, *crossing into* a neighbouring country for training and crossing *back* into one of Rhodesia's eastern and north-eastern *frontier* regions, where the war was fought. As it intensified, the war appeared to assume a life and movement of its own: it '*visited* different areas of the country at different times and with various degrees of intensity.'[7] The first large-scale combat between guerrillas and government forces took place in 1966; thereafter, the unstable and shifting space of the armed struggle remained *dual* (the *rear*, in Zambia and Mozambique, and the *front*, in Rhodesia itself), *rural*[8] and *male-dominated*.[9] Ultimately, it engendered a new nation and, ironically, later, another war within its (old) borders.[10]

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In this chapter, I analyse identity construction in Shimmer Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns* and Alexander Kanengoni's *Echoing Silences*.[11] Their heroes are guerrillas and central parts of their narratives are situated in spaces containing armed conflict. I will therefore read them primarily as war novels, although this is not the only possible approach. In foregrounding the space-time of war, these novels foreground also the link between wartime identities and displacement. In the Zimbabwean context, however, the phrase 'war novel' requires some elucidation.

As a *literary theme*, the war entered Zimbabwean written fiction in a new way after 1980: only then could the armed struggle be represented in a locally-published novel

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[6] A. Verrier, *The Road to Zimbabwe 1890 – 1980* (London, Johathan Cape 1986), p. 18.
[7] I. Staunton, 'Introduction,' in I. Staunton (ed), *Mothers of the Revolution* (Harare, Baobab Books, 1990), p. xi (emphasis added).
[8] 'The war, after all, *did not reach* the towns.' T. Ranger, 'The Changing of the Old Guard: Robert Mugabe and the Revival of ZANU,' *Journal of Southern African Studies* 7 (1), 1980, p. 89 (emphasis added).
[9] See J. Nhongo-Simbanegavi, *For Better or Worse? Women and ZANLA in Zimbabwe's Liberation Struggle* (Harare, Weaver Press, 2000), and Musengezi and McCartney, *Women of Resilience*.
[10] See J. Alexander, 'Dissident Perspectives on Zimbabwe's Post-Independence War,' *Africa* 68 (2), 1998, pp. 151-182, and J. Alexander, J. McGregor and T. Ranger, *Violence & Memory: One Hundred Years in the 'Dark Forests' of Matabeleland* (Oxford, James Currey, 2000).

as a war of *liberation* rather than a series of *terrorist* attacks. Since then, dozens of Zimbabwean novels[12] have referred to it in many different ways. In Chapter Seven, I try to show that Yvonne Vera's novel *Under the Tongue* makes a statement about the space-time of war by carefully constructing a narrative *around* it. Similarly, Geoffrey Ndhlala's *The Southern Circle*, Shimmer Chinodya's *Farai's Girls*, Nozipo Maraire's *Zenzele* and Henry Mututa's *Aspirations of a Black Man* may be read as novels elaborating on reasons why their heroes and heroines do *not* join the armed struggle.[13] Alexander Kanengoni's *The Vicious Circle* and Chenjerai Hove's *Bones* concentrate on the war's social causes and effects,[14] while characters' post-independence roles in Spencer Tizora's *Crossroads* and Edmund Chipamaunga's *Chains of Freedom* are determined by the roles they played in the second *Chimurenga*.[15] William Saidi's *Gwebede's Wars* details the impact of Zimbabwe's struggle on the life of a character in independent Zambia.[16] The list could go on – and would expand even further if references to the 'dissident' war of the 1980s, or the first *Chimurenga*, were included.

In this chapter, however, I do not treat 'the war' as a thematic, but as a spatio-temporal category. I will therefore *not* take into consideration novels such as those mentioned above, but will, instead, read Chinodya's and Kanengoni's texts against the background of other novels/novellas whose chronotopes contain *a space-time inhabited by armed combatants and/or those training to be combatants in the Second Chimurenga*. It is to that kind of text/space-time that I will apply the expressions 'the war novel' and 'the space-time of war.' Apart from *Harvest of Thorns* and *Echoing Silences*, I would name eleven other war novels and novellas in English, written by male and female, black and white authors, and published between 1982 and 2002. They are: *A Fighter for Freedom* by Edmund Chipamaunga, *Woman in Struggle* by Irene Ropa Rinopfuka Mahamba, *Karima* by T. O. McLoughlin, *The Contact*, *The*

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[11] S. Chinodya, *Harvest of Thorns* (Harare, Baobab Books 1995 [1989]) and A. Kanengoni, *Echoing Silences* (Harare, Baobab Books, 1997). Subsequent references to the two novels are to these editions and will be cited in the text, where their titles will be abbreviated as *HT* and *ES* respectively.
[12] The comments that follow are limited to those written in English.
[13] G. Ndhlala, *The Southern Circle* (Harlow, Longman, 1984); S. Chinodya, *Farai's Girls* (Harare, College Press, 1997 [1984]); Maraire, *Zenzele*; H. Mututa, *Aspirations of a Black Man* (Harare, The Literature Bureau, 1995).
[14] A. Kanengoni, *Vicious Circle* (Harare, College Press, 1985 [1983]); Hove, *Bones*.
[15] S. Tizora, *Crossroads* (Gweru, Mambo Press, 1989 [1985]); E. O. Z. Chipamaunga, *Chains of Freedom* (Harare, Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1998).
[16] W. Saidi, *Gwebede's Wars* (Harare, College Press, 1996 [1989]).

Bridge and *Mavhondo* by Garikai Mutasa, Kanengoni's *When the Rainbird Cries*, *Silent Journey from the East* by Isheunesu Mazorodze, *Pawns* by Charles Samupindi, *Kandaya* by Angus Shaw and *The Stone Virgins* by Yvonne Vera.[17]

Although they are thematically and structurally varied, these texts share broad chronotopic similarities. If we accept Bakhtin's definition of a genre as a *relatively stable* type of utterance,[18] and his statement, quoted in Chapter One, that novelistic chronotopes have an intrinsic generic significance, then they may be seen as articulations of a specifically Zimbabwean novelistic macro-genre, within which various European generic models are appropriated and transformed (I return to this in section four). In all of them, the space-time of war straddles at least one colonially-imposed spatial boundary (between 'black' and 'white,' Rhodesian and non-Rhodesian or rural and urban spaces). The Zimbabwean novelistic space-time of war is, furthermore, circumscribed on the one hand by the *non-militarised* spaces of everyday life, and on the other by the temporal segments of heroes' lives which precede their participation in the war and/or come after it. The novelistic space-time of war is an *extra-ordinary* and non-permanent spatio-temporal location: inhabiting it entails difficulty and danger, and characters that do so acquire non-ordinary identities and, often, names. Its very existence implies the possibility of a specific, *transformative* kind of *spatio-timporal circling* of characters: the possibility, that is, of leaving the civilian space-time of *Rhodesia*, entering the space-time of war, and returning, as the space-time of war dissolves, into a new world of liberated *Zimbabwe*.

The settler-authored war novels published there before 1980 – novels mentioned in Chapter One and based on the Rhodesian chronotope, such as Peter Stiff's *The Rain Goddess*, Robert Early's *A Time of Madness* and Lloyd Burton's *The Yellow Mountain* - saw the space-time of war as a zone of contact between the forces of order and civilisation introduced by Europeans and the threat posed to them by native savagery and Communism. As Chapter One explains, these novels were intended

[17] Chipamaunga, *A Fighter for Freedom*; Mahamba, *Woman in Struggle*; McLoughlin, *Karima*; Mutasa, *The Contact* (Gweru, Mambo Press 1990 [1985]) and *The Bridge (Two Novellas)*; A. Kanengoni, *When the Rainbird Cries* (Harare, Longman Zimbabwe, 1996 [1987]); I. V. Mazorodze, *Silent Journey from the East* (Harare, Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1989); C.Samupindi, *Pawns* (Harare, Baobab Books, 1992); Shaw, *Kandaya*; Y. Vera, *The Stone Virgins* (Harare, Weaver Press, 2002).

primarily for the entertainment and encouragement of settler readers who, in the 1970s, needed to be reassured that the Rhodesian political and social status quo would be maintained. They therefore construct the space-time of war as a location of *resistance* to *externally*-induced *change*. The thirteen post-1980 texts I am looking at in this chapter, on the other hand, all share the broad assumption that the guerrilla war was just, and that the change it sought to bring about was *an improvement*. In spatio-temporal terms, then, the ultimate purpose of the space-time of war in these texts is for it to cancel itself out by creating – through the spatio-temporal circling of *insiders*, as described above - a *national* space with a *changed* identity.

The heroes and heroines of post-independence war novels enter into four types of encounters and relationships: those with the *enemy soldiers* (typically, episodes narrating 'contacts' or describing the mind-set of 'the other side'), with members of their *own* military side (e.g. episodes to do with training, political faction-fighting, or relationships among soldiers), with civilians (common motifs are the punishing of a traitor and securing civilian co-operation) and with the world of ancestral spirits (e.g. the motif of consulting a spirit medium). In individual texts, these relationships are, of course, specifically semantically configured;[19] it is the aim of this chapter to (re)construct identities emerging from their interconnectedness in the space-times outlined in Chinodya and Kanengoni.

Since 1980, critical evaluation of Zimbabwean novels has sometimes been based on the manner in which they relate to the war as a subject matter. Texts have been accused of not engaging with the war sufficiently,[20] or ideologically correctly;[21] some have been relegated to the status of 'sociological documents.'[22] In such a context *Harvest of Thorns* and *Echoing Silences* are unique in the degree of international recognition they have achieved. Both novels have been published in the Heinemann

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[18] Bakhtin, 'The Problem of Speech Genres,' p. 60.

[19] The most obvious feature of this specificity is that, in their actual realisations, the abstract character types enumerated above are, of course, always gendered. The interplay between space-time, ideology, genre and gender in the Zimbabwean war novel deserves a paper in its own right. In the present chapter, I can touch on it only in passing.

[20] See Zhuwarara's remarks on *Farai's Girls* in 'Zimbabwean Fiction in English.'

[21] See Mzamane on Marechera in 'New Writing from Zimbabwe,' Zimunya on Marechera in *Those Years of Drought and Hunger*, Veit-Wild on Hove in '"Dances with Bones"' and Chivaura on Chinodya and McLoughlin in 'Zimbabwean Literature in English.'

[22] P. Kaarsholm, 'Quiet After the Storm,' p. 192. The cited phrase refers to novels by Mutasa and Chipamaunga.

African Writers series (*Harvest of Thorns* in 1990, *Echoing Silences* in 1998); *Harvest of Thorns* won the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Africa Region in 1990. While avoiding explicit value judgements, this chapter hopes to contribute to the range of realised readings (and therefore possible evaluations) of Zimbabwean war novels. Section two below concentrates on *Harvest of Thorns*, and section three on *Echoing Silences.* Section four sets them both against the background of other Zimbabwean war novels and links the issues of narrative space-time and identity with those of genre and gender. I have, of course, also consulted other works by Chinodya and Kanengoni: the chronotopic continuities I establish are pointed out in the appropriate sections.

2.

Harvest of Thorns narrates the life of its central character, Benjamin Tichafa, from birth to the birth of his son, which symbolically closes a cycle of family events when Benjamin is 20 years old. The central part of Benjamin's experience is as a guerrilla in the war of liberation. Events related to the war are contained in the third part of the novel, which takes up roughly half of its length. Compositionally and in terms of narrated time, Benjamin's stint as a guerrilla is framed by the narration of the key events of his childhood and youth and, preceding that, of his parents' courtship and early life together (part three);[23] also by events following his return from the war (parts one and four). The symmetry of the novel's composition is echoed by that of its narrative structure: its two intertwined plot lines tell the story of the constitution, dissolution and reconstitution of a family, and of that family's eldest son starting a family of his own.[24] (It will be seen that these are concerns central to Chinodya's entire opus). Stylistically transparent and filled with meticulously observed detail, *Harvest of Thorns* has provided historians and social scientists with illustrations of

[23] The two sub-sections of part three are separated by a sharp change of narrative focus in chapter eleven.

[24] Chinodya's narrative technique is discussed by Veit-Wild in *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers*, pp. 321-329, and by A. Calder in 'The New Zimbabwe Writing and Chimurenga,' *Wasafiri*, 22, 1995, pp. 35-42.

aspects of social life in Rhodesia and Zimbabwe from the 1950s to the 80s.[25] Terence Ranger has called it 'the first of the realistic novels about the war.'[26]

This chapter argues that *Harvest of Thorns* is also a *Bildungsroman*. In stating this, I differ from Flora Veit-Wild, who rejects this possibility largely because of the series of contingencies contained in the part of the plot relating the circumstances of Benjamin's joining the war. In contrast to her argument – that Chinodya's hero 'does not resemble the hero of the classic Bildungsroman who, working his way up in society, comes to a clearer understanding of himself and the world'[27] - I would maintain that Benjamin *does* in fact arrive at such an understanding, and that in this he is not opposed to, but *resembles* the heroine of Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, whose path to self-awareness I discussed in the previous chapter. On the personal plane, the son of fundamentalist Christians and an inhibited boarding-school student becomes the father of a family who confidently stands up to his own father ('I can say anything I want anywhere. You have to admit your mistakes.' *HT*, 264). Politically, the boy who wonders about the meaning of the phrase 'son of the soil' (*HT*, 99), and later joins the guerrillas because he has *nowhere else to go*, grows into a guerrilla who understands that there is '*no other way but this*' (*HT*, 148; italics in the original), and delivers, in Chapter 34, a monologue about the war's nature and meaning which lends the book's final chapters a slightly didactic air. *Harvest of Thorns* is, I would argue, a story of both personal and national *emergence*.

As I indicated in my discussion of *Nervous Conditions*, 'emergence' is a key concept in M. M. Bakhtin's typology of the *Bildungsroman* and related novelistic genres. It is true that Chinodya's novel contains – as Veit-Wild has noticed – elements of arbitrariness in plotting, and is thus connected to what Bakhtin calls the novel of ordeal, and also, differently, to the biographical novel. What distinguishes it from those types, and puts it firmly in connection with the *Bildungsroman* and the realist novel is the decisive component of *becoming*.[28] Bakhtin explains that, in the

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[25] See, for example, Nhongo-Simbanegavi, *For Better or Worse?* and T. Burke, *Lifebuoy Men, Lux Women: Commodification, Consumption and Cleanliness in Modern Zimbabwe* (London, Leicester University Press, 1996). The verisimilitude of *Harvest of Thorns* is discussed by R. Moyana, 'Literature & Liberation.'

[26] T. Ranger, 'The Fruits of The Baobab: Irene Staunton and the Zimbabwean Novel,' *Journal of Southern African Studies* 25 (4), 1999, p. 699.

[27] See Veit-Wild, *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers*, pp. 324-5.

[28] See Bakhtin, 'The *Bildungsroman* and Its Significance,' p. 20 *ff.*

historically most significant type of *Bildungsroman*, this becoming is twofold: a man's personal emergence is inseparably linked to historical emergence. 'It is no longer man's own private affair. He emerges *along with the world* and he reflects the historical emergence of the world itself. He is no longer within an epoch, but on the border between two epochs, at the transition point from one to another.'[29] This is an exact description of *Harvest of Thorns*: Chinodya's novel constructs the figure of '*man growing in national-historical time.*'[30]

It is significant that, unlike in the previous chapter, where I applied the Bakhtinian concept of *Bildungsroman* to *Nervous Conditions*, in this case the personal pronoun used by Bakhtin fits the gender of the protagonist of the Zimbabwean narrative I am discussing. In addition to that, and in further contrast to *Nervous Conditions*, *Harvest of Thorns* narrates the *entire* process of its protagonist's personal becoming. In this respect, Chinodya's novel is closer than Dangarembga's to the European type of *Bildungsroman* that Bakhtin is describing. However – and this is the main thrust of this section – *Harvest of Thorns* also establishes a degree of semantic tension between the two kinds of becoming that Bakhtin talks about, the public and the private. This tension is linked to the ambivalence that marks the space-time of war in this novel, and this ambivalence, in turn, separates *Harvest of Thorns* from the rest of Chinodya's opus.

Here it becomes necessary to state that the space-time of *personal* emergence plays a part also in Chinodya's early novels, *Dew in the Morning* and *Farai's Girls*.[31] Chinodya's entire opus deals with aspects of male transition towards maturity, narrated from male points of view.[32] In relational terms, 'maturity' in a Chinodya novel entails increasing the degree of independence from one's parents/nuclear family and approaching/establishing sexual relationships with women. (In *Dew in the Morning* and *Harvest of Thorns* it also means coming face to face with the supernatural - the world of ancestral spirits). In *spatio-temporal* terms, it always

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[29] *Ibid*, p. 23. Emphasis in the original.
[30] *Ibid*, p. 25. Emphasis in the original.
[31] Chinodya, *Dew in the Morning* and *Farai's Girls*.
[32] In that sense, it is true that women play 'secondary roles' in his work (see Gunner, 'Power, Popular Consciousness, and the Fictions of War,' p. 83.) The heroes struggle, but often fail, to turn them into dialogic partners. When I interviewed Chinodya in Harare in August 2001, I put it to him that his characters seem obsessed with 'girls.' He answered that their key difficulty is not knowing *what to say* to them. His latest book is titled *Can We Talk.*

involves *leaving home*: the first sentence of *Dew in the Morning* describes the hero's *arrival* in his family *second* home in the country; in *Farai's Girls*, the hero goes to boarding school; in *Harvest of Thorns*, Benjamin's mother leaves a 'native reserve' to live in town with her husband, and Benjamin leaves the township to go to boarding school, and then to war.[33]

All of this means that, in a Chinodya novel, the passage of time is always linked to a widening perception of physical space. As they leave home, the male heroes of his narratives enter into *exceptional* spaces containing provisional, parallel societies, in which they acquire new identities. In *Dew in the Morning*, the village which the hero visits during school holidays is such a space, inhabited by both locals *and* newcomers, villagers *and* uprooted townspeople, state officials ('agricultural demonstrators') *and* witches, ghosts and spirits. Most of *Farai's Girls* takes place in various kinds of boarding schools, spaces neither adults' nor children's, neither urban nor rural, and demarcated most strongly along gender lines (e.g. boys' and girls' hostels). Because these are liminal spaces, they entail the potential for conflict; inhabiting them, for the heroes, means growth, but the outcome of that growth is uncertain.[34] It is clear to the characters that they are merely *passing through* them, but they do not know what awaits them in the future. The space-time of personal emergence is, in Cinodya, *always* linked to ambivalence. In *Harvest of Thorns*, however, the ambivalence of the space-time of war is amplified by its double function: a new man emerges from it simultaneously with a new nation. In Bakhtin's words, the national transition is accomplished 'in him and through him.'[35] In the words of Chinodya himself, quoted at the outset, Benjamin is 'carrying a gun and shooting people, but coping with adolescence.' In keeping with this, in the space-time of war, the hero of *Harvest of Thorns* acquires a new identity and a new name:

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[33] In *Child of War*, the children's novel Chinodya wrote under the name Ben Chirasha, the youthful hero leaves his rural home in order to live in a cave with freedom fighters for a while; in the short story 'The March,' a group of boys leaves their boarding school before dawn. Walking towards the city, they find themselves 'in the middle of nowhere.' See B. Chirasha, *Child of War* (London, Macmillan Press, 1991 [1985]); S. Chinodya, 'The March' in *The March and Other Pieces: Literature Bureau Workshop Anthology* (Harare, Longman in association with the Literature Bureau, 1983), p. 9. It is worth pointing out that Chinodya's opus as a whole does *not* equate 'home,' the place of origin of the process of maturing, with '*rural* family seat' or *musha*.

