THE ZIMBABWEAN NATION AS CULTURAL CONSTRUCT IN THE WORKS OF JOHN EPPEL, DAMBUDZO MARECHERA AND YVONNE VERA

by

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Nations and peoples are largely the stories they feed themselves. If they tell themselves stories that are lies, they will suffer the future consequences of those lies. If they tell themselves stories that face their own truths, they will free their stories from future flowerings.

Ben Okri, *Birds of Heaven*

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ABSTRACT

This study contributes to an understanding of how the nation is textualized in African literature. It offers readings of three Zimbabwean writers - John Eppel, Dambudzo Marechera, and Yvonne Vera - to show how the notion of difference underlies representations of the nation in their texts selected for study. It begins with an overview of a number of theories of the nation and, then, notes the importance of an approach that takes account of the interplay between nation and narration but also attends to the notion of difference in examining representations of the nation in literature. It justifies the choice of writers by arguing that John Eppel, Dambudzo Marechera, and Yvonne Vera can be regarded as representatives of their country's literature. All these points are made in Chapter One.

In Chapter Two, the thesis examines John Eppel's *The Great North Road* with a focus on the polyphonic structure of this text and its description of the settler culture. It shows that both these strategies disclose an othering of the natives, within Rhodesian culture, which is reflected in the imagined geography of the nation described in the novel. Selected poems from his collection *Spoils of War* (1989) are also analyzed as grounds for further exploring Eppel's questioning of Rhodesian identity.

In Chapter Three, the thesis reads Yvonne Vera's *Nehanda* as a text which represents an early colonial Shona community as a nation struggling to recover its cultural identity and land. It shows that Vera's representation of this nation is achieved through various strategies, such as, firstly, the inscription of her heroine as an intermediary between two

sections (the dead and their descendants) of what appears to be a 'family-nation' and, secondly, the inversion of the binary roles between the settler and the native.

Marechera's texts, examined in Chapter Four, reveal a representation of Rhodesia/ Zimbabwe as a concentration camp and, generally, a space of violence leading the subject to alienation. Such portrayals, the thesis argues, are consistent with Marechera's refusal to identify with his nation. The issue of the variety of his representation of Zimbabwe leads to an inquiry into the complexity of his representation of nation in his work, for example, questioning why notions of margins, displacement, and mimicry underpin such a representation.

In Chapter Five, the thesis returns to Eppel in order to consider how his novel *Hatchings* suggests the emergence of a modern Zimbabwean nation even as it concentrates on corruption in the Zimbabwean society.

In the concluding chapter, the thesis summarizes its main arguments. It stresses that the common thread running through all the texts selected for study is the imagining of the Zimbabwean nation as a community divided along some category of difference, thus validating the study's main assumption that difference informs representations of the nation in much of Zimbabwean literature.

Key terms: Zimbabwe(an) nation. representation. cultural space. difference. margin(alization). settler. native. John Eppel. Dambudzo Marechera. Yvonne Vera.

OPSOMMING

Die wyses waarop die begrip 'nasie' in literêre teksverband (en spesifiek in Zimbabwiese literatuur) figureer, vorm die ondersoek terrein van hierdie studie. Vertolkings van die Zimbabwiese skrywers, John Eppel, Dambudzo Marechera en Yvonne Vera word aangebied ten einde die verskille in hul onderskeie voorstellings van die begrip 'nasie' bloot te lê. Ter inleiding word 'n oorsig van die teorieë oor 'nasie' verskaf, waarna die belangrikheid van 'n benadering waarin die wisselwerking tussen nasie en vertelling (met inbegrip van die verskillende voorstellings van die begrip 'nasie' in die Zimbabwiese literatuur) ondersoek word. Die keuse van skrywers is geregverdig omdat John Eppel, Dambudzo Marechera en Yvonne Vera as verteenwoordigend van Zimbabwiese literatuur beskou kan word.

In Hoofstuk Twee word John Eppel se *The Great North Road* ondersoek en daar word gefokus op die veelstemmige kultuur in hierdie teks asook die beskrywing van 'n setlaarskultuur. Daar word aangetoon dat albei hierdie strategieë 'n "othering" van die inboorlinge in die breë Rhodesiese kultuur openbaar wat ook in die denkbeeldige geografie van 'nasie' in die roman reflekteer word. Geselekteerde gedigte van sy bundel, *Spoils of War* (1989) word ook as verteenwoordigend van hierdie bevraagtekening van die Rhodesiese identiteit ontleed.

In Hoofstuk Drie kom Yvonne Vera se *Nehanda* aan die beurt as 'n teks waarin die vroeë koloniale Shona-gemeenskap as nasie 'n stryd voer om hulle kulturele identiteit en grond te herwin. Vera se voorstelling van haar heldin as 'n tussenganger tussen twee entiteite

(die gestorwenes en hul afstammelinge) wat as 'n 'familie-nasie' voorkom asook die tweeledige omgekeerde rolle van setlaar en inboorling dien as voorbeeld van hierdie stryd.

Hoofstuk Vier sentreer rondom die geskrifte van Marechera waarin Rhodesië/Zimbabwe as 'n konsentrasiekamp en 'n geweldsruimte wat tot vervreemding lei, voorgestel word. Sulke voorstellings hou verband met Marechera se weiering om met sy nasie te identifiseer. Die vraagstuk na die verskeidenheid van sy voorstellings oor Zimbabwe lei tot die ondersoek van die komplekse voorstelling van 'nasie' in sy werk, wat onderskryf word deur begrippe soos marginalisering, verplasing en koloniale bespotting.

In Hoofstuk Vyf word terug gegaan na die werk van Eppel met die doel om te kyk op welke wyse sy roman *Hatchings* die verskyning van 'n moderne Zimbabwiese nasie voorstel te midde van korrupsie in die Zimbabwiese samelewing.

Die laaste hoofstuk van die verhandeling is 'n opsomming van die hoofargumente, wat beklemtoon dat die gemeenskaplike draad wat deur al die bestudeerde tekste loop, 'n denkbeeldige voorstelling van die Zimbabwiese nasie as 'n verdeelde gemeenskap is. Die kernopvatting is dus dat dié diversiteit in die gemeenskap gereflekteer word in die eksemplariese tekste van Zimbabwiese literatuur wat in hierdie studie bespreek word.

Sleutelterme: Zimbabwe nasie. representasie. kultuur. ruimte, verskil. grens. marginalisering. setlaar. inboorling. John Eppel. Dambudzo Marechera. Yvonne Vera.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

A number of works of African literature are about nationhood. The reason for this, as critic Simon Gikandi (1991:13)[1] has observed, is that the development of African literature runs parallel to that of nation formation in the continent. In narrating the nation, the African writer, and particularly the African novelist, wears a number of hats: he or she sees himself or herself, like Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe, as a teacher or, like Ousmane Sembene, as an historian or a griot who chronicles and 'interpret(s) the socio-historical and cultural heritage of his community' (Françoise Pfaff, 1993:15) in an attempt to raise its national consciousness. Sometimes the African novelist writes from the perspective of a witness who tells about neocolonial practices that threaten nation formation, and, sometimes, from that of an exile who, in the words of Timothy Brennan (1989:26), 'proclaims his identity with a country whose artificiality and exclusiveness has driven him into a kind of exile - a simultaneous recognition of nationhood and an alienation from it'. And in some instances he or she acts simply as a propagandist. Whatever the standpoint from which a national narrative is written, it is definitely worth examining the representation of the nation it provides, as this will enhance the significance of the text.

The purpose of this thesis is to consider representations of the Zimbabwean nation as revealed in a selected sample of texts by Zimbabwean writers. This chapter sets the scene of this study by exploring the possibility of reading African narratives of the nation in the light of current theories of nation in postcolonial cultural studies. It begins by presenting

[1] For the purpose of notation, an annotated Harvard system has been adopted.

an overview of a number of these theories, in order to demonstrate the need to shift the focus from an analysis of nationalism in Zimbabwean literature, as has been done in a number of studies (see, for example, Morrison and Ngara, 1989; O'Brien, 1994; Sibanyoni, 1995; and Taitz, 1996), to a study of representations of the Zimbabwean nation as cultural construct. The overview is also warranted by the need to define the uses of the term 'nation' in this project and highlight the limitations of the kind of criticism that has read African literature as either celebrating or undermining this notion. Further, the chapter engages the view that there exists no national (as opposed to nationalist) literature in Africa. It argues that such a view overlooks the common concern among Zimbabwean writers, of all races, genders and classes, with issues of difference and identity in their shared cultural space. The chapter then justifies the choice of approach, authors and texts.

Until quite recently the idea of the nation as a historically and geographically determined reality was a well-established view among political theorists. Ernest Renan (in Homi K. Bhabha, 1990:19) expresses this traditional view when he states that the idea of the nation lies in 'the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories' and 'the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage one has received in an undivided form'. A common past implies not only the sharing of a common culture and history but also, in most cases, the same geography. In the Third World context, Frantz Fanon's critique of bourgeois nationalism, articulated in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1968), rests on this traditional and, some say, conservative, concept of nation.

Fanon's perceived failure to question nationhood in the colonial states of Africa which rose to the status of independent nation-states has amazed some of his liberal critics.

Christopher Miller (1992:73), for example, is surprised that Fanon applies the term 'nation' to 'ethnic entities' that are far from being nations. Explaining Miller's position on this point, Neil Lazarus (1993:73) observes that Fanon 'takes for granted the unforgoability even the world-historical "appropriateness" of what has been imposed upon Africa by the colonial powers'. According to Lazarus (1993:73), by doing so, Fanon privileges the nation not only as the "obvious" but also as the decisive unit of anti-imperialist struggle'. At the same time, both Miller and Lazarus seem to suggest that, in using this discursive framework for his critique of colonialism, Fanon unwittingly locates himself plainly in the very conservative and colonial terrain he seeks to reject.

To be sure, Fanon's re-appropriation of the concept of nation serves his purpose, for it provides him with a base from which he can launch his critique of colonialism and neocolonialism. He purposefully remains within the terms of the colonizer's model of the colonial nation for he believes that colonial nations can rise to the status of new nations if precolonial national culture is taken into consideration. In Fanon's (1968b:169) view, precolonial culture helps 'rehabilitate [a] nation and serve as a justification for the hope of a future national culture'. This is why he sees 'literature of combat' as playing a vital role in helping foster national consciousness by drawing on past culture. As he puts it, '[literature of combat] moulds the national consciousness, giving it form and contours and flinging open before it new and boundless horizons...' (Fanon, 1968b:193).

It is a dimension of Fanon's influence that his ideas about the nation resonate in the works of a number of Third World writers, such as Ayi Kwei Armah, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Yambo Ouologouem to name but a few, whose texts construct Africa as a space of

struggle against colonialism and its aftermath, neo-colonialism. Armah, in his novel *Two Thousand Seasons* (1978), idealizes this precolonial culture, which he refers to as the 'way', whose loss he situates at the arrival of first the Arab, then the European 'invaders' and whose recovery, through armed struggle and resistance to foreign cultural imperialism, he sees as a necessary condition for the emancipation of the African nations. The same valorization of national culture as an antidote to colonialism can be seen in resistance narratives by Zimbabwean writers. One of the chapters of this thesis (see Chapter Three) focuses on a representative narrative of the liberation war. Drawing upon Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), it pays attention to the way this novel (see discussion of Yvonne Vera's *Nehanda*) conveys a notion of the nation that is, in the words used by Svetlana Boym (1995:152) in a different context, 'not merely a specific geographic entity, but a state of the soul, a world-view, a spiritual continent'.

As has been pointed out by Kwame Anthony Appiah (1991:353), this type of ideological African literary text that celebrates the nation has been followed in the post-independence period by texts that 'reject not only the Western *imperium* but also the nationalist project of the postcolonial bourgeoisie'. Nonetheless, the concept of nation underpinning all these various texts is the traditional one handed in by the Enlightenment. Accordingly, discussions of images of the nation in such texts have largely been conducted with this notion in mind.

The emergence of new nation-states in the Third World, their vulnerability to secessions and, more recently, the disintegration of some countries in the former Eastern Bloc have however discredited this traditional idea of nation. Benedict Anderson's seminal work,

Imagined Communities (1983), represents perhaps the boldest attempt to reconsider this concept of the nation. Anderson's thesis (1983:19) is that the idea of nation should be associated 'not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural system that preceded it, out of which - as well as against which - it came into being'. He sees its development as resulting from 'a half-fortuitous, but explosive interaction between a system of production and productive relations (capitalism), a technology of communications (print), and the fatality of human linguistic diversity' (46). Of significance to the argument of this study is Anderson's view that print media, notably the newspaper and the novel, have been instrumental in shaping the idea of the nation and still perpetuate the myth of the nation by constituting readers as subjects who regard themselves as members of a national community.

The nation as imagined community, Anderson argues, affirms its existence through a number of traditions and symbols. In a defence of this argument, Eric Hobsbawm (1983:7) suggests that it is symbols such as flags, anthems, ceremonials, monuments, mottoes and the traditions associated with them, as well as nationalism, which constitute our referents of the idea of nation. In a similar vein, Ernest Gellner (1983:55) states that 'it is nationalism which engenders nations, and not the other way round', adding that 'the cultures it claims to defend and revive are often its own invention, or are modified out of all recognition'. Also relaying this view, Timothy Brennan (1989:4) observes that, 'nations are mental projections, or polyglot renderings of a single epic creation that is in the world rather than about it; that nation-forming is of the present, rather than the past ...'. Not so, says Anthony D. Smith. In a clear dismissal of Hobsbawm's view that the invention of traditions legitimizes the nation, Smith remarks that 'there is more to the formations of nations than

nationalist fabrication, and "invention" must be understood in its other sense of a novel recombination of existing elements' (Smith, 1992:72). In an implicit criticism of Benedict Anderson's view of the role of print capitalism in spreading the idea of the nation, Smith asserts that such a view does not account for important elements in the pre-modern era, including pre-existent ethnic ties and the existence of nations even in Antiquity, which contributed to the construction of modern nations.

