CHAPTER TWO: 'DE-SCRIBING' THE RHODESIAN NATION

John Eppel's *Duiker Berry's The Great North Road* is structured as a series of non-chronological flashbacks to different periods in the life of the main character, Duiker Berry. The novel begins with Duiker's recollections of the events during his first year as an apprentice fitter and turner at the Umdidi factory, and particularly of the circumstances that led to the launch of his *Perfumed Wind* business. Then in another flashback the reader is transported to Duiker's early days at a boarding school in Bulawayo. A further shift situates him in England where his conversations with his great-aunt during his exile there move the time sequence further back in the emerging 'history' of the Rhodesian 'nation' as they revolve around her recollections of the early days of colonial occupation, when the British pioneers first set foot on what was to become Rhodesia. In yet another time shift, Duiker's experiences as an army reservist on a camp duty near the Mozambique border, are recounted. The narrative is also interspersed with accounts of his relationship with his cousin Rosie Hadi who died on the Great North Road, and of his joining of a conservative church, two accounts which feature prominently in the novel.

It is pertinent to note early in the chapter the significance of Eppel's setting of the narrative in Bulawayo and Umdidi. The word 'Bulawayo' derives from 'gu bulawayo' ('place of killing'), a name chosen by King Lobengula for his capitals after he succeeded his father King Mzilikazi. It was from one of these capitals that he fled in 1893 when a pioneer column marched towards the town. The capture of Bulawayo marked the beginning of the British occupation of Matabeleland. The term 'umdidi' is less sinister in its indictment of the

colonial enterprise but conveys the crudely satiric thrust of the novel in that the word means backside or 'bum' (more politely, of course, one's posterior!). In colloquial form, the word adds nuances to the significance of this imaginary colonial enclave, and of its settler population! So, before the narrative begins, the thrust of this colonial diatribe is voiced 'loud and clear' - this also provides a counter-argument to Anthony Chennells's assertion that Eppel's first novel 'is much more a satire about Rhodie nostalgia than Rhodesia's realities' (1995:12). The significance of this fictional name is reinforced by Eppel's indictment of Rhodes as both 'bum-bandit' (*The Great North Road*) and Rhodies as 'bandits' (*Spoils of War*), allusions to Rhodes's reputed sexual proclivity, on the one hand, and to his colonizing enterprise, on the other; a legacy which perhaps goes some way towards explaining the rationale for the present somewhat draconian legislation against homosexuality in Zimbabwe!

This chapter examines the ways in which Eppel dismantles the myth of the Rhodesian nation, focusing on those circumstances within which Duiker Berry negotiates his own identity as well as on the ways in which the status of the native as Other is constructed. Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson's observation that the 'texts of Empire need to be described as part of the anatomy of Empire, but they also need to be de-scribed as part of the liquidation of Empire's effects' nicely captures Eppel's descriptive method in this text. Part of the intention here, therefore, is to locate the difference that lies at the heart of the Rhodesian national narrative and to show how it is foregrounded in Eppel's text. The argument is that both the polyphonic structure of the novel and Eppel's depiction of the settler culture conjoin to highlight racial and cultural difference as a means of self-reflexively positioning the native at the margins of the Rhodesian nation. An attempt is

also made to show how such foregrounding of otherness discloses Eppel's representation of the Rhodesian nation. A useful way to approach these concerns is by drawing on Bhabha's work on difference in colonialist discourse alluded to in the first chapter, and explained fully below. In the second part of the chapter an analysis of some poems from Eppel's first collection entitled *Spoils of War* (1989) is offered to show their complementarity with the novel for they, too, register his interrogation of the concept of the Rhodesian nation.

Before addressing these issues, it is appropriate to note that the term 'nation' in the colonial context was used to refer to the settler community, to the exclusion of the indigenous people, and, as D. K. Fieldhouse asserts in *Colonial Empires*, it implied a special link between the colony and the metropolis: 'loyalty sprang from common race, language, religion and institutions' (1966:198). This point is implicitly endorsed by Anthony Chennells (1996:103) who observes that

> Rhodesia, as a space, defines the English race that discovers through the process of conquest and appropriation the nature of its civilisation. The English become a race only through relation to their empire; Rhodesians as spokespeople of the discourses of empire are also naming their own identity.

As Chennells's remark suggests, underlying this restrictive concept of nation is the assumption in colonial discourse that, as a race, the settlers are different from the natives. For the colonists, preoccupied as they were with the economic growth of the colony and with political and cultural domination, the natives' only usefulness was to contribute to that economic growth. The term 'nation' acquired additional meaning after Rhodesia severed its ties with Britain in 1965. Thereafter, the Rhodesian 'nation' came to define itself as an

independent nation. Hence, the desire of Rhodesians to affirm their own identity, which Chennells points out. As will become clear later on, Eppel offers in his text a representation of the Rhodesian 'nation' that reveals the illusion of a hegemonic society unaffected by the presence of the Other at its margins.

That the novel is a narrative of the declining Rhodesian nation which has its inception in anecdotes from daily life, what Bhabha refers to as 'the scraps, patches, and rags of daily life' (1990:297) (reflected in the flashbacks referred to above), is first confirmed by the following self-reflexive remark about the protagonist's favourite pastime: 'He spends his free time writing badly-rhymed poetry on the subject closest to his heart, Rhodesia' (9). This remark is symptomatic of Duiker Berry's claiming of the Rhodesian identity that permeates the book. This constructed identity is also emphasized at the beginning of the narrative by Duiker's self-confession that 'I will never be able to call it Zimbabwe' (12). The context of this remark is significant in terms of Duiker's own perceived Rhodesian identity. His comment is made as he notes Honey's lack of respect for her fellow Afrikaners. Expecting her to show to her people (the Afrikaners) the same kind of loyalty that he shows to his fellow Rhodesians, he projects into her his sense of identity, which she really does not care about. His remark that 'I'm not being pathetic. I'm proud of my heritage' (12) only elicits an outraged response from her. (The chapter will return to this passage later, as it illustrates the dialogic contest over the colonial narrative of Rhodesia.) Duiker's determination to situate himself in the 'national' colonial culture is also evident in his wearing of a T-shirt bearing the inscription 'Rhodesia is Super' (14). Duiker's unconscious identification with Rhodes develops into a sense of worship, as is also confirmed not only in the passage above, but in addition by what is described as his purpose in life:

> ... to vindicate the man who had given his name to the nation to which Duiker proudly, splendidly, and with oft a moistened eye, belonged. Yes belonged. None of your past tenses, your had had's with Duiker Gilbert Grace Berry: school colours for rugby, team tabs for cricket and water polo; war veteran (but reluctant to talk about it); self-made man; shook hands with Ian [Ian Smith].. . (13)

This passage highlights the complexity of the authorial viewpoint in this novel. It pokes fun at Duiker Berry, thus pointing to a distancing of the author from his leading character who becomes an archetype distinct from the author. The naming of places in Rhodesia where Duiker's *Perfumed Wind* product is sold echoes the process of annexation that marked colonial conquest. Perhaps the only difference is that in this instance he uses the powerful strategy of advertizing as his tool of territorial conquest.

The idea of Rhodesia as an 'imagined' community becomes more 'real'. This can be clearly seen in the following passage where Duiker reminisces about the day he first kissed Honey:

> What happened was this. Friday afternoon had come round and Duiker was happy. There was the weekend to look forward to: sleeping late in the morning, bacon and eggs for breakfast, a spot of fishing down at the dam, and, best of all, Friday night bioscope up at the club. *The Caruso Story* was showing, with Mario Lanza, Duiker's Dad's favourite singer. Duiker preferred the golden oldies like Gigli, Tauber, McCormack, and Caruso himself, but Mario Lanza was not to be sneezed at. Much more exciting than the film, however, was the prospect of seeing, maybe even sitting next to, maybe even holding hands with, maybe even - cease your thumping, heart! - kissing Honey Swanepoel. It was school days; the high school children were home: the village was alive. Most of the boarders went to Bulawayo schools: Milton, Eveline, Townsend, Gifford; some went to Plumtree, and some went as far afield as Guinea Fowl in Gwelo and - the diehard Afrikaners - to Tom Naude Hoër Skool in Pietersburg, South Africa. The snooty manager and his even more stuck-up wife, just because they had degrees, sent their children to private schools: Amanda to St Peter's and Robert to Falcon. The disgusting thing about these schools was that they were multiracial. Even when Duiker had been at school, two

> years ago, was it? They had started taking in Africans. St Peter's used to use the Milton swimming pool and Duiker remembered how he and his Charter House friends would shudder at the thought of having to dive into the water after piccanins had used it. Sis man. (16)

This passage not only records a day in the life of the protagonist, but also presents a picture of social life in a community. It is significant that the day mentioned in the passage is Friday, because it is an ideal day for social intercourse. Although the reader is given just a general feel of the social gatherings that take place on such a day, there is a sense that the passage provides a representation of the Rhodesian society on a microcosmic level so that the lifestyle depicted here takes on archetypal significance as an indictment of colonial behaviour. There is also a sense that the focus on schools indicates what it means to live in Rhodesia and what culture one learns in order to function within that society. 'Like the army ... challenging the values in his small world', it is clear that this is a national culture that excludes indigenous people, thus replicating an imperial ideology built on prejudices of race and colour. The mention that some of the schools have started taking in Africans indicates that the novel is set in the late period of colonial rule, which justifies Peter Kohler's (1993:67) designation of the text as 'the late Rhodesian novel', an allusion to the temporal setting of the novel and, more importantly in terms of this study, to its thematic content. The passage also underscores the nature of the relationship within the white community between the English and the non-English. L. Adele Jinadu (1986: 36) offers an insight into this state of affairs when he writes that 'The colonial situation is not a closed system from which whites other than those from the colonising society are excluded. Mercantilist assumptions, particularly in matters of trade, define relationships between such whites, often referred to as foreigners and whites from the metropolitan country'.