[34] *Can We Talk and Other Stories* (Harare, Baobab Books, 1998) retains, as a collection, the principle of spatial widening, but questions for the first time the assumption that maturing equals personal growth.

[35] Bakhtin, ' The *Bildungsroman* and Its Significance,' p. 23.

Benjamin Tichafa becomes the guerrilla Pasi Nema Sellout.[36] I would argue that in part three of *Harvest of Thorns*, the two co-exist.

The 'public' aspect of war-time emergence brings about another difference between the early novels and *Harvest of Thorns*. In the latter, the space-time of emergence is firmly bounded, and the boundary is difficult and dangerous to cross: seventeen-year old Benjamin has to overcome a series of obstacles. His initiation into maturity is therefore more sharply separated from the rest of his life than in Chinodya's other narratives. As he takes a train and then a bus towards the border with Mozambique, he clings to 'civilian' space-time. 'He let the minutes slip from him, yet clung desperately to every second. He envied the people who had things to do and places to go to.' (*HT*, 111) After being questioned at a roadblock, he finds himself on no-man's land in the mountainside at night, gets caught up in a firefight and ends up at a guerrilla base. This is where he has wanted to be, but once in Mozambique, Benjamin loses his grip on space-time: 'his sense of time was disoriented' (*HT*, 120); when he tells the commander that he had been 'coming here,' he is asked to define 'here.' (*HT*, 122)

Acquiring a new, guerrilla identity requires a new understanding of space and time: before being re-born as a combatant, he is made to wait aimlessly in a dark, underground, womb-like (*HT*, 121) tunnel. There, he reflects on his identity with relation to physical space ('Where was he now and why was he where he was? Who was he to be here, in this pit?' - *HT*, 124) and also on his past life ('Who would have thought a week before he would end up here?' – *Ibid.*). But following his initiation into the space-time of war, his relationships with family members are suspended. For war purposes, they are irrelevant. The relationships, which define his status as a guerrilla are towards the enemy, fellow combatants, and to civilians in the operational areas, once back in Rhodesia. It is therefore appropriate that he is asked to state his identity – the startling question 'Who are you,' spoken repeatedly in the night by a disembodied voice – on two occasions in the third section of the novel: once on the dark mountainside by an anonymous guerrilla pointing a gun at him (*HT*, 118-119); the second time by an anonymous villager whom *he* is pointing a gun at in the dark. (*HT*, 192) On both occasions, answers are superfluous: war-time identities

[36] *Cf Echoing Silences*, in which the hero retains his 'civilian' name throughout.

are finally decided on by the person holding the gun. For the trembling peasant *and* the novel's omniscient narrator, he is, once within the space-time of war, a new person: the freedom fighter whose name means Down-with-traitors.[37]

But the civilian identity of Benjamin Tichafa[38] does not disappear: it is merely submerged, and it is precisely this *doubleness* that makes *Harvest of Thorns* unique within Chinodya's opus. It surfaces in the brief chapters 20, 27 and 32 containing Benjamin's unspoken thoughts addressed to family members. Significantly, Pasi thinks of himself as Benjamin in the episode where he loses his virginity to a fellow combatant – one in a string of 'girls' he meets during the war. (*HT*, 243) Despite the larger business of war in which he is involved, Benjamin shares with the heroes of *Dew in the Morning* and *Farai's Girls* the preoccupation with his own sexual maturing and the changing relationship with family members – even though they are irrelevant for the war's outcome.[39]

In addition to this, the tension between the two parallel processes – one central to the individual, the other to the nation – is underscored by the episodes in which there are pointed changes of style and narrative focus. In chapter seventeen (describing physical and political training novice guerrillas receive in a camp in Mozambique), the narrative voice switches from the third person to a de-personalised 'you' ('Days passed and weeks passed and your body steeled with running.' – *HT*, 130).[40] In chapter 21, the guerrillas' presence in Rhodesia is registered through the eyes of a series of characters they encounter: an old woman in the bush, a local businessman, a foreman on a white-owned farm. In the following chapter, Pasi Nema Sellout listens to a *pungwe* - a night-time meeting between the guerrillas and the villagers – from a tree where he is keeping guard, and records events as he *hears*, rather than *sees* them. The opening section of chapter 26 recounts the events of a battle between Pasi's group of guerrillas and Rhodesian soldiers as they are told by a multitude of speculating, myth-making peasant voices. Unlike the chapters written from Pasi's

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[37] I am grateful to Ben Chibisa and Paul Danisa for helping me translate the Shona names and words in *Harvest of Thorns* and *Echoing Silences*.

[38] The levelling-out symbolism of the family name – 'we will die' seems in ironic contrast with the exclusiveness of Benjamin's war name.

[39] In an interview with Veit-Wild in 1990, Chinodya also stressed his interest in Benjamin's private development. See Veit-Wild, *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers*, p. 321.

[40] For a discussion of this section, see Veit-Wild, *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers*, pp. 326-328. Yvonne Vera uses a similar technique in an analogous context in chapter nine of *The Stone Virgins*.

point of view (for example, his reaction to the death of a *prospective lover* in chapter nineteen, or the meeting with another in chapter 29), these episodes have a *distancing* effect: readers cannot always be sure what happened, or how the hero views it. In this novel, national and personal emergence are not entirely complementary processes.

The point, however, at which ambivalence threatens to turn into internal and external conflict, and the source of most doubt on Pasi Nema Sellout's part, is the episode when he is asked to kill a village woman who had been found hiding a walkie-talkie in her hut, by striking her to death with a root. The act is deliberately cruel and he resents having been made to do it: the woman had reminded him of his mother. In a stream of consciousness addressed to his mother, he – that is, *Benjamin* - draws a distinction between killing in battle and killing a civilian: '*it's different if it's a blast a hundred metres away or it's somebody at the bottom of the hill whose face you don't know and can't see but if it's one of you then it's different.*' (*HT*, 217; italics in the original) This episode becomes a source of tension among the guerrillas of Pasi's unit. (*HT*, chapter 28) But the group does *not* split (although there are disputes among them that remain unresolved, and questions that remain unanswered – e.g. what to do about informing a *mujibha*'s family about their son's death - *HT*, 250), and the novel's hero does *not* develop a split personality. The woman, *was*, after all, collaborating with the police. The unanswered questions, the ambivalence of his war-time identity, the contingencies related to his joining the war referred to earlier, and the parallelism between him and the Rhodesian soldier he cannot bring himself to kill in chapter 33 are enough to undermine any binary oppositions along the lines of 'war heroes' vs. 'sell-outs' that readers might attempt to bring to this text. But despite all this, the text finishes on a note of optimism, inseparable from the fact that the space-time of war is, for the novel's hero, the space-time of becoming a man.

In part four, as the new man emerges from the war into the space-time of the new nation, his relationship to home and the people in it has changed, but the ambivalence persists. The Rhodesian chronotope he had left behind has suffered no essential alterations: after his risking his life crossing one colonial boundary (i.e. into Mozambique), back in his home town Benjamin finds intact another: his family still lives in a township, and he still looks at the opulent suburbs (now, however housing also some black inhabitants – e.g. 'the new, black mayor'), from the window of a

crowded omnibus. (*HT,* pp.6 – 8) His family has reconstituted and extended itself, but he 'has no job or house of his own yet.' (*HT,* 277) Benjamin has returned from the war having successfully accomplished the important task of becoming an adult man. What kind of a public 'adulthood' - independence - he has helped to bring about is not so clear. The novel's concluding sentence ('He tells himself he'll do it' – *Ibid.*) focuses resolutely on the individual and refuses to generalise, thus allowing the individual to become emblematic of the national. Yet the ambivalence established in part three resonates in the name of Benjamin's newly born son. 'Zvenyika' can mean 'about the country,' or simply 'politics.' At the end of *Harvest of Thorns*, Zvenyika's future, and that of his land, remains unknown.

Chinodya is on the record as stating that Zimbabwean writers practice self-censorship. In an interview published in 1993, he said: 'I think with the war some of our writers got into trouble doing certain books. It's up to us to be subtle. (...) We ought to be so clever that people don't realise what we are doing, how we are criticising.'[41] In an interview with me, eight years later, he used more direct and emotional language in explaining the pressures on writers in the early years of independence.[42] Withholding the articulation of public emergence in *Harvest of Thorns* may be read as a technique of political subtlety, executed through the manipulation of genre.

3.

On his return home from the war in *Harvest of Thorns*, Benjamin tells his mother: 'I'm clean. There are no vengeful spirits after me.' (*HT*, 9) He is able to say this truthfully, despite the fear of one his comrades that the spirit of the village woman killed as 'a sellout' might pursue them, and bring them bad luck. (*HT*, 226) Central to the structure of Kanengoni's *Echoing Silences* is the fact that its hero, the former guerrilla Munashe Mungate, *is* pursued by the spirit of a woman branded a 'sellout' he has been forced to kill. Like Chinodya's novel, *Echoing Silences* contains a wealth

[41] J. Waddington, interview with Shimmer Chinodya, *South African Review of Books* 5 (4), 1993, p. 18.

[42] 'You don't know what we went through in the late 80s. Some f****** professor would stand in front of us, and say, "This is not ideologically correct. This style is good but it's not ideologically correct." ' Chinodya's angry remark is a literary practitioner's reaction to the critical separation of 'form' and 'content' discussed in Chapter Two. When asked to give an example of such an 'ideologically correct' professor, he named a prominent Zimbabwean mimetic critic but asked me not to publish the name.

of factual information.[43] In other respects, however, the two texts could not be more different.

Munashe's killing of the 'traitor' and her child in a guerrilla base in Mozambique is described on the opening pages of *Echoing Silences*. The woman is the wife of a participant in a rebellion against the political and military leadership of Robert Mugabe's ZANU/PF party and ZANLA, the party's guerrilla army. She herself is neither a guerrilla nor a politician; Munashe does not know about the revolt and his existence is not threatened by it. The key sentence describing the event is: 'There was nothing (...) to understand.' (*ES*, 2) This sentence appears, in similar contexts, in other texts by Kanengoni: the short stories 'The Black Christ of Musami' and 'Things We'd Rather Not Talk About,' and an earlier war novel, *When the Rainbird Cries*.[44] Like *Echoing Silences*, *When the Rainbird Cries* describes the loss of civilian and combatant lives resulting from guerrilla leadership divisions. Both novels use the technique of 'flashbacks.' In doing so, however, they imbue the temporal implication of the technique - the continuing presence of the past in the present - with widely differing meanings. While the hero of *Rainbird* sees the past as unfolding 'evenly, very neatly' behind him,[45] Munashe experiences it very differently.

Echoing Silences is divided into three parts. Its frame story contains events arranged chronologically and unfolding in a matter of days. After independence, Munashe, an accounting clerk and a former combatant, breaks down at work under the weight of war memories and is taken home to his wife (part one); they go to his rural home, where family members gather for a possession ceremony during which an ancestral spirit seeks a solution to the problem (part two). In part three, Munashe and family members travel to the distant village which is the home of the woman he has killed during the war. After another possession ceremony, Munashe is found dead at the foot of Mount Nyangani. Within that frame, the text contains, in a series of flashbacks, episodes from Munashe's past life. Because they are numerous,

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[43] See T. Ranger. 'Introduction,' in A. Kanengoni, *Echoing Silences* (Oxford, Heinemann, 1998), pp. v-viii.

[44] See A. Kanengoni, *Effortless Tears* (Harare, Baobab Books, 1993), pp. 44, 58, and *When the Rainbird Cries*, pp. 90, 104. In *Echoing Silences*, the phrase is repeated on pp. 47 and 83, establishing a parallel between war and spirit possession. Other key phrases threaded through Kanengoni's opus are 'effortless tears' and 'septic wounds.'

interconnected and non-chronological, and because their presence is not indicated by breaks in the text, their effect is disconcerting and disorientating.[46] This is particularly true of part one, in which the first 29 pages are composed entirely of flashbacks and flashbacks-within-flashbacks, all referring to the war: the episode of 'the traitor' (the woman with the baby on her back),[47] itself told through separate fragments. (*Cf ES*, 1,19) This memory leads to other *fragmented* memories: of Munashe's journey to the front (*ES*, 4, 8), of a comrade named Bazooka (*ES*, 7,15), of a surprise attack once back in Rhodesia (*ES*, 9 – 15), of a sympathetic section commander (*ES*, 17, 19), of an Irish priest who inspired Munashe at school (*ES*, 18) and of another comrade, named Sly (*ES*, 23 – 27). It is the readers' job to assemble the fragments and make spatio-temporal sense out of them.

Although this technique is reminiscent of European modernism, in this novel, a 'flashback' is not a deliberate mental act, nor does it function as an aspect of novelistic form of expression designed to simulate the haphazard working of an individual mind which otherwise exists in linear space-time. For Munashe, there is nothing metaphoric about being pursued by the ghosts of war. The repeated return of the woman with the baby on her back is literal: he is being plagued by a *ngozi*, an angry spirit on an unjustly killed person, seeking revenge. In this novel, unlike in Hove's *Ancestors*, the world of the supernatural intervenes in the world of the living with extreme violence. The result of this intervention is a *deformation* of space-time inhabited by a living person. Munashe is forced not merely to remember but to re-live spatio-temporal sequences from the war; and since most of the novel adopts his viewpoint,[48] the reader is forced to go through the same process:

> As always, it began with the cry of a baby somewhere – perhaps in his mind – and he instinctively reached for the bottle of sedatives in his

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[45] Kanengoni, *When the Rainbird Cries*, p. 5.

[46] This is discussed by F. Johnson Chalamanda in the review of *Echoing Silences*, in *Exile & African Literature*, 22, pp. 140-144.

[47] The Zimbabwean novel's other woman with a baby on her back victimised by the war is, of course, Mazvita in Yvonne Vera's *Without a Name*. The novel is discussed in the following chapter.

[48] Although most of the novel adopts Munashe's point of view, it is, in fact, told by an omniscient narrative voice ('If he had been at the camp on the previous night, he would have heard the abnormally agitated security officer argue with the base commander over what should be done with the baby' – *ES*, 2), which occasionally veers away from Munashe in order to adopt the viewpoint of other characters ('*Amai* Taurayi saw her husband moving in circles around his car, gesticulating to himself, occasionally kicking the car with his foot and she was happy she was not there to listen to his grumbling and then she pushed him out of her mind and turned and looked at *vatete* Nyagazi' – *ES*, 89).

> pocket – but he knew it was hopeless. The baby continued to cry and the sound drew nearer. He thought of his wife in Sakubva as he staggered to the door of his office and wobbled down the narrow corridor jostling people as he passed, his eyes glazed. (...) The manager leapt up from his chair but he did not realize that the walls of Munashe's mind had already fallen in. *The woman stopped digging and unstrapped the shrilling baby from her back. Munashe could see the weals through her torn blouse and he looked away.* (*ES*, 1 – italics added).

The novel's text thus inhabits a nightmarish maze of spatio-temporal tunnels, cutting across chronologically experienced space-time and connecting its distant sections on the basis of association and similarity. Munashe *cannot* stay in the narrative present; he *has no identity* outside this convoluted space-time. Continuous returns to the space-time of war have become a part of his being. 'War' thus becomes for him an ontological category: a mode of existing. As it gradually engulfs his existence ('Munashe's nightmares spilled into his waking hours' – *ES*, 38), it *obliterates* the temporal boundary between pre- and post- independence times, so carefully established and strongly compositionally underscored in *Harvest of Thorns*. By the end of *Echoing Silences*, characters who have witnessed the two possession ceremonies have been forced to share some of Munashe's most traumatic experiences. As for the readers, those who choose to painstakingly assemble Munashe's experiences in chronological order will notice that the novel in fact contains all the elements of a complete life-story, including accounts of Munashe's childhood, schooling and marriage (e.g. *ES*, 39-43, 62-4, 74-5). Their ordering in the text, however, eliminates from it any idea of personal *emergence* in the sense of linear progress.

By the same token, the novel removes a sense of positive change (the Bakhtinian national emergence) from the very concept of 'independence.' I have tried to show that in *Harvest of Thorns* Benjamin's choices – no matter how haphazard – lead to an adult male identity. Munashe's trauma is caused by the war *forcing* certain identities (e.g. of sellout or executioner) on characters, *at the expense of* others (e.g. husband, worker). After the war, his younger brother taunts Munashe about his inability to play the traditional 'manly' roles, filling him with a 'sense of inadequacy.' (*ES*, 59) War has the same effect on women: in part two, Kudzai, a female guerrilla loses child-bearing ability after being repeatedly raped by a male senior ('I no longer menstruate

and I am not pregnant. Menopause at twenty!' - *ES*, 56). In this novel, members of both genders have their lives irreparably disrupted and in this they find a shared identity: they are co-sufferers, not 'opposite' sexes as in Chinodya. Munashe, like Benjamin, meets young women in the course of the war but he is not able to have a lasting relationship, or a child, with any of them.

I have said that disparate episodes from the war are, in part one, connected on the basis of association and similarity. The main link between them is the repetition of the motif of a 'sellout.' Apart from the woman with the baby on her back, this label becomes associated with: Munashe (for being educated), Bazooka (for being 'a witch'), the survivors of a Rhodesian attack (for surviving), section commander Tonderayi (for not being like other commanders), the guerrilla Sly (for deserting) and a black Rhodesian soldier (for joining the Rhodesian army). They are opposed neither to the *military* enemy (Munashe has no qualms about killing white soldiers and feels 'cleansed' afterwards – *ES*, 28) nor to civilians (in part one there is evidence that the guerrillas are supported by both villagers and ancestral spirits), but to '*commanders* with the capacity to hold life in their open palms and stare down at it' (*ES*, 15, emphasis added) and the unnamed party leaders *in the rear. Echoing Silences* does not merely relativise the us/them division: it firmly redraws it. This novel is concerned with those for whom the space-time of war is not redeemed by personal growth, but is the location of irreparable loss.