Of relevance to the African context is Partha Chatterjee's (1993) similar criticism of Anderson. According to Chatterjee (1993:7), the 'specifities of the colonial situation do not allow a simple transposition of European patterns of development'. Indeed, in Africa the illiterate masses do not have access to the print media, which are a luxury in many parts of the continent, and they are not even fluent in the colonial language which is the medium of most of those print media. In terms of Anderson's argument, this means that an important section of the nation is not served with the ideological discourse that he sees as vital for spreading and reinforcing nationalism. Because of the lack of adequate printing infrastructure and the high cost of books, there is even less access to the novel, even for literate members of the community. Whether to write in an indigenous language (as Ngugi wa Thiong'o has argued) for an insignificant public, or write for a largely foreign public whose nationalism does not need to be reinforced by narratives from another nation (as writers like Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka have done), are questions that give a sense of how difficult it is for African writers to promote nationalism in a medium that is foreign to their nations.

Viewed in this context, the debate about the language issue in African literature becomes, in fact, a debate about whether nation formation in Africa runs the risk of coming to a standstill if that literature does not achieve its goal of moulding the 'national' community. Ngugi in *Decolonising the Mind* (1986) has a point when, following Fanon, he expresses concern about the use of a foreign language to carry national cultures and draws attention to the fact that a foreign language can serve the colonizing purposes of an oppressor nation. Ngugi's argument carries over from the literary and cultural domain to the political field as is particularly evident in his reference to Africa and the West as oppressed and oppressor, respectively. Perhaps more resolutely than other African writers, Ngugi contests a universalistic discourse which considers local (African) writers as agents of a universal (Western) culture.

The analysis of the concept of nation presented above reveals that the term 'nation' falls prey to a contradiction of its own. Samir Amin (1997:8) captures this tension, inherent in the concept of nation itself, when he observes that 'it opposes universality - of the human species, of its destiny, of its societal forms - to the particularity of the communities that make up humanity'. This ambivalence between '*societas*' and '*universitas*' is what Homi Bhabha (1990:3) characterizes, after Tom Nairn, as the 'Janus-faced discourse of the nation'. The emphasis on the notion of a global or cosmopolitan nation that has emerged in recent works on nationalism bestows on the concept of nation the universalistic sense Amin speaks about. Such a notion is framed in Julia Kristeva (1991, 1993) as a condition for displacing the kind of petty nationalism that she has observed in France. In *Strangers to Ourselves* (1991), she alerts her reader to the fact that the foreigner, far from being the Other, is someone like us for we are also strangers to others. Such a situation, she argues,

is a crucial reminder of the limits of nationalism. The title of her book *Nations Without Nationalism* (1993) evinces Kristeva's interest in cosmopolitanism for, although she does conclude that French nationalism should not be done away with, she clearly favours a notion of nationalism that is inclusive of other cultural groups which inhabit French territorial space. Kristeva (1993:13) herself finds comfort in what she terms 'a transnational or international position situated at the crossing of boundaries'.

The belief in a global or international village as implied by Kristeva's observation is a cornerstone of postcolonial theories which bolster a universalist rather than a nationalist conception of national identity and which place an accent on the cultural representation of the nation. Proponents of such theories include Homi Bhabha, Kwame Anthony Appiah, Stuart Hall, Edward Said, and Salman Rushdie. For present purposes, Bhabha's, Appiah's, and Hall's positions will be considered. It is pertinent to note at this juncture that their notion of universalism has been perceived to reproduce an imperial discourse that equates western culture with modern and universal culture (see Bill Ashcroft *et al.* 1995; and Theodore H. Von Laue, 1997). Interestingly, Von Laue suggests that the universalizing tendency of Western culture is helped by Third World 'intellectuals who emigrate to the West, often creating, with the help of compassionate Western scholars, a Westernized version of their traditional cultures' (1997). However, writing from a Marxist perspective, Aijaz Ahmad presents an alternative perspective, arguing that universalist theories of nation serve a captilalism cause. As he sees it, 'the national bourgeoisie, like imperialist capitalism itself, want a weak nation-state in relation to capital and a strong one in relation to labour' (1995:11).

Embodying as it does a universalist perspective, Homi Bhabha's concept of nation is closely linked to his view of national culture, not as a 'homogeneous' reality but as being continually in 'a process of displacement and disjunction' (1994b:5). He identifies postcolonial migration (in its various forms, including 'cultural and political diaspora', 'exile', 'political and economic refugees') as the major factor in the emergence and spread of a national culture. In his view, a national culture in the context of a modern nation is a hybrid culture resulting from the coexistence of the indigenous cultural community and the nation's new communities of migration. It is typical of his theorization that these new 'minorities' are seen as key players in the cultural politics of the modern nation, as is clear from his observation that

> The discourse of minorities, spoken for and against in the multicultural wars, proposes a social subject constituted through cultural hybridization, the overdetermination of communal or group differences, the articulation of baffling alikeness and banal divergence. (Bhabha, 1996:54)

According to Bhabha, the reality of this coexistence of various communities attests to the fact that the modern nation is larger than geographical entities, not just in terms of its territorial boundaries but also in terms of the number of cultural communities it encompasses - hence the metaphor of nation as a cultural space. In this context, the terms 'frontiers'/'borders' and 'borderposts' acquire new meanings for they refer not only to territorial demarcations between nation-states but are also tied to the distinctions between cultural communities, as can be seen in the following extract from an essay by Smadan Lavie and Ted Swedenberg (1997:166-167):

> Borderzones are sites of creative cultural creolizations, places where criss-crossed identities are forged out of debris of corroded, formerly (would-be) homogeneous identities, zones where the residents often refuse the geo-political univocality of the

> lines. As such, the border is a process of deterritorialization that occurs both to, and between, the delimited political realities of a First World and the Third World. Yet borders are not just places of imaginative interminglings and happy hybridities to be celebrated. They are mobile territories whose constant clashes with the Eurocenter's imposition of fixity of culture makes them minefields.... They are zones of loss, alienation, pain, death - spaces where formations of violence are continually in the making.

The postcolonial appropriation and formulation of these terms is by no means a suggestion that the modern nation has a postcolonial identity. In fact, the modern nation is explicitly construed in many discussions as involving the reality of displacement to the metropolis. Thus, as Bhabha (1994b:9) suggests, identification with the nation through what he refers to as 'the borderline community of migration' is a function of whether the migrant manages to identify with a culture that is at once his/hers and the native's. In his essay 'Frontiers/Borderposts' (1994a: 271), he implicitly restates this point when he asks the question:

> As the migrant and the refugee become the 'unhomely' inhabitants of the contemporary world, how do we rethink collective , communal concepts like homeland, the people, cultural exile, national cultures, interpretative communities?

Here again, it is pertinent to note how the issue of the global nation is phrased in terms of the location of its centre, and the relation between communities and cultures of origin and migration to the centre.

Unlike Renan, for example, Bhabha considers that the past alone plays no major role in the emergence of national culture. He speaks of the culturally defined space of the nation as 'a space of intervention' wherein takes place 'an encounter with "newness" that is not part of the continuum of past and present' (1994b:7). Such a redefining of the concept of

national culture reveals that the modern nation as theorized by Bhabha is not the same 'nation' as that understood by political theorists such as Renan, Hobsbawm and Gellner, who were discussed earlier.

Appiah (1997), in a discussion of cosmopolitanism, clearly aligns himself with Kristeva's critique of nationalism, alluded to earlier, when he portrays himself as a cosmopolitan patriot and not a nationalist. By showing that patriotism is not incompatible with cosmopolitanism, he is able to point to the limitations of nationalism through his understanding of the nation as an arbitrary concept. 'Nations,' he states (1997:624), 'matter morally, when they do, in other words, for the same reason that football and opera matter: as things desired by autonomous agents, whose autonomous desires we ought to acknowledge and take account of, even if we cannot always accede to them'.

Thus, Appiah does not look at nationalism as either a permanent or even a desirable attribute. In his conception, the nation in the traditional sense discussed above has a reduced status. His view of the global nation as a 'cosmopolis of which we cosmopolitans would be not figurative but literal citizens' (1997:624) sides with Kristeva's notion alluded to above, for he speaks of 'the rich possibilities of association within and across their borders; states of which [cosmopolitans] can be patriotic citizens' (624). Appiah argues that the precariousness of the concept of the 'nation' surfaces in connection with 'the creation of a national common culture to center our lives' and the supposed necessity 'for us to center [sic] ourselves on a national culture' (632). For Appiah, like other universalist theorists referred to above, presumes an emphasis on and celebration of cultural hybridity

and migration, as reflected in his characterization of the cosmopolitan patriot as someone who

> can entertain the possibility of a world in which *everyone* is a rooted cosmopolitan, attached to a home of one's own, with its own cultural particularities, but taking pleasure from the presence of other, different places that are home to other, different people. The cosmopolitan imagines that in such a world not everyone will find it best to stay in their natal patria, so that the circulation of people among different localities will involve not only cultural tourism (which the cosmopolitan admits to enjoying) but migration, nomadism, diaspora. (1997: 618)

The stress on 'pluralized identity', which Appiah's statement underscores, highlights another dimension of the global nation, which is predicated by Stuart Hall (1995) on 'the break[ing] out of the boundaries once the nation begins to weaken out ...'. However, Hall is careful to point out that he believes in the weakening of the nation state, not its outright disappearance. Referring to the process of identification that accompanies the crossing of boundaries, he explains that as the gendered self moves on to occupy different spaces (class, ethnic group, nation state, global nation, the postmodern, and so on), so it becomes 'pluralized'. With a clear reference to Benedict Anderson's concept of the nation as imagined community, Hall (1995) emphasizes the symbolic significance of his spatial allusions. In his words,

> The boundaries we draw are always in part symbolic. The communities with which we identify are not always places we can put on the map. But they are places in the mind.... They are imaginary communities. It is an imaginary geography in part which produces the places to which we belong.

Hall's remarks confirm Anderson's argument that identity communities are mental constructions. Underlining as they do the fact that identities are spatially defined, they certainly provide a caveat for the reading of narratives of national identity as fictional

constructions of multiple identities. Indeed, what emerges from Hall's argument, and is interesting as far as this study is concerned, is the suggestion that, in the same way that the self is 'pluralized', representations of such communities as family, ethnic community, diasporic community, nation, and global village can be intricately linked. His characterization of identities as 'more the product of difference and exclusion, than they are the sign of of an identical, naturally constituted unity' (1996:4) both reinforces his point about multiple identity and aligns him with Appiah's school of thinking about cosmopolitan identity, referred to above.

After this overview of the main theoretical discourses of the nation, it becomes necessary to establish the approach which is used in this thesis. Bhabha (1990:3) suggests that an approach that takes account of 'the Janus-faced ambivalence of the language itself in the construction of the Janus-faced discourse of the nation' (already alluded to in a different context) is the most appropriate for a reading of narratives of the nation. Such an approach requires the critic to be alert to the '*in-between* spaces through which the meanings of cultural and political authority are negotiated' (1990:4). In his essay 'DissemiNation: time, narrative, and the margins of the modern nation', Bhabha goes on to explain that rather than simply attending to those spaces, one needs also to consider the temporality of the nation (its 'double-time'). In his view, this condition requires appropriate strategies - 'complex strategies of cultural identification and discursive address that function in the name of "the people" or "the nation" and make them the immanent subjects and objects of a range of social and literary narratives' (1990:292) - so that the national text allows itself to be understood. As he sees it, a discussion of the people and their social condition, and particularly their way of living difference in the context of the 'modern' nation, requires a

consideration of the 'space of the people' or nation-space. In Bhabha's theorizing, the nation-space is not only a geo-political entity but also 'a liminal form of social representation, a space that is *internally* marked by cultural difference and the heterogeneous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities, and tense cultural authorities' (1990:299).

The emphasis on difference as a representational mode is an important dimension of the present project. Indeed the main assumption of this thesis is that difference lies at the heart of the representations of the nation offered in the texts selected for analysis. Accordingly, the purpose of this thesis is to explore the complex and central role of difference in these representations of the nation as well as the various strategies employed by the authors of those texts to incorporate difference into their construction of the imagined community of the Zimbabwean nation. This focus is warranted by the fact that, a multi-racial and multi-ethnic nation, Zimbabwe has a history of celebration of difference, not just as a characteristic of a plural society but also as a space of dis-identification with the racialized, cultural and social Other. For this reason, concern with categories of difference (racial and cultural, obviously, but also class, gender, social, moral, and so on) is central in much of Zimbabwean literature. Indeed, Zimbabwean writers share with their fellow African writers what Revathi Krishnaswamy (1995) has identified as a desire to 'continue to assert a localized postcolonial identity based on essentialist notions of purity *and* difference' [emphasis mine] (140) in contrast to migrant writers like V.S. Naipaul and Salman Rushdie who display 'a deterritorialized consciousness freed from such collectivities as race, class, gender, or nation...' (139). Most Zimbabwean writers, with perhaps the exception of Dambudzo Marechera whose

work testifies to a sense of 'deterritorialized consciousness', easily conform to Krishnaswamy's characterization.

Thus, this chapter takes account of the need to explore the interplay between nation and narration advocated by Bhabha which, as already intimated, derives from Anderson's view that nations are 'imagined communities' and therefore can be textualized. This theoretical model provides the possibility to question the ways in which African narratives of the nation have been read thus far. With the emphasis placed in this theorization on the 'imaginary geography' of the nation, there is a further need to investigate the ways in which Zimbabwe is imagined as a cultural space. This concept of an imagined space of the nation entails in turn a close consideration of the notion of difference implicit in the use of the terms border, periphery, centre, and so on. In different ways, each of the texts selected for analysis focuses on communities within the space of the nation and explores the ways in which they exist in relation to one another. Thus, as a model that encourages an exploration of the imaginary construction of the nation and an interpretation of difference within cultural spaces, Bhabha's theory of nation as a cultural space suits the purpose of this project. But to avoid the danger of subscribing to a single approach, this study calls for a consideration of other critical rejoinders to the theory of nation, including those by Appiah, Edward Said, Stuart Hall and Gayatri Spivak which are further elaborated when and as necessary.