PART ONE

As noted earlier, an important strategy employed by Eppel to highlight the marginalization of the natives in *The Great North Road* is his structuring of the novel as a polyphonic text. He also suggests this othering by foregrounding the use of stereotypes in his settler characters' discourse, as will be shown later in this section. In his theorization of the novelistic discourse, Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) conceives of literary language as a field of ideological confrontation. According to him (see Bakhtin, 1984), a polyphonic text is characterized by a diversity of languages or voices representing different ideological positions. Such voices, he argues, reflect not only the consciousness of the narrator alone but of all the 'voices' participating in the dialogue, that is, all the other main characters as well. Such voices, according to Bakhtin, are 'in dialogue' with one another. Hence, the virtual synonymity between 'dialogic' and 'polyphonic,' as David Lodge (1990:86) has noted. Thus, central to Bakhtin's theory of novelistic discourse is an element of confrontation between the various ideological positions present in the novel. This thesis posits that Eppel's first novel is a site of confrontation over the Rhodesian colonial narrative, which situates the origin of the nation in the arrival of the first British pioneers and emphasizes a common culture and destiny for its white, (mostly) English-speaking members. For this reason, the question of the way in which the dialogic nature of this novel discloses Eppel's representation of Rhodesia deserves close attention. It is hoped that an analysis of selected passages from the novel illustrating this dialogism will not only reveal the existence of dissonant voices within the colonial discourse, pointing to a contestation of the very idea of a Rhodesian nation, but will also draw attention to the representation of this nation as exclusive of the non-settler population. Such an analysis wil also show

that, although the dialogue taking place in Eppel' novel is mainly a dialogue between "in-groups" themselves', in Kyung-Won Lee's (1997:104) words, it is certainly not intended by Eppel as a "tempest in a tea pot" as Lee would suggest.

But, before examining the polyphony proper, it may be useful to consider the extract below, in which Duiker recollects his favourite subjects at Milton School in Bulawayo, an important passage which situates him firmly in the colonial culture.

> But then English was one of Duiker's best subjects, his second best in fact. History had been number one, especially Rhodesian history. After all, he, Duiker, came from pioneer stock. So it was virtually like learning about his own family. Even now, so far away from it all in time and place, incidents like the massacre of Major Allan Wilson's patrol at Shangani brought tears to Duiker's eyes. That was the Ndebele War of 1893.... And it was all still inside Duiker's head, practically word for word, complete with titles and sub-titles:
>
> *The Ndebele War. 1893*
>
> The seeds of this war can be traced to two converging factors: 1) the long-standing enmity between the Shona tribes and the invading Ndebele, 2) the arrival in Mashonaland of the Pioneers... (24-25).

The fact that English and Rhodesian history are Duiker's favourite subjects is worth noting because these two school subjects are associated with the transmission of imperial culture and ideology. The role of the English language as a cultural tool of the British Empire is well documented (see, for example, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1993; Simon Gikandi, 1996; Kyung-Won Lee, 1997). Despite the fact that it functions as the *lingua franca* of the world, it is often perceived, in Lee's words, as 'the arch-imperial language that carries with itself numerous metrocentric metaphors and connotations' (1997:112). In the colonial context of Eppel's novel, English is hegemonic as the language of the settlers who wield political

and economic power in the occupied land. Given Duiker's ideological leanings, one can assume that he is aware and proud of the cultural domination that the settler community exerts on the colonized natives through its language. Thus, the reader can see that Duiker's interest in English is more than an educational hobby; this interest seems to be part of a conscious realization of the language's past role in the subjectivization of the natives. Language's role in the constitution of subjects is a point emphasized by Louis Althusser (1971) in his seminal essay 'The Ideological State Apparatuses'. In the context of Eppel's text, as is shown later, the natives are constituted as other subjects through a process of 'interpellation' that conveys an awareness of racial and cultural difference, and that thus conditions the natives to accept their inferiority.

English is also literature. The purpose of literature, Althusser (1971:174) states, is to reveal 'the ideology from which it is born, in which it bathes, from which it detaches itself as art, and to which it alludes'. Pierre Macherey and Etienne Balibar (1992), building on Althusser's notion of ideological apparatuses, have explained how literature as a field of ideological class struggle stages, via the fictional world and its values, the process of the subjectivization of individuals to the dominant ideology. Working from the premise that literature has, as its primary material, history, they are able to argue that beneath the literary discourse lie the other ideological discourses (moral, political, religious, aesthetic, and so on) in which the dominant ideology is realized and which are recognized as such by members of the dominant class. Another Marxist literary theorist, Terry Eagleton (1978), states that since history survives in the text in the form of a 'double-absence', ideology thus becomes the dominant constituent of literature.

The significance of Duiker Berry's interest in Rhodesian history is all too clear. As already indicated and as will be now discussed in more detail, his concern lies in his sense of identification with the pioneers of whom he is a descendant and, through these, with the Rhodesian nation. As will also become clear, Duiker displays a diachronic vision of the world in contrast with Honey Swanepoel's static vision. Given the relation of language, literature and history to ideology which is highlighted in the above considerations, it appears that the mentioning in the above passage from the novel of Duiker Berry's hobbies is an invitation by Eppel to read Duiker's story in ideological terms. The suggestion in the passage that Duiker knew 'everything' about the Ndebele War of 1893 is indicative of the extent to which he is brainwashed by the settler ideology, so that the ultimate significance of his interest in Rhodesian history appears to lie in his sense of identification with the pioneers. (Reading the novel, one is aware of the irony beneath the narrator's comment that, having secured a grant to study for a BA degree with concentration in English and History, 'He scraped through first year but failed second year outright, whereupon he returned to Umdidi and began an apprenticeship in his father's trade, fitting and turning' (15). This contrasts with Honey's impressive, yet diffuse academic record, which includes a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry, a Bachelor of Commerce with specialization in Accounting and a Bachelor of Arts majoring in English and Geography. This record, which puts her at an advantage over Duiker, emphasizes the sense that her interpretation of history is more reliable than Duiker's, a point which is further discussed later in the chapter.) The extract from the history textbook which Duiker remembers by heart helps one to see how the colonial ideology erases the natives' past, by constructing the pioneers' arrival as a bright moment in the history of a savage land when a superior civilization arrives, to halt the inexorable cycle of violence that supposedly engulfed precolonial Africa.

One is reminded here of Fanon's observation that the settler 'is the absolute beginning: "this land was created by us"; he is the unceasing cause: "If we leave, all is lost, and the country will go back to the Middle Ages"' (1968b:39-40).

Dialogism over the narrative of the Rhodesian nation is evident in the passage below, which records a conversation between Duiker and his great-aunt, Aunt Frances, during which her sense of identification with the natives causes her to claim that she was the mistress of the Matabele king, Lobengula, a ludicrous distortion of historical time highlighting the satirical thrust of the extract. Despite this, Aunt Frances's version of history appears to be more authentic than Duiker's. Duiker's version is interesting in that it shows, as Benedict Anderson has indicated, how official history participates in the creation of national identity. There is a confirmation of this insight in the following passage which revolves around the Ndebele War, already mentioned.

> "How many were killed, Aunty? Was it about fifty?"
>
> "Fifty! More like a hundred - in Matabeleland alone. Anderson at Boola Boola, Baragwanath at Filabusi, the Cunningham family, eight of them, at Inzisa; Dr and Mrs Langford at Rixon's farm, that surveyor... what was his name?... Edwards or Edkins, at Inyati; the Dutchman Fourie and his family; six children, along with Mr and Mrs Ross and their adopted daughter, Agnes... all eleven were massacred on the Tekwe River... Oh, the list goes on and on. Umlimo had given the order to spill the white man's blood, and it was spilt - make no mistake about that."
>
> "Aunty, you sound as if you approve of what they did," said Duiker with an accusing whine in his voice.
>
> "Of course I don't approve," she replied. "What monster can approve of the butchering of helpless children? Poor little Agnes Kirk's hat was found in a kaffir hut a long way from her corpse. But I do understand why they revolted. Had I been in their position I should have done the same. Only not the children..."
>
> "Well, how would you expect the children to survive if their parents had been butchered?"

"Suffer the little children to come unto me. I would adopt them. The tribe would adopt them. Do you think Lobengula would have allowed his impi, on their raids into Mashonaland, to kill children? Never. The children were spared."

"To be brought up as slaves, or, at best, to become second-class citizens of the tribe, despised by the Matabele of Zulu descent..."

"The *Abenzantsi*."

"Is that what they called themselves? Aunty, surely you don't condone Lobengula's raids against the Shona people, even if they did spare the children, which I doubt."

"I don't condone it and I don't condemn it. Do we condemn the lion for killing the buck? The Matabele were hunters, carnivores. Tilling the soil was not for them; spinning cotton was not for them. They lived by the sword-"

"You mean the assegai," Duiker interrupted.

"All right. They lived by the assegai, and they died by the assegai."

"They died by the thousands when the white man came along. And a jolly good thing too."

Aunt Frances unnerved Duiker with a delayed look of her semi-demented eyes.

"How can you say a thing like that?"

"With great pleasure, Aunty. The Matabele deserved what they got. They invaded Rhodesia and plundered everything in sight. The poor, innocent local natives, the Shona-types, were massacred. Their villages were burned down, their cattle and crops taken... the survivors were driven into the hills. I'm going back to Mzilikazi now: the father of your precious Lobengula." Mr Thomas's history notes began to assemble in his mind's eye. Titles, sub-titles, and dates swam with little squiggly tails into focus. (50-52)

This passage is quoted at length to reveal Aunt Frances's precise recollection of the casualties suffered by the pioneers, as well as to highlight her balanced interpretation of historical events, as suggested by her remark that she understood the Matabele's position - although her sense of historical objectivity is somewhat undermined by her clear preference for the Matabele over the Shona. The long extract above also offers an interesting insight into the effect of official discourse on Duiker. His ability to recall the historical events which were fed to him by his history teacher and his conviction that this historical knowledge is true confirms the role of the school curriculum in the constitution of Rhodesian subjects. As is typical in pioneer tales, Duiker's rejoinders replicate the

notion alluded to earlier, that colonial conquest brings civilization to the natives. In this particular instance, the ideology of blame as a justification for the invasion is powerfully used against the Ndebele. Also, characteristically, there is in Duiker's remarks the suggestion that deaths in the pioneers' ranks were totally undeserved as they were so-called bearers of civilized values.