In the second section of the novel, the group of 'sellouts'/victims widens: it now includes Kudzai and Lizwe, a combatant disabled in the post-independence clashes between ZAPU and ZAPU, 'opposing factions (...) *on the same side* of the war' (*ES*, 65, emphasis added). By now, through sheer numbers and repetition, this group of characters has assumed a quasi-allegorical quality: the implication is that they are *types*, and that there are more people like them. Simultaneously, the notion of 'war' has been extended to the post-independence ZANU/ZAPU conflict (*ES*, 62-4), and the statement 'There was something *fundamentally wrong* with the way the war was being conducted' (*ES*, 52 – emphasis added) is allowed to reverberate with the implication that the *wrongness* did not simply disappear after independence. For the

Shona, the appearance of a *ngozi* is a consequence of unjust and *evil* acts:[49] This novel unequivocally points at the war of *national liberation* as a source of evil. It locates the evil in *deliberate* acts of violence against the helpless. In this novel, unlike in *Harvest of Thorns*, the war takes on the dimensions of a *morally compromised* process: by enforcing identities incompatible with civilian space-time it ultimately distorts the very chronotopic fabric of the universe.

Part two explains how Munashe (the literal translation of his name is 'in-God') came to consciously side with the 'sellouts': he 'made the shameless resolution that, come what may, the war that he was going to fight would be for no one else but Kudzai and the other woman with the crying baby on her back.' (*ES*, 72) The central paradox of Munashe's identity, however – and the reason why he is haunted by the *ngozi* – is that, apart from being a victim, he is also a perpetrator. Similarly, the chronotope of war is marked not only by violence: there is also – and therein lies its ambivalence in *this* novel - almost gratuitously, love, solidarity and kindness, such as that between Munashe and Kudzai, or between Munashe and the Rhodesian Army rifleman who saves his life against all war-time logic. After independence, Munashe meets and is helped by the man again, only to learn that he was in fact killed before independence. The episode – recounted in similar form in Kangngoni's short story 'The black Christ of Musami'[50] - indicates the existence in the novel of the world of the *benevolently* supernatural. In parts two and three, this world intervenes on Munashe's behalf.

In part two, Munashe's flashbacks are guided by the possession ceremony in which he participates: the revered spirit of the family, the lioness Manhokwe, speaks through his aunt, and, by looking into Munashe's past, directs the telling of it, thus imposing some order on the spatio-temporal structure of his existence ('"There is another woman that I keep seeing. Who is she?"' - *ES*, 66). Zimbabwean novels differ in their semantic constructions of the ritual of spirit possession: in chapter 31 of *Harvest of Thorns*, the guerrillas consult a spirit medium and Benjamin receives his first *nyora* (ritual incisions), but remains uninvolved with the ceremony and

[49] See, for example, P. Reynolds, *Traditional Healers and Childhood in Zimbabwe* (Athens, Ohio; Ohio University Press, 1996), esp. chapters two, four and five.
[50] See Kanengoni, *Effortless Tears*.

uncommitted as to its meaning.[51] In *Echoing Silences*, the ritual unfolds as a kind of combat: Manhokwe is 'nature fighting against nature' (*ES*, 57) – the protector spirit of the family challenging Munashe's *ngozi*. At the height of the battle, the two realms of existence – the world of the living and the awesome realm of the supernatural – come into direct and deliberately provoked contact: the ceremonial drummer 'knew from his vast experience of facilitating communication between people *of this world* and *that other beyond the sky* that the ceremony was about to reach its climax and explode: *the two worlds* were about to *collide*.' (*ES*, 76 – emphasis added) The collision has been brought about so that Munashe and his family may be cleansed of the malevolent influence of the *ngozi* – and the tension between space-time as experienced by Munashe and the other characters might cease. During the ceremony, the *nogzi* manifests itself to all present as Munashe becomes possessed by the spirit of the woman he has killed. But although action must be taken to appease it – the woman demands to be taken home – Manhokwe pointedly lays no blame on Munashe. (*ES*, 66)

In the novel's third part, a similar collision is accompanied by a multiple inversion. The second possession ceremony is held in a village at the foot of Nyangani mountain in Zimbabwe's Eastern Highlands, where Munashe's family has travelled from rural Mhondoro, to the south of Harare. When, in phrases reminiscent of *Harvest of Thorns*, they are asked to state their identity ('"Who are you? Where do you come from? What do you want?"' (*ES*, 82), they answer in terms of space: '"We are strangers to this part of the land"' (*ES*, 83), and later describe the meeting in similar terms: '"This is the reason why we of the Shumba totem have come all the way from the land without trees in Mhondoro to your land of mountains that touch the sky."' (*ES*, 84) The collision of the spatio-temporal dimensions described in part two has resulted in a connection between distant parts of physical space. During the possession ceremony that follows, Munashe is again possessed by the spirit of the woman with the baby on her back: she occupies his body, and speaks to her mother in his voice. The ambivalence of the scene both resembles and surpasses that of Benjamin's homecoming ('"Is this *the harvest* we are reaping after all our pain and sacrifice?"' – *ES*, 84, emphasis added), as killer and victim, man and woman,

[51] Spirit possession also occurs in Chipamaunga's *Fighter for Freedom*, Mazorodze's *Silent Journey from the East*, Mungoshi's *Waiting for the Rain*, Vera's *Nehanda* and Hove's *Ancestors*. Kanengoni's

'sellout' and 'war hero' merge in an extraordinary image. But after the dead woman makes her symbolic return to her home among the living, Munashe himself joins the world of the spirits.

The effect of a *ngozi* is countered by ceremonial cleansing, hence the ceremonies centred on Munashe; the precondition of cleansing being effective is that the person affected reveal the truth about the crime committed.[52] When possessed by the spirit of his victim, Munashe is instrumental in telling her story. But although he himself has also been a victim, he at first resists being cleansed (*cf ES*, 66). Despite attempting to escape wartime memories by moving from place to place (*ES*, 60), the identity of a person revisited by the war is the only one he possesses: after being 'cleansed' of it, he dies, and is – in an afterlife reminiscent of the space-time of moral/political justice inhabited by the characters of Stanlake Samkange's *On Trial For My Country*[53] - finally able to walk again among Kudzai, Bazooka, Sly and the other victims of the war. He has a vision of a revolutionary rally addressed by Herbert Chitepo, Jason Moyo and other dead ZANU/PF heroes, who attack the corruption of a system in which 'the politics, the wealth and the economy of the entire country was slowly becoming synonymous with the names of less than a dozen people.' (*ES*, 87) The victims have become heroes, and the official heroes – unnamed and absent - are denounced as criminals.[54]

Munashe's death may be interpreted as the *retribution* of the supernatural, associated with the concept of *ngozi*.[55] But it is significant that the spirit medium from the victim's village absolves his family of guilt ('"I am glad you realise that you can't blame these people from the land of vast and open plains. Your problem and their problem is the same."' – *ES*, 85), and, in Munashe's vision, his victim also forgives him ('"It wasn't your fault," she said.' – *ES*, 88). Just as, before his death, Munashe was torn between living in the linear space-time of the narrative present and the spiralling tunnels of the space-time of war, so his achievement in the moment of

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When the Rainbird Cries features a *fake* spirit medium.

[52] See Reynolds, *Traditional Healers*, p. 59.

[53] See S. Samkange *On Trial for My Country* (London, Heinemann, 1966); I owe this parallel to Chan, *Robert Mugabe*, p. 45.

[54] T. Ranger has pointed out that Robert Mugabe remains unmentioned in the book. See 'Introduction.'

[55] See, for example, M. Gelfand, 'The Shona Religion,' *Zambezia* 1 (1), 1969, pp. 37-45, and H. Buchner, *Spirits and Power: An Analysis of Shona Cosmology* (Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1980), pp 69-70.

death is spatio-temporal: he has made the forgotten past come alive, and united different spatial segments, or 'brought *two distant villages* together to *mourn* in the strangest circumstances.' (*ES*, 88) He has also broken the silence surrounding the history of the struggle, the silences that 'distorted the story and made it defective.' (*ES*, 87) ('Taurayi,' the name of Munashe's little nephew interested in hearing his war stories over and over, is the plural imperative form of the Shona verb 'to speak'). Moral distortion, here as in Vera's *Under the Tongue* and Chinodya's *Can We Talk*, starts with silence: in Kanengoni, both individual and national identities are affected by it. While *Harvest of Thorns* culminates in an image of birth, at the end of *Echoing Silences*, as in Hove's *Shadows*, the very landscape mourns the last of multiple deaths: 'down in the valley, the village lay silent and withdrawn, visibly shaken by the previous day's events.' (*ES*, 89)

4.

This section looks briefly at *Harvest of Thorns* and *Echoing Silences* in the context of the other Zimbabwean post-independence war narratives, enumerated in the first section of this chapter. In his discussion of speech genres, Bakhtin states: '[V]ery frequently the expression of our utterance is determined not only - and sometimes not so much - by the referentially semantic content of this utterance, but also by others' utterances *on the same topic* to which we are *responding* or with which we are *polemicizing*.'[56] If, based on the presence of broad chronotopic similarities discussed in section one, Zimbabwean war novels are seen as constituting the specifically Zimbabwean 'macro-genre' – a genre subsuming and modifying other genres – then the evidence of the kind of polemic Bakhtin describes can be discerned within it. Critics have pointed out that Kanengoni's and Chinodya's novels resist uncritical glorification of the guerrilla fighters' participation in the war.[57] Among the war novels named in section one of this paper, unqualified glorification occurs in the novels by Edmund Chipamaunga and Garikai Mutasa (*A Fighter for Freedom*, *The Contact*, *The Bridge* and *Mavhondo*). In keeping with Bakhtin's statement, I read these novels first and foremost as jubilant replies to the discredited Rhodesian discourse which, in the decade before independence, produced novels indiscriminately glorifying those fighting *against* the guerrillas. (Terence Ranger

[56] Bakhtin, 'The Problem of Speech Genres,' 91. Emphasis added.

would call them novelistic 'counter-claims.')[58] Not coincidentally, both groups of texts contain generic traits of popular adventure novels, as I argued in Chapter Five. It is therefore not unexpected that their extra-ordinary heroes – inhabiting Bakhtinian adventure time - traverse the spatio--temporal circle typical of the war novel with conspicuous ease. (In Mutasa's *Mavhondo*, for example, super-guerrilla Lance Pasi glides around the empty bush in moccasins, demonstrating an uncanny feel for its 'rhythm').

A special mention must be made in this context of Irene Mahamba's *Woman in Struggle*. Like the work of Mutasa and Chipamaunga, this novella also elevates the freedom fighters to the status of faultless and absolute liberators. But unlike Mutasa's and Chipamaunga's works, which narrate anti-colonial exploits, Mahamba's narrative praises their role in the curbing of 'traditional' gender-related injustices. It is perhaps because of this that the space-time of *Woman in Struggle* is curiously de-militarised. Although the novella features an enemy attack, and episodes taking place in a guerrilla base, there are no boundaries in it between the space-time of war and civilian space-time, and characters move between the two often, and at will. (A de-militarisation of the space-time of war occurs also in Vera's *The Stone Virgins*, which I mention below.) If Mutasa and Chipamuanga make use of the adventure novel genre, Mahamba's text may be related to the genre of popular romance, just like the work of the female settler novelist C.E. Dibb.

In other war novels, however, narrative space-time and character movement are more complex. Isheunesu Mazorodze's *Silent Journey from the East* and Charles Samupindi's *Pawns*, for example, problematise aspects of the space - time of war by introducing into the chronotopic circling of characters described in section one the generic traits taken from the western realist and modernist novel. Both texts emphasise in minute, almost nauseating detail the illness, hunger and disease accompanying the excruciating periods of *waiting* that would-be guerrillas have to undergo as they progress through space-time; Samupindi's text also fractures the continuity of narrative focus and time. But it is arguable that these novels are still engaged in celebrating the manner in which the nationalist leadership conducted the

[57] See Ranger, 'Introduction,' and 'The Fruits of the Baobab,' and Veit-Wild, *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers*, pp. 306-307 and 328.

struggle.[59] Analogously, Tim McLoughlin's *Karima* and Angus Shaw's *Kandaya* move away from Rhodesian popular genre forms but remain locked in dialogue with the Rhodesian discourse and chronotope.

In that sense, the critically praised complexity of Chinodya's and Kenangoni's texts does not stem only from their stylistic or compositional sophistication, but *also* from the number of texts and genres - in Bakhtinian terms, other chronotopes - they are in dialogue with. In section two above, I have tried to show how Chinodya reworks the genre of *Bildungsroman* by building ambivalence into the very semantic heart of his text: now it can be said that this re-working is made more complex by being also a rejection of popular genres. Another Zimbabwean war novel that engages in a similar kind of multiple generic dialogue - albeit through very different means - is Angus Shaw's *Kandaya*, in which a young Rhodesian soldier, emerging as a person at a time of national crisis, pursues through space and time his African nationalist Other. Shaw achieves the effect of ambivalence by refusing to solve the *mystery* that is Kandaya. In chronotopic terms, his protagonist commands a freedom of spatial movement unique within the Zimbabwean war novel; it is symbolic that the culmination of the hunt for Kandaya takes place in an *underworld* of hidden caves.

But it is *Echoing Silences* alone that takes *all* the phases of the war novel's spatio-temporal circle - including such typical episodes as new recruits receiving political education, getting a first real gun, and coming home - and turns them into a source of distortion and suffering. In this novel, *every* aspect of a just struggle is compromised, and so is the entire private and national spectrum of space-time. In that sense, there is nothing comparable to *Echoing Silences* in the history of the Zimbabwean novel in English. In Kanengoni's other novel, *When the Rainbird Cries*, published two years before *Harvest of Thorns*, the motif of the rainbird signifies spoiled beauty and usurped credit. But despite tragedy that is brought on by the greed, stupidity and cowardice of a guerrilla commander, rain - a potent symbol in Zimbabwean literature - does come at the end of the novel. Nothing like this occurs in *Echoing Silences*.

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[58] T. Ranger, Naming the Heroes,' *Southern African Review of Books* 1 (2), 1987/1988, p. 23.
[59] See White, 'War Song,' and M. [V]ambe, 'Is *Pawns* another plug for ZANU (PF)?', *Sunday Gazette Magazine*, Harare, December 19, 1993, pp. 19-22.

Like the authors of *Woman in Struggle* and *Kandaya*, Alexander Kanengoni is a former combatant. Genres, says Bakhtin, must be fully mastered before we can manipulate them freely; and once that has happened, it is the echo of the generic whole that resounds through each individual utterance.[60] If, based on its chronotopic traits, 'the war novel' is seen as a broad and relatively stable framework for the Zimbabwean reworkings of various European-imported generic models, then the title *Echoing Silences* (an oxymoron, incidentally, like *Harvest of Thorns*) carries with it also a generic symbolism. This formally experimental text reworks the adventure, realist *and* modernist genres, only to finally dissolve them. They resonate within it, but it surpasses them. By doing so, it has gone furthest in extending the limits of 'the written war,' and has thus inevitably changed the way in which the 'real war' is remembered, and may be thought and written about. At its most confident, the genre of the Zimbabwean war novel stops being what it is: the chronotopic circling of Kanengoni's hero is transformative only in the bleakest of ironic senses.

Fittingly, the most recent novel among those considered in this section, Yvonne Vera's *The Stone Virgins*, was written 'after Kanengoni,' both in terms of chronology and generic analogy. The space-time of the second *Chimurenga* features in only one (the ninth) of its seventeen chapters. In *The Stone Virgins*, the space-time of war is a purely mental space: gone is the spatio-temporal circling, the collectivity of combatants, and combat itself. Sibaso, Vera's guerrilla-turned-dissident, is a lonely, disturbed man who lives among rocky hills and has inwardly turned to stone himself. The space-time of war, as represented in this novel, is a space-time of stasis, distortion and death. I discuss this and Vera's other novels more fully in the following chapter.

[60] Bakhtin, 'The Problem of Speech Genres,' pp. 79, 88.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Crossing Into the Space-time of Memory: Yvonne Vera[1]

> He knows nothing about the here of it. The feel of that here. The sight of it. The moment so full of here.
>
> Yvonne Vera[2]

1.

It is arguable that, in the history of the Zimbabwean novel, the work of Yvonne Vera occupies a strangely ambivalent position. On the one hand, it may be intertextually related to many key works of Zimbabwean Anglophone fiction. In addition to stylistically continuing the novelistic line inaugurated after independence by Chenjerai Hove (as I argued in Chapter Four), Vera's novels are also centred on women, and this connects them to the work of other Zimbabwean women writers, such as Dangarembga and Maraire. Although she does not concentrate on the armed struggle, her thematic preocupation with war-time violence provides a link with the novels of Chinodya and Kanengoni. On the other hand, there is a sharp sense of uniqueness attached to Vera and her work. Despite the various kinds of vertical continuity named above, in the opinion of a Zimbabwean critic she writes 'without reference to any identifiable literary tradition.'[3]

To a large extent, the startling quality of Vera's fiction is the outcome of its breaking unspoken taboos and engaging unflinchingly with potentially shocking substance of content, such as rape, abortion, incest, suicide and mutilation: not for nothing is a reader devoted to her work entitled *Sign and Taboo*. She herself defined her contribution in similar terms when she said:

> [T]o have explored those moments of tragedy without, you know, withdrawing from them; without covering up. To go into the moment of the abortion, and say it; and moment-by-moment of a woman's feeling of tenderness towards herself, and violence towards herself:

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[1] An earlier version of this chapter was published under the title 'Crossing into the Space-Time of Memory: Borderline Identities in Novels by Yvonne Vera' in *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 36 (2), 2001, pp. 76-93.

[2] Y. Vera, *The Stone Virgins*, p. 141.

[3] Muchemwa, 'Language, Voice and Presence,' p. 3.

> both those things. I've not been... I've been able to talk about them. So I think that's my contribution, and difference in that.[4]

In chronotopic terms, Vera's narrative worlds are centred on the spaces of their heroines' bodies, and this points at key differences between her and her fellow Zimbabwean writers. Unlike the characters of Dangarembga and Maraire, Vera's women do not seek to emancipate themselves by improving their minds through education. Unlike the freedom fighters in novels by Chinodya and Kanengoni, her characters do not deliberately enter and leave the space-time of armed struggle in order to bring about revolutionary change to their worlds. Vera's women seek, first and foremost, to control the space of their own bodies, and their identities are shaped by how they relate to the violence and trauma involving space-time and the female body, as the sentences quoted at the outset intimate.

A further aspect of Vera's uniqueness within Zimbabwe is the steadiness of her novelistic output. After the initial collection of short stories, written while she was still a student at a Canadian university, she has published five novels. Charles Larson has argued that this consistency is partly due to the unique relationship Vera has with her Zimbabwean publisher, Irene Staunton, who has also encouraged her to explore the nuances of her evocative prose style.[5] The designations 'lyrical' and 'poetic,' often bestowed on Vera's texts,[6] sometimes function as a euphemisms for stylistic and compositional opacity. As in the novels of Chenjerai Hove, the very shape of the worlds her novels bring into being (and therefore of identities constructed within them) is inseparable from these novels' style, composition and narrative technique.