The idea of representation implied in the title of the thesis is understood in the Foucauldian sense of 're-presentation', which also informs Bhabha's theory of nation. It is purposefully chosen to allow space for a discussion of strategies of representation of

Zimbabwe as cultural space and a consideration of how relationships between people within that space are culturally characterized, in the text under scrutiny. As Michael Gerald Maranda puts it in his essay entitled 'Mirroring Nations' (1996), 'what is important about the nation is not what it is but what it represents itself to be'. This observation is particularly relevant to the thrust of this study as it implies the possibility of understanding the master narrative of the Zimbabwean nation through comprehending the 'individual' narratives discussed in this study.

In addition to drawing on the theoretical framework outlined above, the thesis will also refer to other aspects of literary theory, particularly those of the current theoretical discourses on the gendering of the nation, given the fact that there seems to be a consensus among the three writers selected for discussion - John Eppel, Dambudzo Marechera and Yvonne Vera - in using female characters as national icons and in inscribing the female body as a trope for the nation. This thesis attempts to uncover these and other symbolisms in its readings of the selected texts, namely Eppel's *Spoils of War* (1989), *D G G Berry's The Great North Road* (1992), *Hatchings* (1993) and *Sonata for Matabeleland* (1995); Vera's *Nehanda* (1993); and Marechera's *The House of Hunger* (1978), *Mindblast* (1984), *The Depth of Diamond* (1985, unpublished), *The Black Insider* (1990), *Cemetery* of *Mind* (1992) and *Scrapiron Blues* (1994).

In addition to the theoretical framework and the approach presented above, attention to the nationalist trend of Zimbabwean literature and to the authors of the texts selected for analysis in this thesis is central to the following chapters. Flora Veit-Wild, in *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers* (1992b:1), observes that Zimbabwe's literary history presents very few similarities with that of other African countries:

> The typical pattern in the development of African literature - a phase of cultural nationalism and anti-colonial protest followed by a phase of post-colonial disillusionment - shifted in the case of Zimbabwe. Here post-colonial disenchantment and criticism of African leadership emerged even before independence was achieved; a residual cultural nationalism co-existed with a modernist existentialist perspective.

This is undoubtedly a useful tip for those interested in examining cultural and ideological elements in Zimbabwean tales of the nation. Veit-Wild's presentation of Zimbabwean literature carries the idea of an exclusively black literature, which is understandable in terms of her objectives in her seminal book. However, the conception of Zimbabwean literature that this thesis adheres to is that literary texts produced by white Zimbabweans are an integral part of Zimbabwean literature, a point that Preben Kaarsholm (1994:327) makes in his review essay on Veit-Wild's book. It is common enough not to recognize this fact, because of the divided history of the country and the fact that the dominant feature of that literature is, as pertinently noted by Veit-Wild (1992b), a preoccupation with cultural nationalism. The work of John Eppel, one of the three authors whose works are examined in this thesis, shows that the conception of an inclusive Zimbabwean literature, when adhered to by critics and students of Zimbabwean literature, could generate a more complete picture of that literature.

And yet, the colonial literary history of Zimbabwe could indeed give the conception denounced here some justification. As Anthony Chennells (1996:128) has noted in relation to white Rhodesian fictional literary texts:

> None provides new insights into Rhodesia; they instigate no new understanding of either the settlers or the Black world, although for nearly 30 years before Zimbabwean independence, more and more articulate statements by Black leaders had demanded that Rhodesian whites look at blacks in a different way.

In Chennells's retrospective view, there were two discursive spaces that characterized the fictional world in colonial Rhodesia:

> ... white space which was open to appropriate new items for the discourse which named itself progressive; a Black space which belonged to a primitive past and which, because it was closed by the white discourse, was incapable of any new disclosure of what Blacks were within that space or could become if they rejected its boundaries. In the end both the discursive space and the literal geographical space in which racist legislation had over the years embodied the discourse were smashed by war. (1996:129)

Because of this history, much of contemporary Zimbabwean literature appears as a literature that attempts to create the new discursive space that is necessary to contribute to the grand narrative of the new postcolonial nation, alluded to above. This master narrative is that of a once fragmented nation that negotiates the differences within itself in order to promote a multicultural citizenship. It is one further challenge of this study to examine how each of the micro-narratives selected for this study engages with this master narrative.

At this juncture, it seems useful to address briefly the question of whether a national Zimbabwean literature, in fact, exists and, if so, what nationalist purposes it serves, for Bernth Lindfors' (1997) claim that there are no national literatures in sub-Saharan Africa entails the supposition that the texts selected for analysis in this project have no national value. Lindfors argues his thesis on the grounds that African nations are ethnically,

culturally and linguistically divided nations. In his view, the notion of a national literature is tied to the commonality of experience for its population groups:

> A "national literature" presupposes a national experience which is unique and distinguishable from national experiences elsewhere. Most African nations are so heterogeneous in population and consequently so incredibly complicated in social structure, political organization and historical development that the experiences of one group in the society will not be representative of those of all other groups in the society. If a writer elects to treat a theme such as birth, marriage or death - to mention only the most basic possibilities - he will have to set it in a special social context which will immediately make it uncharacteristic of groups which exist in different social circumstances. (1997:126-127)

Lindfors is certainly right to point to the fact that African nations are, as he puts it, creations of European statesmen. Needless to say, however, his entire argument is circular and characteristic of a conservative Western discourse on nationalism according to which the juxtaposition of different tribes within African nation-states means that such states can never become nations. Such a position, which develops from a history of representation of the African as the Other, disregards the fact that decades of struggle for independence may have united people from different tribes and even from different racial groups. Such a view also helps to understand why Mordechai Tamarkin (1996:366), who is convinced that 'The African nation-state was constructed by the intellectual imagination of African leaders and foreign scholars, rather than by the socio-moral imagination of its African citizens', advocates a return for Africans to 'a traditional moral order' based on ethnic consciousness. Tamarkin seeks support in Ngugi's assertion that there is no inherent contradiction for Africans 'between belonging to their immediate nationality, to their multinational state along the Berlin-drawn boundaries, and to Africa as a whole' (1986:23) in order to repudiate the notion of the nation-state in Africa. In the literary

sphere, this argument can be situated within a conservative strand in African criticism which holds that African nations cannot develop national literatures and which regards African literatures as appendices of Europhone literatures.

To prove his point Lindfors further argues that the distinction between tribes in African countries is so acute that no one group's experiences can have meaning for another group. In a paradoxical revision of Lindfors's argument in his own country (the USA), writers such as Toni Morrison and and Alice Walker narrate experiences of the African American population group in terms that do not always apply to other groups in the country. But, if as Morrison (1992:17) also concedes - aligning herself theoretically with Lindfors - that literature reflects how peoples 'choose to talk about themselves', then African American literature is both national and tribal. It follows that the texts examined in this thesis are also part of a Zimbabwean national literature. Written by authors who belong to different races, classes and genders in Zimbabwean society, these texts describe experiences and deal with themes that have national significance as they reveal preoccupations with issues of national identity in a culturally hybrid space. The same can be said of a number of other African national literatures, including South African literature which, incidentally and somewhat paradoxically (because it implies the very notion of hybridity propounded here which he rejects for the rest of the African continent), Lindfors regards as the only truly emerging national literature in sub-Saharan Africa.

Turning now to the issue of the nationalist concerns of Zimbabwean literature, it is widely acknowledged that this literature is mainly preoccupied, through its first generation of writers, with 'attempts to recreate history and a national identity' and, through writers of the

second generation, with 'the process of deracination they underwent as children' (Veit-Wild, 1992b:10). The first has been the central motif underpinning narratives of the liberation war, which constitute an important part of Zimbabwean literature. Chenjerai Hove's observation (in Michael Chapman,1996:301) that 'the war forced us back into history from the margins' captures the essence of the nationalist thrust of Zimbabwean war narratives. Interestingly, such nationalist concerns are not peculiar to literature by Zimbabwean blacks, as Chennells's (1996) discussion of Rhodesian war novels reveals.

As already stated, this thesis focuses on the strategies of representing the nation in the works of three Zimbabwean writers: John Eppel, Yvonne Vera and Dambudzo Marechera. These three authors have been chosen not only as representatives of various groups within the Zimbabwean society but also because of their common interest in using difference as a representational strategy in their treatment of the nation. Furthermore, their works selected for study offer various standpoints from which the writing of the Zimbabwean nation can be understood. Marechera writes from the position of a universalist bohemian writer positioned at the margins of his society, Eppel from that of a 'white Zimbabwean who belongs and yet does not belong to his country, and has very mixed feelings about his past' (Eppel, 1996:19), while Vera provides the perspective of a female writer strongly influenced by her experiences of life in rural Zimbabwe. Seen from these two angles, their writings of Zimbabwe reveal something about the complexity of the concept of nation that cannot be interpreted solely in terms of the established frame of reference in Zimbabwean literature, and it is this unique quality that provides some justification for the present enterprise. Worth stressing is a relative paucity of critical attention to these authors who are seminal to the debate on writing the nation. Their texts

selected for analysis represent a varied corpus as they include a settler narrative, a novel of the first *Chimurenga*, narratives of exile, a thriller, a narrative of postcolonial culture and poems. The argument for this study is the need to fill a perceived gap in research that has thus far been conducted on the writing of the nation in Zimbabwean literature. This thesis thus addresses an aspect that has hitherto been neglected by critics and that warrants critical attention.

Eppel's work consists of three satirical novels and two collections of poems. In an interview with Richard Saunders, he insists that his works are committed to his country and his past. As Eppel himself says in that interview, he is very conscious of his particular situation as a white man in his country. His writing, he says, 'echoes the dialectical relationship I have with my past - and present - as first a white Rhodesian and now a white Zimbabwean' (Eppel and Saunders, 1995:15). He has explained his use of satire in his novels, and lyricism in his poetry, as his ways of expressing this relationship. By focusing on his work, this thesis attempts to show that his satire contributes to his representation of the Zimbabwean nation as a complex and changing nation. Unlike writers writing from a position of exiles or immigrants, he can look at the reality of his country, and write about it fearlessly and, more importantly, authoritatively, though in fictional form.

The difficulty of writing from an immigrant's or expatriate's perspective is well captured in Salman Rushdie's (1991:10) remarks, inspired by his experience in revisiting India, that 'writers in my position, exiles or immigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt'. In Eppel's case, as will become clear in this thesis, there is no such sense of loss

but rather a desire either to provide a testimony of the colonial or postcolonial national culture, exploring the danger of difference for such a culture, as he does in his novels and some of his poems, or to describe and narrate national landscapes, as he does mostly in his poetry. Thus, the two aspects of his writing of his nation which this thesis examines are his writing of the nation as people and his writing of the nation as a cultural space. In the novels, he very often focuses on small rural communities which are microcosms of the Zimbabwean society as a whole. Relationships between individual characters within those microcosms acquire greater significance once understood in the general context of the Zimbabwean nation.

John Eppel's personal circumstances shed light on his imaginary construction of the Rhodesian/Zimbabwean nation. A white man, he did not have to leave the country; a situation which theoretically placed him in a position of antagonism towards the liberation war. As this thesis hopes to show, Eppel's work exudes not racism and bitterness as one might expect from a white Rhodesian (Zimbabwean) but a deep love for his country, and particularly his native Matabeleland, and also a deep concern for its postcolonial situation. His satire is directed not at individual characters *per se* but at representatives of colonial or postcolonial national culture. Part of his novelty thus has to do with his representation of Zimbabwe as a space wherein the various cultures of the nation interact with one another and, particularly with his attempt at undermining difference. His work introduces a new perspective in Zimbabwean literature as it blends images of the past with concerns about dislocation in a society marked by the new power relations between racial groups. He adopts stances that mirror the divided soul of white Zimbabwe and the relation of settler history to the present and future of Zimbabwe.

Writing from a perspective which is different from that of Eppel, Marechera 'gives violent expression to all the violence his generation has experienced, to the deracination, homelessness, alienation, anger and despair which have marked their spiritual being' (Flora Veit-Wild, 1992a:258). According to Veit-Wild, Marechera's generation of writers differ from their predecessors whose writings betrayed a strong nationalist sentiment, by producing works of a more fictional nature and which were more marked by their everyday experiences of life in racist Rhodesia. This thesis subscribes to Veit-Wild's view but argues that Marechera's work, like that of other writers of his generation, reveals ambivalent images of his country. As Veit-Wild has also noted, his own problems as a student at the University of Rhodesia, his homelessness and marginalization both in England and in his home country after his return - all these experiences deeply affected his attitude towards his country, and account for the negative image of his country that his work reveals. As a result, critics and colleagues have seen Marechera's work as the product of a deranged mind. The designation of his oeuvre in those terms does not, however, do justice to the fact that disillusionment with his own country could be at the origin of the anarchist views expressed in his writings. It should be remembered that Zimbabweans, both in England and in his own country, were critical and ashamed of Marechera's lifestyle. The fact that he was perceived, and perceived himself, as a controversial figure also contributed significantly to the way he portrays himself and his home environment in his work.

Marechera's self-imposed status as a bohemian writer alerts us to the fact that he was a marginalized writer. His marginalization was not only social but was also related to Zimbabwean literature and African literature as a whole, as Veit-Wild (1987:113) has pointed out:

> Dambudzo Marechera is an outsider. He cannot be included in any of the categories into which modern African literature is currently divided; his writings have nothing in common with the various forms of anti-colonial or anti-neocolonial protest literature, nor can they be interpreted as being an expression of the identity crisis suffered by an African exiled in Europe.

David Buuck (1997:118) endorses this view when he asserts that Marechera 'stands outside the conventions of categorisations of African writing due largely to his class status. By not functioning within the international exchange of cultural production, Marechera remains doubly marginalised: invisible in the West and misunderstood at "home"'. Of particular interest to this project is Marechera's location of his literary approach in the idea that his primary attachment as a writer is to the world, not to a single nation, a point he stresses in his self-interview, quoted in Veit-Wild (1992a:221):

> I think I am the doppelganger whom, until I appeared, African literature had not yet met. And in this sense I would question anyone calling me an African writer. Either you are a writer or you are a writer for a specific nation or a specific race, then fuck you. In other words, the direct international experience of every single living entity is for me the inspiration to write. But at the same time I am aware of my vulnerability - that I am only me - and of my mortality: and that's why it seems to me a waste of time to waste anybody's life in regulation. In ordering them ....