Lyn Ridett (1995), in a powerfully argued article about the construction of history in settler societies, makes observations that are apt here. Referring to the way Australian colonial discourse presents two incidents in which a group of settlers was killed by Aborigines, followed in each case by the massacre of Aborigines by colonial police, she has suggested that

> In both accounts the chilling excitement of massacres is used to strengthen the separateness of the 'other', to demonstrate the good-heartedness of intrepid settlers who are forced to live among primitive people, and also to distract from the fact of the massacres of Aboriginal people by settlers. (20)

Where *The Great North Road* is concerned, Duiker's remarks in this extract from the novel, quoted above, illustrates how emphasis is laid on the natives (in this case, the Matabele) as a way of suggesting their responsibility for the massacres suffered by the pioneers, and also as a means of constructing the latter's own massacres of the natives as acts of self-defence. This focus on the Matabele raids and Duiker's approving of the massacres perpetrated against the Matabele denotes what Riddett describes as 'selective memory' in the construction of history in settler societies. As she argues:

> This emphasis on the 'otherness' of [natives] is functional in the construction of non-[native] social memory in a settler society. In combination with a process of social amnesia it allows the separation between the groups to continue; it sanctions the separation of settler social memory from [native] social memory; it reinforces the settler identity as a group which continues to struggle against the odds; and it privileges settler history over a more comprehensive and inclusive history. Selective memory and social amnesia are both functional in the construction of settler history which depends on its uniqueness and its exotic nature to maintain a special place in white history of Australia. (21)

The insight Ridett provides helps us understand why, despite the atrocities committed against the natives, the settler narrative of the Rhodesian nation insists on excluding them as members of the nation. In this context, the following excerpt from the novel is also worth considering:

> "Let me remind you," she resumed, "that it was the Shona who drove you and me from the land of our birth. They hated, and hate, us far more than the Matabele ever did. The Matabele might have raided Mashonaland but they never occupied it. We simply marched in there, the pioneer column, representing the British South Africa Company, we marched in and took over."
> ... "We didn't just take over, Aunty. We brought civilization, we brought prosperity to a primitive land, we brought protection for the Shona tribesmen against the Matabele raids, we -"
> "Why did the Shona revolt against us then? Six years after we raised the Union Jack?"
> "Those were just a few isolated incidents, Aunty, organised by leaders of the Matabele insurrection and a couple of religious fanatics." (52-53)

The overall tone of this passage, and particularly Duiker's reaction to his great-aunt's tale, forces the reader to accept Frances's perspective as the more valid one. Her age, and the fact that her early life was nearly contemporary with the events, lend editorial credence to her story. Notice how it is in its selectiveness between what it deems significant ('We brought civilization... prosperity... protection...') and insignificant ('just a few isolated

incidents...') that the official discourse Duiker duplicates constructs 'history'. This very selectiveness generates a view of the Matabele as bloodthirsty rascals and of the Shona as simple-minded victims. Thus this passage becomes a sphere in which two discourses about the origin of the Rhodesian nation transgress each other: a discourse of lived history with its inherent flaws, and the official discourse perpetuated through school history books.

In another revealing passage in the novel, Aunt Frances defines this latter discourse in the following terms:

> What you did at school was Rhodesian Government propaganda. You did history from the white man's point of view, specifically the white businessman's point of view. Matabeleland was a nation, Reggie; Rhodesia was a company with interests primarily in mining and farming. It was born a company and died a company. (53)

This passage points to the tension between 'living' history and 'doing' history. Aunt Frances's interpretation of Rhodesian history (and also Honey's as will soon become evident) displaces Duiker's view of Rhodesian history as a justification for an exclusive Rhodesian national identity. For his is a view that separates the pioneers, and more generally the whites, from the indigenous component of the nation, as already quoted, all but advocating the view that the native is an outsider. This passage is central to the novel because it poses an explicit question as to the reliability of settler discourse and about the notion of a Rhodesian nation. It undermines the authority of official history and the white settler's viewpoint. With this comment, both as an empathetic participant and by stripping it of its most important justification of the colonial enterprise, Aunt Frances rewrites the Rhodesian official history. In other words, her view challenges the claim that it was a civilizing enterprise: 'It was born a company and died a company'. In another episode in the novel, Wilma, a friend of Honey Swanepoel's, endorses this view of colonization as a

commercial enterprise when she refers to Rhodesia as 'a ninety year old corporation (meaning Rhodesia) that did not have the grace to die' (82).

It is a tragic dimension of Duiker's fixation that, confronted with the reality that the idea of the Rhodesian nation is an evaporated dream, he refuses to accept the *fait accompli*, clinging to the anecdotes from a white past:

> "I'll tell you something, Aunt Frances," Duiker was almost angry now, "Rhodesia will never die. We may have been driven from our land by communist terrorists, we may have been scattered all over the world - look at me; look at you - but as long as we live, and our children live, and our children's children live, we will keep Rhodesia alive in our hearts. How can you say that we were not a nation? We had our government, our own laws; we played rugby against the All Blacks, the Wallabies, the Lions, the Springboks, we competed in the Empire Games - won medals for yatching, shooting, boxing... we fought as a nation in both world wars.... Ian Smith was shot down in Germany...." (53)

Duiker's allegiance to an evanescent dream, evident in this passage, leaves no doubt as to the difficulty which uncompromising settlers experience in joining in the process of national reconciliation. It is clear from the above that Eppel focuses on the pioneer motif as a strategy for offering a revision of official Rhodesian history. This rewriting of history sometimes takes a satirical turn as when Frances mentions Lomagundi as the place where pioneer J D Campbell was killed. There is irony in Duiker's discovery that the name of a Shona chief killed by the Matabele - whom he considers as the whites' worst enemies - could be retained as a war cry by his conservative Milton school:

> "Lomagundi, for your information, Reggie," said Aunt Frances who was singularly unimpressed by his demonstration, "was a Shona chief killed by the Matabele."
> Duiker had returned to his armchair, slightly out of breath. "Is that so, Aunty?"
> "It's a place, and a person, and a war cry." (55)

As has already been noted, the contestation over the civilizing purposes of the colonial enterprise is very strongly expressed in the novel. A further illustration of this debate can be seen in the exchange below between Honey Swanepoel and Duiker Berry:

> "Heritage," she scoffed, "you call it a heritage? How can we claim an heritage from our origins? A fucking commercial company owned by the capitalist bum-bandit exploiter, Cecil Pusface Rhodes."
>
> "Rhodes was a great man," replied Duiker, selecting his words from a mental image of a page from his school history exercise book. "Despite ill-health he helped bring civilization to a primitive land... [and] ... he did so at his own expense. Rhodes -"
>
> "Bullshit."(12)

As in previous examples, in this passage two different opinions of the colonial history of Rhodesia are revealed: Honey's conception of Rhodesia as a mere business enterprise contests the official discourse which Duiker appears to have internalized. Ironically, Duiker's own business enterprise undermines his view about the civilizing purpose of Rhodes's expedition. The text seems to suggest, here, that in the same way that he erroneously views his business not primarily in mercantilist terms but as an important contribution to release the pain of those suffering from haemorrhoids, Berry fails to see Rhodes's conquest as anything other than an altruistic civilizing mission. By contrast, what Honey's response also reveals is Eppel's strategy for undermining the logic of Rhodesian national identity that Duiker insists on preserving, a strategy that is all too apparent in the subtext to the farcical name [*Perfumed Wind*] given to his pharmaceutical product and its purpose. Here, the near farcical allusions conjoin with Honey's indictment of Rhodes not only to subvert this notion of nationhood but also to erase it through the deployment of satire.

Honey's opinion of the colonial history of Rhodesia, expressed in the exchange above, is reminiscent of that of the stranger's in Olive Schreiner's *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland*. In a revealing scene in Schreiner's novel, Peter Halket, a settler who has been in the new colony for some time and was initially a staunch supporter of Cecil Rhodes like Duiker Berry, discusses the colonial history with the stranger, the thinly masked figure of Christ:

> "Who gave you your land?" the stranger asked.
> "Mine! Why, the Chartered Company," said Peter.
> The stranger looked back into the fire. "And who gave it to them?" he asked softly.
> "Why, England, of course. She gave them the land to far beyond the Zambesi to do what they liked with, and make as much money out of as they could, and she'd back 'em.'
> "Who gave the land to the men and women of England?" asked the stranger softly.
> "Why, the devil! They said it was theirs, and of course it was," said Peter.
> "And the people of the land: did England give you the people also?"
> Peter looked a little doubtfully at the stranger. "Yes, of course, she gave us the people; what use would the land have been to us otherwise?"
> "And who gave her the people, the living flesh and blood, that she might give them away, into the hands of others?" asked the stranger, raising himself.
> Peter looked at him and was half afraid. "Well, what could she do with a lot of miserable niggers, if she didn't give them to us? A lot of good-for-nothing rebels they are, too," said Peter. (55-56)

By recognizing that it is the purpose of colonialism that men and women of England should make as much money as they can out of the land 'given' to them by England through Rhodes's Chartered Company, Peter Halket subscribes to Honey's idea that Rhodesia is a business enterprise that was set up to exploit the land and the natives. This view also conjoins with Honey and Aunt Frances's opinion that Rhodes was a ruthless businessman, not the philanthropist he was portrayed to be in colonial history. Schreiner's treatment of

this episode is made effective by the way it reflects badly not only on the, as yet uninitiated, trooper Peter Halket himself but also on the Chartered Company and on England as the imperial centre. The difference between Schreiner and Eppel lies in the *bildungsroman* mode. Peter Halket is transformed in Schreiner's novella and is finally shot - willingly sacrificing his life for the Other. John Eppel, with an economy of details, reveals Duiker as a naive, even ignorant soul. Beneath the narratorial comment 'selecting his words from a mental image of a page from his school history exercise', Eppel satirizes the unthinking young settler who repeats mechanically what he was force-fed, which reflects the discourse of white colonization of Africa. Another challenge, an implicit one, is evident in the author's satirical tone, and thus reinforcing the argument presented here that *The Great North Road* presents a polyphony of voices.

Hence, the challenge to the nationalist discourse is offered quite explicitly by Duiker Berry's Aunt Frances and his girlfriend Honey Swanepoel, as argued earlier. They articulate an ideological position that is consistent in its conviction that, as a business venture first and last, Rhodesia can never be a nation. With this revision of Rhodesian history, the counter-hegemonic discourse undermines any claim by Duiker, and others who think like him, of Rhodesian identity. What is also revealed here is that the colonial narrative underpinning the novel embodies its own contradiction. It is pertinent that the counter-hegemonic voices are those of a so-called pioneer, on the one hand, and an Afrikaans female, on the other. In this way, the pioneer motif, coupled with the intuitive female voice, serves to underline the narrative of the 'nation' through its effort to rehabilitate the 'native'. It is also significant that in *The Great North Road*, Eppel (as one

of the narrative voices) seems to identify himself, through his principal narrator, with these two female characters whom he depicts sympathetically.