This chapter wishes to suggest that it may be profitable to read Vera's novels as a kind of a cycle. By this I do not mean to say that, read in the order of publication, Vera's five novels (*Nehanda*, *Without a Name*, *Under the Tongue*, *Butterfly Burning*,

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[4] R. Primorac, interview with Y. Vera, Bulawayo, January 2001.
[5] See C. Larson, *The Ordeal of the African Writer* (London, Zed Books, 2001), chapter four.
[6] See, for example, P. Ludicke, 'Writing From the Inside-Out, Reading From the Outside-In: a Review of Yvonne Vera's *Nehanda* and *Without a Name*,' in Derek Wright (ed), *Contemporary African Fiction* (Bayreuth, Bayreuth African Studies, 1997), pp. 67-73; M. Taruvinga, 'Butterfly Burning: Novel of Great Imagination,' *The Independent Extra*, Harare, February 5, 1999, p. 13; C. Wake, review of *Nehanda*, *Wasafiri*, 19, 1994, p. 75.

and *The Stone Virgins*)[7] form a continuous narrative macro-sequence (in the manner of Achebe's novelistic cycle, for example), nor that readers are advised to reorder them according to the sequence of narrated time. (*Nehanda* is set in the 1890s, *Butterfly Burning* in the 1940s, *Without a Name* and *Under the Tongue* in 1970s, and *The Stone Virgins* mainly in the 1980s). I wish merely to suggest that I have found the spatio-temporal structures of Vera's texts to be closely related, and perhaps even reducible to versions of a single chronotope, whose key characteristics are briefly outlined below.

In the worlds of Yvonne Vera's novels, physical space is heterogeneous and constrained, rather than continuous and unlimited. Furthermore, physical space and linear, chronological time are not the only spatio–temporal components of these worlds. They intersect with another spatio-temporal dimension, which I have called the space-time of memory. Below, I attempt to demonstrate that Vera's heroines derive important components of their identities from a positioning in relation to these two spatio-temporal dimensions, as well as from the ability (or lack thereof) to exercise control over the space of their own bodies. I will here exemplify these and other points most fully on *Nehanda*, Vera's first novel, and *Under the Tongue*, arguably her most 'difficult' text. Her other two novels, *Without a Name* and *Butterfly Burning*, share a basic thematic similarity and parallel chronotopic configurations, and will be discussed more briefly. The chronotope of Vera's last novel, *The Stone Virgins* is discussed in this chapter's final section. Although its space-time is related to the chronotopes of Vera's other works, I will argue that it also represents a new departure within her novelistic opus.

2.

Nehanda was inspired by the historical figure of a female spirit medium who was a major leader of Zimbabwe's first *Chimurenga*, the uprising against colonial rule, in

[7] Yvonne Vera, *Nehanda* (Harare, Baobab Books, 1993); *Without a Name* (Harare, Baobab Books, 1996 [1994]); *Under the Tongue* (Harare, Baobab Books, 1996); *Butterfly Burning* (Harare, Baobab Books, 1998), and *The Stone Virgins*. Subsequent references to Vera's novels are to these editions and will be cited in the text, where titles will be abbreviated as *N*, *WN*, *UT*, *BB* and *SV* respectively. In quotes, italics used for emphasis have been added throughout.

1896. While Hove's *Bones* merely evokes the symbolic and moral authority of the famous *mhondoro* (royal ancestor spirit), Vera's novel chooses to narrate the course of the anti-settler rebellion, and the life of the medium that led it. According to oral tradition, she was defiant when captured and, before being executed, predicted that her bones would rise again. In time, Nehanda (the name is usually accompanied by the respectful title *Mbuya*) became a powerful nationalist symbol of the inevitable but long-awaited victory over white oppressors. Mediums of the same ancestral spirit participated in the second *Chimurenga*, Zimbabwe's liberation struggle, in the 1960s and 70s. Since the 1950s, Nehanda has appeared as an inspirational figure in several important Zimbabwean works of fiction.[8] Historian Terence Ranger has pointed out Vera's deliberate refusal to pay attention to historical sources in constructing her narrative.[9] In this she is unlike her fellow Zimbabwean writer Charles Samupindi, whose story of Nehanda's trial is accompanied with the statement that 'the author developed his material from ascertainable fact.'[10] Vera's text may also be said to be in direct dialogue with Stanlake Samkange's axiological *Year of the Uprising*, which focuses mainly on white male characters, and mentions Nehanda only in passing, as a distant background figure, in the last chapter.[11]

In Vera's novel, the plot construction is circular: the first chapter introduces a flashback spanning almost the entire length of the novel. In chapter one, the central character is in prison; we see her there again in chapter 26 (the last but one). Within the flashback, a rhythm of intertwining subplots can be discerned: chapters relating Nehanda's life – her birth, youth, possession, capture, and death – alternate at irregular intervals with sections narrating the African experiences of Mr Browning, the colonial official whose task is to hunt her down, and with sections outlining (while focusing on other characters) the course of the rebellion. In all this, it is

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[8] David Lan, whose useful summary of the role of Nehanda in Zimbabwean history and tradition appears in *Guns & Rain* (London, James Currey, 1987), p. 6, mentions Solomon Mutswairo's Shona novel *Feso* and Herbert Chitepo's poem *Soko Risina Musoro*. For a comparison between Vera's novel and Mutswairo's *Chaminuka*, see M. T. Vambe, 'Strategic Transformations: Spirit Possession in the Zimbabwean Black Novel in English,' in M. T. Vambe (ed), *Orality and Cultural Identities in Zimbabwe* (Gweru, Mambo Press, 2001), pp. 102-114. See also M. T. Vambe, 'Spirit Possession and the Paradox of Post-Colonial Resistance in Yvonne Vera's *Nehanda*,' in Muponde and Taruvinga, *Sign and Taboo*, pp. 127-138.

[9] See T. Ranger, 'History has its Ceiling: The Pressure of the Past in *The Stone Virgins*,' in Muponde and Taruvinga, *Sign and Taboo*, pp. 203-216.

[10] See the back cover and foreword of Charles Samupindi's *Death Throes: The Trial of Mbuya Nehanda* (Gweru, Mambo Press, 1990).

[11] See S. Samkange, *Year of the Uprising* (London, Heinemann, 1978).

noticeable that the reader is provided with only the most minimalist hints as to the time-span in which the story unfolds. Chapter three describes Nehanda's birth, while in chapter 17 she is referred to as an old woman (*N*, 75). Otherwise, the length of narrated time is left unspecified.[12] Similarly, the causal and temporal links between episodes are not explicitly stated, nor are the episodes within the flashback ordered strictly chronologically. Because of this, individual chapters leave the impression of independent, rounded episodes – separate temporal bubbles, endowing the novel with a dream-like, lyrical quality. More to the point in the present context, the novel's compositional structure underscores the fact that Nehanda remains unchanged throughout. As a character, she does not develop. From the moment of birth (after which she did not cry for a day, then cried all day and night 'with her tiny speech-seeking voice' – *N*, 12), until the moment of capture (in prison, she remains mute then repulses Mr Browning with a terrifying scream – *N*, 116), she remains alone, marked by difference, separated from the community around her by being destined for difficult and extraordinary things. (I return to this below.)

More specifically configured than narrated time, the novel's physical space is equally fluid: it is constructed as a dimension undergoing a process of differentiation. On the one hand, there are African places of everyday living – the huts, the fields and the surrounding bush (referred to in chapters three to five, seven, and four respectively). These are marked by the twin rhythms of seasonal tasks and ritual (the village gathering place, *dare*, is described in chapter ten);[13] and although it is true that *Nehanda*'s is a 'woman-centred world,'[14] the text makes it clear that both of these rhythms require the collective participation of men, women and children. On the other hand, there is the individualised, woman-free world of the European men against whom the African rebellion is directed. Surveying the landscape from European-style houses (*N*, 54), these characters introduce into the novel a concept of space that equates familiarity with analysis (Mr Smith, a white character, is an insect

[12] Terence Ranger writes: 'In the novel, "Nehanda" is born and becomes an old woman all within the actual six years of colonial occupation.' (See T. Ranger, 'History has its Ceiling,' p. 203.) But the historical six-year span that Ranger refers to is not delimited by the novel.
[13] The role of ritual (related to birth, the seasons and the war) in *Nehanda* has been touched on in Jones, 'Land, War and Literature in Zimbabwe,' and Wilson-Tagoe, 'Narrative, History, Novel.' For a discussion of the role of Shona material culture in the novel, see E. Chiwome, 'A Comparative Analysis of Solomon Mutswairo's and Yvonne Vera's Handling of the Legend of *Nehanda*,' in Muponde and Taruvinga, *Sign and Taboo*, pp. 179-190.
[14] Wilson-Tagoe, 'Narrative, History, Novel,' p. 164.

collector) and is either personal in the individualised sense (when a bat enters Mr Borrowing's room at night, it becomes a 'creature that has intruded into his space' (*N*, 75; *Cf* 108/9 where Nehanda intrudes on bats' space in a forest cave), or abstract. In chapter thirteen, Mr Browning sums up his civilisation's relationship to space by saying: 'We have drawn maps, and know how to locate ourselves on the globe. The native only knows where he is standing. I have been collecting maps since I was a boy. This is what we should teach at the new school, a knowledge of the earth.' (*N*, 54). The attempt, on the part of the Europeans, to 'introduce order and culture' (*N*, 55) is inseparable from spatial pressure stemming from their very physical presence (in chapter six, for example, this is experienced as desecration).[15] But it overlooks an entire spatio-temporal dimension of the universe they have encroached on: the space-time inhabited by African ancestral spirits. It is a dimension to which mediums like Nehanda (on whom the novel is 'centred') and Kaguvi have direct access.

This is the world's non-physical dimension, across the boundary between life and death. As it has been pointed out in the discussions of Hove and Kanengoni in the preceding chapters, in the Shona system of belief, this boundary is far from impermeable. But while Hove's Mucha and Kanengoni's Munashe are visited upon by spirits who cannot remain in their own realm, in Vera's novel it is the living person who transgresses the Lotmanesque spatial prohibition by crossing the boundary between the living and the dead. Because she becomes possessed by an ancestral spirit, Nehanda '*has crossed* the boundary of sleep many times, and of death,'(*N*, 92) and has given voice to 'superior forms of existence'. (*N*, 111) In the realm they inhabit, the difference between the past and the future is eradicated.

This means that, from the outset, Nehanda has the ability to perceive the direction of time's unfolding as reversible. In chapter two, for example, just after she has learned how to walk, and as she senses the presence of spirits for the first time, Nehanda is nearly carried off by a circular gust of wind. The wind, which is later (*N*, 2; *Cf* a twin image on 111, referred to below) seen to symbolise her unique function, is described in the following terms: 'Arrogant in its own conception, it challenged the familiar categories of birth and death. It moved at once in *opposite directions, with time and*

[15] For a discussion of the role of settlers in relation to space in *Nehanda*, see K. Mangwanda, 'Re-Mapping the Colonial Space: Yvonne Vera's *Nehanda*,' in Muponde and Taruvinga, *Sign and Taboo*,

against time.' (*N*, 3) The first sentence in chapter three describes a calabash which holds 'memories of the future.' (*Ibid.*) Because she is a spirit medium, Nehanda is also a prophet: a person who is able to articulate the future precisely as if it were the remembered past. As a result, Nehanda experiences temporality as space, and temporal movement as if it were spatial. In chapter four, fetching water from the river, young Nehanda has a vision of her future self, fully formed. The presence of this image is spatial: it is 'like a shadow that has somehow separated from her'. (*N*, 16) In the chapter in which Nehanda's mother explains to her daughter the role of ancestral spirits, the image of a shadow recurs: 'A *mudzimu* is a shadow. It follows you wherever you go.' (*N*, 27) If the existence of beings inhabiting the realm of future/past is imagined in spatial terms, then contact and communication with this realm can be conceptualised as a journey, or movement in space. In *Nehanda*, the act of undertaking such a journey is identical with the act of narrating it.

Such an act takes place during the possession ceremony, in chapters fourteen and fifteen of the novel. In a sequence reminiscent of an episode from Charles Mungoshi's *Waiting for the Rain*, Nehanda commands a physical space at the centre of the community assembled at the *dare* ('The crowd retreats from her, respecting her command of the ground, her territorial claims.' - *N*, 61) in order to tell a story. The story is related to a fertile valley enclosing a lake and surrounded by mountains. Nehanda's

> quivering voice tells of fear and suffering. "The valley was spacious and surrounded by mountains covered with lush grass. From the mountains, rivulets flowed filling a small lake in the fertile valley in which fishes of various kinds swam. The valley, however, is no longer green with birth. Its grass is dry, and the sediment of memory swallows boulders of grief." A murmuring confirms the tale to be told. (*N*, 60)

The space containing the valley relates to the physical world of the novel as both a metonym and a metaphor: it is both contiguous with and representative of it, or, put differently, both the place of telling and the place of unfolding of Nehanda's story. It is, of course, a story of dispossession, and it culminates in the ancestral call for resistance. But the story's narrator is, crucially, *not* the journey's leader. Nehanda is no more than a mediator ('She tells them what those who had gone before had said' –

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pp. 141-154.

N, 61), or an interpreter ('And the dead are among them, but there is no one to interpret the messages which come from beyond' – N, 102). Her role is that of a go-*between*.

Similarly, the ancestors' instruction to the people - to go to war – is no more than one side of a dialogue that the people themselves have initiated. Without their collective voice, the narrative/journey would not have been possible. 'You too have been chosen to tell this story, to accompany the story-teller on the journey *which may not be embarked upon alone. The story-teller needs an accompanying tongue.*' (*N*, 61) In *Nehanda*, the invading whites are confronted by a united African community. This encompasses both the living and the dead and spans both the physical and the spiritual spatio-temporal dimensions. This unity is made possible by the pivotal role of Nehanda.

By mediating between the community and the ancestral spirits, Nehanda opens up the space of war: the people attack the settlers in the hills, where they have intervened into the landscape in order to turn it into a fortress (chapter nineteen). The rebellion is led by the hunter-warrior Kaguvi, another spirit medium, but it is directed by Nehanda's voice emanating from the darkness of a cave. She has become 'the whirling centre of the wind' (*N*, 111; *Cf* 2 for a parallel image, referred to above), the central, defining point of the conflict that defines the novel's space-time. She thus finds herself precariously placed at the intersection of *two* spatio-temporal borderlines: one between the living and the dead, as outlined above, and the other between the African universe and that of the invading white men. In this she is unique and completely alone. Nehanda's identity emerges from the tension between the two intersecting borderlines she inhabits. One – the borderline between the space-time of the ancestors and that of the living - manifests itself in her person as an internal duality. The other - between the African and the voracious white worlds – translates into external pressure. Their combined outcome is physical trauma.

In order to clarify this point, it becomes necessary to say that in this novel, spirit possession is not conceptualised as a personality displacement. That is to say that the

medium does not function as a mere 'external' mouthpiece for the ancestral voice.[16] Historically, the name Nehanda refers to a royal ancestor of the Shona people; her medium at the time of the first *Chimurenga* was a woman named Charwe.[17] In the novel, on the other hand, a young woman named Nehanda becomes the transmitter of the collective, undifferentiated ancestral voice *which becomes a part of her person*, and it is she who will be remembered by the coming generations. In the words of Clive Wake, 'the medium *is* Nehanda.'[18] This means that Vera's Nehanda is a medium inasmuch as the borderline between the various spatio-temporal categories that make up the novel's universe run, literally, *through* her: she is both the centre and a model of the novel's chronotope. During the possession ritual referred to above, she is able to mediate in the dialogue between the ancestors and the people because she has internalised both sides if it. Vera's Nehanda is a dual character: she has an 'other-worldly' and a human aspect; she is, *simultaneously*, both a spirit-medium and a woman.[19] This duality resonates in her voice during the possession ritual: 'It is an alluring voice, undulating, carrying the current of a roar that reminds them of who they have been in the past, but it is also the comforting voice of a woman, of their mother whom they trust.' (*N*, 62) Nehanda inspires in her followers a recognition of the trace of the same duality in their own beings: her voice 'awakens the dead part of themselves.'(*N*, 81; see also 24)

Thus it is possible to say that the contact with the world of collective memory amounts to contact between the dead and living parts of her self. But this does not mean that establishing that contact is easy: it is a constant struggle, an act of resistance that is increasingly difficult to sustain in the face of external pressure generated by the expansion of 'white' (abstract, Rhodesian) space. In a cave, during

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[16] The Rhodesian anthropologist Michael Gelfand states: 'It certainly is an impressive sight to see a person in a state of possession; *it is as if the whole body has become occupied by a new personality.*' See M. Gelfand, *The Genuine Shona*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1992 [1973], p.133, emphasis added. After independence, Pamela Reynolds has written, in the context of discussing traditional healers: 'The norm holds that the healer is passive in that she is a conduit in the process of communication between the ancestors and their descendants. She is said to be *the pocket to the shade(s).*' Reynolds, *Traditional Healers*, p. 29. Emphasis added.

[17] See Lan, *Guns & Rain*, p. 6, and the entry of Mbuya Nehanda in K. Sayce (ed), *Encyclopedia Zimbabwe* (Harare, Quest Publishing, 1989), p. 281.

[18] Wake, review of *Nehanda*, p. 75; emphasis in the original.

[19] Wilson-Tagoe, in 'Narrative, History, Novel,' refers to Nehanda's liminality, in connection with her 'extraordinary ability to straddle past, present and future' (p. 165).

the uprising, Nehanda experiences this pressure as spatial constraint felt physically, through her body:

> If she does not wrestle triumphantly this night, her people will be utterly destroyed. In the solid darkness surrounding her, she feels something grow. It gathers, growing steadily out of the rough walls, scurrying across the floor of the cave. She responds frantically, walking bent, in circles, under the low roof of the cave. A heaviness grows on her shoulders, and she crumples to the floor, cursing. (*N*, 82)

This is followed by the physical hardship of crossing the forest, and of imprisonment and death. She undergoes all of this for others (hers is 'a sorrow born out of sacrifice' - *N*, 92; see also 114): outside her role of straddling aspects of space-time, Vera's Nehanda has no existence. She is who she is because she mediates/resists.

Death, for Nehanda, means the separation of the two component parts of her self. In chapter 25, she sees the divide between them: 'On the other side of the river, she sees reflected the living part of herself. In this life, it is the dead part of her being which guides her, and which speaks.' (*N*, 111)[20] Forced to choose, she remains with the 'burden of her seeing self' (*Ibid.*) and experiences a final vision: the fertile valley - now symbolic of the victorious new nation - restored to greenness and growth. This is her moment of prophecy, her 'memory of the future'. Significantly, the vision features *ordinary* women in full possession of a voice – 'a majestic language that will lead them safely into the future.'(*N*, 113) Following this vision, Nehanda gives herself up and is executed.