In other words, Marechera sees himself as a cosmopolitan writer whose mission is not to celebrate a nation but to celebrate the centrality, the universality of cultural experience. As will become clear in Chapter Four, his refusal of national identity has significant implications for a discussion of the representation of Zimbabwe in his work. The challenge will be to show that, though his work is marked by 'postcolonial repudiations of fixity and purity', to use Krishnaswamy's phrase (1995:140), his location at the Third Space (cf. Veit-Wild, 1996) and exile, because of the dis(location) they entail, constitute contexts of

difference from which he wrote his nation. Because a nation is a community that encompasses 'other nations', other communities, different characters, his work is bound to reflect and comment on the types of difference that characterize relations between such communities and/or characters.

By contrast, Yvonne Vera writes from the perspective of the subaltern in the Spivakan sense that her work highlights the experiences of the Zimbabwean black female subject, and is infused with a strong desire to provide a female peasant perspective which, with perhaps the exception of Chenjerai Hove and Tsitsi Dangarembga's work, has been sadly absent from Zimbabwean literature. One reviewer of Vera's most recent novel *Under the Tongue* (1996) has captured the uniqueness of Vera's art by noting that her entire work is influenced by her childhood life experience in a rural township during the liberation war and that this particular novel is 'a celebration of home, of Africa, of Zimbabwe, of life in the villages and townships' (Jane Rosenthal, 1996: 41). This influence and experience resonate in her work whether she writes about the contemporary situation (as she has done in *Without a Name*, 1994; and *Under the Tongue*, 1996) or when she goes back into the early colonial past as she does in her novel *Nehanda* (1994), discussed in Chapter Five, to situate the origins of the nation. This thesis posits that Vera explores difference in her writing of the nation through her re-writing of the first liberation war, a project in which she inverts the binary relations between the settler and the indigene.

The thesis as a whole consists of six chapters. Following this introductory chapter, which sets the theoretical framework for this study, Chapter Two shows that John Eppel constructs in *The Great North Road* an imaginary settler community in which the natives

are constituted as occupying the margins of the colonial nation-state. It argues that such a construction is compatible with the othering of the natives in the Rhodesian colonial narrative that Eppel's novel disrupts.

In Chapter Three, the thesis looks at another novel set in the colonial period, although the time here is early colonial in contrast to the late colonial setting of Eppel's text discussed in the previous chapter. It reads Yvonne Vera's *Nehanda* as a novel which promotes cultural difference as a way to underscore a representation of the Shona people in the early days of colonial rule, as a nation assaulted culturally and deprived of its territory and one which fights to recover its lost identity and land.

Focusing on selected texts by Dambudzo Marechera, Chapter Four explores the ways in which this writer provides representations of a (colonial and postcolonial) nation he refuses to identify with. It proposes that Marechera's occupation of a position of marginality, the 'third space', allows him to give an uncompromising picture of his nation and to claim a universalist identity.

In Chapter Five, the thesis returns to Eppel in order to consider his representation of the postcolonial Zimbabwean nation in his novel *Hatchings* and in some poems from his collection *Sonata for Matabeleland*. The argument here is that a concern with moral as well as immigrant/ native differences informs Eppel's representation in these texts.

Chapter Six summarizes the main arguments presented in the analyses of representations of Zimbabwe in the works selected for this study, focusing on the ways in which these

representations reveal a common interest among the three writers selected for discussion in using of difference as a strategy for writing the plurality of the Zimbabwean nation.

Thus, the arrangement of the four central chapters is governed by the need to provide different facets of representation of the nation in both the pre- and post-independence contexts. Chapters Two and Three are presented as contiguous in terms of representation as they both deal with 'imagined communities' that are constructed around the colonizer/colonized dichotomy. Chapter Four, which discusses Marechera's representation of his nation under and after colonialism, can be seen as a bridge between the two previous chapters and Chapter Five. Moreover, Chapters Four and Five focus on texts in which other kinds of difference and the issue of cosmopolitanism in a postcolonial context are brought in to displace racial difference as a significant ingredient in the narratives of the Zimbabwean nation.

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.

CHAPTER THREE:

REMAPPING THE COLONIAL SPACE: YVONNE VERA'S *NEHANDA*

The discussion of the duty camp incident in John Eppel's novel *The Great North Road* in Chapter Two has revealed that the liberation war was perceived by the colonial settlers in Rhodesia as a threat to their 'national' space. The term 'terr' (short for terrorist) used in Rhodesian official discourse (and in Eppel's novel by the men in Duiker Berry's C Section) to refer to the liberation fighter carries the suggestion, implied in the Anthony Chennells (1996:104) passage quoted in Chapter Two (see part 1), that its referent destabilizes the settler community's supposedly moral and civilized order. Read in the light of Chennells's observation about the settler's perception of the liberation war quoted in Chapter Two, Yvonne Vera's *Nehanda*, though set in the first *Chimurenga*, can be seen to challenge this settler-constructed representation of the liberation war, by constructing it as resistance to what Barbara Harlow (1987:10) terms 'the programmatic cultural imperialism which accompanied western economic, military, and political domination of the Third World'. This chapter argues that, unlike Eppel's *The Great North Road* which disrupts the colonialist narrative by problematizing difference, Vera's text reclaims difference to refute the settler's mapping of the colonial space. In this way she is able to construct the indigenous community of her novel as a 'nation' threatened in its cohesiveness and identity by a foreign invasion. The chapter shows how such a representation of the 'nation' is made explicit through Vera's figuration of her heroine Nehanda as an intermediary between the 'natives' and their ancestors, as well as through her text's foregrounding of the uprising as a struggle for national liberation.

Geography, in narratives of resistance, is important because of its association with the cultural consciousness of the nation through the ancestors who are believed to own the land. For this reason, the living cherish the land and are ready to fight for it. It is this very special and emotional association with the land and the granting of, so to speak, an affective personality to the geography, as well as the difference between foreigner/outsider and native/insider, that this discussion hopes to show as informing Vera's representation of colonial Zimbabwe. As the reader would have understood, the term 'nation' and 'natives' as used in the context of this chapter refer to the Shona people whose uprising against the early Rhodesian settlers is fictionalized in Vera's text.

The argument in this chapter is informed by Edward Said's discussion of the territorial and cultural dimension of resistance in the colonial context offered in his seminal book *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). Particularly useful to the purpose of this chapter is Said's notion of the narrative of resistance as essentially a tale of land re-appropriation that deconstructs the imperial narrative of appropriation. As he argues:

> If there is anything that radically distinguishes the imagination of anti-imperialism, it is the primacy of the geographical element. Imperialism after all is an act of geographical violence through which every space in the world is explored, charted, and finally, brought under control. For the native, the history of colonial servitude is inaugurated by loss of locality to the outsider; its geographical identity must thereafter be searched for and somehow restored. Because of the colonizing outsider, the land is recoverable at first through the imagination. (1993:225)

The extent to which geography as well as the outsider/native dichotomy are central in *Nehanda* will become clear as the chapter concentrates, in Part One, on Vera's construction of her heroine, and, in Part Two, on that of the settler. In Part Three, the

chapter considers the way in which the text reveals two representations of the nation: one that relates to the colonial setting and another, futuristic, that relates to the postcolonial context, not unlike those representations proposed in Ayi Kwei Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons* (1978).

PART ONE

Vera's text is structured around Nehanda, the prophetess and war leader, who embodies resistance to colonialism. Her representation in the novel provides a site in which the mythical aspect of her personality works to underscore her role in the liberation war as ancestor-inspired and thus patriotic, in contrast to the imperial and commercial motives of the colonial invaders. To the degree that Nehanda is constructed as an intermediary between the ancestral spirits and the living, she symbolizes the nation in its African sense of a community consisting of the departed and the living. As Vera's heroine is reminded by her mother: 'The dead are not dead. They are always around us, protecting us' (27). Nehanda's life story provides Vera with a narrative space in which to explore the relationship between these two parts of the nation. The novel suggests that Nehanda's life, and particularly the events in her life narrativized in the text, attest to the intervention of the ancestors in the affairs of the nation. Thus, in her novel, Vera rewrites the colonial history of her nation by suggesting that the anti-colonial uprising which Nehanda embodies is not, as colonial history would see it, an attempt by natives to resist civilization but the expression of her people's desire to recover what they believe to be their land and their way of life.

Eldred D. Jones (1997:50) has argued that

> Although it is dominated by the life of one woman, Nehanda, with whose birth it opens and whose defiant encounter with Browning in the prison cell ends the linear narration, the novel is really concerned with the spirit of the people which stretches back into time and is inextricably linked with the land itself which in turn enshrines the spirits of the ancestors.

Jones makes here a valid point, which reinforces another one made earlier in this chapter, namely that land is important because of its association with the ancestors. However, the suggestion that Nehanda plays no central role in the story is less convincing. It would be a mistake to dismiss Nehanda's life as an accessory to an exploration of the spirit of the people, as Jones's statement seems to imply. For it is through the story of her life that the issues of national identity and national liberation which Vera's text answers are textualized. It is in delving into her character's life that Vera is able to explore these issues. As this discussion hopes to show, constructed as it is as a gift from one part of the nation to another and thus as a bridge between them, a point well understood in the Shona traditional beliefs which inform Vera's text, Nehanda's life is a centrepiece in Vera's project of reclaiming national geography and identity. Therefore, an analysis of the representation of the nation in Vera's text would not be complete unless it examines the connection Vera establishes between Nehanda's life and the concept of cultural nationalism her life embodies.

In considering Vera's construction of Nehanda as a mythic persona, three events in her life will be considered: her birth, her involvement in the anti-colonial uprising, and her death. Nehanda's death in a prison cell provides the novel with its starting-point. This would appear as a surprising beginning for a novel that celebrates armed resistance

against imperialism. However, Nehanda's death is not narrativized as an ordinary death. In the first section of the novel, Vera portrays her as a Christ-figure dying from wounds she suffered from her beating at the hands of the agents of an usurping and ruthless colonial power. Like Christ, Nehanda is presented as a person who believes that her death serves, if not immediately to liberate her nation from colonial bondage, at least to plant the seed of their future liberation. It is possible to see this admixture of Christianity and tribal mythology as the only space of compromise with the colonizer's worldview in a novel in which, as mentioned earlier, the articulation of difference - in a way that is different from Eppel's in *The Great North Road* - forms the cornerstone of Vera's writing of the nation.

The opening paragraph describes her sufferings in the prison cell:

> Ants pull carcasses into a hole, and she is not surprised. Pain sears the lines on her palms, and she turns her eyes to her hands in wonder. Rivers and trees cover her palms; the trees are lifeless and the rivers dry. She feels that gaping wound, everywhere. It is red like embers, but soft like water. The wound has been shifting all over her body, and she can no longer find it. (1)

This passage is striking because the pain to which Nehanda is exposed contrasts with her optimistic state of mind. As suggested earlier, she does not conceive of her death as a tragedy but as a price that needs to be paid for the liberation of her nation. This may help to explain why she is able to experience pain as she does. As the sentence 'It is red like embers, and soft like water' vividly illustrates, Nehanda appears to possess the ability to transcend pain. It seems clear from this sentence and from the second paragraph in the text that, by speaking of her heroine's ability to detach herself from her body and to see herself from the perspective of another, Vera wants to emphasize Nehanda's mythic nature.

It is also pertinent to consider the second paragraph:

> ... Her arms feel boneless to her spirit. The earth moves. She feels her body turn to water. Insects sing in and out of her armpits. She looks up in surprise and her body has changed from water to stone. Water gathers in her eyes, which have been filled with dark heavy clouds, and it is as though it has rained.... She gasps as she feels another part of her depart in a graceless trickling of yellow liquid. (1-2)

As if standing in the background is the other part of Vera's protagonist, her spirit, which looks on her body's sufferings and fragmentation. This passage illustrates Vera's way of stressing the predominance of Nehanda's spiritual being over her corporeal being. Because of this, Nehanda is surprised to see that 'her body has changed from water to stone' and that 'another part of her has left her' (1).

Nehanda's description in the third paragraph as a depositor of words, that is, of tradition, adds to her image as a mythic figure:

> Nehanda carries her bag of words in a pouch that lies tied round her waist. She wears some along her arms. Words and bones. Yellow becomes crimson. She follows the crimson path that forms a meandering shape in the distance, in the world of dreams. She travels to the faraway place where her body turns to smoke. The comforting crimson brings her closer to her own death. She raises her hands above her head as though supporting a falling roof. She gestures into the sky with frantic arms. She laughs. The skin tears further away from her, and she knows that the damage to herself is now irreversible. Nothing will save her from this final crimson of death; it is too much like her inner self. (2)

The true meaning of the above passage is located in the terms 'words' and 'dreams'. With these words Vera invests Nehanda with the power of ideas and discourse. This power is registered by the image of the pouch of words that she is described as carrying. Once again the reader is made to realize that Nehanda is more than a creature of bones and body, the insignificance of her physical being at this moment of her death being here

underscored by the suggestion that it turns into smoke. It is significant that later on in the narrative, Nehanda is granted agency as a narrator. This strategy allows Vera to state her own views on national politics as if they were those of her heroine.

With this dramatic episode of Nehanda's last moments in her prison cell, the reader is given a glimpse of Vera's construction of her heroine. However, it is through the account of her birth and of her subsequent role as an intermediary between the ancestors and their descendants that the narrator reveals more clearly Nehanda's agency in her nation's recovery of its cultural consciousness. As already noted, the book opens with her death, but this is quickly followed by her birth - the cyclic patterning is both deliberate and telling. The text presents her incoming birth as a special gift to the living from the departed:

> The departed had come to deliver a gift to the living, to shape the birth of voices, to grant the safe passage of the unborn. (3)

It is worth restating the point that, according to Shona traditional beliefs, the concept of the nation encompasses both the living and the departed ancestors who continue to take care of the living, a point that Terence O. Ranger (1979:18) alludes to when he speaks of '(the dead's) role as protector of the land and the people' and 'as forming the tender bridge between the living and the divine'. As the above extract from the novel also reveals, Nehanda's birth is described in terms that challenge the logic of biological conception. As in the case of the birth of Christ, hers was announced in dreams (the significance of which is captured later in this chapter) to a select group of individuals in the community by the ancestral spirits. These privileged individuals are the three women sitting in the room with

the young mother-to-be. Vera's narrator describes them as being fully aware of their privilege of being chosen:

> The circle of women asserted their strength through their calm posture, waiting. They looked upon their presence as a gift; this was not a chance for them to fail or to succeed; it was a time to rejoice, or else to mourn. They knew that the birth of the child, for whom they all awaited, was something that they did not have the power to control. They were here to accompany the mother, and the child, on their separate journeys. No one is allowed to make a journey alone. (4)

The characterization of the presence of the women in the room as a gift is something that is consistent with the idea, developed in Vera's text, of Nehanda as a landmark in the life of her nation. Notice how the above passage suggests that the women were privileged yet passive participants in an event that the ancestors of the land have organized. Notice also how the text analogizes Nehanda's birth to the beginning of a journey. Vera's use of the trope of a journey is considered later in the chapter. For the moment, though, it is important to consider how the circumstances of Nehanda's birth connect with the purpose of the novel through the presentation of the characters. The final word of the quotation 'alone' is also pregnant with meaning in its suggestion that the unity of the national community is reflected in the ways it prepares for the coming of its new members.