In the narrative of the Rhodesian nation, the second *Chimurenga,* or war of liberation of the sixties and seventies, assumes a great importance as an event that threatens the nation's survival. It is conceived as a phase in the history of the nation during which the racialized Other seeks to reverse the colonial process. As Chennells (1996:104) points out,

> The war, when it came could not be; it could only be a rebellion which meant, in settler mythology, primitive space attempting to reabsorb civilized space; and it was a battle against this reassertion of the primitive that the war was described and indeed fought.

As with the Ndebele War alluded to above, Eppel's novel reveals two distinct positions on the issue of the liberation war: one, voiced by Duiker and his fellow Section C comrades, which is the official Rhodesian discourse, and the other, of the silenced colonized population, 'whispered' by the silent women and the 'terrs' on the other side of the Mozambican border. Located as they are in this bush war episode within the context of institutional opposition, the characters referred to above assume their roles as representatives of the two racial groups of colonial Zimbabwe. They are not selves within this context, rather they (and this is particularly true of the Rhodesian conscripts) obey a discourse of authority that presents the racialized Other as a menace to the settler space. In this respect, their treatment (in their imagination) of the women, which is discussed below in more detail in the context of Eppel's depiction of settler culture, appears as a logical reaction in the presence of a menacing enemy. It is worth stressing that with this episode Eppel's novel provides a double perspective on the war. Taking Gayatri

Chakravorty Spivak's (1988) notion of the subaltern's inability to speak as a guide, it can be argued that the women's silence is an act of resistance. It represents an anti-imperialist response to the settler speech. This underlines further the point that, in his narrative, Eppel challenges the settler discourse on the liberation war.

The settler discourse is now examined for the abundant use of stereotypes it contains, and uses to legitimize the natives' exclusion from the imaginary borders of the Rhodesian nation. It can also be argued that Eppel problematizes this othering by focusing on the existentialist dilemma posed to the settler by the very presence of the native in the space s/he claims as her/his own. In this context, Bhabha's argument (1994b:81) about what he terms 'the regime of visibility deployed in colonial discourse' is illuminating. As he explains,

> The visibility of the racial/colonial Other is at once a point of identity ('Look, a Negro') and at the same time a problem for the attempted closure within discourse. For the recognition of difference as 'imaginary' points of identity and origin - such as black and white - is disturbed by the representation of splitting in discourse.

Bhabha offers this argument to make the point that the presence of the native is problematic to the settler because it opens up the possibility of identification with him/ her. Hence, the use of stereotypes in settler discourse to demarcate the space between him/her and the native and to legitimize difference. In light of this insight, it makes sense to read the cultural assumptions of the settler group as manifestations of the racist ideology of colonialism. For the point is that, in the racially segregated Rhodesian society of the novel, the colonial discourse of the settler group makes use of its own racist stereotypes to legitimize the colonial project. In the words of Chennells (1996:103), 'The settler discourse always claims to be able to read under the appurtenances of Christianity and to see what

is really there: the genetically, racially determined nature of the Black' and 'the discourse presupposes subject Whites and object Blacks' (104). Chennells's understanding of the settler discourse confirms Abdul R. JanMohamed's (1991) characterization of colonialist literature (and discourse) as displaying black/white, European/native, self/other binarisms. Some examples of these stereotypes, considered below, reveal that the terms of reference used to designate the natives are totally exclusionary, as suggested earlier.

Two types of stereotypes are considered here: those that are constructed around the theme of the (black) native's mental inferiority and those that refer to his body. As suggested earlier, Bhabha (1994b) sees such stereotypes as constituting a mode of representation in colonialist discourse by which the colonizing subject seeks to construct the otherness of the colonized. Appropriately enough, Eppel's text is replete with utterances, that are racially charged, by settler characters conveying such stereotypes. Underlying all these statements is the notion of difference from the native. Consider, for example, how the first type of stereotype is presented through Dr Frankfurter's opinion of what makes a 'kaffir' happy:

> "I tell you, pal," he had said to the man with gumboils, "your average kaffir, do you think he gives a damn about your motor car, your three-bedroomed house stuffed with furniture, your university education and what-have you? Not a bit of it, pal. Your booze is all your average kaffir wants to make him happy - your booze, a bit of your old slap and tickle, your full belly of course, and then, maybe, a couple of your *mombies*. That's it, pal. Enough booze, enough food, enough fanny, a few *mombies*, and what have you got? You've got a happy kaffir." (153)

Dr Frankfurter's opinion epitomizes the colonial discourse's demarcation of the natives as simple-minded, appetitive and lustful. Juxtaposed with the bush war fantasy, alluded to

earlier, the satirical parallel is all too apparent. The surface meaning in the above passage constructs the natives as children of nature, only happy when their physical needs have been satisfied and not at all preoccupied with needs beyond the physical ones, while the deeper meaning deconstructs this meaning, extending it to embrace, through pointed irony, the settler culture.

Reg Bench's questioning of the 'kaffir''s honesty provides further evidence of the use of stereotypes in settler discourse, only this time it represents the native as morally different:

> Shorty was the barman. Good little kaffir, thought Reg. Polite, reasonably honest - Reg smiled cynically to himself as he walked through the club doors, past the notice boards and out onto the balcony - show me an honest kaffir and I'll show you a donkey with a two-inch cock. Wouldn't trust one - not even Shorty - as far as I could kick a piano. For sixpence, the little shit would cut my throat. (158)

The implication is that in Reg Bench's opinion, the level of honesty of a Black is one step below that of a White. The passage thus confirms Abdul JanMohamed's point that the colonizer perceives 'a profound moral difference between self and Other' (1991:84). Shorty, although a good man by Black standards, is not honest enough in Reg Bench's eyes. If further evidence were needed to support the colonizer's view that the native is different, it is articulated in the following passage that records part of the conversation between Reg Bench and his friend Spawnch Fitzburg:

> "Like if my daughter married a kaffir? I tell you, Reg, it would break me."
> "It would break me too, Spawnchie, but not before I had broken that kaffir into little pieces." And Reg demonstrated his method by breaking a cardboard coaster into little pieces and dropping it into the spittoon. " *Ja*, " Reg repeated, "not before I had broken that kaffir - whoever that kaffir might be - into tiny little pieces."
> "Spoken like a true Rhodesian," said Spawnch.... (167)

This passage is interesting in the way it sanctions the desire of the two friends, not to allow a physical union between a white woman and a 'kaffir', as Rhodesian wisdom. In this opinion, physical contact is unseeming if not immoral. The subtext here is not just the representation of the native as morally inferior but also asserts a denial of his or her humanity, as well as claiming a loss of racial purity (through miscegenation) that such a union supposedly generates. Since the Other is, by implication, equated with the animal, it follows that he is unfit to share in national identity with the settler.

One of the tactics of this negative characterization of the racialized Other in the settler's discourse is the conscious distinction between the white man and the black man, a tactic that in fact amounts to an underscoring of the latter's inhumanity. Consider, for example, the following incidents: on one occasion, the narrator tells the reader that Corrie Spunt, one of the two white apprentices at the Umdidi factory, was 'a huge eighteen year old, already half a foot nearer to God than any man or "kaffir" in the factory' (105). Elsewhere, the statistics about the victims of accidents on the Great North Road are given by Blesbok White and Spawnch Fitzburg as follows: 'that's three people it's killed in the last few years.' 'Plus a stack of kaffirs,' added Spawnch. 'Yes, that's true...' (164). Adding authority to these exclusionary representations of the natives is the idea that beating up or killing black men is a worthy cause, which confirms JanMohamed's view that the colonizer is governed by an unconscious 'desire to exterminate the brutes' (1991:67). Among Blesbok White's credentials as a tough man, feared by his fellow settlers, is the fact that he killed three black men with his bare hands, although the narrator suggests that this number may be exaggerated. The two apprentices Corry Spunt and Monty Bubbles, keen admirers of White, have two ambitions in life: 'to fuck up kaffirs and box for their country' (105). Crude

racist remarks of this type show that within the settler discourse the other race is constituted and experienced as an enemy. They also echo Fanon's theorization of 'the black man's body as the site of projected paranoid fantasies, as a threatening, menacing body that must be destroyed' (Françoise Vergès,1997:582-3).

An example of the stereotypes related to the body of the native is provided in the scene where Reg Bench visits his sister-in-law and lover Sweetie Hadi. After Marie, the 'nanny', has brought tea for Reg, Sweetie Hadi observes that she stinks. Reg Bench is quick with the generalization that 'They all do it, it's their diet' (127). 'They', of course, are the natives. This statement is exclusionary in its association of the black body with bodily odour and the suggestion that close contact with the natives is detrimental to the white. Underlying the statement is also the suggestion that the national space would be better off without the 'kaffirs'. Interestingly, Reg and Sweetie's remarks are made after Sweetie has advised her daughter Rosie Hadi to avoid contact with the black children: 'I don't like you running around in a costume with all those picannins around' (127). This statement echoes Duiker's remark, referred to earlier in the chapter, that he and his friends shuddered at the thought of swimming in a pool that had been used by black children. All these statements emphasize an unconscious desire to exclude blacks from the settler space while, at the same time, depending on their labour. So the irony here lies in the idea that the native is physically and morally different, though a kind of 'unnecessary evil' that goes with the territory, so to speak, which permeates the colonial discourse in the novel. All the examples considered above emphasize race as 'the ultimate trope of difference,' in Henry Louis Gates' (1992:49) apt phrase.