The manner of her death points to the paradox of *Nehanda*. Its central character, whose uniqueness is obvious from her birth and whose proud death precipitates the birth of a nation is also, simultaneously, a lone, physically traumatised woman inhabiting (literally, embodying) a double margin. A comparable experience had previously remained unimagined in Zimbabwean fiction, despite the centrality to it of the motif of spirit possession. It is Vera's heroine's very uniqueness that turns her into an isolated figure in an African society that functions collectively, and whose

[20] In chapter 23, Kaguvi undergoes a parallel experience; but while Nehanda's separation from the ancestral spirit is described in spatial terms, Kaguvi's is temporal: 'His ancient spirit, which he now sees as something separate from himself, weighs sorrowfully on him. It is as though they now live in separate ages of time, himself in the present, his spirit departing further into the past.'(*N*, 106-107)

collectivity she represents. A further paradox is that Nehanda's loneliness establishes a parallel between her and the white men who are hunting her, and turns her, and her alone, into an opponent capable of defeating them (Kaguvi is captured; Nehanda turns herself in). Such a defamiliarized Nehanda may antagonize those nationalist critics who prefer to see women as idealised, 'elevated' figures presiding symbolically over essentially male struggles,[21] or, differently, those who would question the implications of Vera's appropriation of African myth and ritual.[22] More importantly in this context, it connects Nehanda with Vera's other women: her access to the space-time of memory links her to the female characters in *Under the Tongue* and *The Stone Virgins*, while her *strangeness* is one of the traits connecting her with Mazvita and Phephelaphi, the heroines of *Without a Name* and *Butterfly Burning* respectively. In the following sections, I look at these novels in turn.

3.

After the first reading of *Under the Tongue* it becomes clear that it is possible to read every other chapter of the novel successively: only the odd-numbered chapters and then only the even, or – for an ordering of events closer to the chronological - the other way around. It could be (but for now this must remain an open question) that, because of this, *Under the Tongue* deserves the status of Zimbabwe's first postmodernist novel, the kind of text whose meaning is inseparable from the tension between different possible reading procedures. What matters here is that such hypothetical readings highlight in the novel the presence of two compositional series, each containing two intertwined narrative strands.

In the first series, starting with chapter one, a young girl, Zhizha, goes through the gradual and painful process of remembering repeated sexual violation by her father

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[21] A Kenyan example (influential in Zimbabwe) is pointed out in Elleke Boehmer, 'The Master's Dance to the Master's Voice,' *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 26 (1), 1991, pp. 188-97. For a reading of *Nehanda*'s relationship to nationalism that differs from mine, see Vambe, 'Spirit Possession and the Paradox of Post-Colonial Resistance.'

[22] See Wilson-Tagoe, 'Narrative, History, Novel,' p. 165. Such objections neglect the fact that *Nehanda* is, according to the semiotic view of culture propounded by the likes of J. M. Lotman, a secondary culture text: its meaning is inseparable from the fact that it *rewrites* a primary culture text (in this case, that of Shona ritual). Secondary culture texts are built upon primary ones, but fail to adhere to their rules in all respects. Lotman's views on culture texts are usefully summarised in I. Portis-Winner, 'Some Comments Upon Lotman's Concepts of Semiotics of Culture: Implications for the Study of Ethnic Culture Texts,' In M. Halle *et al* (eds), *Semiosis: Semiotics and the History of Culture* (Michigan, The University of Michigan, 1984), pp. 28-36.

Muroyiwa. We also learn the story of Zhizha's grandmother's motherhood: the arrival of a long-awaited son and his early death. These stories are told in the present tense and the first person, from the point of view of Zhizha, who is living with her maternal grandmother in Dangambvura, a black township in the town of Umtali,[23] near then-Rhodesia's border with Mozambique, at the time of Zimbabwe's second *Chimurenga*.

The second series (contained in chapters number two, four, six and so on) relates in roughly chronological order the lives of Zhizha's parents. Her father's biography is marked by his own father's blindness and brother Tachiveyi's leaving home to join the guerrilla struggle for freedom. Muroyiwa journeys to Umtali and, in Dangambvura, meets and marries Zhizha's mother Runyararo, a mat-weaver and seller. At ceasefire, Runyararo is released from prison where she was sent for killing her husband.

The regularity of the alternation between the two series has the inevitable effect of adding parallels to oppositions: both series, for example, tell stories of unhappy children, distant fathers and wounded mothers. A novel constructed in this manner may be interpreted in different ways. Some readers may choose to reassemble the narrative segments in chronological order and see in them a statement of causes and effects, thus finding in the novel an unexpected trace of sympathy with Muroyiwa. Others might take the first series as dominant and convert the novel's socio-critical dimension into a generalized condemnation of men: Muroyiwa - in Shona 'the bewitched one' - is the only male character prominent in the novel.[24] There are, of course, numerous other possibilities. Either way, an act of conventional, linear reading demands of the reader a participation in the intertwining of strands of novelistic space-time; the tidy, symmetrical reed mats woven by Runyararo thus become an apt metaphor for the composition of Vera's novel itself. Another possible metaphor is that of a circle, with the act of reading successive chapters seen as zigzagging between points on the opposing halves of its circumference and coming to

[23] Other novels analysed by this thesis that are (partly) situated in or near Umtali/Mutare are *Nervous Conditions*, *Zenzele* and *Echoing Silences*.
[24] Such a reading emerged during the discussion following the final session of the symposium on Zimbabwean literature ('Scanning our Future, Reading our Past') held between 10 and 12 January 2001 at the University of Zimbabwe in Harare.

rest - with chapter 23, in which Zhizha's memory reaches its fullness, framed by chapters narrating the coming of peace - in a moment of private liberation embedded within the celebration of the public one. In terms of narrated time, the first series has approached this moment by delving into the unspoken past, the second by progressing chronologically into the unknown future.

The concept of the reversibility of time flow's direction – whose presence in *Nehanda* I have attempted to point out in the previous section – thus appears in *Under the Tongue* in the guise of time's circularity. This is articulated not only compositionally, but also verbally: in the final chapter of *Under the Tongue*, the narrating voice describes the emotional impact of the ceasefire by saying: 'History had become dazed and circular.' (*UT*, 112) Another example may be found in an early chapter dealing with Muroyiwa's youth, where circular time acquires a spatial implication:

> There was a *beginning* to things, a point so *small* it could not be touched with memory, not felt, just spreading into the *larger things* that could be touched and felt. The *end* of things is also like that, a sort of vanishing which imitates the beginning, *impossible to separate from the beginning* except for its indescribable faintness. (*UT*, 38)

In keeping with the notion of circularity, the ceasefire in *Under the Tongue* may be interpreted as the beginning of coming into being of the radically new space-time envisaged in *Nehanda*. Crucially, however, and in opposition to such a reading, both novels end with the moment of anticipation: radical spatio-temporal emancipation does not take place in either of them.

The spatio-temporal analogy between *Nehanda* and *Under the Tongue* does not exhaust itself in a series of incidental similarities. The two novels' chronotopes are continuous in all their key aspects: the unstructured quality of linear time,[25] the heterogeneity of physical space, the central role of the space-time of memory and the key role dialoguing female characters play in gaining access it. When juxtaposed to

[25] We are told that Muroyiwa had met Runyararo ten years before the ceasefire (*UT*, 102); also, that he left home three years after his brother joined the guerrillas. (*UT*, 55) This sets the narrative in the 1960s and 70s, and means that Zhizha is still a pre-teenage girl at the time of the ceasefire. But we don't know when she was born, how old Muroyiwa was when he left home or when exactly Zhizha is moved from her parents' house to her grandparents'.

that of *Nehanda*, however, physical space of *Under the Tongue* is seen to be constrained by a twofold absence.

One is the absence of the space of the armed struggle against the settlers. The people who, at the novel's end, return from it are the new kind of men and women – the kind that this novel is *not* about, the freedom fighters: 'The men tumbled out of the sun, and they had brought women who had fought beside them. (...) These same women had killed farm dogs, white men and grasshoppers.' (*UT*, 101) Historically, many women who became guerrillas had to leave the country they sought to liberate before the fortunate ones saw the day of return. *Under the Tongue* (or any of Vera's other novels so far) does not tell their story, nor does the novel's physical universe know any such width. In it, the war exists almost like an object: it is discrete, contained and static, fixed to a specific location. The location is both sacred - the mountains contain places dedicated to the presence of ancestral spirits - and fearsome ('there was a lot of fear surrounding the mountains, so much sacred ground, and the war' - *UT*, 91). It is approachable via a specific route ('It had been named the road of death because so many people had vanished there' - *UT*, 93), but none of the novel's characters except Muroyiwa's *absent* brother take part in the fighting, and Muroyiwa derives his identity precisely from the contrast between himself and his older brother: 'He existed as an opposite to his brother, the war was an axis which kept a balance between them. Tachiveyi had courage, Muroyiwa had stayed behind. Tachiveyi was the first born; Muroyiwa was the last.' (*UT*, 93/94).

The armed struggle defines the novel's spatial span negatively: the final words of the text, referring to all of its world's inhabitants, are: 'they had waited.' (*UT*, 113) The war can thus be said to occupy this world's central axis, so that everything that takes place occurs *around* it, as it were: 'Those who stayed at home were also afraid, but they were *outside the shell* that contained those who fought, though this shell was thin like saliva.' (*UT*, 48) The centre, inasmuch as it contains the terrain of military action, remains invisible and silent. That is, however, not to say that it is empty of meaning: the space of war exerts pressure on the spatial structure of the rest of the narrated world that is the exact reverse of the pressure exerted by European-controlled space in *Nehanda*. The novel ends with the moment of anticipated spatial restructuring, just after the 'shell' – the boundary between the space of war and the

space of everyday living – finally bursts, but before the space of war merges with the rest of the novel's world.[26]

The novel's other defining exclusion encompasses the direct cause of war: the presence of white settlers and the space they inhabit. They were the ones, after all, who brought into being the Rhodesian chronotope, and by doing so carved the space of the colony by confining the African population to 'native reserves' and overcrowded townships – the two kinds of physical space occupied by the characters in *Under the Tongue*. But the space in which the coloniser is physically present also exists in the novel only negatively. There are no major white characters in this, or in any of Vera's other novels except *Nehanda*. Settlers are referred to in *Under the Tongue* without being named, and the space they inhabit functions purely as a constraining force. This force acts as a subordinating mechanism that has moulded the characters' world and narrowed it down, but does not otherwise actively interfere with it: 'Grandmother says the wood should be free, after all, it grows by itself in the forest with no one to help it but the departed. But they sell everything to us here, she says, they sell water. They have taken the water and hidden it somewhere.' (*UT*, 23) If the war is imagined as the centre of the novel's physical space, then the undifferentiated 'white' space defines its outer boundary. The novel's narrative unfolds between them – which means precisely in-between historical cause and effect. The historian Terence Ranger has remarked, in connection with *Butterfly Burning*, that Vera's work is 'written in the pauses of the historian's narrative, at a moment when everyone expects something to happen but nothing has.'[27] This is equally true of *Under the Tongue* and *Without a Name*. These fictional chronotopes interrogate historical ones by inhabiting the cracks within them.

In *Under the Tongue*'s constrained physical world, (where a key contrast of the Rhodesian chronotope, that between country and city, pales in the face of the uniformity of lack: in the country, of rain; in the township, of private spaces – see *UT*, chapters twelve, five and eighteen), characters perform two kinds of movement:

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[26] War is therefore not among the things that this novel *cannot* say. The text articulates a dimension of its meaning by choosing to talk of things to which it is contiguous. *Under the Tongue* is thus a good example of the ultimate arbitrariness of purely thematic criteria of novelistic classification, referred to in Chapter One.

[27] Terence Ranger, 'The Fruits of the Baobab,' p. 697.

either within or across boundaries. The former is Muroyiwa's kind of displacement: he goes from drought-ridden village to crowded township in order to be *near* the war, and wait. Muroyiwa desires change but waits for it to be brought about by Tachiveyi: 'The return of Tachiveyi to Njanja would bring sight to their father. Muroyiwa never doubted that his brother would return.' (*UT*, 94) Tachiveyi, on the other hand, moves across the boundary circumscribing the space of war. Similarly, Runyararo moves into the space of a colonial state institution. In the text of the first and second series respectively, Runyararo and Tachiveyi figure through their absence. Leaving - movement outside the narrative's physical space – is in both cases connected to an act of resistance, the result of a wish to create, literally, a new world. Tachiveyi's return remains an uncertainty; Runyararo does return. But while, at ceasefire, the guerrillas leave the space of war as a group, Runyararo returns from prison alone. Yet she, too, has taken part in a certain kind of collectivity, by aiding her mother and her daughter in reaching the space-time of memory.

As in *Nehanda*, memory represents non-physical movement into the past, against the flow of chronological time. In this novel, too, such movement is not conceptualised as going *back,* but as an act of *advancing* into another dimension, only describable in terms of space. In all of Vera's novels, such movement is somehow linked to physical trauma, but her other texts differ from *Nehanda* in that the trauma is inflicted by a violation of the most private space of all, the space inside a woman's body. In *Under the Tongue*, the journey towards the space-time of memory is performed by Zhizha and Grandmother. (Tonderayi, the name of Grandmother's dead son, is the plural imperative form of the Shona verb 'to remember.') Neither of them could have accomplished it alone.

Vera's are (like Hove's) lyrical texts about violent worlds. Nehanda remains unmarried and childless; in *Under the Tongue*, Grandmother wishes she had had the power to use her body to shelter Tonderayi: 'I should have kept him safe, inside of me.' (*UT*, 70) In chapter 21, on seeing her grey hair in the mirror, she describes the process of ageing in a spatial image that evokes Zhizha's trauma: 'Grandmother says her hair used to be black but *the world has entered her too much* and her hair has turned white.' (*UT*, 98) The space-time of memory, to which Zhizha and Grandmother guide each other, is a position from which the trauma of such a

violation can be overcome by being articulated. As in *Nehanda*, this point is reached through dialogue. But while in *Nehanda* dialogue is part of a public ritual involving an entire community, here it becomes a private survival mechanism shared by three generations of women belonging to the same family.

Zhizha unwittingly prompts Grandmother to tell her the story of Tonderayi by whispering his name and thus, in Shona, literally urging her to remember (see *UT*, chapter thirteen). The relating of the story is described as opening up of spatial access: 'I have seen her *hidden world*, her *place of forgetting.*' (*UT*, 60) 'Scars are our hidden worlds, our places of forgetting.' (*UT*, 61) But it also has temporal significance: in telling the story of her dead child to her young grandchild, Grandmother has touched both the past and the future: 'The birth of my son, Grandmother says *into her memory, into me.*' (*UT*, 62) By revisiting her past, Grandmother contributes towards Zhizha approaching her own 'place of forgetting.' After she has heard Grandmother's story, Zhizha asks a direct question. 'I see you Grandmother. Where is my mother, is she dead? Grandmother gasps.' (*UT*, 73)

An earlier stage of Zhizha's recollection is a memory of Muroyiwa's crime being related to Grandmother by Runyararo. (*UT*, chapter 7) As both a recipient and teller of stories, Grandmother thus becomes the focal point in the exchanges between the women. Her voice – uttering consoling words, songs and laments - figures throughout the first series and is always addressed to a listener. 'Sorrow,' says the narrating voice, 'is linked to sorrow.' (*UT*, 63) The verbal sharing of previously unspoken sorrow ('the words they have given, hidden, stolen, for each other' - *UT*, 61) unites the three female characters and enables them to bring about a whole new dimension of being, inaccessible individually or silently. In Vera's worlds, silence is as destructive as physical violation. This is a key meaning of this novel's title, and the reason why, in chapter 23, silence is described as 'the opposite of life.' (*UT*, 104) The physical act of rape is described as something that pushes a woman's voice backwards into her own body: 'He enters. I cry into the night but my cry returns to me and spreads down into my stomach like water.' (*UT*, 106) Women cannot counteract such violence and regain their voices on their own: 'Grandmother says a woman must not swallow her tears. A woman is not a tree. My arms reach toward Grandmother. She has given me a word which only a woman can give to another.

This is a place where women harvest.' (*UT*, 54) Unlike Muroyiwa, the women in *Under the Tongue* resemble Nehanda in that they do not arrive at their identities negatively, but interactively.[28]

4.

This novel, then, articulates the kind of experience that all too often remains unspoken and unspeakable. Like Mahasweta Devi's story 'Breast Giver' analysed by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak[29] and other women's texts from the 'Third World,' *Under the Tongue* may be approached as a literary representation of the gendered subaltern. My contention here is that the same is true of *all* of Vera's novels, including *Nehanda*. Her work may, therefore, be said to speak, in a specific manner, for the Zimbabwean voiceless. In connection with this, however, a further point needs to be emphasized: the narrative voice in *Under the Tongue*'s first compositional series is *not* Zhizha's. Although it is a voice that unswervingly adopts Zhizha's point of view and emphasizes closeness to it by the use of the first person singular, the stylistic complexity of its prose pointedly refuses to simulate the kind of language that could be used by a child of Zhizha's age. The abused child is not constructed by the chapters of the first series as a subject who tells her own story. The convention adopted by these chapters is that of an all-knowning narrator who re-tells the complex and contradictory emotions of a subject who *could never fully formulate them* herself. (The same is true of the narrators focusing on abused and traumatised women in Vera's other long narratives. *Nehanda* uses no first-person narration, while the other novels make use of it only occasionally and in a manner comparable to that of *Under the Tongue* - see *WN* chapter 28, *BB* chapter 20 and *SV* chapters 6, 8, 10 and 12). As an intellectual, Vera cannot be accused of fostering a delusion of transparency exposed by Spivak in a famous essay.[30] Furthermore (and here, again, *Under the Tongue* is representative of Vera's entire opus) although it is

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[28] For a discussion of issues surrounding the voice and memory in *Under the Tongue*, see M. Samuelson's, 'A River in my Mouth: Writing the Voice in *Under the Tongue*' and her 'Re-membering the Body: Rape and Recovery in *Without a Name* and *Under the Tongue*,' both in Muponde and Taruvinga, *Sign and Taboo*, pp. 15-24 and 93-100 respectively.

[29] G. C. Spivak, 'A Literary Representation of The Subaltern: A Woman's text from the Third World,' in G. C. Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York, Methuen, 1987), pp. 222-240.

[30] G. C. Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in Williams and Chrisman, *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*, pp. 66-111.

the story of survival against all odds, there is a sense in which Zhizha's story is *not* the story of a becoming.