The presentation of the three women is made 'national' with the mention that they come from various parts of the land and represent a range of age groups, civil status, professions, and temperaments. The first woman is presented as a newlywed woman: 'She belonged to the village only through marriage, an event that had taken place three years previously' (4). This mode of presentation suggests that the nation is constructed as consisting of many villages. By her presence in the room this woman gives a national

sense to the event she is witnessing. Vera's narrator presents the second woman as a laborious, rural woman as is indicated by the remark that 'The day's waiting was perhaps more difficult for her than for the others because for her it was unnatural to sit still' (5). This remark suggests the impatience with idleness associated with peasant women. The third woman is described as a debonair widow and a trader who 'knew where the best markets were, and how people lived in far-flung villages' (5). This remark also points to the importance geography is given in this text. The nation is here presented as consisting of many villages located at some distance from a centre that appears to be Nehanda's birthplace. The importance of the land is further emphasized by the following description of the woman: 'she had a circle of huts, and land to plant her crops ' (5). The remark that 'She had no qualms about sitting on a stool like a man' serves to subvert what is considered as a masculine posture and is also part of Vera's narrative process, to assert the national representation effected by the women present. As in Armah, Vera looks to the woman for recovery of the land.

The two other women in the room are Vatete, the midwife, and the young mother-to-be. The midwife is described as 'the most important of the human presences in the room' (5) by virtue of the fact that she was the depositor of 'many memories' (5). The text further reveals that '[She] had tucked some of her secrets into the fold of skin around her knees and ankles, and around her elbows' (5). However, the aspect of her personality that the narrator stresses most prominently is her profession:

> Vatete was highly respected. When she failed to deliver a child into the world, it was understood that the spirits had intervened in the occurrence. For no matter how powerful and ambitious a mortal might be, the departed were in control. They determined who came into the world, and who did not. (6)

A careful reading of this passage indicates that Vatete's expertise as a midwife depends on the will of the 'dead'. This passage is one of the several reminders in the text that the ancestors have a say in the affairs of their descendants and that, in reality, there is no boundary between the living and the departed. The last member in this group of women is the mother-to-be. The description of the mother-to-be is a remarkable illustration of what Jones (1997) characterizes as Vera's close observation and fine portrayal:

> In this smoke-filled hut with its reluctant yellow light, a young woman was lying along the edge of mud wall, close to the raised mud platform on which the cooking utensils were kept. A series of rounded pots were piled delicately one on top of the other to a height that nearly reached the thatching, successively curving inward and outward to create a tall figure which filled her imagination with wonders of her existence.
>
> She slept on a wide grass mat with a low flat stool supporting her head. She was completely naked. The night was warm and her heels rested on a small black-haired goatskin which would later be used to make an apron to carry the child. The light that fell on her tired face revealed that her wrinkled brow was beaded with sweat. Though this was her first child, she was fortified by the presence of the other women. (6-7)

There is empathy and dignity in the description of this young woman and her surroundings, which befits the role that she plays in the story. The fact that her child's birth is a significant event is once more suggested by her realization of 'the wonders of her existence' and her fortitude.

In the following passage Vera's narrator offers an explanation of the gathering of the women in the room:

> The women were here to welcome the child. Each of them had already met the child in dreams which they could not recall. By visiting their dreams, the child had picked

> them out to receive her. If she had not wanted them, she would have kept them away from her birth. By their ungrudging presence the women had tied themselves irrevocably to the future of the child whom they had not yet seen. In the future, others would recognize the child by her gifts and her difference - her eyes that would see distances. Her eyes would brim with dancing prophecies of hope and despair. (6)

This passage is complex in its suggestion that Nehanda is both an object of spiritual intervention and an agent of this intervention. She is a gift from the departed. But she is also said to have visited the women in their dreams and chosen them to receive her. This shows that in a sense she is endowed with the same powers as the spirits of the departed. The passage once again calls attention to the women's being blessed in being selected for this privilege. Considered in the context of the whole story, this passage is pivotal in that it prepares the reader for future events in the story. It links Nehanda's birth to the future of the nation. She will emerge as a leader, making 'others', that is her people, recognize her as such. Her ability to see 'distances' and her 'prophecies of hope and despair' will affect the course of her people's history. The link between Nehanda's birth and the suggested birth or rebirth of the nation is an aspect that will be given consideration later in this chapter. At this juncture it is necessary to address the importance of the discourse of dreams in Vera's process of constructing Nehanda as a mythical figure, which is revealed by this episode of Nehanda's birth.

Part of Vera's broad strategy for constructing Nehanda as a mythical subject is precisely to play on the ontological analogy between dream and reality in African traditional society. Maggi Philips (1994:102), in her article on the use of the dreams in the works of African women writers Ama Ata Aidoo, Tsitsi Dangarembga, Bushi Emecheta, Bessie Head, and Flora Nwapa, argues convincingly that it does not make sense to consider dreams and

dreaming in African texts from non-African perspectives, because 'the dream activity of these texts challenges interpretative closure'. She goes on to explain that 'for African writers, dream activity is a valuable storehouse of experience with which to explore narratives and question the nature of knowing across the breath and depth of the unending human history' (Philips, 1994:91). In her novel Vera constantly juxtaposes dream and reality so that the distinction between them becomes completely blurred. As used in her novel, this strategy enables her to construct Nehanda's life as an intervention of the ancestors in the affairs of the nation. It is also a narrative device that Vera uses effectively in the novel to recover the historical memory of the people.

The woman trader's dream exemplifies Vera's use of the dream for her mythic construction of her heroine. This dream is important in its structure as well as in its content, as can be seen in the following excerpt:

> "Did you say you walked for two days to arrive at the trading place?" the listeners asked, trustfully patting the dung-covered ground with open palms. With one mouth, the first two women questioned the trader, and moved closer together, their shoulders touching.
>
> "I said it took two days. That does not mean we walked for two days."
>
> "Do not hide your words, like ripe fruit in a tree. Tell us your true meaning."
>
> "That is the time it took before we could arrive, but I do not know how long we walked. We walked part of the time, and part of the time we rested. How much time is that?" She mocked her companions whom she knew had travelled little beyond their own homesteads.
>
> "You forgot to say that some of the time you were lost! Time is not something you can retrieve from behind an anthill after you have been lost all day. But then, only the owner of the dream knows what wonders have happened in dream."
>
> "Have you known a traveller who did not lose the way at least once? Unless you have walked the path before, how can you not get lost some of the time? Even an ant-eater, which is the rarest of wild animals, is one day seen crossing the clearing

> which surrounds a homestead, before the sun has gone to its mother. Is the ant-eater in search of human company or is it lost?" She answered defensively.
>
> "Perhaps we should say it took only half a day to arrive. In dream, the spaces between event and event are full of darkness. Only the departed can tell us how to journey through them. One does not ask what causes the skin of the chameleon to change. There are some mysteries which it is good to hide from the eye."
>
> "How long did it take you to return? Was the journey forward the same as the journey back? Did you lose your way on returning as you did going?" the first woman asked. She clapped her hands emphatically, her ivory earings visible in the dark.
>
> "Only the crab knows its own journey, if it is going forward or backward." (7-8)

The dream unravels gradually as the trader rather grudgingly replies to the questions put to her by her two companions. The conversation between the three women is characterized by a language that is double-voiced and that subverts the traditional category of co-operative story-telling. The content of the dream is particular in the way it establishes Nehanda as truly a gift from the ancestors. This happens as the questioning women appear to be satisfied that the words (of wisdom) coming from the trader's mouth are signifiers of a special intervention of the spirits in the birth of the child. More importantly, it enacts a connection between the reason and the fact of Nehanda's birth. Vera's positioning of this conversation at this stage of the narrative is significant. It is an attempt to alert the reader to the fact that it is because colonial invaders arrived in the land that Nehanda's birth became a necessity.

Because of her special nature, Nehanda is endowed with supernatural gifts. She sees what others cannot see and does things that others cannot do. She sees the black crows in the sky or vultures (a metaphor for the settlers) and can watch the village celebration at the *dare* or gathering place from her mother's hut: 'If Mother had the gift of sight, she would see her daughter in the clouds of dust that the men raise around them. Mother

thinks her in the hut. Nehanda sees all the activities, and dances on the shoulders of the best dancers among those gathered' (33). The reader learns that when she touches the beetle, 'she wails until she brings herself to deafness, until she has closed out the earthly sounds that try to penetrate and disturb her silence' (34). And yet 'nothing can be heard from her' (34). No one but she can even see that 'the spirits perform prophetic dances on the ground before her, and send deafening echoes through the ground' (34). Undisturbed by her physical surroundings she waits in desperation for the spirit world to establish contact with her. Her sense of expectancy is captured in the following passage:

> No words come out of her mouth in desperation. She rocks back and forth, but no one hears her invocation. She speaks with the guidance of the departed which shape her tongue into words. Words grow like grass from her tongue. Nehanda waits in the darkness for the masked presence that will tell her of the long night that has been sent to the earth, and of the moon that sits rotting in the heavens. (36)

Images of darkness and night recur quite frequently in the text to symbolize the period of enslavement and domination that followed the colonial invasion. Nehanda's ability to see her people from the vantage point of the spirit world enables her to see what this long period of domination has done to her people:

> The light of the heavens has been stolen from the eyes of her people, and only the fire gives them warmth, when they can once again find each other's faces. Only the scarred faces of her people tell them they have been in the battle. They are shocked at this transformation of their bodies because they cannot remember the call of battle. On which plateau has the battle been fought, and against which adversary? Surely they have not fought one another?
>
> The distances are now hidden by the darkness, and they cannot see into the future, or into the past. They are trapped in the moment of their abandonment. (36)

There is an implicit reference in this passage to forced labour under a harsh colonial rule, as suggested in the phrases 'scarred faces' and 'transformations of their bodies'. Obviously

the absence of remembrance - which presumably hinders the people's search for their lost identity - as well as their lack of foresight is also attributed to 'the darkness' that has fallen on the land. The following passage, which records a conversation between Nehanda and the spirits who 'reveal ... distances to her spirit' (37), reinforces the notion that colonial domination has lasted too long and suggests that it has been facilitated by the trickery of imperial discourse :

> "Indeed it is dark, but it has been dark for a long time. We are in the season of night. It has been night since morning. The sun has vanished from the sky. We bear the marks of the moon on our faces."
> "Something has passed over our heads. Beware of trickery. Yes, some trickery is in the blindness rendered through words. Beware of blinding words!" (37)

By describing Nehanda as one who is inspired by the ancestors of the nation, who is able to understand her people's predicament and who possesses vision, Vera effectively constructs her as a symbol of the nation. In the narrative, Nehanda is indeed positioned at the centre of the confrontation between darkness (colonial domination) and its antithesis, 'light from the heavens' (cultural identity) which needs to be retrieved. This construction of Nehanda as medium *cum* resistance leader effects a 'spiritual' marginalization of the settlers and justifies Anthony Chennells's (1995:13) assertion that the uprising in Vera's text 'is not primarily a resistance of battle but grounded on some other plane of being and cognition to which the whites have no access'. Claiming this ontological ground is precisely Vera's way of affirming difference and unsettling the settler's discursive space alluded to by Chennells (see Chapter One). Vera herself has implicitly acknowledged this aspect of her text by describing it as a 'mythical work' depicting a 'mystical world' (John Vekris, 1997:10).

PART TWO

The following extract from the trader woman's dream provides an apt starting-point for considering Vera's inscription of the settler in her text, because while it implies the inaccessibility for the whites of the African system of knowledges alluded to by Chennells, it also casts the invader as a danger to the nation.

> ... We were indeed surprised by what we saw. We thought our eyes had abandoned us. Make me remember, was it not said by the late chief that our kindness would be our death?"
>
> "You met the symbol of death on your *journey's path*? Is that what you saw? Did something cross your path then?" The two women swallowed more distance between themselves and the story-teller. They now sat very close together.
>
> "If it had crossed our path and passed, we would have been satisfied, and cleansed ourselves in the river. That is not what chanced. We saw the sign, but the sign had decided to remain among us."
>
> "Was it a sign? What did it see? Here we stand in the middle of the river. Tell us what you witnessed."
>
> ...
>
> "The sign was in the form of a human being. A stranger, but a human nevertheless." ...
>
> "Did the stranger walk on two legs? For how else does a *stranger* become a sign? Did he walk on two feet? or on four? Did he walk forward or backward?"
>
> "The stranger had decided to stay. Did you not hear me tell you of it? We discovered that the stranger had decided to stay among us. The stranger became a sign of our future. What does it mean to have *a stranger, with unknown customs*, live among you? To live I say, not to visit?"
>
> "That is indeed a sign." (10-11) [emphasis mine]

According to Edward Said (1993), the journey as a central trope is typical of imperial narratives about the non-European world. He argues that the deployment of this trope is a literary means of suggesting, as in the case of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, the 'colonial trajectory' and a 'reclamation of the fictive territory' (1993:212). This latter is undermined, in the extract chosen, through the participatory nature of the story-telling

process. The imaginative immersion - 'Here we stand in the middle of the river' - suggests this reclamation. Its broader frame of reference is, of course, the implicit comment being made about the construction of the nation through the evocation of the communal ethos. In a somewhat different but complementary way, Eric Savoy (1990:294) associates the journey trope in imperial narratives with 'a self-conscious examination of the impulses to interrogate and interpret the unreadable "text" of the Other, and the defensive, pseudo-interpretive articulations against the unreadable'. Considering the context of *Nehanda*, and taking account of Maggi's point that dreams in African literature could have particular meanings, the trader's dream appears to provide a deconstructive reading of the journey motif in colonial narratives. This appears so in view of the fact that the dream entails a return and an encounter with the stranger. The passage suggests that, in this case, it is the native rather than the Western traveller and so-called explorer who tries and interpret the unreadable 'text' of the Other. Interestingly, the roles are reversed here, with the native in the role of the Self and the stranger becoming the Other. The question 'What does it mean to have a stranger, with unknown customs, live among us? To live I say, not to visit?' constitutes the terms in which this interrogation is articulated. With this reversal of roles, Vera underlines the concept that the invasion of the land by the stranger constitutes a cause for concern about the danger it poses to the nature of communication between the departed and the living.