In his book *The Rhetoric of Empire* (1993), David Spurr contends that

> The European role in colonial territory depends on the clear demarcation of cultural and moral difference between the civilized and the uncivilized. But the ultimate aim of colonial discourse is not to establish a racial opposition between colonizer and colonized. It seeks to dominate by inclusion and domestication rather than by a confrontation which recognizes the independent identity of the Other. (32)

This is a valid point. The Berry family's connection with their servants exemplifies this complex relation between the settler and the native. While their discourse is remarkable in its portrayal of the native as ugly and primitive, their dependence on the natives' labour makes it possible for them to bear the latter's presence. Although Spurr's statement is a little contentious in its suggestion that colonial discourse does not attempt to 'establish a racial opposition', he is correct in pointing out that maintaining colonial power relations depends crucially on the continued construction of cultural and moral difference from the colonized.

The othering of the native that the settler discourse highlights is also reflected in the depiction of settler culture which Eppel offers in his novel. A number of incidents at the army duty camp and in the Umdidi community allow the reader to enter into the imaginary, racially separated, world this novel depicts. The two bush war incidents examined in some detail here involve Duiker Berry and his fellow conscripts of Section C of the Thirteenth Battalion of the Reserve force on camp duty near the Mozambique Border. Although the narrator makes it clear that more than one section, in fact a whole battalion was involved, it is obvious that Section C is given representative value as a symbol of the 'Rhodies' involved in the protection of their 'national space' against the 'terrorists'. Therefore, the incidents considered here acquire the status of a shared experience of national dimension.

This enables Eppel to look at how the experience affects the characters' affirmation of their (Rhodesian) identity.

The bush war episode is interesting in that it shows racist practices as a daily experience in Rhodesian society. At the kitchen camp where Duiker and an African police constable meet, Duiker objects to the constable's reading of a James Hadley Chase novel on the grounds that,

> Africans should not be allowed to see pictures like that, or read obscene books that describe in intimate detail the sexual activities of white people. Still, it's not the boys' fault. It's the people who write those books and make them available to children and kaf... Africans. (65)

Duiker does not simplistically object to the fact that the African conscript reads Chase-type novels. His objection underlies the colonial fear of the Other's 'entry into [white] female space', to use Bridgett Orr's (1994:160) apt phrase. Such an entry is experienced as a threat by the colonial male subject. Instead of this type of reading, Duiker suggests Shakespeare, quotes his 'To be or not to be' conundrum although, not without irony, the reader learns that Duiker himself has never read Hamlet. The suggestion of reading Shakespeare conforms to the colonial need to feed the Other with the culture of the Empire. The reference to the Africans as 'boys' also fits with the colonial stereotype of the Africans as children. It is in this way that this incident can also be viewed as illuminating the narrative of Rhodesian nationhood. It can be seen that in the hands of John Eppel nation-writing is about difference and transformation. What begins as a tale of crossing geographical borders [the pioneer motif] becomes a narrative of the defying and redefining of metaphoric borders: experiential and aesthetic. The narrative, in turn, claims public space for the portable - and competing - mythology of Rhodesiana.

In another significant scene, Duiker and his C Section comrades, who have now reached the border fence, meet a group of indigenous women and children. The incident, which was read earlier as illustrating a 'silent' dialogue between the white Rhodesian soldiers and the natives, is now examined for the manner it reveals the othering of the native population. For this purpose, it is pertinent to consider the following passage:

> The party stopped. There were three old women, a teenage girl, and two little girls. The women were carrying on their heads large bundles of sticks tied with strips of bark. Sydney asked them where they came from; they pointed vaguely ahead. Their faces were expressionless. The young girl, had she not been... you know... a 'nanny'... would have been very pretty and quite sexy. The latest in Johannesburg *haute couture* could not have offset her body to the same superb effect as the colourless rags she wore. Naturally Sydney and his patrol men, like all true Rhodesians, were not in the least bit sexually attracted to 'nannies'... and if all five of them were now making intensely detailed visual examinations of this young thing, you, dear reader, can be assured that these examinations were accompanied by no feelings of lust.
>
> Sydney asked them - or rather, since 'kitchen Kaffir' evolved as a means of telling, not asking - Sydney told them to tell him if they had seen any terrorists in the area. They shook their heads stupidly.
>
> "Give the bitches a clout, Syddo," said Billy, "it's the only language they *verstaan*." Sydney raised his fist suddenly and the woman nearest to him flinched; but she stood her ground. "Go on, man," shouted Billy, "knock her fuckin' block off." But Billy wasn't looking at the old woman Sydney had threatened; neither was Con for that matter; neither was Lofty; neither was our Duiker. An examination is an examination, and when you're in the Rhodesian armed forces, be it the RLI, the SAS, the BSAP, Grey's Scouts, Selous Scouts...Sixth Batt...Thirteenth Batt... you name it... when you carry out an examination of anything, but *any*thing, that may be a danger to the security of your beloved country, and as I said before, you are a member of the Rhodesian armed forces, then you carry out that examination thoroughly. You do not leave a breast - in the present case the phrase `stone unturned' would be singularly inappropriate - I say you do not leave a breast unscanned. Thus it was that the patrol men were still conscientiously carrying out their examinations of the teenage girl. Indeed these faithful soldiers, let it now be recorded for posterity, were exceeding the expectations of even the most demanding of the Rhodesian Army precepts. When they had reached the limits of their visual searchings, these men brought in the expertise of their imaginations.

> Lofty, for instance, had the girl on her back with her legs open; Con had her stripped naked, bound hand and foot, and suspended from a chain that was bolted onto his garage roof; Billy was doing something very thorough to her with her fingers; Sydney had her up against the back seat of his Toyota station wagon and seemed to be frisking her for a concealed weapon. Duiker had her down on all fours - but only for an instant. (68-69)

Underlying the bitterly satirical comments in this passage is the suggestion that the brutality and racism of the Rhodesian soldiers are national features but ones which mark a sexually-oriented hedonism. In reading this passage, Frantz Fanon's (1980) discussion of the role of the Algerian woman in the imagination of the European colonial settlers in Algeria springs to mind. Fanon argues that the European's desire to unveil the Algerian woman was motivated by his intention to possess her, to dominate her, and, through her, to subjugate the Algerian society. For, as Fanon sees it, the veil worn by the Algerian woman was perceived by the frustrated colonizer as an obstacle, as a symbol of resistance, to his project of cultural conquest. In Fanon's own words (1980:21), 'Unveiling this woman is revealing her beauty; it is baring her secret, breaking her resistance, making her available for adventure'. He goes on to argue that the European's frustration at not conquering the Algerian woman leads to the kind of aggressiveness that characterizes the 'rape of the Algerian woman in the dream of a European' (23). As Fanon (1980:24) goes on to explain:

> With an Algerian woman, there is no progressive conquest, no mutual revelation. Straight off, with the maximum of violence, there is possession, rape, near-murder. The act assumes a para-neurotic brutality and sadism, even in a normal European. This brutality and this sadism are in fact emphasised by the frightened attitude of the Algerian woman. In the dream the woman-victim screams, struggles like a doe, and as she weakens and faints, is penetrated, martyred, ripped apart.

Thus behind the satirical tone of the above extract lies what in Fanonian terms amounts to a national feature, as already noted. And the inscription of this 'national' feature into the shared experience of national service is particularly significant in terms of the discussion offered in this chapter. The passage from Eppel's novel quoted above suggests parallels between the indigenous 'Zimbabwean' woman and the Algerian woman. Although there is no specific mention of the veil in this extract - it is replaced by 'the colourless rags she wore' - the repeated references to the 'visual examinations' and the mental rape of the young girl by the soldiers show that there are parallels between the Algerian woman and the native 'Rhodesian' woman represented by the teenage girl. With these various elements in place, the situation described in this scene corresponds to that Fanon discusses in 'The Algerian woman', as indicated in the foregoing argument.. From the conscripts' perspective, the women's silence when asked whether they have seen terrorists constitutes them as an obstacle in getting at the terrorists. The 'epistemic violence', (to use Spivak's (1988) telling phrase), perpetrated on them and the mental rape of the young native can rightly be seen as intended to constitute the native women as 'other'. From another point of view, this incident shows that the othering of the women and the terrorists is exposed by Eppel as part of the colonial strategy of positioning the natives outside the borders of the Rhodesian national space, to deny them national identity. As already mentioned, the call-up itself is justified as an exercise during which the conscripts experience their Rhodesian identity through protecting the settler space.

As this incident shows, they experience it by denying it to the other. Albert Memmi in *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1974) has drawn attention to the mental effect of this denial on the colonized. According to Memmi (1974:96): 'As a result of colonization, the

colonized almost never experienced nationality and citizenship, except privately. Nationally and civically he is only what the colonizer is not'. Chennells (1996:106) makes a similar point with particular reference to the Zimbabwean situation when he remarks that 'settler discourse always attempted to externalize Blacks from White-controlled space - literally through the creation of Reserves and through the Land Apportionment Act, discursively through terms like 'savage' and 'child' which made them alien in civilized or adult space'.

Eppel reveals with sardonic humour yet clearly his stance on the native's marginalization by staging a reversal of roles between the 'Rhodies' and the Other in the scene near the border fence. The conscripts have been eating and drinking after they had made themselves a resting place on a termite mound. Now, exhausted, they have all sunk into sleep. Duiker is woken up when he hears a cow's footsteps approaching, which the Section mistakes for those of the 'terrs'. 'For the rest of that night, the footsteps around their camp and the nerves of those men were as tight as piano wires, when in the gathering of the day some footsteps began to climb the termite mound: crump... crump...crump' (71). But, as Lofty, one of the conscripts, later says, 'It sounded just like terr footsteps' (72). With this incident, in which the Other, in unmistakable farce, takes the form of a cow, Eppel accomplishes a reversal of roles between the 'Rhodies' and the natives by showing the former on the receiving end of fear and humiliation.