By this I mean that it is not a story of the protagonists' maturing, 'growing up,' education or any other kind of mental development leading to identity change, such as I discussed in previous chapters in connection with *Nervous Conditions* and *Harvest of Thorns*.[31] Vera has yet to write a *Bildungsroman*. In that sense, her subaltern women are static: but to say this is merely to state that from the outset there is nothing less-than-whole or less-than-finished about them. We do not see – because we do not *need* to see - the 'progress' of Zhizha or Nehanda.[32] What does need to change, on the other hand, are the deformed, constrained and divided worlds in which they exist. In chapter 21 of *Under the Tongue*, Zhizha's attempt to imagine Grandmother as a young woman is spoiled by a mirror, an object reflecting framed space back at the person looking. (*UT*, 98/99) In the novel's final chapter, city women develop a ritual of breaking mirrors in the street, possibly, we are told, as an expression of missing the men who have gone to fight. Vera's novels' attitude towards colonial worlds and chronotopes is comparable to the 'marvellous act' (*UT*, 112) of the woman who publicly smashed 'a mirror the size of herself.' (*Ibid.*)

It has been pointed out above that *Nehanda* and *Under the Tongue* anticipate a changed future, but do not articulate it. These novels desire, but do not show, a chronotope different form the colonial ones they construct. In *Without a Name* and *Butterfly Burning*, even the anticipation is missing. In both of these texts, the central space is that of women's bodies: *Without a Name* is a story about rape and infanticide, while *Butterfly Burning* deals with unwanted pregnancy and self-inflicted abortion. Both culminate in the women's self-destruction. For characters like Mazvita (*Without a Name*) and Phephelapi (*Butterfly Burning*), this remains the only option because they inhabit worlds even more constrained than that of *Under the Tongue*. Although the space-time of memory exists within them, it has become a private, secret domain: its collective, dialogic component is entirely absent.

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[31] For a brief juxtaposition of Vera's work with *Harvest of Thorns* with reference to the genre of *Bildungsroman*, see N. Wilson-Tagoe, 'History, Gender and the Problem of Representation in the Novels of Yvonne Vera,' in Muponde and Taruvinga, *Sign and Taboo*, pp. 155-178.

[32] It may appear that the final chapter of *The Stone Virgins*, in which the heroine, Nonceba, recovers gradually from physical abuse, contradicts this statement. I discuss this in section five below.

It is arguable that, in *Nehanda* and *Under the Tongue*, spatial restructuring is associated with circular movement, or *returning*: Nehanda's from the forest, Tachiveyi's from the war, Runyararo's from prison. In *Without a Name* and *Butterfly Burning*, however, the heroines' spatial circling turns out to be fruitless, bringing with it no promise of real change. This is because they make two basic spatio-temporal mistakes: they fail to realise the circumscribed nature of physical space available to them, and they assume that time is linear and disjointed.

Mazvita travels (via a large, white-owned farm) from a war-destroyed village to an urban township and back. For her, the spatial triangle created by these three places is associated with three men: an anonymous rapist, a caring lover and an incidental companion. Wishing to cut herself off from the (unarticulated and unshared) memory of the first, Mazvita is, paradoxically, also unable to stay with the second. In an ironic reversal of the happy city-country journey narrated by Cole Bowen and discussed in Chapter Three, Mazvita defies the Rhodesian chronotope and goes unaccompanied from the countryside to the city. But she overestimates the difference between them, and mistakes physical movement for change. 'She did not share in the belief that time was *continuous and endless*' (*WN*, 56) and 'longed for a future in which she would look *backwards* and feel fulfilment, so her *divisions of time* were cautious and laboured.' (*Ibid.*) The linear progress she imagines is impossible for a black woman in the space of a colony. Instead, in another image evoking timeflow's reversibility, the future comes threateningly *at* her ('as though she fought against a strong current that determined to move against her. The future threatened her, it was large.' - *Ibid.*), pushing her, finally, backwards both in space and in time: the novel's last chapter starts with the sentence 'It is yesterday.' (*WN*, 101) The same happens to Phephelaphi in *Butterfly Burning*. Never having left the Bulawayo township of Makokoba, she is, after a quasi-circular relocation within it ('Boyidi and Zandile both watched her walk slowly down L Road, the suitcase above her head, each of her strides pronounced a changed womanhood, till she turned into Jukwa Road *where she had begun*.' - *BB*, 26) caught twice in the identical set of circumstances that pulls her back from her dream of progress. What separates Mazvita and Phephelaphi from Vera's other heroines is their aloneness, and lack of participation in dialogue: they are both marked by 'a silence that inspires a quest for personal autonomy and self-

extension.'[33] Yet it is precisely this silence that prevents them from achieving the personal progress they seek.

Because the space opened up by dialogue is not available to them, the only means these women have left of expressing their identities is through ritualised death. 'Death,' says the narrator of *Without a Name*, 'properly executed, could be mistaken for progress.' (*WN*, 36) To adjust to constrained circumstances, and become like the prostitute and the shebeen owner in *Butterfly Burning*, or the anonymous city women in *Without a Name*, is impossible. For Vera's women, the freedom of movement – both spatio-temporal and social - is a condition of survival. Nor do the novels' narrators ever find it unreasonable that Phephelphi wants to be a nurse at a time when it is impossible for black women to do so, or that Mazvita 'was definite that she had not come to the city simply to nurse the children of strangers.' (*WN*, 58) In these texts, narrative focus is an expression of an ideological stance. Mazvita and Phephelaphi are *strange*. But, yet again, it is not they but the limitations of their worlds that require altering. In a Vera novel, movement is synonymous with resistance.

It seems to me that in this uncompromising stance lies a key component of the political and artistic significance of Vera's work. It does not, however, entail ideological rigidity. Positioned, in their marginality, at the very centres of their worlds, Vera's women are infinitely more complex than either the colonial or a monologic kind of nationalist discourse would allow. Their identities are neither dependent on men's,[34] nor constructed in absolute opposition to them.[35] They are predicated (as I hinted at the end of Chapter Four) on the kind of spatio-temporal freedom that allows for 'a sense of belonging *before* that kind of belonging which rested on another's wondrous claim.' (*BB*, 69) This is particularly clearly discernible

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[33] Wilson-Tagoe, 'History, Gender and the Problem of Representation,' p. 171.

[34] 'Hence the woman looks to the husband – and therefore to the male – as protector, defender and provider. But she, by her very make-up, has another role as indispensable and important because it is complementary to his for the well-being of the family institution.' Michael Gelfand, 'The Shona Woman,' in *NADA, The Rhodesian Ministry of Internal Affairs Manual* 10 (5), 1973, p. 47.

[35] 'Far from effecting positive change in the relations of power and authority between themselves and their husbands, the new breed of women under discussion only succeeds in redefining their sense of liberation in terms of a radical androgynous identity. This form of identity seeks to define a woman as an autonomous self, whose individuality has nothing to do with her relations to the man.' Kennedy C. Chinyowa, 'Gender Development in Shona Literature,' in E. M. Chiwome and Z. Gambahaya (eds), *Culture and Development – Perspectives from the South* (Harare, Mond Books, 1998), p. 168.

in Vera's latest novel, *The Stone Virgins* – the first of Vera's novelistic narratives to cross the temporal boundary marking the moment of independence.

5.

At the centre of the chronotope of *The Stone Virgins* are: temporally, the years immediately preceding and following the coming of independence; spatially, the rural area of Kezi, outside Bulawayo. The opening sentences of the novel's second chapter state simply: 'Kezi is a rural enclave. Near it are the hills of Gulati.' (*SV*, 15) Readers also learn that the smell of rain evaporating from the damp roofs of Kezi village huts is 'the softest scent of living things there is – it is life itself.' (*Ibid.*)

The novel carefully positions Kezi as a place which is normally considered a periphery. The closing paragraph of the first chapter (which is devoted entirely to a description of Bulawayo) describes a 200-kilometre drive, in a straight line, westwards from the bustling porch of a busy city hotel to the Kezi general store, beyond which there are no buses and no tarred roads. Kezi – where most of the novel takes place – is most pointedly *not* the city, although Bulawayo's lights are visible from it at night. (*SV*, 15) It is also not where decisions of national importance are made. At independence, rural residents read reports of the landslide victory of the new Prime Minister in the paper (*SV*, 53); before that, young lovers pretend to be phoning the old, Rhodesian, Prime Minister from a green phone booth without a mouthpiece. (*SV*, 19) Like *Bones*, *The Stone Virgins* narrates the story of rural people who are normally forgotten. But for the novel's implied narrator, and for Kezi's residents, it is the centre of the world:

> In truth, the bus drives from Bulawayo to Kezi, then back to Bulawayo. But on the slim wooden plaque suspended next to the conductor's window Kezi comes first, and in the minds of the residents of Kezi, of course, Kezi comes first: the bus, therefore, is seen as driving from Kezi to Bulawayo to Kezi, over and over again during the entire week. (*SV*, 17)

In compositional terms, it is Bulawayo that is the periphery: the text returns to a description of its space only in its last chapter.

The social centre of Kezi – what John Noyes would have called the main nodal point of this world's chronotope – is the Thandabantu (literally 'love-people') general store. This is where the bus stops, people socialise, trade, and exchange views. This is also where, at independence, gender-related social change is perceived and recorded, as female guerrillas win the right to sit on the veranda on upturned beer crates, something previously reserved for senior men only. (*SV*, chapter four) In chapter thirteen, the Thandabantu store is deliberately destroyed, its owner tortured and killed by the soldiers of the new, independent government supposedly suppressing a dissident rebellion. In *The Stone Virgins*, the colonial contrast between the country and the city is widened, rather than closed, after independence.

To the east, Kezi is encircled by the hills of Gulati. Before independence, there are armed guerrillas in the hills (*SV*, chapter nine); after independence, there are both armed men – dissidents unhappy with the new dispensation - and government's torture camps for the civilians accused of supporting them. (*SV*, 124) If the huts of Kezi are linked to 'life itself,' the stony landscape of Gulati stands for violence and death. The hills shelter Sibaso, a freedom fighter who does not give up his weapons at independence, but roams the countryside inflicting harm on civilians: 'Independence is a compromise to which I could not belong.' (*SV*, 89) The life-enhancing qualities of the landscape of Kezi are embodied by Thenjiwe, a young woman 'more beautiful than rain.' (*SV*, 30) Sibaso, on the other hand, sleeps in a sacred cave (decorated with ancient paintings, 'the stone virgins') and in a bomb crater, both containing corpses (*SV*, 96-97, 130). He merges with the rocky landscape and becomes inhuman: 'The rocks split open, time shifts and I confess that I am among the travellers who steal shelter from the dead.' (*SV*, 95). In chapter six, Sibaso kills Thenjiwe (spectacularly, by decapitating her) - an act of brutality that parallels the destruction of Thandabantu store. After independence, rather than being liberated, the space of Kezi becomes 'a naked cemetery.' (*SV*, 143) Through references to Sibaso's state of mind this space is repeatedly (albeit indirectly) associated with the wider social space of Africa as a whole. 'He was already dead, an exhumed thing breathing. His arms a nest for a continent, a battlefield.' (*SV*, 90; see also 78 and 111)

The novel's narrative comprises four strands, all constituted out of very few events, all marked by a series of circlings and returns characteristic of Vera's work. The first

is of the arrival of a man, Cephas Dube, in Kezi, his brief love affair with Thenjiwe, and his leaving for Bulawayo. The second, told partly in flashback, is the story Sibaso, which includes his leaving Gulati and returning there. The third is the narrative of Thenjiwe's sister Nonceba, who witnesses Thenjiwe's death and is herself raped and mutilated by Sibaso. She, too, goes to Bulawayo, after Cephas returns to Kezi in order to take her away.[36] The fourth strand narrates the death of shop owner Mahlathini and the destruction of Thandabantu store.

As in *Under the Tongue*, the narrative focus of *The Stone Virgins* alternates between male and female characters, although with less regularity. The impersonal narrative voice veers between adopting the perspectives of Thenjiwe, Cephas, Nonceba and Sibaso, and the third-person textual segments that are interspersed with the first-person narration of Nonceba's and Sibaso's internal lives. The destruction of Thandabantu store and the torture of Mahlathini are, on the other hand, related by a narrative voice almost Tolstoyian in its omniscience. 'Mahlathini's death would not be registered. There would be no memory desired of it. It was such a time. Such a death.' (*SV*, 122) 'The team of soldiers who had congregated on Thandabantu store had demonstrated that anything which had happened so far had not been random or unplanned. Atrocious, yes, but purposeful.' (*SV*, 124) This is, to my knowledge, the most direct indictment of government-sponsored violence in post-independence Zimbabwe so far. In *The Stone Virgins*, rural inhabitants do not merely find themselves at the mercy of violent dissidents whom the government fails to control, as in Hove's *Shadows*. Nor is the post-independence violence simply the extension of pre-independence ethnic conflict, as in Kanengoni's *Echoing Silences*. In Vera's novel, the first independent government deliberately destroys socially produced space in the former colonial periphery: 'They committed evil as though it was a legitimate pursuit, a ritual for their own convictions.' (*SV*, 124)

Compositionally, the text is divided into two parts. The first, comprising the opening four chapters, is entitled '1950-1980'. The second, which includes chapters five to seventeen, bears a designation '1981-1986.' Within this broad temporal framework, relatively few temporal details are given. We know that Thenjiwe was 32 in 1979 when she met Cephas (*SV*, 33, 161), and that Nonceba was still at boarding school

[36] Here as in Kanengoni's *Echoing Silences*, a man is linked with the younger sister of his lover who dies in a war.

then; we are told that their affair lasted for about two months. (*SV*, 36) The final chapter takes place in 1983, when Nonceba has been in Bulwayo for a year. (*SV*, 149) Since the dissident war starts in 1981 (*SV*, 59), the murders of Thenjiwe and Mahlathini must have taken place in 1982.

This relative temporal vagueness is typical of Vera's chronotopes, as is the heterogeneous and constrained quality of the novel's physical space. (The inhabitants of Kezi are positioned between two opposed and unyielding locations just like those living in Dangambvura in *Under the Tongue*.) The existence of the space-time of memory, reached collectively through the solidarity of women and instrumental in the healing of trauma, is also hinted at in *The Stone Virgins*. After her ordeal, Nonceba is brought back to consciousness by her aunt Sihle. This causes her to remember her family, which in turn makes her fight for survival. ('I must live. I do not want naZenzo to be blamed for my missing voice, for Thenjiwe, dying.' - *SV*, 104).[37] In addition to that, there is a strong sense of the future being a threat, suggesting a trace of time-flow's reversibility I discussed above in connection with Vera's other novels. ('She brings the stranger home. She has a lot to forget so this is all right. She has no idea now, or ever, that some of the harm *she has to forget is in the future, not in the past*, and that she would not have enough time in the future to forget any hurt.' - *SV*, 31) I would argue, however, that, within Vera's opus, the chronotope of *The Stone Virgins* represents a spatial widening and a linearisation of time. (In this sense, it is the exact opposite of *Nehanda*, in which the reverse processes took place.) This is due to the fact that the narrative straddles the moment of independence.

In order for this to be properly explained, several other key respects in which *The Stone Virgins* stands out spatio-temporally within Vera's opus have to be mentioned.[38] One of them is to do with the static construction of Vera's female characters, discussed in the previous section. Of the two heroines of *The Stone Virgins*, Thenjiwe remains as static as Nehanda, Mazvita in *Without a Name*, or Phephelaphi in *Butterfly Burning*. However, Nonceba, the survivor, is different. The

[37] In chapter ten, readers are informed that Thenjiwe and Nonceba's mother left their father, that their unconventional aunt would not marry at all despite having children, and that the young women themselves were marked by their 'inability to secure husbands.' (*SV*, 102)

[38] For a discussion of this novel's unique relationship with the academic discipline of History, see Ranger, 'History has its Ceiling.'

final chapter of *The Stone Virgins* shows the process through which she overcomes her trauma. She has moved to Bulawayo, endured repeated surgery (Sibaso had cut off her lips), and found a job. In doing all this, she changes; and since the change is in the direction of gaining both practical and emotional confidence and independence, it may be described as growth, or emergence. 'To watch her happiness unfold is to know that [Cephas] has already helped; they have each dealt with the past.' (*SV*, 160) This may appear to contradict the statement, made in the previous section, that Vera has yet to write a *Bildungsroman*. However, the difference between Nonceba's progress and the personal emergence described by Bakhtin in his essay on the *Bildungsroman* (and discussed in the previous chapter with relation to *Harvest of Thorns*) is not simply in the fact that Nonceba's growth is only just beginning, or that it does not span a large part of the novel's narrative. *The Stone Virgins* is not a *Biuldungsroman* in the Bakhtinian sense because Nonceba is undergoing a recovery from being *broken* – violently wrenched from previous wholeness, which can never again be fully attained. '[Cephas] knows that what he sees of Nonceba is only what is recoverable; he has made her whole for himself.' (*SV*, 158) Still, the fact that Nonceba changes at all makes *The Stone Virgins* different from Vera's other texts.

Again as regards the uniqueness of *The Stone Virgins*: in the novel, Nonceba's trauma is brought about by a chain of events related to political developments in post-independence Zimbabwe. But the exact causes of these developments (the dissatisfaction of Ndebele guerrillas with how they were treated in assembly camps and the newly formed national army)[39] are neither represented nor analysed by the text. On the other hand, Nonceba's recovery is *also made possible by independence*. This is textually stressed, and underlined through spatial means. Despite its indictment of the violent post-independence spatial practices in the rural areas, the chronotope of *The Stone Virgins* also narrates the partial letting-up of Rhodesian spatial constraints, and the easing off of pressure exerted in the other novels by the counter-flow of circular time. The best illustration of this is the double role in the narrative of the city of Bulawayo.

As I explained above, the narrative lingers on the space of Bulawayo only in the first and last chapters of the novel; the atrocities that take place in the countryside are narrated in-between. This has prompted a reviewer of *The Stone Virgins* to write: 'By

the end of the book, I longed for the safe, mundane matrix of streets offered in the[...] first pages and to be freed from the personal, to return to the beginning.'[40] The last chapter, however, does *not* return to the beginning. There are, in fact, *two* Bulawayos in *The Stone Virgins*. The street matrix described in detail in the opening chapter identifies Bulawayo as a colonially-produced space in the very first sentence: 'Selborne Avenue in Bulawayo cuts from Fort Street (at Charter House), across to Jameson Road (of the Jameson Raid), through to Main Street [.]' (*SV*, 3) The black migrant labourers who travel from Bulawayo to Johannesburg and back know that the city is part of the Rhodesian chronotope, and is divided: 'Home is Bulawayo. This side of the city, not the other, *their own side separated*. Over and past Lobengula Street [.]' (*SV*, 6) In this space, black people meet on street corners because they are not allowed into the buildings of the city centre.

> *Ekoneni* is a rendezvous, a place to meet. You cannot meet inside any of the buildings because this city is divided, entry is forbidden to black men and women, you meet outside buildings, not at doorways, entries, foyers, not beneath arched windows, not under graceful colonnades, balustrades and cornices, but *ekoneni*. Here, you linger, ambivalent, permanent as time. You are in transit. The corner is a camouflage, a place of instancy and style; a place of protest. (*SV*, 10)

At night, in a smoke-filled shebeen, black men and women express their dreams in a space that is literally under ground (see *SV*, 7-9). This Bulawayo, 'built on a grid' (*SV*, 9), is a city of unfulfilled longing and sharp edges and divides.