In this respect, Vera's interrogation of the stranger's presence reminds one of Fanon (1968:31) who states that '[in] defiance of his successful transplantation, in spite of his appropriation, the settler still remains a foreigner...', a point that appears to justify Vera's resignation of the settler as a stranger. Her use of this term is also significant in light of

the distinction Nikos Papastergiadis (1996:180), writing in another context, makes between the notions of outsider and the stranger:

> The identity of the outsider carries with it an a priori exclusion: a relation of non-relation. Whereas the stranger possesses an identity which is internalizable but unlocatable. The outsider's identity is one of non-identity, an intranscendable stigma, whereas the ambiguity of the stranger's identity has the potential to blur the categories of identification.

The above observation illuminates the inscription of the settler in Vera's text for it combines both notions. To the native, the invader represents both the stranger and the outsider (as suggested in Said's argument about the importance of locality in resistance narratives, quoted earlier). In this sense, the above quote also helps the reader to see that the notion of the stranger as used in Vera's text becomes a site for the native to confront his or her own identity. Unable to locate the identity of the colonial invader and refusing to identify with him, the native eventually resorts to war as a means of erasing this ambiguity and of regaining control of the discursive space. There is another dimension, not emphasized in the novel, to the way the native confronts his or her identity: that is the ironical fact that the Shonas are not the first occupants of the land they reclaim as theirs.

This construction of the colonial invasion as a metaphor for cultural lethargy in traditional African societies is a device that Ayi Kwei Armah also uses in his novel *Two Thousand Seasons* (1978), which explores the internal and external disruptions of what Armah's communal narrator calls the 'living way' of the black race as a consequence of foreign - European and Arab - invasions. Armah's communal narrator is much given to the repetition of such words as 'ostentatious cripples', 'killers', 'enslavers', 'predatory tormentors', 'conquerors', 'devotees of death', 'attackers', 'enslavers', and 'slaughterers' to characterize

the invaders and to the use of lexical items with positive loading such as 'thinkers', 'remembers', 'seers' and 'utterers' to suggest an African rationality (the 'way'), that contrasts with the 'white disease'. Vera, in contrast, is less inclined to use terms with negative loading to refer to the invaders. Her strategy is to let her readers draw their own conclusions. Both Armah and Vera, however, are concerned about the impact of colonial invasions on African people and traditional ways of life. Armah sees colonialism, which he also refers to as the 'white road', as a source of the destruction of the African way of living. In his opinion, the European way of living or culture carries within it the seed of destruction of the African culture. Similarly, Vera identifies the coming of the Europeans as a symbol of death. In her text, she highlights the undesirability of the European presence in the land because of the pernicious effect 'unknown customs' might have on indigenous people. For these reasons, both writers' novels emphasize the necessity of fighting the invaders and rejecting their world-views.

Vera identifies, through the trader's dream, the stranger's motives in a way that is also reminiscent of Armah in *Two Thousand Seasons*, a text in which the 'white man from the sea' is depicted as chiefly interested in capitalist exploitation of the land. Isanusi, the wise councillor who is portrayed as a keeper and defender of the 'way', presents to the nation on behalf of the greedy king Koranche a list of the invaders' demands, which include a total franchise for the exploitation of natural and mineral resources, in return for trinkets given to the king and his courtiers. In *Nehanda*, land and its natural and mineral resources also figure prominently as the reasons why the strangers want to stay. In a scene reminiscent of Isanusi's presentation of the settlers' demands, Ibwe reports to the village

audience at the village square that the settlers have suggested that the natives let them exploit the soil in return for protection and the benefits of civilization.

In the following extract in which the woman trader tells how the stranger in her dream set out to occupy the land, the stranger's motive is identified as commercial exploitation:

> He had built a home.... He had taken many cattle away from us. He had moved us away into the barren part of our land where crops would not grow. Many people were killed by the stranger. When we saw his arrival we gave him pieces of gold, and he gave us that which he had brought from his own land. What we saw on that hill tied our mouths, and we left in silence. (11)

Building a house on the top of a hill is an act of claiming possession of the entire land surrounding the hill. The trader woman and her companion's surprise and astonishment convey their deep conviction that there was a grim plan behind the stranger's arrival in their land. This implication does not go unnoticed by the two women in the room who comment: 'A visitor to a strange land must be humble enough not to choose the highest ground in the land to build his home' (12). Thus, seen in the general context of the story, the trader's dream serves to set the scene for the resistance struggle in which Nehanda plays a leading role.

The commercial dimension of colonial conquest is also stressed in the following remarks contained in Vatete's tale:

> We were certain that they had come for gold... . The strangers cared only for the wealth of the forest ... (24)

However, Vatete's story, which describes the encounter with the strangers at the base of the sacred big tree of rain, also appears to validate Chennells's (1995:13) view that the

uprising narrated in the novel is mainly motivated by the 'spiritual assault' associated with the settler's presence in the land. The journey to the tree of rain is made in order to appease the ancestors so that there can be rain. Vatete tells the child Nehanda: 'For four days we were supposed to leave food at the foot of the tree. We were there to worship and praise our great ancestors so that we could have rain.' (22) The big, sacred tree, which 'was older than anyone in the village' (22) is the home of the rain spirit. As Vatete emphasizes, 'only those who had been chosen by the great spirit that we prayed to could be allowed inside' (22). As the villagers reach the big tree they are met with the sight of strangers desecrating this holy site. For at the base of the tree, these people are not only eating the food that they have cooked but they are also digging the ground around the tree in search of gold. These acts of desecration bemuse the villagers who consider them to be offensive to their ancestors: 'We had never seen such desecration' (23). And Vatete goes on to lament in the following terms:

> It is a hard thing to see strangers on your land. It is even harder to find a stranger dancing on your sacred ground. What mouth can carry a sight such as that?.... We were afraid of our ancestors who had been offended. (23)

Through Vatete's story Vera introduces the notion that the stranger's presence in the land may not be as temporary as it appears. Consider this exchange between the child Nehanda and Vatete:

> "Why did the strangers stay then, if they could not find what they wanted? Why did they stay if they failed to find gold?"
>
> "Often we say that the mouth is like a wounded tree, it will heal itself. But there were no answers to satisfy our asking. The stranger had come to us on a long journey, and his kin had forgotten him." (24)

The conquest motif is central in both the midwife Vatete's stories and Nehanda's mother's dreams. Vatete's story about the child who was abducted by strangers and put in a goatskin bag, but who managed to free herself by singing a traditional song that 'put them to sleep' and 'by chewing off the skin of the bag' is rightly described by Jones (1997:52) as a foreboding tale. 'This foreboding', he states, 'is realized in the clash heralded by the arrival of Browning and Smith', interesting in its fairly obvious literary allusion to *Things Fall Apart* with the early missionaries Brown and Smith, now become an archetypical name choice. Given the context of the novel, it is clear that the abducted girl symbolizes Zimbabwe. The singing of the traditional song her mother taught her is a clear reference to the cultural legacy of the ancestors and the chewing off of the skin of the bag, a clear reference to the liberation struggle. Through the metaphors interspersed in the narrative of this dream Vera forces the reader to see that it is possible for a nation to regain control of its destiny by resorting to the resources of its cultural heritage. The foreboding Jones refers to is also encapsulated by Nehanda's mother's dream the night before her daughter's naming ceremony. In the dream, the mother sees herself running desperately through a rain of feathers 'surrounded by mysteries' to try and find her lost child. To the mother, this dream is a bad omen for her daughter's future. It looks as if Vera's narrator duplicates the same plot device to make the point that the presence of foreigners in the land heralds chaos. It also seems consistent with the general thrust of the novel that the rain of black feathers symbolizes the colonial conquest of the land, which will affect the destiny of her child. This view is confirmed in the following narratorial comment:

> Mother sees the birds fly off the trees and disappear into the shadows of the tall anthills. Mother is very afraid for her daughter, whom she feels will not be with her long. (20-21)

Significantly, both Mother's dream and Vatete's story incorporate the abduction in their plots. They revolve around the abduction of a child. These two stories complete each other, considering that the silence in Mother's dream about the perpetrators of the abduction is filled in Vatete's tale where the strangers are identified as the culprits.

The notion introduced in Vatete's reply, that the stranger is on a long journey which may have severed his ties with his native land, is important in this passage. It was mentioned earlier that, according to Said, the journey as a central trope is typical of imperial narratives about the non-European world. It is clear from the above passage that here again, through Vatete's story, Vera deconstructs the journey motif in colonial narratives. Notice how her narrator presents the stranger's journey in contrast to the villagers' relatively short journey to the tree of rain - four days of sacrifice and then the return home. This notion is ambiguous in that, while it establishes the fact that, because of his extremely long journey from home, the stranger no longer belongs to his place of origin, it also raises the question of what course of action to take, given the danger his permanent presence in the land would present to the villagers' traditional way of life. In light of this latter interpretation, Vatete's words can be interpreted as a call for resistance. There is some optimism, though, at the end of this essentially sad story, which is suggested by the image of the millipede. Despite the fact that the ancestors had been offended by the presence of the strangers, which resulted in a more severe drought in the land, an unexpected thing happened:

> We did not dream, because we had no sight with which to feed our dreams. Then a millipede moved across the earth, though there had been no rain. In the black sand, it left a soft trail that led behind a rock. (25)

There is a clear suggestion in this passage that even in times of serious difficulties some extraordinary happenings may occur. The millipede moving to the tree of rain serves as a metaphor for an agent of change. The metaphor clearly points to Nehanda. The analogy with Nehanda is also implied in Vatete's phrase 'black sand', which can be read as referring to Zimbabwe. Thus the end of this story suggests the possibility of an intervention of the spirits in the liberation struggle, which is what the rest of this novel is about. All these narratives - dreams and 'real stories' - that Vera has intertwined in her main plot contain signals about the nature of the foreign invasion and the intentions of the colonists, and about the role Nehanda is cast to play for the liberation of her land.

It has been shown that colonial presence is suggested in terms that reveal a complete rejection of a multicultural politics of nation-formation. The image of the settler as a vulture in the dreams, and of colonial invasion as darkness, would have been recognized by the reader as important in this novel. The transformation Vera has made from crow to vulture somehow complicates her construction of the colonial invader, considering that the crow and the vulture are scavengers rather than birds of prey, which is what she means the settler to symbolize. As the narrative proceeds, related images are used in Nehanda's speech to underscore the disruption of the life of her nation by the fact of this unwholesome presence.

After the council held at the *dare* during which discussion concentrates on the white men's refusal of the elders' injunction that they should leave the land, it becomes clear that the conflict between the colonists and the indigenous people is inevitable. The latter's reactions to the village spokesman Ibwe's replaying of the meeting between the colonial

administrator and the village elders indicate well how the positions between the colonized and the colonizer are revealed to be irreconcilable. The members of the community support their elders' rejection of the white man's offer of guns and invitation to join in his religion. They are horrified at the white man's suggestion that the chief signs an act of allegiance to his Queen. The frustrated comment made by one person in the crowd that '[t]he white man will not leave this land willingly' (39) and the question repeatedly asked by another 'For how many moons will the stranger be among us?' (42, 43 and 44) capture the natives' anger caused by the presence of the white man.

The scene then shifts away from the *dare* to Mr Browning's house. Here Vera provides the reader with an additional dimension of the divide between the settlers and the natives. The misunderstanding between Mr Browning, the colonial administrator, and his houseboy Mashoko, dramatized through their thoughts, is portrayed as emblematic of the tension between the two groups. Mashoko does not understand why Mr Browning has renamed him Moses. Browning reasons that the 'new name is easier to remember and, more importantly, it is a step toward the goal of civilizing the country' (44). The narrator interprets the misunderstanding in terms of the cultural difference between the groups to which the two men belong: 'Like the embryonic garden outside Mr Browning's window, the name creates a space in which Mr Browning can feel comfortable' (44). But the point is also that civilization and the white man's religion are seen as synonymous. With this episode Vera's narrator suggests the loss of African cultural identity as a consequence of colonization. The two men also have differing views on Mashoko' s work. Being in the service of Mr Browning is felt by Mashoko as an humiliating experience whereas to Mr Browning the work ennobles Moses.

Vera's treatment of this scene is interesting in the way it recalls that of Guillaume Oyono in his anticolonial novel *Houseboy* (1990). In his discussion of the novel, Christopher Miller (1993) reads the evolving relationship between the houseboy Toundi and his master, the French administrative commandant, as informed by what he refers to, after Homi Bhabha (1994), as 'the politics of the glance' . As he explains: 'From Sartre to Foucauld and Homi Bhabha, the power to look and see has been recognized as a crucial sign of *colonial* control and resistance' (Miller, 1993:78). Referring clearly to what Bhabha (1994b:76) has termed the '*surveillance* of colonial power as functioning in relation to the regime of the *scopic drive*', what strikes Miller in *Houseboy* is that Toundi and the French commandant 'glare at each other according to an elaborate system of hierarchies and taboos, a system that is taken apart and laid waste by the novel' (1993:78). As Miller explains, Oyono's novel starts with the colonizer having the upper hand in all the glances, looks, and stares exchanged by Toundi and him and then the reader witnesses a weakening of the commandant's glance. This, Miller argues, reveals that 'Oyono's treatment of the glance amounts to a fairly explicit demonstration of anti-colonial resistance on a small scale, the reversal of explicit power relations' (81).