The quote from the Rhodesian national anthem -

> Rise O voices of Rhodesia, God may we Thy bounty share. Give us strength to face all danger, and where challenge is, to dare. (72)

- has a sarcastic overtone. It makes clear that Eppel overturns the Rhodesian government discourse on the bush war in which the 'Rhodies' were depicted as heroes and the liberation fighters as cowards. When the section is really attacked by the 'terrs' on the second day of their patrol, just after having made a pact to meet again after twenty years, the helplessness of their situation as they run for survival, some of them wounded like Duiker, is apparent and the reader is invited to reflect upon the senselessness of a war that divides a nation. Even Duiker, the typical 'Rhodie', is made to feel the negativity of this army camp experience and to interrogate his Rhodesian identity in a passage that resounds with a retreat to the womb syndrome:

> He didn't give a damn, at that moment, for Honey, or his mail-order business which was bringing him a small fortune; he did not give a cory bastard for his schooldays, or his time at university, or his army camps, or Rhodesia, or the universe... he wanted to be at home with his mother and father - and his sister too - and Lady, and Socks, and Nyoni, and Aaron in his 'houseboy' uniform... (76)

In his discussion of Michael Hartmann's *Games of Vultures* (1973), Anthony Chennells (1996:123) comments that Hartmann's novel is unlike other Rhodesian novels about the bush war because 'most of its characters are to a greater or lesser extent confused' and the novel deals with 'a situation which... is also an acknowledgement that settler discourse has lost any claim it might once have had to name and control settler space'. This observation also applies to *The Great North Road* forDuiker is presented in the above passage from the novel as confused about the necessity of the bush war and even about claiming Rhodesian identity. Chennells finds Hartmann's novel objective because of its implied recognition that the bush war is a civil war, not an invasion of settler space. This aspect of the two novels provides interesting points of comparison between Hartmann and Eppel who, otherwise, write from two different perspectives.

This duty camp episode is telling in terms of the dialogism of Eppel's text, discussed earlier, because it helps the reader to realize that another form of silence characterizes the 'dialogue' between Section C and the 'terrorists'. Sharing the narrator's privileged position the reader can see that the Rhodesian collective, here represented by Section C, perceives the guerrilla as the Other and engages with him in a dialogue whose purpose is to erase him. Being in this privileged position, the reader also sees that the protagonist Duiker Berry at the end of this episode interrogates his identity, which is an indication that he is unsettled by the nature of the dialogue he has been involved in. Thus, in this incident, a different discourse on the bush war is heard, not just from the 'silent' Other but also from the disillusioned settler, in this case Duiker Berry. It is a discourse that points to the construction of a peaceful and inclusive nation, posited on the coming together of the different racial groups in the country.

In the same way Eppel has established, primarily through Duiker's Aunty Frances and his girlfriend Honey, a counter-discourse that contests the discourse of the Rhodesian nation; he has deconstructed the colonial narrative by highlighting, in Chennells's apt words, the 'tension between a rhetoric of a complacent Rhodesian nationalism and the grotesquerie of his Rhodesians' (1995:16-17). This subversion is evident in a number of instances, including those already explored, but a further three examples are offered for consideration here. Blesbok White, a terror not only to 'kaffirs' but also to his white peers, is the unsuspected lover of Maria, Sweetie Hadi's 'nanny', and the father of the baby in her womb. Ironically, the discovery is made by his own daughter Baby who, the reader is told, sometimes shuddered at the sight of her boss Finkel Papz because of his promiscuous relationships with native women: 'Finkel Papz was despised by the people of Umdidi, not

because he was Jewish, although that did not help, but because he slept with "nannies". That was unforgivable. Sis. Dirty little *kaffirboetie*' (134).

The other character, already mentioned, who embodies the paradox between the Rhodesian values he articulates and his own behaviour is Reg Bench whose self-identity tags ['Rancher, white man and - don't you forget it - Rhodesian' (165)], like Duiker's observation about Cecil Rhodes already quoted, indicate his pride in his Rhodesian identity. He holds that the natives are dishonest. And yet his own morality is questionable. Eppel is at his most satirical when he tells his reader that Reg once urinated into one of the water tanks that supplied drinking water to the village and that, reported to the manager by one of his indigenous assistants, he flatly denied the offence. 'Nevertheless, word had got round, and there were many in the village who wouldn't have put it past Reg Bench to piss in the water supply' (124). With this comment, Eppel disrupts Bench's pretence to moral superiority which his judgment of Shorty, the black barman, has highlighted. His other criminal acts include buying stolen factory tools, selling poisoned meat, and committing adultery with the wives of his fellow workers, including his own sister-in-law Sweetie Hadi. Finally, Dr Frankfurter's opinion about the natives is also undermined by the narrator's negative presentation of him as an incompetent man and a tireless talker: 'He was an amateur prospector. Vindictive people said it was the other way round, that he was an amateur doctor and a professional prospector. He gave you pills for nothing and charged you for being forced to listen to him...' (152). It is clear that the narrator expects the average reader to side with the 'vindictive people'. One of Dr Frankfurter's passions, the reader is repeatedly told, is 'conversational generosity' (153).

In presenting the contradiction between the settlers' beliefs and their behaviour, Eppel has effectively shown the ugliness of the settler culture. This process is completed in the conversion episode at the end of the narrative. This episode is significant in that it provides the perspective of a native, one that is more fully revealed in the next chapter of this thesis, in the discussion of Yvonne Vera's *Nehanda*. In this instance, the narrative is told from the point of view of Moses Phiri. It focuses on the return of Duiker to his home town in Zimbabwe after spending some time abroad. As the reader will remember, the narrative is a long flashback about Duiker's life in colonial Rhodesia. But Moses Phiri's account is also significant in two other ways. First, it consecrates the death of Rhodesia, symbolized by the death of Rosie Hadi (an anagram, as a number of critics [see, for example, De Kock (1993), Kohler (1993), and Chennells (1995)] have pointed out, for Rhodesia) and its racist ideology of the nation in its suggestion that even the most radical 'Rhodies' have accepted reality and become part of the new nation. But, as Kohler (1993:72) rightly points out, the seemingly happy ending of the novel with its suggestion that with the end of the *Chimurenga*, the birth of the new nation has reunited its divided population - with Brother Moral MacBraggert as the moral unifier - is undermined by the 'moral emptiness, lack of spiritual and physical grace' of 'this renewed culture'. Secondly, it shows how MacBraggert's religious venture duplicates the commercial nature of the Rhodesian nation by promising its members a new prosperity, though through treacherous means, as the incident of the resurrection of Pop Clitnip demonstrates. Brother Moral MacBraggert, who prominently reappears in Eppel's second novel *Hatchings*, discussed in Chapter Five, thus emerges as the fictional re-incarnation of Cecil Rhodes.

What this discussion of the settler culture has also shown is that the discourse which inscribes it is, not surprisingly, hegemonic and racist. As Katiya Gibel Azoulay (1996: 132) notes, in a counter-argument to Kwame Anthony Appiah's *In My Father's House* stressing the possibility of loss of identity for Black Americans in a Western culture, 'the social vocabulary of culture is intimately linked to issues of representation and therefore refers to the question of power: who has the power to define whom, when, and how and, finally, for what purpose'. He goes on to argue that 'Where a particular sector of the population is defined as a distinctive group - a cultural entity - often the markers of race and ethnicity reinscribe the very boundaries that negate the effort to convey the porousness and interrelationship of group identities as well as the complexity of an individual's identity' (132). In these terms, Eppel's project in *The Great North Road* appears to be precisely one of exposing and subverting such a discursive practice, which, as mentioned earlier, feeds on difference in order to exclude the native from the settler space. It also exposes the settler culture, showing that

> The "Rhodesian Way of Life" is not only bizarre and comic but it is only able to define itself, and then only in the most flatulent terms, by belonging to "bridge parties, barbecues, country clubs, going to the hairdresser, and organizing the servants." There is no sense of belonging to Africa, nor of having any purpose beyond the most immediate and banal of concerns. (Kohler, 1993:70)

By this novel's end, the reader has a clear sense of the inadequacy of such a discourse. As the narrative perspective shifts from Duiker's to the indigenous journalist Michael Phiri's, it becomes obvious that another discourse and another mode of representation has taken over. Furthermore, Duiker's return to the country after its independence marks the end of the Rhodesian dream and suggests the re-appropriation of national identity and 'the power to define' by the formerly silenced other.

Having established that *The Great North Road* deconstructs the notion of the Rhodesian nation, this chapter now addresses the question of how the novel represents Rhodesia as a nation. As should be obvious by now, perhaps the most striking aspect of the novel is the relative invisibility and silence of the native people. As has been seen, it is Duiker Berry's Aunty Frances and his girlfriend Honey Swanepoel, not the natives, who challenge the ideological and cultural assumptions of the colonial discourse. There is little indication of what the natives' attitudes towards the settler culture are. The closest the reader comes to a reaction or attitude from the colonized group is, as the incident involving the soldiers and the native women has revealed, a reluctance and even a refusal to articulate their attitudes explicitly. Helpful in this regard is the position taken by Stephen Slemon (1994). For Slemon (1994:28), drawing on Gayatri Spivak's notion of subaltern culture, asserts that 'Under colonialism... the colonized speaks only through speaking positions which imperial and other powers permit to its Others...'. This insight helps one to understand the women's reaction to the soldiers' provocation. The invisibility of the indigenous population is also underscored by the fact that much of what the reader learns about them is filtered through the settler discourse; the exception being Moses Phiri, the waiter turned journalist, whose narration of the conversion episode may be said to channel an 'indigenous' perspective. Also, apart from those natives who work as servants in the settlers' houses, the reader is not apprised of any knowledge of how they live. Fanon gives his reader an insight into this structure of the settler society in *The Wretched of The Earth* (1968) when he points out that the two spaces occupied by the settlers and the natives are not complementary but exclusionary.

Thus the natives' invisibility and silence point to their positioning at the margins of the Rhodesian nation. Eppel further suggests this marginalization through his foregrounding of the insistence, in settler discourse, on a separate national identity. Thus what his novel reveals is a representation of colonial Rhodesia as a space where a white minority population occupies the centre and the larger indigenous group is confined to the periphery. Although not all the indigenous characters in the novel are figured literally at the frontiers of Rhodesia, Eppel makes use of the border strategy to underscore their marginality. The group of women the young Rhodesian conscripts harass near the Mozambican border, already discussed, is central to Eppel's strategy of constructing the indigenous subject as living at the frontier. Their harassment can be seen as the expression of an unconscious desire to drive them to the other side of the border where they should belong. After all, as the text makes it clear, that side is where their kind (the "terrs") are supposed to be. The women were harassed because they were supposed to have seen the terrorists. The border is also institutional and cultural. This explains Duiker's disgust (commented on earlier) that some schools have started taking in Africans and that white and black schoolchildren swim together in the same pools. At the same time, very satirically, Eppel lets it known that such barriers often have currency in daylight only, as his account of the affair between arch-racist Blesbok White and an African 'nanny' indicates.