The Bulawayo of the last chapter, on the other hand, is a city of flowers: they are everywhere in the city streets as Nonceba, who now lives here, moves through them. Although it is possible to tell that some of the female flower-sellers she watches are white ('her hair stands in neat large brunette curls' – *SV*, 148), and others black ('I give you bonus ... madam' – *SV*, 150), the text does not say so directly. The colonial grid of streets remains. But among the city's workers (and in contrast to the migrant labourers of chapter one), there are now 'recently employed black bank tellers and trainee managers newly graduated from the economics department of the University of Zimbabwe.' (*SV*, 149) Rather than meeting at city corners, away from doorways and entries, black people like Cephas can now move out of the black ghettos: 'He

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[39] On this, see Alexander, 'Dissident Perspectives' and Ranger, 'History has its Ceiling.'
[40] V. Hamblin, 'Yvonne Vera's scintillating new novel gives voice to women,' *The Daily News* (Harare), 4 June 2002, p. 12.

had watched the city change during that year and he moved to the flat from Mpopoma township, partly to prove to himself that independence had really come, to share in its immense promise, in its cityscape.' (*SV*, 161) After independence, the space of Bulawayo has changed significantly *and irrevocably*. It is only because of this that the city can, for Nonceba, become a place of healing. ('Mpilo,' the name of the hospital where she is taken after her ordeal, means 'life.') The neat and airy flat that she shares with Cephas (on the second floor of a building with the colonial name 'Kensington Flats' – *SV*, 154) is in stark contrast with the underground shebeen from chapter one. In the flat, Nonceba has her own room: she is the only one of Vera's heroines in possession of a space that is 'completely hers.' (*SV*, 153) In contrast to Phephelaphi, stranded in the 1940s Makokoba, she has a 'good school certificate in the city' (*SV*, 157), and a future. Unlike in *Bones* and *Echoing Silences*, in *The Stone Virgins*, the coming of independence brings about further tragedy, but *also* a significant social change for the better.

In other words, this novel is well aware of the dangers of what Richard Werbner has called quasi-nationalism – the destructive 'dark side of nationalism' that accompanies the anti-colonial thrust of African liberation struggles.[41] But it also recognises and represents nationalism's 'light,' emancipatory side. *The Stone Virgins* starts by evoking colonially produced space, and tells a story of how a violent colonial spatial inequality - that between the city and the rural areas – was preserved and deepened after independence. In the end, however, it evokes the possibility of constructing what Lefebvre would have called a *differential* national space. The novel's last paragraph tells of how Cephas – who comes from *Mashonaland* (*SV*, 34) – is involved, in his job as a historian, with restoring kwoBulawayo, the seat of the pre-colonial *Ndebele* state.[42] The text treats the ancient seat of the Ndebele kingdom as a nationalist symbol – but it represents the kind of new nation that understands the need 'to restore its past.' (*SV*, 165) While Vera's other novels stopped short of showing a change in the colonial chronotope, *The Stone Virgins* represents this change – and constructs it as being both complex and ambivalent.

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[41] R. Werbner, 'Smoke from the Barrel of a Gun: Postwars of the Dead, Memory and Reinsciption in Zimbabwe,' in R. Werbner (ed), *Memory and the Postcolony* (London, Zed Books, 1998), p. 92.
[42] Although the Rhodesian chronotope regards urban spaces as'white', colonial Bulawayo was in fact preceded by a pre-colonial town. On this, see P. Kaarsholm, '*Si Ye Pambili* – Which Way Forward? Urban Development, Culture and Politics in Bulawayo,' in Raftopoulos and Yoshikuni, *Sites of Struggle*, pp. 227-256.

The character of Cephas also points at a final key uniqueness of *The Stone Virgins* within Vera's opus. This is the first of Vera's novels that allows a male character to participate in the community of healing through which traumatised women reach the space-time of memory. Vera has spoken of Cephas' difference: 'Of all my characters, he is the most faithful man to our human dignity.'[43] Although Nonceba is, in the first instance, supported by a female relative, the novel's chapter finds her living with Cephas and sharing with him the memory of his former lover, her dead sister Thenjiwe. Unlike in the other novels, however, the space-time of memory is reached without words. 'She does not talk about Thenjiwe. Not once since leaving Kezi.' (*SV*, 163) Cephas is allowed to do this service to Nonceba because he allows her the freedom to control her body, and does not make any attempt to control her movement.

Although Ranger is right to describe the relationship between Cephas and Nonceba as 'unspoken love,'[44] it is a love that is not physical. 'Perhaps this was the similarity between the sisters, to ask him to wait, till she again calls his name. He would let Nonceba be. Leave her and bury his own longing.' (*SV*, 164) Furthermore, he does not ask her to refrain from initiating a displacement (in this he is different from Nyenyedzi and Fumbatha). 'If she decides to move out of her flat, he will help her find another. He will even give her up; this, his final disguise.' (*SV*, 160) Cephas, again, comes to represent a non-violent space-time that recognises multiplicity and difference. Because she has access to such a space-time, for Nonceba a striving for emancipation is not realised in a circular trajectory. Unlike her sister, she has escaped the onrush of the future. Unlike Mazvita, she goes from village to city, and is not forced to return. Nonceba's journey from Kezi to Bulawayo is a line as straight as the road between them, and it unfolds in chronological time. After independence, such straightforwardness has become conceivable. But, as before in Vera, displacement, for a woman, symbolises a search for the freedom of the space of the body.

The Stone Virgins is full of images of men's and women's bodies merging, and of people entering – mentally or physically – the inside of another. Among the most

[43] G. Mutandwa, interview with Yvonne Vera: 'Yvonne Vera: the person and the dreamer,' *Financial Gazette* (Harare), May 23-29, 2002, p. 47.
[44] Ranger, 'History has its Ceiling,' p. 208.

sustained and memorable of such images is Sibaso's decapitation of Thenjiwe, in which his body usurps her space-time:

> His head is behind Thenjiwe, where Thenjiwe was before, floating in her body, he is in her body. He is floating like a flash of lightning. Thenjiwe's body remains upright while this man's head emerges behind hers, inside it, replacing each of her moments, taking her position in the azure of the sky. He is absorbing Thenjiwe's motions into his own body, existing where Thenjiwe was, moving into the spaces she has occupied. Then Thenjiwe vanishes and he is affixed in her place, before Nonceba's eyes, sudden and unmistakable, like a storm. The moment is his. Irrevocable. His own. (*SV*, 66-67)

Typically of Vera, extreme violence is here described without direct reference to pain, shock or blood: Sibaso moves quickly and gracefully. What he does, though, is to annihilate another by 'moving into the spaces she has occupied.' In Vera's work, violence, its causes and its consequences are *always* spatio-temporal. For her women, more often than not, bodily merging means a violation. Within the chronotopic configurations of their worlds, to conceive of a Lefebvrian differential space means first and foremost to demand, and get, independent visibility. To be seen, simply, as 'something with an outline.' (*BB*, 91)

CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusion

The stories told by all the novels analysed in this thesis are, either wholly or to a large extent, related to the pre-independence era. *Nervous Conditions* and Vera's first four novels are entirely situated in the colonial period; the others (the novels of Hove, Maraire, Chinodya, Kanengoni, and Vera's *The Stone Virgins*) link pre- and post- independence times. None of the texts I have analysed has thus found it possible *not* to interrogate what Chapter Three has called the Rhodesian chronotope. In this, it is safe to say, they are representative of Zimbabwean fiction in English as a whole. Even though more than two decades have passed since the coming of independence, Zimbabwean novels have continued the dialogue with colonial models of space-time, initiated by the first generation of Anglophone writers in the 1960s and continued by the likes of Mungoshi and Marechera in the 70s. As Chapter Three indicated, I would attribute this continuity to the fact that some key features of colonial space have remained in place after independence.

The post-independence novels interrogate and subvert colonially-produced models of space-time by adopting two key narrative strategies. Firstly, their chronotopes replicate the positioning of colonial boundaries while at the same time re-interpreting their meaning. This is especially true of the boundary between urban and rural spaces, which features in the majority of the novels considered here. (The only exceptions are Vera's *Nehanda* and *Butterfly Burning*.) All of these novels deny the absolute difference in 'natural,' race-bound identities, which the Rhodesian chronotope locates in the cities and in the countryside. They link rural and urban spaces to various *other* kinds of difference instead. In *Without a Name*, it is the difference between gendered encounters; in *Zenzele*, a difference in culture; in *Harvest of Thorns*, a difference in socially-produced names and identities; in *Bones*, the difference between the presence and absence of war, and so on. Novels such as *Nervous Conditions* and *The Stone Virgins* also de- and re-centre the Rhodesian chronotope, by relegating urban spaces to the margins of their own models of space-time. Perhaps most importantly, the novels stress the *links* between rural and urban spaces. In texts by Hove,Vera, Chinodya and Kanengoni, the chief among such links is the presence of various forms of violence. The work of these four novelists also

stresses the continuity of violence across another colonially-established boundary – that between pre- and post- independence periods of time. In doing so, they question the opposing moral claims (tied to the 'justice' supposedly inherent in socially produced spaces) in both the colonial and post-colonial political regimes.

The second narrative strategy adopted by the novels I have analysed consists in narrating events taking place in alternative locations, situated in-between the spatial binaries that constitute the Rhodesian chronotope. Examples of such liminal spaces are the space of apprenticeship in *Nervous Conditions*, the space-time of war in the war novels, Vera's space-time of memory and the space-time of the supernatural in Hove and Kanengoni. These locations may be regarded as the nuclei of Lefebvrian differential counter-spaces. However, none of the novels expands such spaces into full and permanent models of differential space-time. While all twelve novels agree in exposing the Rhodesian chronotope as violent (in its restrictiveness)[1] and violating (in that it produces and enforces damaged, traumatised, incomplete and externally-imposed identities), those that engage with post-independence space-times agree also in representing the spatio-temporal change brought about by independence as, at best, partial and ambivalent (as in *Bones*, *Ancestors*, *Zenzele* or *The Stone Virgins*) or, at worst, as no change at all (as in *Shadows* and *Echoing Silences*). Unlike the post-independence axiological texts (and therefore with the partial exception of *Zenzele*), no novel I discussed represents the coming of independence as an unequivocal spatio-temporal *liberation*.

The novels locate the violent (restrictive) quality of post/colonially-produced spaces in their *hierarchical* nature. This may be illustrated by the difficulties that bodily displacement - the physical crossing of boundaries – presents for the characters. Among the twelve novels I am discussing, there are only two – *Nervous Conditions* and *Zenzele* – in which characters have the luxury of routinely covering distance in cars, 'at once extensions of the body and mobile homes,' as Lefebvre describes them.[2] In Zimbabwean texts, characters with access to this privileged mode of transport have a foothold in spaces close to the centres of power. (In different texts, the narrative figure 'power' is determined by various combinations of attributes related to race, gender, class and age.) In is perhaps not a coincidence therefore that

[1] Four of the novels I analysed (*Bones*, *Nervous Conditions*, *Echoing Silences* and *The Stone Virgins*) contain the figure of character *replacement*.

Nervous Conditions and *Zenzele* are also rare among Zimbabwean novels in English in demonstrating pronounced elements of comedy. Readers of texts by Hove, Chinodya, Kanengoni and Vera are less likely to laugh, and their characters - Marita, Benjamin, Munashe and Mazvita - join Stanley Nyamfukudza's Sam and Wilson Katiyo's Alexio in having to cross boundaries in trains, buses, or on foot. In the narrative worlds of Zimbabwean novels, the ease of crossing physical space is directly related to the possession of power. Most of the novels I have looked at tell stories about the slow, painful and belaboured movement of the disempowered – both before and after independence.

The hierarchical quality of Zimbabwean novelistic space also has a *temporal* effect: it limits memory, both public and private. In addition to the hardships linked to the crossing of space, the disempowered encounter difficulties in maintaining their identities, and memories of their identities, in time – especially as discursively produced in the form of official histories. In a study of the selection processes tied to the spatial practices that produced The Heroes' Acre – the central public monument of the newly-independent nation - Richard Werbner has written: 'The official version is never the whole story in Zimbabwe.'[3] In contrast, Zimbabwean publisher Irene Staunton has called fiction such as Hove's and Vera's 'Zimbabwe's unofficial truth commission.'[4] Because they tell stories about the disempowered, all of the novelistic chronotopes I have discussed may be read as expressions of a cultural counter-memory, buried or ignored by official state discourses.[5] In Chapter Five, I have tried to show that this statement is to some extent true even of a text such as *Zenzele*, which may at first appear to be *upholding* the 'official version' of Zimbabwean history. Some of the novels (e.g. *Nervous Conditions*, *Harvest of Thorns*, *Ancestors* and *Butterfly Burning*) focus on the difficulties of maintaining the continuity of *private* memory and identity in the face of post/colonial spatio-temporal restraints, while leaving the public aspects of such difficulties implicit. Others (*Nehanda*, *The Stone Virgins*, *Shadows* and *Echoing Silences*) pointedly and explicitly concern

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[2] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 98.
[3] Werbner, 'Smoke from the Barrel of a Gun,' p. 91.
[4] Staunton's statement is quoted in R. L. Swarns, 'Zimbabwe's writers explore despair and violence under black rule,' New York Times, 6 October 2002, as posted in ZIMNEWS on www.zwnews.com on 7 October 2002.
[5] On literature as cultural memory in the Southern African context, see J. Crewe, 'Recalling Adamastor: Literature as Cultural Memory in "White" South Africa,' in M. Bal *et al* (eds), *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present* (Hanover, University Press of New England, 1999), pp. 75-86.

themselves with the *public* suppression of certain kinds of narratives. When contrasted to axiological texts such as *A Fighter for Freedom* or *Woman in Struggle*, they may be seen to be contributing to the social construction of 'the memory of suffering over and above the general tendency of history to celebrate the victors.'[6]

Thematically, this concern with officially forgotten pasts manifests itself in the form of repeated insistence on the importance of speech, language and narrative as embodiments of previously unarticulated memory. Text after text voices the need to *tell more*, to talk, to say what has remained unsaid, to remember. To quote a sampling from the different novels, in *Echoing Silences* we hear: 'We deliberately kept silent about some truths, no matter how small, because some of us felt that we would compromise our power;'[7] in *Ancestors*: 'A story untold is a story of death.'[8] In *Harvest of Thorns*: 'And this I've never told anyone, Dickson.'[9] From *The Stone Virgins*: 'Mahlathini's death would not be registered. There would be no memory desired of it. It was such a time; such a death.[10] From *Bones*: 'Marita will not forget the woman whose body lay near her when people in colourless uniforms went to bury her.'[11] In *Under the Tongue*, we hear: 'I whisper, very softly: "Tonderayi.",'[12] and in *Nervous Conditions*: 'Don't forget, don't forget, don't forget.'[13] Finally, at the outset of *Shadows*: 'For Johana's father, whom no one remembers.'[14] Sometimes, the titles speak for themselves: *Without a Name*, *Echoing Silences*, *Under the Tongue*, *Can We Talk*.

Some novels (most notably Hove's and Kanengoni's) link the need to remember with the need to ritualistically *mourn* the past, and this is, in turn, associated with the power of the supernatural world, whose inhabitants can turn malevolent when stories are suppressed. This is not to say, however, that the novels establish anything like the kind of semantic linkage between 'ancestors,' 'tradition' and 'possession of rural land' that the Zimbabwean ruling party is currently using in an attempt discursively to justify violent spatial practices. A recent advertisement, frequently repeated in the

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[6] P. Ricoeur, 'Memory and Forgetting,' in R. Kearney and M. Dooley (eds), *Questioning Ethics* (London, Routledge, 1999), p. 10.
[7] Kanengoni, *Echoing Silences*, p. 87.
[8] Hove, *Ancestors*, p. 20.
[9] Chinodya, *Harvest of Thorns*, p. 273.
[10] Vera, *The Stone Virgins*, p. 122.
[11] Hove, *Bones*, 103.
[12] Vera, *Under the Tongue*, 59.
[13] Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*, 188.
[14] Hove, *Shadows*, p. 5.

Zimbabwean government-sponsored press (and representative of may others), reads: 'Now that the *land of our ancestors* is in our hands, it's time to use it fully to guarantee food security, create jobs, develop and grow our economy for the good of our country.'[15] In the novels, in contrast, the voices of the ancestors are not associated with the idea of controlling space-time, or with causing segments of space to 'change hands.'[16] On the contrary, they add to and encourage social heteroglossia, as represented in the novels. The fictional ancestral voices (and the heteroglot novels themselves) thus transgress against the authoritative meanings and practices (in the Bakhtinian sense) currently striving to dominate the Zimbabwean social space.

Put differently: despite the national 'unfinished business' tied to the colonial distribution of agricultural land, the twelve Zimbabwean novels that I have analysed do not envisage a 'reversal,' or any kind of a mechanical undoing of the Rhodesian chronotope as the *sole* basis of a 'liberated' national space-time. Taken as a group, and representative of a textual formation, they may, however, be taken as articulations of a spatio-temporal demand. All of them bring into being space-times in which characters lack what may be termed certain basic spatio-temporal rights. In my reading, it is these rights that are the basis of the novels' intimation of the possibility of constructing a differential space-time. There are three of them. They are: (1) the right to *leave,* cross a boundary *and arrive*; (2) the right to *stay* - not to cross a boundary at all; and (3) the right to cross and re-cross a boundary – to *leave* and *return*. All three kinds of spatio-temporal performance should be possible *while maintaining a continuity of identity and the integrity of the body*. Simple as they may sound, these rights are not easily obtained in Zimbabwean novelistic chronotopes. On the contrary, seemingly uncomplicated actions such as 'leaving home,' 'staying at home,' or 'returning home' are fraught with difficulty and danger – as recalling the stories of Tambudzai, Nonceba or Johana's father (and many others) illustrates. Zimbabwean novels tend to tell of worlds in which both displacement and the absence of displacement may result in identity breakdown, physical violation, or both. This is not to say that the novels assign no importance to land ownership and its relationship to identity. Some – *Shadows*, *Ancestors* and *Zenzele* construct characters who long to become 'buyers of land.' But it is precisely these narratives that make it

[15] Cited in W. Moyo, 'On the Breadline,' *News Africa* 1 (32), 2003, p. 21. Emphasis added.
[16] For a discussion of the colonial and post-colonial constructions of pre-colonial spatial 'traditions,' see A. Cheater, 'The Ideology of "Communal" Land Tenure in Zimbabwe: Mythogenesis Enacted?', *Africa* 60 (2), 1990, pp. 188-206.

particularly noticeable that owning the land in itself, without the spatio-temporal rights named above, does not produce the emancipation they desire.