In the scene between Mashoko and Mr Browning Vera dramatizes this aspect of anti-colonial resistance in much the same way. Consider, for instance, the passage below which describes Mashoko' s attending to Mr Browning when the latter is washing:

> While Moses stands very stiffly in the centre of the room, Mr Browning dips the soap into the water and proceeds to wash his face. Some of the soapy water splashes onto Moses's uniform; and he will have to change it. Moses closes his eyes against the droplets, but does not move.. He keeps his eyes closed until Mr Browning has stopped splashing. "You can open your eyes now, Moses,"

> Mr Browning says. What a fool Moses is, a real clown. He wonders what his wife will think of Moses. His habits are embarrassing.
>
> What a fool Mr Browning is, Mashoko thinks .... Having completed his inspection of the garden , Mr Browning re-enters the house. His eyes are wrinkled, and small moist patches have already appeared below each of his armpits; later, a much larger one will spread across his back. Mashoko tries to avoid looking at him. (44-5)

In terms of the postcolonial 'politics of the glance' Miller refers to, it is clear that through this scene Vera successfully inscribes the colonizer as holding the balance of power at the beginning of the uprising. Vera depicts him as the one who dictates the terms of the relationships. At the same time the colonizer's apparent control is undercut by an internal mode of resistance that expresses itself not through the looks but in thoughts. Mashoko cannot face Mr Browning because he does not feel confident enough to do so, even though he is sure to have the last word as suggested by the reference to a larger patch on Browning' s back. Not surprisingly, when later in the story he comes to announce his departure, he is in control. 'Mr Browning had been surprised to see him wearing his traditional clothes. He carried his shield under his arm' (74). The traditional apparel and the arm symbolize national identity and resistance, respectively. Jones (1997:52) correctly reads this scene as indicating 'the liberation of the spirit of the people'. It is significant that, when Mashoko reappears in the novel, he joins the crowds which are listening to the rebel leader Kaguvi. The text suggests that his purpose in joining the rebellion is in order to settle his personal account with the colonizers: 'He dances to the crowds, affirming the truth that has been spoken, shedding the humiliation he has suffered since the arrival of the white men' (73). In this episode Mashoko is made to represent his nation for it is the entire nation that, the text suggests, has suffered from the presence of the settlers.

The colonizer's voice, though less loud here than in Eppel's *The Great North Road*, is also heard in the novel through Mr Browning and his assistant Mr Smith. Despite their mutual dislike on a personal level, the two men share a strong commitment to the empire and to the colonization of Africa. In a scene in the novel, the two men exchange views on Africa and its inhabitants. It is not surprising that their conversation is cast in a language which recent postcolonial theories have identified as the colonial discourse. Such a discourse is crystallized in several utterances in the conversation. A short selection (which has been given letters for the purpose of easy reference) is given below:

A "Smith, do you know the difference between us and the natives? The difference is that we know where we are and the native does not."
"Surely, the Africans know the land..." Mr Smith answers dispassionately. (52)

B I mean the knowledge of the world that we have. We have drawn maps,and know how to locate ourselves on the globe. The native only knows where he is standing. I have been collecting maps since I was a boy. This is what we should teach at the new school, a knowledge of the earth. (52).

C The African must begin to go somewhere. He must be given a goal in the future. (53)

D I sometimes wonder why I have stayed in Africa so long, although it is a fairly appealing place. One can easily stand outside things... (53)

E ... I value my freedom. Freedom emanates from nature itself. It is the charm of Africa that ideals coincide so perfectly with nature. (53)

F It seems natural to keep one's eyes focused on the distance in Africa.... The landscape appears monotonous since the horizon is always before one's eyes, without any distracting landmarks to obscure vision. The foreigner in Africa is always in a state of waiting; the horizon turns one into a dreamer. (53)

G I shall introduce order and culture," Mr Browning says... . We should enlarge the prison... . We need order and justice. (55)

H "It is hard to deal in a civilized manner with people who possess so many superstitions." The urgency of introducing the Bible in Africa had never been more clear to Mr Browning. (75)

I The only certain thing is never to trust the native, no matter how well behaved they seem. They are the most dishonest race on the face of the earth. (76)

J They are unaccustomed to work, these natives, that is why they are fighting us. They prefer to sit in the sun all day, than to be brought under the most advanced civilization in the world. (76)

K Only the rifles will Christianize the natives.... (77)

The extracts above can be grouped into two categories. First, there are those that relate to the space (Africa) and, second, those that relate to its inhabitants. In his book *The Rhetoric of Empire* already referred to, Spurr explains the question of appropriation of space and people in colonial discourse. In his view, it is not only land and its resources that the colonizing imagination appropriates but also the indigenous people and the native point of view. He observes that 'the colonizing imagination takes for granted that the land and its resources belong to those who are best able to exploit them according to the values of a Western commercial and industrial system' (Spurr, 1993:31). The appropriation of the land is present in the text in the form of the settlers' presence in the land and their stated desire to continue to rule, as expressed in response to the village elders' requests that they should leave the land.

Statements D, E, and F about the African landscape reflect the view in colonial discourse of the continent as pristine and inviting conquest. As Spurr (1993:30) states in his book, 'the European experience in Africa allows for the nostalgic pastoralism to be projected onto the future and made into the object of utopian desire. This utopian vision imposes an entire

series of European institutions on the natural landscape'. The absence of 'any distracting landmarks to obscure the vision' in statement G above calls for the need to take possession of the uncultured land and to endow it with symbols of civilization, such as churches, schools, and prisons, which is the idea that is implied in statements B, G, and H. Statements A, B and C are rooted in assumptions in colonial discourse that Africans have no culture and that it is in their best interests to allow themselves to be ruled by a superior culture. Such a discourse, according to Bhabha (1994b:70), assumes 'a form of governmentality that in marking out a 'subject nation', appropriates, directs and dominates its various spheres of activities'. Statements I , J and K illustrate stereotypes circulated in colonial discourse that serve to perpetuate the myth of the inferiority of the black race, which the work of Bhabha, Fanon, Said and other postcolonial theorists has shown to characterize colonial discourse. All these utterances reveal the polarization in Vera's text of two conceptions of land: the colonists' and the natives', which can be justifiably be regarded as the *causa belli* in this story. Thus, given the context of the novel, it seems justifiable to see in this representation of the colonist's voice Vera's strategy of exposing the presumptions of the hegemonic settler discourse, well brought into relief in the colonial discourse Duiker Berry articulates in *The Great North Road*, and her strategy of highlighting the irreconcilable nature of the two positions: the settlers' and the natives'.

Nehanda's transformation into a prophetess and a war leader coincides with the mounting opposition to the settlers' presence. Her strange behaviour, which is noted by the villagers and which is characterized by her refusal to speak and to eat, forces her mother to consult a *n'anga* or traditional healer. After consultation the *n'anga* declares Nehanda to be on the point of being inhabited by a good spirit. This diagnosis is consistent with the point David

Lan makes in his book *Guns & Rain* (1985) about the only reason why, according to Shona beliefs, the departed might make a descendant ill. As he puts it, 'This is to give a sign that they wish to possess her or him, to speak through her or his mouth to all their descendants to warn that some disaster is about to strike or to complain that they have been forgotten and ask that beer be brewed or a child be named in their memory' (32). Soon after the *n'anga*'s consultation, Nehanda starts prophesying. It then becomes clear that her voice is no longer her own but that of the ancestors of the land. The text validates this interpretation as the following passage suggests:

> She stays in the darkness of the cave, and speaks to the people from within, out of their sight. Her voice is that of the departed. It comes from the beginning of time. The people stand at the cave, calling, asking her to pass the voices of the departed.The voice comes from within them, from the cave, from below the earth and from the roots of trees The voice awakens the dead part of themselves, and they walk with new beliefs, with renewed wisdom. (81)

It also comes as no surprise that Nehanda's message to the nation is a call to take arms against the settlers. She indicates who the enemy is by pointing to the hill where the first settler was spotted.

PART THREE

Much of the politics of representation of the nation in Vera's text is deployed through Nehanda's voice. In the following extract, Vera has Nehanda use the image of a valley to portray the space of the nation:

> Here in this desperate valley where the grass was once green I hear the birth of voices. It is hard and convulsive, like other births. The green valley is a place that holds hope and warmth. At the bottom of the hill, and then at the summit of the hill, not only would I see the wonders and trials of a past time, but even I would be transformed. (59)

The image of the green valley implies a picture of pre-colonial Zimbabwe as an Edenic place, a place of hope and warmth. This romantic image is contrasted with that of a dry valley, which symbolizes the country under colonial rule. This imaginary representation of Zimbabwe is appropriate as it relates to the geographical reality of the country. David Lan (1985) in his chapter entitled 'the People and the Land' characterizes Zimbabwe as essentially consisting of a valley and a plateau. In the above passage there is also a reference to a difficult 'birth of voices', which the narrator associates with the prophecies that Nehanda is about to make. The 'birth of voices' forces a recollection of the circumstances of Nehanda's own birth and is perhaps also a pointer to the birth of the Zimbabwean nation that this narrative implicitly celebrates. (This point is dealt with in some detail later on when this chapter discusses the gendering of the nation in this novel.) Notice also the repetition of the word 'hill' in the passage ('the bottom of the hill' and 'the summit of the hill'), which may be seen as emphasizing the natives' righful ownership of their territory. This interpretation appears to be validated by the association of these places with the 'wonders and trials of a past time'.

Vera further establishes the contrast between precolonial and colonial Zimbabwe by analogizing colonization with drought. In the passage below Edenic landscape imagery (represented by 'mountains', 'rivulets', and 'small lake'), describing precolonial Zimbabwe, exists side by side with a vocabulary denoting death, here represented by the terms 'dry', 'no longer green with birth' and 'grief' reinforcing the 'desperate valley' above:

> The valley was spacious and surrounded by mountains covered with lush grass. From the mountains, rivulets flowed filling a small lake in the fertile valley in which fishes of various kinds swam. The valley, however, is no longer green with birth. Its grass is dry, and the sediment of memory swallows boulders of grief. (60)

This image of colonial Zimbabwe is completed with reference to the settlers, symbolized in the novel by the vultures who dominate the landscape. At some point in the narrative, Nehanda declares: 'I see vultures! ...There are vultures in the air !' (60). By this image of the vultures, the reader is made to recall the black birds and black feathers in Mother's and Nehanda's dreams mentioned earlier. It reveals a constant emphasis on the settlers' presence as the origin of the nation's misery. Because vultures are associated with death and corpses, the image serves to represent the land as a place of death, and possibly as a battlefield. There is also a suggestion in the text that, because of the digging for gold, the land has lost its naturalness and the soil its fertility: 'We have dug dead roots from the thirsting soil, tubers that mock us with fists of dry rot, the forest in which we have hunted has become a land of diggers. The ground echoes, echoes' (62).

Once she has constructed this picture of the occupied homeland, Nehanda chronicles the nation's passive coexistence with the settlers. She mentions the fact that the nation was not prepared for the long settler presence and for the invasion of the land that ensued. As the voice of the ancestors, she laments the fact that the nation rather unwisely extended a hand of hospitality to people whose intention was to appropriate the land and to divert the nation's attention from the ancestors. Stressing that the time has come to recover their lost identity and to reclaim 'their' land, she petitions the nation to carry out the ancestor's command:

> I am among you. I carry the message of retribution. The land must be cleansed with your blood. You must fight for what belongs to you, and for your departed. I will speak until the birds depart from the trees. (61)

That Nehanda carries a message of retribution is consistent with the thrust of the novel in which the colonial conquest is construed as a grave injustice done to the native and his/her culture. The simile of the black birds on the trees which repeatedly occurs in Nehanda's monologue serves precisely to inscribe the invasion in terms that negate a link between the settler and the land. (Significantly, Nehanda is associated with *Shirichena* or the bird of light.) In the monologue the scavengers (a metaphor for the settlers, as already indicated) are portrayed as different from the natives: 'From the tree flew predictions in the form of birds that we had never seen before' (63). The difference between them and the natives consists also in the fact that the settlers occupy a space (trees) where the natives would not feel comfortable. (This statement further points to the whites' marginalization, suggested in Chennells's remark alluded to earlier.) It is a space that is metaphorically the settlers', because of its association with imperial conquest. Even their discourse is presented as different from the natives: 'Voices sit on the branchless trees and call out to us with a multitude of sounds that have travelled long distances through the heated air' (63). Finally, the lasting effect of the birds' presence is presented as detrimental to the nation, not only because 'Our trees no longer bore fruit, and we dug the earth fruitlessly' (65), a reference to moral and cultural drought, but also because it severed communication with the ancestors.

It seems that, with these metaphors, Vera disrupts the notion of cultural hybridity celebrated by postcolonial theorists and favours that of cultural homogeneity. The type of nationalist discourse conveyed through them repulses hybridity, which it considers as pernicious to indigenous culture because of its potential to dilute cultural purity. This is why, in order to impress even further upon the nation the ideology of cultural nationalism,

Nehanda reminds her people that there is no greater urgency than to claim what is theirs and to rid the land of that which enslaves the people physically as well as spiritually. Hence her exhortations:

> "Rise up, I say. Rise up and fight.' (66)

And:

> Spread yourselves through the forest and fight till the stranger decides to leave. Let us fight till the battle is decided. Is death not better than submission? There is no future till we have regained our lands and our birth. There is only this moment, and we have to fight till we have redeemed ourselves. What is today's work on this land if tomorrow we have to move to a new land? Perhaps we should no longer bury our dead. (66)

As should become clear by now, Nehanda represents the spiritual arm of the *Chimurenga*. It is her role as one that unlocks the nation's conscience and provides it with the moral strength that sustains it on the battleground, that Vera's novel highlights in its representation of the nation. In this way, the natives appear as a nation awakening from a long night of cultural limbo. It is to Kaguvi, however, that the task of leading the nation on the battle ground falls. By reclaiming the legendary figures Nehanda and Kaguvi as heroes in a national liberation war fought to reclaim land and cultural identity, Vera's novel enacts a revision of the pioneer origin myth. The focus on these mythical figures is also significant because it enables Vera not only to inscribe the liberation fighter as a signifier of national identity and the war as a national cause but also, in the words of Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins (1996:116), to 'loosen imperialism's stronghold on historical representation'. Ironically, of course, the argument of the novel turns on an even older myth: that of Adamastor, the legendary spirit of Africa residing in Table Mountain in the Cape of Good Hope, biding its time before repossessing the land.