The last chapter of the novel brings the narrative to the early days of Zimbabwe's independence. In this context, a different imaginary map of the national space is drawn. With Moses Phiri having been granted the role of narrator, the text draws attention to Duiker Berry's return from exile, a reminder to the reader that the representation offered

in the larger part of the narrative reflects a recent past of the nation. Duiker's return from his exile in Britain is interesting in terms of the novel's exploration of national identity. His re-crossing of the border is presented not so much as evidence of his conversion to a new national ethos, but rather as a return to the source of Rhodesianism. Tellingly, his first visit is to the pub where he hopes to meet his comrades from Section C of the Thirteenth Battalion following the promise they made to each other when doing duty at the Reserve near the Mozambican border. The end of the novel sees him joining Brother Moral MacBraggert's ultra-conservative Blood of Jesus Temple, a congregation of right-wing whites. Thus, the narrative offers a largely static representation of the nation - one that is divided between a white conservative minority and a black majority. Perhaps the only change in the picture is that the former settler does not occupy the centre any more.

PART TWO

Attention now turns to selected poems in *Spoils of War* to corroborate the foregoing argument on *The Great North Road*. The suggestion here is that the four poems under scrutiny, namely 'Rhodesian Lullaby', 'Thin White line', 'Call it "In Memory of General Josiah Tongogara"' and 'Spoils of War' disrupt the appropriation of Rhodesian identity and thus reflect one of the central themes of Eppel's first novel. It is necessary to point out that some other poems in the collection are not as politically engaged as those selected for detailed analysis. Other poems in this anthology express Eppel's sensitivity to the beauty of the nature and life which provided a context for the social injustice that his poetry typically denounces.

The poem entitled 'Rhodesian Lullaby' characteristically registers Eppel's questioning of the politics of Rhodesian nationalism. More particularly, it speaks of the end of the Rhodesian dream which is, as has been seen, the focus of the last episode of the novel. The poem opens with an image of shrapnel that serves to convey a sense of the shock and suddenness surrounding the end of the dream:

> Like shrapnel from an old bomb we scatter
> to other lands, delivering reasons.
> On our elbows and our knees, a season's
> grass-burns. On the backs of our hands, faces,
> and necks - the first traces of skin cancer.
> Yes, we're Rhodesians. Does it matter?

Although the idea of war is suggested by the image of the shrapnel in this first stanza, it is not with war that the poem is mainly concerned. The underlying concern in the poem is with the aftermath of the liberation war for a people that seems to have lost a sense of its constructed identity. The poem is part of what Peter Kohler (1993:84) rightly sees as 'an attempt to bring calm and understanding to a people who got emotionally stuck, who in their disillusion defeated themselves, morally and spiritually, by going it alone.' The image of disease ('skin cancer') emphasizes the pain and disillusion that this predicament causes. The statement 'Yes, we're Rhodesians' and the rhetorical question at the end of the stanza underscore the speaker's sense of the irreversibility of this predicament. From this initial question 'Does it matter?' follows a description of various aspects of the Rhodesian lifestyle which was interrupted by the departure from the country, already alluded to.

> Even our children have learned not to cry
> for their puppies' graves. The women weep
> no more for their gardens. And the men sleep

less fitfully on their way to Smithland
or Salisbury-by-the-sea. A boozy band
Of rebels, we fought the world and lost. Why

Should it matter? Rhodesians never die.
From our mouths flat patriotisms slide
tight as trouser-legs, unbending as pride.
Stories of war spread like phosphorous
To our eyes. In a trickling of pus
and blood down cheeks, we shout our lullaby.

Our wallets were fat, our bellies fatter.
Memories of war slip like envelopes
under the doors of our minds. Each one copes
in his own way - a defiant slogan
on a T-shirt, the old flag printed on
a dishcloth ... hush now - it doesn't matter.

Kohler (1993:75) reads the last two lines of the second stanza as suggesting the idea of, as he writes, 'a people whose aggressive obstinacy was a way of coping with the foreboding of its own disillusion and historical demise'. This assessment seems to be justified in the face of the poem's overall satirical questioning of the notion of Rhodesian identity. Notice how the initial question, 'Does it matter?', already referred to and repeated at the end of the second stanza, points to the conclusion stated in the last line of the novel. The cruel simplicity of the comment 'it does not matter' is poignant. In the face of this conclusion, comments such as 'We're Rhodesians' and 'Rhodesians never die' assume a hollow, if ironic, ring. The irony is evident when one considers that this poem has a significant intertextual relation to the following Rhodesian ballad by Clem Tholet and Andy Dillon (used as an epigraph in Peter Godwin and Ian Hancock, 1993):

We're all Rhodesians
And we'll fight through thick and thin,
We'll keep our land a free land,
Stop the enemy coming in,
We'll keep them north of the Zambezi
Till that river's running dry,
And this mighty land will prosper
For Rhodesians never die.

As a metatext of this ballad, Eppel's poem presents the Rhodies' exodus from 'our land' as an ironic situation. For, contrary to the spirit of the ballad, they have been unable to win the war and to stop the 'terrorists', an internal enemy, from taking power in 'their' land. Eppel's poem is not about staying in the country so as to see to it that 'this mighty land (will) prosper', but it is about leaving the country precisely as a result of a military capitulation in the face of international politics. The image of 'flat patriotisms slid(ing) tight as trousers-legs' may refer to the emptiness of the Rhodesian government propaganda that was force-fed to White Rhodesians. The falsity of the settler discourse on the bush war is suggested in the lines 'Stories of war spread like phosphorous in our eyes'. A similar image, 'Memories of war slip(ping) like envelopes', suggests that the discourse fades away with the end of the war. In the poem, the old flag is mentioned to reinforce the idea of the end of the Rhodesian dream. The mention of all these elements of Rhodesian nationalism is put in the context of a lost dream. The irony in this poem is clinched by the juxtaposition of all these symbols of the old order with the defiant slogan 'Rhodesians never die'.

Another significant image in the poem is that of pus and blood rolling down cheeks while 'we shout our lullaby', which action is associated with the title of the poem. The association

of pus and blood seems to suggest the cruelty perpetrated by the settler community which the poet deplores. The cynical tone is confirmed by the use of the word 'shout' instead of 'sing', and the paradox of 'shout(ing)' a 'lullaby', which conjoin to suggest, at once, the brutality and insensitivity of the settlers. Thus the title of the poem appears as a contrast to the event narrated. The poem appears to focus on the end of the Rhodesian dream and the subsequent emigration of a substantial number of the white population. The predicament of those scattering to other lands is likened to 'the first traces of skin cancer'.

In the poem Eppel debunks the myth of a powerful Rhodesian national identity through the image of the settlers fleeing Rhodesia and being forced to invent reasons for their demise. Their uncomfortable predicament is emphasized by the image of disease ('traces of our cancer') that the poet introduces. As was seen in Chapter One, Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* explains the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized in psychiatric terms. In his poetry, Eppel often represents the settler in terms that suggest that s/he suffers from some kind of ailment. Such an image recurs in some of the poems analyzed in this section of the chapter. Eppel also subverts the colonial discourse as he refers to the Rhodesians as a 'boozy band of rebels', thus labelling them with the very term used in colonial discourse to refer to the liberation fighters. Peter Kohler (1993:84) sees in this poem an example of what he describes as 'the generosity in Eppel's writing' because it 'points to what he has spoken about as the need for Rhodesian mythology to find the grace to die, to find closure for itself'.

In the poem 'Call It "In Memory of General Josiah Tongogara"', Eppel problematizes Rhodesian nationalism from a different angle. The poem begins with Eppel drawing

attention to the structural similarity of his text to Donald Davie's poem, 'Dream Forest', and W. B. Yeats's poem, 'In Memory of Major Robert Gregory'. The thematic preoccupation of the poem really starts in the third line of the first stanza.

> With your permission, William Butler Yeats?
> And yours, Mr Davie? Is it Donald Alfred?
> I have set up these three sophisticates:
> types of thin-lipped greed, authenticated
> not by art but by their thin-lipped times.
>
> First, the cash-box bandit Cecil John,
> tossed like coins a thousand thousand crimes
> that fell on heads and tails, or rolled along
> those hunters' tracks pressing northward from the Cape,
> acquiring land from a promise and a song.
>
> Next, guilty of riot-een, loot-een, rape-
> een in nearly every speech: the Wrong
> (but) Honourable Ian Douglas Smith,
> extant. Fearless as a tiger, he did
> a lot of bona fide damage with
>
> the likes of me, in this set up, the third
> and final pair of lips; so tight they'd break
> the circle of a rhyme; so thin they'd cut
> a kiss in two; so sorry they'd embarrass
> General Josiah Tongogara, extinct.

The title of this poem refers to General Josiah Tongogara, who is regarded as a hero of the war of liberation. He is described in *Makers of Modern Africa* (Uwechue,1996:754) as 'not just a military man in the conventional sense. He was first and foremost a politician, a quality he combined with his military ability to become one of the most influential personalities in ZANU's [Zimbabwe African National Union] Central Committee'. The General's nobility and heroism in reconquering his land is contrasted with what the poet

perceives as the foolishness of heroes in the Rhodesian historiography (Cecil John Rhodes and Ian Smith), but also with those Rhodesians who espoused the causes championed by nationalist leaders. As already indicated, Eppel sees Rhodes's conquest of Zimbabwe as a commercial crime and Ian Smith as guilty of poor judgement. It is pertinent to note the poet's use of the words 'bandit' (reminiscent of his indictment in *The Great North Road*), 'thousand thousand crimes', 'hunters', 'riot-een', 'loot-een', 'rape-een', 'Wrong', and 'damage' in constructing Rhodes's colonial venture as criminal and Ian Smith's nationalist discourse as damaging to national harmony between all the racial groups. Underlying this poem is the view that national reconciliation passes through a recognition of the historical wrongs the poem mentions.

The poem 'Thin White Line' is also typical of Eppel in its association of colonial rule with destruction. One notices in this poem the same preoccupation with history as in the poem just analyzed and the same directness of address. While the emphasis in the previous poem is on the wrongs committed by the colonials, here it is upon the construction of settlers sacrificed to the cause of the colony as heroes. The speaker in this poem points an accusing finger at his forebears:

> You, Great-Grandfather:
> colonial volunteer;
> Ladysmith, Wagon Hill, Spion Kop;
> (Killed in action):
> you came home a hero.
>
> You, Oupa:
> despatch rider;
> Windhoek, Swakopmund, Tsumeb;
> (Wounded in the hand):
> you came home a hero.