Some novelists and novels have referred to these spatio-temporal rights explicitly. In a non-fictional text about the socio-spatial relationship between Africa and Europe, Chenjerai Hove speaks of the unacceptability of granting Africans '[t]the right to depart, without the right to arrive.'[17] In *The Stone Virgins*, the narrative voice asserts, on behalf of the characters: 'All they want is to come and go as they please. At independence, they just want to go in there, and leave, as they please, not to sneak or peep, but to come, and go, as they please. They would stay gone if they could establish *this one condition*.'[18] To have the freedom to chose between movement and stillness, and to perform the actions of coming, going, staying and returning *without trauma and violation* is the chief idea these novels share of a spatio-temporal 'politics of reconfiguring difference differently.'[19] The novels tell stories about characters who keep trying to attain their rights, and thus, I would argue, project an optimism and a faith in the future. But if, following Lotman, we accept that movement across a boundary is the very basis of narrative itself, then Zimbabwean non-axiological novelistic space-times point at a central trait of the Rhodesian chronotope: it either *suppresses* narratives, or it *enforces* them: it does not leave its inhabitants the possibility of choice. In this lies the key to its violent nature. The relationship between the Rhodesian chronotope and narrative has two important sets of implications: one is related to genre, the other to gender.

In the essay on speech genres, Bakhtin asserts that, in themselves, generic forms (in Pelesian terms, the generic substance of expression) have no pre-fixed meanings independent of their specific, historically contextualised realisations (as forms of expression).[20] In addition to that, genres as historically realised are hardly ever 'pure'; they are inflected and modified according to dialogic contexts in which they find themselves. The Zimbabwean novel in English provides illustrations of both of these points. In Chapter Six, I have tried to show how 'the war novel' endows the second *Chimurenga* with a range of meanings ranging from 'liberation' and

[17] C. Hove, 'Europe and Us: "Please Mind the Gap",' in [editor not stated], *Images of the West* (Harare, Baobab Books, 1996), p. 59.
[18] Vera, *The Stone Virgins*, p. 9. Emphasis added.
[19] W. Natter and J. P. Jones III, 'Identity, Space and other Uncertanties,' in G. Benko and U. Strohmayer (eds), *Space and Social Theory: Interpreting Modernity and Postmodernity* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1997), p. 155.

'emergence' to 'destruction' and 'mental suffering.' As regards the 'purity' of form, this thesis has argued that various Zimbabwean texts have effected a 'partial, structural adoption of western genres'[21] as different as the adventure novel, the novel of ordeal, the biographical novel, the modernist novel and the *Bildungsroman*. However, it is perhaps because this generic diversity has so far escaped critical attention that the label 'the realist novel' has, in some critical writings on Zimbabwean fiction, acquired negative ideological connotations. I have in mind the debate on Dambudzo Marechera, which I discussed in Chapter Two. For some critics in the 'pro-Marechera' camp, novelistic 'realism' (which they associate largely with 'linear' plotting and 'omniscient' narration) has become associated with monologic and prescriptive dominant nationalist discourses, and the (axiological) novels that transmit them.[22]

In contrast, I would argue that a novelistic genre which reached its peak in the West precisely during the 'stylistic formation' of realism, could, in the Zimbabwean context, be taken as a symbol of resistance to social monoglossia. If, as I have said, the Rhodesian chronotope inhibits certain kinds of narratives, and induces/enforces others, then the kind of story it most consistently prevents from unfolding fully is the story of a double (individual and national) emergence that Bakhtin describes as the most important type of *Bildungsroman* (as explained in Chapters Five and Six). Taken collectively, the twelve novels analysed by this thesis tell the story of the impossibility, in Zimbabwe, of telling a story of such a double emergence: *no* young person in *any* of the novels is shown emerging 'along with the world.' The novels that attempt to tell such stories (*Nervous Conditions* and *Harvest of Thorns*) establish truncated versions of the genre. Others (*Echoing Silences* and *The Stone Virgins*) read like bitter distortions of it. Yet others (by Hove, and again Vera) represent static characters in static worlds, or (*Zenzele*) point at narratives of emergence as *absent*. In a study of the Continental and English *Bildungsroman*, Franco Moretti claims that the *Bildungsroman* as a type of narrative encapsulates the contradictions of European modernity.[23] If this is so, then the contradictions of Zimbabwean post/colonial

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[20] See Bakhtin, 'The Problem of Speech Genres,' p. 88 *ff.*

[21] J. Blommaert, 'Intercultural Communication and African Popular Literature: on Reading a Swahili Pulp Novel,' *African Languages and Cultures* 6 (1), 1993, pp. 34-35.

[22] See, for example, D. Shaw, 'Transgressing Traditional Narrative Form,' in Veit-Wild and Chennells, *Emerging Perspectives on Dambudzo Marechera*, pp. 3-21.

[23] Moretti, *The Way of the World*. Moretti's definition of *Bildungsroman* is compatible with Bakhtin's in that it emphasises the duality of idenitities (private and public) that is central to it. Moretti also adopts Lotman's definition of a narrative event (see esp. p. 26).

modernity have shown themselves to be only partly narratable through this borrowed generic form. Each Zimbabwean novelistic reference to the genre may thus be seen as an intertextual reminder of *a lack*; of something missing: for example, the impossibility of telling a Zimbabwean story of *gradual emergence*, or the absence of the spatio-temporal rights enumerated above.

As for the gender-related implications of the absence in the novels of spatio-temporal rights, all the texts analysed in this thesis represent female characters as particularly disadvantaged. In comparison to the men, they face multiple spatio-social barriers and multiple silencings: while men's spatio-temporal rights are limited primarily by the seemingly impersonal (although power-related) configurations of their chronotopes, women's are additionally influenced and circumscribed by the male characters. In the novels, men attempt to dictate women's spatio-temporal behaviour: women are asked/ordered/allowed/forced to cross or not to cross boundaries, to leave, stay or return. Female characters are also represented as particularly susceptible to violations of bodily integrity. Various forms of physical violence against women (rape, mutilation, beatings, marriage without choice and war-related violence) are thematised in *all* the novels I have discussed, not only in those by women authors. Violent episodes from Yvonne Vera's books are particularly memorable, but one may also recall Marita, Janifa, Johana, Miriro, Tariro, Mai Tambu, Rudo from *Zenzele* and Kudzai from *Echoing Silences*. When it comes to basic chronotopic rights and gender, non-axiological Zimbabwean novels appear to be broad agreement, and this includes many novels not focused on by this thesis. Even an adventure story, such as Garikai Mutasa's *Mavhondo*, is able to state: 'she [a female freedom fighter] had no illusions about the men in her society – they were mostly sexists at heart. This was the only thing they had in common with the Rhodesians.'[24] This broad agreement perhaps helps to explain another marked regularity, related to the gender of *authors*. Despite the prominence of war as a theme in Zimbabwean writing, women novelists remain pointedly uninterested in representing the space-times of the armed struggle. When they do construct chronotopes that contain the space-times of war, women represent them as de-militarised, as I pointed out in Chapter Six. For Zimbabwe's women writers, narratives of armed combat are not the stories that most urgently demand telling. Given the current insistence of the Zimbabwean official discourses on the continuity

[24] Mutasa, *Mavhondo* (in *The Bridge: Two Novellas*), p. 139.

of the *Chimurenga*, this rejection of militarised chronotopes may be read as a gendered form of protest and resistance.

In today's Zimbabwe, the ruling ZANU (PF) is striving to exert control over all the aspects of the social production of space: spatial practice,[25] representations of space[26] and representational spaces,[27] claiming that this is necessary in order to reclaim and finally de-colonise the Zimbabwean nation. The government is claiming that it has finally undone the Rhodesian chronotope; nevertheless, differences remain between the inside and the outside of Zimbabwe, and between urban and rural areas, as hunger, lack and political persecution dominate the national space and 'war veteran' terror rules the countryside.[28] A recent article in a Zimbabwean newspaper, describing government-sponsored violence in the urban areas (as practised by the ZANU-PF youth militia, 'The Green Bombers'), states: 'They (ZANU PF) want to create a whole generation that thinks in the same way as (President Robert) Mugabe.'[29] In such a context, non-axiological fictional texts have the potential to help keep alive alternative and pluralistic concepts of political and individual morality, social justice and national identity. This brings us back to the question of how fictional texts may be used, discussed in Chapter One in connection with the concept of literary function and touched on in Chapter Three in a discussion of the role of fiction in forging social change. Textual function is linked to the question of readership: whether (and which) Zimbabweans are reading texts such as the ones I have analysed, how they are reading the texts, and what effects the texts may have on them.

It is said that, in the 1970s, Dambudzo Marechera staged a one-man spatio-social protest by walking the length of then-Salisbury's Second Street between the University College of Rhodesia and the city centre, carrying a placard with an anti-colonial message. Many years after his death, one of a group of young, up-and-

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[25] See, for example, A. Meldrum, 'Mugabe hires China to farm seized land,' *The Guardian*, Feb 13 2003, p. 17; Staff Reporter, 'Govt eyes 45 new farms in fresh wave of designations,' *The Financial Gazette*, Harare, January 16-22, 2003, p. 3.

[26] See, for example, D. Nyekorach-Matsanga, 'Travesty of journalism!', *The Herald*, Harare, 17 January 2003, p. 8; Staff Reporter, 'President participates in school construction,' *Ibid*, p. 2.

[27] See, for example, B. Zulu, 'Weather forecasts being censored,' *Zimbabwe Independent*, posted in ZWNEWS, www.zwnews.com on 24 January 2003.

[28] I am grateful to Mai Pamberg for sharing with me the notes and impressions form her research trip to Zimbabwe, which took place in January and February 2003.

[29] F. Mutsaka, '"Green bombers" run amok in towns,' *The Financial Gazette*, Harare, January 16-22 2003, p. 7.

coming Zimbabwean intellectuals publicly credited Marechera's work with helping his group to form a sense of their nation's identity, and of their own identities as Zimbabweans and as intellectuals.[30] In this specific case, Marechera's work is credited with forging a change in social perceptions – a social change – amongst readers. Who are the Zimbabwean readers of novels by Hove, Dangarembga, Maraire, Chinodya, Kanengoni and Vera now? What kind of acts of reception do these novels provoke? How do they participate in the production of Zimbabwean readers' representational spaces? Not enough is known about this. *Bones*, *Nervous Conditions* and *Harvest of Thorns* are on the Zimbabwean high school English syllabi; all the writers except Maraire are taught at University Zimbabwe undergraduate and post-graduate literature courses, as well as at Zimbabwe Open University and teacher-training colleges.[31] Yvonne Vera tells stories about how 'ordinary' people - taxi drivers, curio sellers - have told her that they know and like her work.[32] Zimbabwe is certainly not a bookless society.[33] Finding out more about Zimbabwe-based readers of Zimbabwean novels, about how exactly they (re)construct and use the novels' fictional worlds, and about how these readings may impact upon Zimbabwean social practices, ought to become the subject of a separate study.

[30] See C. Kabwato, 'Marechera abhorred tyranny of any kind,' *The Financial Gazette*, Harare, Thursday 22 August 2002; http://www.fingaz.co.zw/fingaz/2002/August/August22/2304.shtml
[31] I am grateful to Anthony Chennells and Robert Muponde for e-mail conversations about the syllabi of Zimbabwean educational institutions.
[32] R. Primorac, interview with Yvonne Vera, January 2002; conversations with Mai Palmberg.
[33] On this, see C. Larson, *The Ordeal of the African Writer.*

APPENDIX

The textual links between Vera's work and popular/axiological texts have, to my knowledge, not been systematically studied. In her novels, however, Rhodesian townships and Tribal Trust Lands (the 'black' spaces of the Rhodesian chronotope) are represented as places that contain readers of such books, and the books themselves. In *Without a Name*, Joel – the casual, urban-based lover who refuses to support Mazvita's child – reads James Hadley Chase (see chapter fourteen). In *The Stone Virgins*, the inhabitants of Kezi read Nick Carter and Agatha Christie (chapter two), while the former guerrilla Sibaso remembers reading Solomon Mutswairo's *Feso* before joining the war (chapter eleven). When, as I stated in Chapter One, footnote 28, I interviewed Vera in Bulawayo on 25 January 2001, I asked her whether she was familiar with Rhodesian settler fiction and the pre-independence fiction in indigenous languages, and found her affirmative answers interesting and unexpected. I reproduce that part of our conversation in section one below. Later that year (on 28 August) I interviewed Shimmer Chinodya in Harare, and asked him similar questions about his pre-independence reading habits. Unlike Vera, he said that he had had no contact with non-Anglophone fiction, but that, as a young man, he had read popular texts in English. The relevant segment of the interview with him is included in the second section of this Appendix. I believe that both writers' answers point at the importance and potential interest of studying the various genres and formations of Zimbabwean fiction comparatively.

1.

RP: Let me ask about what you read before you left [Zimbabwe]. Did you read Shona novels, or Ndebele novels, at all, when you were at school?

YV: I read Ndebele novels.

RP: Which ones? Can you give names?

YV: *USethi ebukhweni bakhe*. That one, not only did I read, but I listened to it over the radio…

RP: OK, what have you just said? Is that the title?

YV: Yes.

RP: Who's the writer?

YV: Oh, I don't remember…

RP: Sigogo?

YV: Sigogo, yes...[1]

RP: Did you like it? What did you think?

YV: I liked it, at that time, except you see, all this...And I read others I think, I'm forgetting them now. But some were Zulu, from Zulu language. But it always seemed that it was about the city, and it was about women failing in the city, or sometimes it was about women, and marriage, you know... And things were very much in this way...Marriage – is she accepting the marriage or not. And that, eventually... 'Cause there was a... maybe you know about this: these writers were asked to write in a certain way.

RP: Yes.

YV: ...in a certain moral...so their writing was very contained. So it was lacking in terms of that. But it was the first literature we grew up with.

RP: Did you feel a revolt against it then? Did you have any feeling that...

YV: Noo.

RP:...that 'I could do this better'?

YV: No, no, not at all. I didn't even know I'd become a writer. I think we enjoyed the stories because we were... we sat by the radio and listened, and laughed at the characters. We were just amused. And we just enjoyed the language also – the Ndebele language is very beautiful, really... So one didn't overthink it, 'cause one didn't even position oneself as a writer. Just a listener.

RP: Did they... I haven't read them 'cause I don't know Ndebele. The impression I get is – lots of events, lots of plot. And then this happened, and then that happened. So, good entertainment. Was it like that?

YV: Yes. It was *very* entertaining, that's why it could be made into a radio... it could be read by different characters over the radio. Because it was really entertaining. Although it was looking at disintegration of culture, as was observed by this particular writer, in the city. And therefore warning us, you know, against losing our moral values and all that. So it was calculated to do that. To make us see the dangers – especially of the city.

RP: Yes. They were Literature-Bureau sponsored. How about white writers? Were you aware – I'm asking you as a reader now, as somebody who was there in the 70s, rather than Yvonne Vera, the famous novelist - Peter Armstrong, Daniel Carney...?

[1] The meaning of the title is 'Sethi at her place of betrothal.' For a discussion of this novel and Ndabezinhle Sigogo as an author, see Veit-Wild, *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers*, chapter nine.

YV: No… Daniel Carney - I thought – when I heard that – I said yeees, I read one book, called… maybe if you gave me a title, I would remember…

RP: *White Death.*

YV: No, not that one.

RP: There was one called *The Raging* something…

YV: *Whispering* something.

RP: Sorry?

YV: *Whispering…Death* or some strange…

RP: *Whispering Death.*

YV: Isn't it? I think that's the one I read. [Laughs.]

RP: It's a slim thing about the war. About guerrillas.

YV: [Laughs.] Yeah.

RP: Did you read it before independence?

YV: Yes.

RP: How did you come across it?

YV: I don't know, I just found it in our local library. In the township.

RP: That's interesting, because…

YV: 'Cause they just threw those books there. You just read them without knowing much about the author. You just read what you found. 'Cause I read a lot.

RP: In the townships?

YV: M-hm.

RP: Which one?

YV: Luveve.

RP: You found Daniel Carney there?

YV: I think that's where I found it, 'cause I never had left the township to go anywhere.

RP: Because that is…You know it's been studied by Professor Chennells… It's one of the prime carriers of Rhodesian propaganda, if you like…

YV: Yes, because they would distribute these books all over, and we just read whatever was there. You didn't go to the library and say, I'm looking for this author, I'm going to read this, this – you just read this shelf and then you read the next shelf, and [laughs] the next shelf. So if it was just shelved there, in whatever order or disorder, you just read that. And you just looked at covers, and you said, I've read this, I've read this, I've read… You didn't really think of the authors.

RP: A lot of them were, in my opinion, adventure stories.

YV: They were adventure stories. And they were very popular. Because in the township people read, you know, these popular thrillers and things like that. It was a great pastime in the townships, to read, you know. You sit on your garbage bin and you read, you know. And this was what you did, you know. In the morning, in winter, you…in the sand…

RP: You must have been what, a teenager?

YV: Yeah, around ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen…[sic].

RP: Can you remember at all, 'cause I didn't expect you would say yes…

YV: …on that one!

RP: Yes, *Whispering Death*, it was a slim volume, I think it came out locally *and* overseas – what on earth could you have thought about that?

YV: It was strange, just made you a bit frightened, isn't it – it was a thriller. It was in the war, or something – can't remember.

RP: It was about the war, it was about this guerrilla leader…who was like an animal, who was like a demon…

YV: Yes. But I didn't understand that at all you see. Because I wasn't conscious of all these things. All we just knew was that it was a story. And you just read and put things aside. Sometimes you were reading books which were too macho for you. And you then go back and read the enchanted forest, or something, you know [laughs]. And you felt better, you know, whatever you read. So… but the books were not organised properly in these libraries. It was just a pile of books.

2.

RP: [question on whether SC had read white Rhodesian writing before independence]

SC: Wilbur Smith, yes. We used to read Wilbur Smith *voraciously*. [Laughs.]

RP: Which books?

SC: Ah, I don't remember. *When the Lion Feeds*. I can't even remember them.

RP: So, how old would you have been?

SC: I mean, we read that kind of literature. At that time we were so immersed in it, I'd no idea what was happening to us... I went through an English Honours course. We were doing, you know, Shakespeare, and Dickens, and Jane Austen, and all that. It's only after I left university that I started to read around. So at that time it was a book, it was a novel, it was something exciting to read.

RP: An exciting story?

SC: Yeah. I mean, we had no sense of – most of us had no sense of politics, or the underlying…

[…]

RP: Did you read any of the Shona and Ndebele [novels], at the same time, when you were…reading Wilbur Smith…

SC: No, I must confess I didn't. People have asked me in the 80s to write in Shona, and I told them, I'm not good enough.

RP: Why not?

SC: No, people always assume, because you're black, because you're Shona-speaking, you're good enough. It's like, I had to do the literature, I had to study, I had to read…. I wish I hadn't.

RP: How's that?

SC: I went to UZ, you know… To the University of Rhodesia… and all there was, was literature in English.

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