You, Dad:
lorry driver;
Tobruk, Alamein, Halfaya Pass;
(slightly shell-shocked):
you came home a hero.

You, son:
rifleman;
(Plumtree, Bube, Vila Salazar);
(confused)
you came home a polecat.

An essential feature of Eppel's language in this poem is its structure characterized by a quasi-absence of sentences. It is as if the poet has intended by the mere listing of items (relation, profession, places, outcomes, and so on) to impress upon the reader the family link, occupation, and circumstances of suffering that entitle the person concerned to the status acquired. Another feature of the poem is the use of the vocative 'You'. The significance of this mode is to enact a dialogue with the addressee. The impression thus created is that of a speaker pointing an accusing finger at the addressee. The contrast in the fates of the first three addressees (heroes in the eyes of the people of their generations) and that of the son (polecat) is precisely the purpose of the poem: to emphasize why it does not make sense for the younger generation to embrace an outdated nationalist ideology, the Rhodesianism of 'Spoils of War' analyzed below. The confusion of the son is reminiscent of that of Duiker in *The Great North Road* after the incident at the duty camp discussed earlier. As has been seen, Duiker is led to doubt by his realization that there is more in life than fighting against the other. From this perspective, the poem 'Thin White Line' puts the reader in a position to accept Fanon's view in *The Wretched of the Earth* that colonial wars have dire physical and mental consequences for the settlers and the natives. Furthermore, this poem serves to provide a counter-discourse

to power and the colonial enterprise that is comparable with that of Aunt Frances and Honey Swanepoel, referred to earlier in this chapter.

The poem is also characterized by the use of names of places. Naming places is an important aspect of colonialist discourse. It is a 'grammatical form[...] of appropriation', as David Spurr (1993:32) has argued, following Roland Barthes. It is also an act of creating histories. In this light, it appears that the speaker's intention in naming these places is to construct their historicity. However, given the postcolonial perspective of the text, one can also assume that what is achieved here is a de-scribing of these places, a deconstruction of their historicity clinched by their association with an unjust cause. The above insight also helps one to understand why in *The Great North Road* the name of the school Duiker attends is Milton School and why his hall of residence is named after Rhodes's Chartered Company: this politics of naming may be situated in terms of Eppel's critique of the agency of the colonial school system in the transmission of imperial ideology, which Duiker's interest in English and Rhodesian history has highlighted. The title of this poem introduces a racial element hitherto only implicit in the other poems. The association of 'white' and 'thin' pejoratively refers to the short history of colonial presence in the country. The nature of the men's experiences reveals what the speaker sees as the military nature of colonial conquest.

The title poem 'Spoils of War', suggests a conceptualization of the colonial period as a time of moral and physical destruction and looting. It is worth analyzing for it illuminates Eppel's intention in his account of the army camp episode in his first novel. For the

purpose of this discussion, only the last part of this long poem is reproduced and closely examined.

The LMG drags me through the bush,
its muzzle close to the ground. A sour,
smoky stink of terror checks it. I push
forward, then flatten in a commotion
that slits a bag of raisins in my brain.

When the screaming starts, I have a notion,
lying on my back - horizontal rain
of tracer bullets just above my nose -
a notion that some cattle have been shot.
I start feeling pity and fear for those
Poor bellowing beasts. Surely that is not
a human sound. The screams go on all night.

Next morning our section finds their shelter,
fifteen metres from where we lay. The sight
of corpses, and their smell, like an abattoir,
forces warm pilchards into my throat. "Look
at that," says sarge, " a Tokarev pistol
still in its grease." He pockets it. They take
a portable radio, a fistful
of rounds, an empty AK magazine,
a portable radio, a penis, a number of ears,
and a picture of someone in a green
uniform. Sarge tells me to save my tears
for the civilians these gooks have slaughtered.
But I am not thinking of them, and I
cannot explain that I am being purged
of my Rhodesianism. That ugly
word with its jagged edge is opening
me. Through a haze of baked beans in chilli
sauce I move to the past tense.

The going
was tough but at last I had my frilly-
petalled (highly protected) succulent
shrub buried up to its neck in granite

sub-soil. *Adenium* does not transplant
well, but this one flourished. You can see it
there today. It flowers in September.
And if ever you live in our old home -
the one in the village - please remember
not to over-water my cuddlesome
stump. And if you are bothered by the law,
tell them that the plant is a spoil of war.

That this poem refers to the same bush war incident in the novel discussed earlier is indicated by the references, some of them absent from the above stanzas, to the Army (Section, Sarge), place of operation (Vila Salazar), Frelimo, cattle, drinks, guns (LMG), and the nature of the experience - the terror that paralyzes the men. Perhaps more significant is the underlying purpose of the two texts captured in the following two sentences from the poem: '... I am being purged / of my Rhodesianism. That ugly / word with its jagged edge is opening me'. These are key-sentences, shedding light on Eppel's intention in both the poem and the novel. It is highly significant that this statement is made after the poet has listed the spoils of war, for it points to his repulsion by the type of experience he has been through. The listing of the spoils of war (a Tokarev pistol, a portable radio, an empty AK magazine, a photograph of someone in green uniform, etc.) emphasizes both the insignificance of the war and the emptiness of the ideal for which the war is fought.

Perhaps because of the condensed nature of poetry, the tone in the poem appears to be intended to be more serious than that of the novel. Eppel's intention here is to highlight the fear and the misunderstanding between the settler and the autochthonous communities in colonial Zimbabwe, which are represented in this poem by the conscripts and the

guerrillas. Each detail is given with emotional intensity so as to make the poem memorable.

In the poem the Frelimo soldiers are still represented as Others. But they are distanced from the reader by the poet's insistence on the activities of the men in 'our section'. As in the episode in the novel, the Rhodesians in the poem are depicted in a previous stanza as cowards: 'No one of us wanted to carry ... We had to spin for it,' but also as representatives of a decadent system. The juxtaposition in the poem of words with martial connotation ('weapon', 'camp', 'danger', 'dangerous', 'weaponry', 'Army life', 'squeeze', 'tragedy', 'terror', 'fear','war',' bullets', 'corpses', and so on) and words referring to peace ('law', 'flowers, 'flourished', and so on) appears to be intended to reflect the mixed political mood of the period in which the text is set. The statement 'I am purged of my Rhodesianism' is central in the poem as it suggests the end of an illusion. This follows the note of bitterness which the attentive reader can detect earlier on in the poem as the speaker regrets his section's involvement in a ' tragedy' that opposes them to 'someone just like ourselves', a clear reference to their black fellow Zimbabweans.

The poem figures the poet as in love with the *Adenium*. In this way the plant is constructed as a metaphor for the country the speaker loves. This metaphor is particularly revealing in the final stanza (not reproduced here). Implicit in his plea, that those who have taken over the narrator's home should take care of his plant, is a concern for the well-being of his country even if he is forced to live in exile. The narrator's attachment to the plant provides a motive for hope and communication for, although the plant is identified as a spoil of war, in contrast with other spoils of war against which it is played off, its symbolism seems to hint at the possibility of reconciliation and love in the new nation.

As has been seen, *The Great North Road* and *Spoils of War* complement each other in their telling of the Rhodesian 'nation' and their auscultation of the Rhodesian subject. *The Great North Road* presents a settler working-class community as a microcosm of what settler discourse constructed as a 'civilized nation' within the wilderness and savagery of Africa. This discourse also constructed the settler identities as hierarchized, and defined the colonial space itself in terms of racial differences. Furthermore, the chapter has shown that, in this polyphonic text, Eppel achieves a deconstruction of the settler hegemonic discourse by offering a rational, counter-discourse that displaces the colonial discourse. Both these conflicting discourses are presented within a cultural context characterized by the insistence of the dominant group on making use of hegemonist stereotypes to justify its nationalist project.

Spoils of War collaborates with the novel to offer negative images of the colonist. These two works are significant in the ways they explore questions of national identity and culture from within the settler community. In his imagined geography of the colonial nation, Eppel has represented the settler space as centre, and the natives' space as a space of difference, that is, as marginalized location. In their marginalized position, the natives are presented as voiceless and relatively 'invisible' subjects. All the texts examined in this chapter insist on the end, the shattering of the elusive dream of the Rhodesian nation, symbolized by the death of Rose Hadi.

In his interview with Richard Saunders, referred to in Chapter One, Eppel laments that his black countrymen were displeased with the content of his first novel because of what they saw as his perpetuation of racial stereotypes. However, reading the novel and the poems as a critique of the colonial ideology of the nation, as has been done in this chapter, shows

that these allegations are unfounded. It is not because the novel reflects the colonial Rhodesian perspective that it is a racist novel. In his works examined in this chapter, Eppel clearly subverts the Rhodesian discourse of the nation; which subversion, by implication, suggests his hope of a future national culture embracing all the peoples of Zimbabwe.

In a discussion of Zimbabwean white authors, including Eppel, Michael Chapman (1996:302-303) observes that '[their] struggle has involved rescuing the sustaining memory from a discredited past, and all these writers speak in an ambiguous amalgam of nostalgia, bravado, moral evasion and determined self-scrutiny'. The most revealing illustration of Eppel's 'determined self-scrutiny' can be found in the poems from *Spoils of War* which have been discussed in this chapter. What the analysis of the novel and the poems has also revealed is the other side of Eppel's work, that is, what in the first place constituted this 'discredited past'. In providing an unashamedly honest portrayal of settler Rhodesia as a society whose central cultural beliefs are rooted in the imperial ideology of racial difference, Eppel has with 'determined self-scrutiny' and 'bravado' come to terms with his settler heritage.

Thus, set against the background of the colonial politics of the nation, Eppel's representation of colonial Zimbabwe in the various texts examined in this chapter may be judged as plausible, for Rhodesia emerges as the racially and culturally divided society it was. While colonial Zimbabwe is represented in Eppel's text largely as a space in which natives are marginalized, the next chapter focuses on Yvonne Vera's *Nehanda*, a narrative of the liberation war, to examine how it displaces the focus from the settler to the native culture in an attempt to reclaim identity and geography.