Kaguvi's inscription as a national hero deserves some consideration. His first appearance in the text constructs him as occupying an important spiritual space, comparable with Nehanda's, as can be seen from the following passage:

> A small wind climbs the hill and meets her on her descent, but does not turn away from it. In the hills she has traversed with the message of her cry, another wind rises, loud and captivating: the hunter Kaguvi. (70)

The reader also learns that 'When Kaguvi arrives at a village, it is as though he has emerged from the horizon' (70). In the context of the 'dancers' 'waiting for the past' (68) and '[seeking] the beginning of the world' (68) the emergence of Kaguvi - metaphorized as the 'wind' - is deeply allusive: he is, at once, primeval man and harbinger of the future of the nation. However, even as the novel functions to represent him as endowed with some magical power, it does not grant Kaguvi and Nehanda equal status. Unlike Nehanda whose authority derives from the departed themselves, Kaguvi, the text tells us, 'is humble and beseeching before the people, who are the only ones with the power to grant him authority over their future' (71). Furthermore, his success on the battleground depends on the only person through whom the ancestors communicate with the rest of the nation: 'When he closes his eyes, the voice of Nehanda comes to Kaguvi. The voice gives him strength, and he works with it towards achieving the goals of the rebellion' (73). There is a sense in the second half of the novel that, by associating the struggle for liberation with the ancestors, Vera succeeds in legitimizing it as a just cause.

Kaguvi is depicted as a national hero. The novel insists on his physical attributes as it foregrounds his bravery in killing a bull with a spear, in drinking its blood and in eating its heart. The belief that a warrior who drinks the blood and eats the heart of a bull killed this

way inherits the bull's strength is part of the Shona myth of bravery. Kaguvi' s battle name is Gumboreshumba, which means 'Leg-of-the-lion' (71). The name suggests his belief that an enemy should be killed. This is confirmed by his fiery anti-settler discourse and by the traditional hunt he and his followers enact. The text tells us that as they enact the traditional war dance 'Kaguvi gazes longingly into the hills' (72). The hills Kaguvi looks into refer to the place which settlers occupied when they first came to the land, and thus symbolize the locus of colonial power. They also represent the lost cultural identity as Nehanda reminds the warriors: 'The past is in the hills' (80).

Kaguvi has more than just a passing association with the lion. The text says: 'His strength is preserved in a black skin bag which he carries on his back. No one has ever seen its contents: the claws of a lion' (72). According to Lan (1985:160), there is a strong association in traditional mythology between the lion and a royal ancestral spirit: 'When a royal ancestral spirit is not in the body of its medium, it lives in the body of a lion. If you kill a lion you take the chance of killing the temporary home of a royal ancestor.' This helps to explain why Kaguvi refers to himself as 'Leg-of-the-Lion'. The power of the lion, associated with Kaguvi, extends to the whole nation whose aspirations he articulates in his dancing:

> During his seances, the villagers live their lives. Kaguvi dances their hopes into being, dances their future and past triumphs, dances their histories, dances the forest that surrounds them, dances the hills and the plateaus, dances until the sounds of the birds become their own war-songs, dances until the strength of the lion is in their limbs. The flight of the eagle is the speed of their feet, the cry of the jackal surrounds them, and their spirits soar and they dream only of their success. (72)

As suggested by the passage above, Kaguvi' s dancing symbolizes the coming to life of a nation that, metaphorically, has been in a state of dormancy since the arrival of the settlers. The celebration of this recovery is artfully realized through the evocation of the past, present and future of the nation. Also, significantly, there is in this passage a repetition of the images of landscape and of scavenging birds which, as already discussed, Vera employs in the novel to allegorize the occupation of the homeland by invading foreign forces. The hope, that the goal of cleansing the nation will be achieved, is suggested in the closing sentence through a reference to the very qualities associated with the settlers.

Typically, Nehanda describes the success achieved during the uprising as the result of scrupulous observance of the ancestors' instructions. In the reports the warriors give to Nehanda of the battles they have fought, they speak of how they felt protected by the spirits throughout the war campaign:

> We moved through the midst of the strangers, and we were invisible. Look, we have come back whole, having achieved our aim. We have shot arrows through the air, and they have landed. Let it not be said that we did not fight, that we did not execute all the messages of the departed. Like the wind we have swept through the land, attacking every stranger on our path. Meanwhile they have attacked us with guns, but we have persisted. (78-79)

And also:

> The blood of our enemies now flows through the land. May the spirits protect us in this struggle. (79)

As the war spreads Nehanda warns the warriors against irresponsible acts that might only displease the spirits and therefore cost the nation its victory over its enemies. One such act is the taking of anything other than weapons that could later be used to crush the

strangers: 'Take only the things that will protect you, not the things that will destroy you' (79).

It is clear from the above that Vera establishes a close connection between the liberation of the land and the recovery of the cultural past. She sees them both as two sides of the same coin. Nehanda's warning to the warriors against coveting anything belonging to the strangers is consistent with the notion Vera develops in her novel that destruction comes with the giving up of one's cultural identity. This notion is made more explicit when Nehanda says: 'Approach the stranger with a single eye, the other should be blind. It is the envying eye that will destroy us, that will change us entirely. We can become stronger and whole if we believe in our traditions' (79). The connection Vera makes between recovery of land and that of cultural identity is also articulated in the following excerpt from Nehanda's speech in which she urges the fighters to carry on the struggle:

> This is our land given to us by the ancestors. Protect it with your blood. The gnarled roots of trees are brothers with the earth. This is the season of journeying to our origins, to the beginning of our beliefs, and of time. This is the season of planting new hope in the ground, and of weeping. This is the season of night, of locusts, and of long shadows that have banished the sun from the earth. (80)

This is in fact a statement of what the war, as dramatized in Vera's text, is all about. The representation of the liberation war as a sacrifice and as journey to the source of cultural identity is well encapsulated in the above extract. The war is inscribed in this novel as a sacrifice that is required to retain the geographical, as well as spiritual, territory inherited from the ancestors. The story told through Nehanda is a history of territorial dispossession and spiritual enslavement.

It is important to remember that the journey motif permeates this text. All the dreams and stories told by the main characters in the novel are stories of journeys - most of them unsuccessful - attempted toward a destination of some importance. The above extract from the novel makes it clear that each of these stories are about a journey of self-discovery. As the above extract also suggests, the journey to 'our origins' is made to correspond with 'a season of night', that is, the colonial period. The journey takes the traveller back to the precolonial period, a period that Vera appears to idealize. Thus in Vera's text the journey motif is both colonial and anticolonial. The question one can ask is whether this is a novel about the recovery of Zimbabwe's soul rather than Africa's. This question arises in large part because the metonyms 'season of night' and 'long shadows', used in contrast to 'sun', clearly refer to the European colonization of Africa. With these metonyms, Vera inverts the notion that colonization brought civilization to Africa. Later on in the text, she allegorizes the colonial presence in terms of drought that leaves the people 'in amazement along the dry bank of the river where we had gathered' (83). This drought, the narrator says through Nehanda's mouth,

> held no sign to remind us of the previous rain. There was no sign of the flood we witnessed. The sky was caked with mud, which held big boulders from a forgotten life: it had been a partner to our deception. (83)

This metaphor of the drought, which is conceived in the mythology of the people of the Zambezi valley as a sign of the ancestors' displeasure with their descendants, effectively serves to emphasize the importance of the war as a means of recovering land and reuniting the people with their ancestors.

To illustrate the notion that the uprising is a national cause, Vera's text dramatizes an incident in which native women and children are brutally massacred by a column of settlers. The slaughter is witnessed by a boy from his position in a tree. He first witnesses the arrival in the village of a group of people on horses. The text makes a point of stressing that the village is almost empty because all the men are in the hills fighting against the settlers, and that the boy spends much of his time in the *musasa* tree because there are no longer any cows in the village that he can look after. In this way the text draws attention to the negative consequences of the colonial presence for the society. The riders of the horses are settlers. From his position in the tree the boy witnesses the killing of his mother, aunt and sister as well as the burning of huts and killing of other villagers. Although the boy is lucky to escape, he has burns in his arms caused by the flames leaping through the hut of his parents, an experience that has changed him into another person and given him another purpose in life: 'He does not want to see the animals any more, but when he closes his eyes the animals are still there. But he no longer wants to die, and he does not die that year, or the next' (99).

The boy's mind now associates the horses with the settlers and the settlers themselves become associated with the enslavement and persecution of his people. His determination to stay alive may be read as responding to a longing to settle accounts with the white invaders. It seems that, by giving a detailed account of this incident, Vera's narrator seeks to invert colonialism's discourse about the savagery of the natives. This episode recalls Alexander Kanengoni's novel *When the Rainbird Cries* (1987), which provides an emblematic account of the massacre that occurs in a village during the war of liberation. But in Kanengoni's text, although this massacre is perpetrated by the Rhodesian soldiers,

the responsibility lies in the hands of incompetent liberation army leaders. Informing this novel is the notion that the goal of the liberation struggle was often dissonant with personal ambitions. This notion gathers force in the novel when it becomes clear that the two men responsible for the debacle are sentenced to death.

Vera's text highlights the risk for the nation of disconnecting the two aims of the war, that is, the liberation of the land and the recovery of the cultural past, through the construction in the last part of the novel of Kaguvi as a heroic warrior who succumbs to the temptation of a foreign religion. This occurs during his conversation with a priest in his prison cell after his capture. The priest tries to convert him to Christianity. The text presents Kaguvi's exposure to the white men's religion as a danger for his spirit, and by extension, for his nation's spirit. The state of self-doubt occasioned by this exposure is shown to have severed his link with his ancestors: 'His ancient spirit, which he now sees as something separate from himself, weighs sorrowfully on him. It is as though they now live in separate ages of time, himself in the present, his spirit departing further in the past. They move in both directions of time, and they will not find each other' (106-107). He is no longer protected by the lion, his ancestor. Although he dies a prisoner of the white man and thus preserves in the eyes of his people a heroic status for his part in the liberation war, he is deprived of a hero's welcome in the ancestors' world. In this sense, Vera's use of Kaguvi as a foil to Nehanda is an important device to suggest the fact that the settlers have invaded his very soul, a hyperbolic innuendo that serves to underline the horror of occupation. Kaguvi's end contrasts with Nehanda's death, which is shown to be the culmination of a perfect process of national liberation. After her capture, she surrenders nothing to the white man. She flatly disobeys Mr Browning's injunction to be converted.

'She dances against Mr Browning and his God, against these strangers who have taken the land, she dances the faces of her people, the betrayal of time, the growth of wisdom, the glory of their survival - a shadow moving on the wall' (116).

By contrast to Eppel's *The Great North Road* which presents the liberation war as a factor of national division, Vera's novel celebrates the war which is presented as a just uprising against colonial invaders. An especially clear instance of this celebration is in the account of the victorious battle between the people and the strangers in the hills. The victory is scored as the ambush laid in the hills results in the death of many settlers and horses as well as the capture of horses and weapons. This battle is described as involving people from all sectors of the society: men, women and children. This participation of all in the battle is meant to make the point that the war is truly a national enterprise. But despite their victories, there is a lingering realization among the people that they cannot sustain the war for long:

> Though they have survived this attack, it is clear to them that it will not be long before they too have to surrender with the rest of their people, and go back to their villages. If not, their kind will certainly perish from the earth through the guns of the white men. Their victories during this fight have been many, but not enough to ensure their safety. They will only be safe, if the white men leave the land. (88)

The fading confidence in the future, underscored by this passage, is made to correspond with the imminent capture of Nehanda by a search party, led by Mr Browning. In the account of Nehanda's attempt to escape her pursuers, Vera seems to imply that this reversal in fortune is a temporary situation. This is indicated by the narrator's comment that

> The spirit from which she is descended has passed on to her a seed which she has planted in the fertile ground. She has clutched it between her fingers for so long. She has been crossing boundaries into a sorrow born out of sacrifice. (92)

The seed in this passage symbolizes the cultural consciousness that, Vera suggests throughout her narrative, was lost as a result of the stranger's invasion of the land. The boundaries in the passage refer to the process of mediation between the ancestral spirits and the people, which involves journeying from one world to another.

In the final part of the novel Nehanda is portrayed as having voluntarily relinquished her supernatural powers. Her death is presented as a passage from a world to which she came to carry a message for her nation, to a world where the narrator wants us to believe that she belongs. It is not as a finality but as the real beginning of a new phase in the nation's history. This is what the text refers to as Nehanda's second birth, which takes place in the cave and consists in her banishing of her own shadow. As with her first birth, her second birth establishes her as a 'liminal' being. At the same time, notice how this second birth is contrasted with her first birth for it is presented as another transition from this world to that of the departed:

> There are no witnesses to her second birth, only the spirits that send elegies to those who have been sacrificed in the fight. She weeps until the stars break into the sky and bring the light back into her eyes, then she watches them dance across the sky, darting, skirting and exploding, giving birth to other stars, dying in perfect patterns in harmony with their moment of death, knowing that the darkness will vanish as another brightness comes into the sky and destroys them, but speeding themselves to that death, singing in their brief glory which is their triumphant moment, existing in harmony with the darkness that makes them burn. (92-93)

The above excerpt, reminiscent of the account of the death of the mythological phoenix, reveals Vera's strategy of 'doubleness', which she uses quite frequently in this novel. References to the stars can be decoded either in the literal sense or, as is probably the case here, as a metaphor for the ancestors. Through such images of the firmament used to describe Nehanda's transformation, the narrator projects a vision of independence for her nation. She does this by playing once again on the opposition between darkness and light as metaphors for colonization and liberation. Also suggesting this opposition is the imagery of birth and death: the birth of a new nation is shown to result from the death of the colonial enterprise, which Said (1993:271) sees as a Fanonian linguistic strategy. Notice also the satirical way her narrator implicitly refers to the settlers' 'brief glory' by associating it with 'the darkness that makes them burn'. Her narrator further stresses the significance of the war as a healing process for the nation by making it clear that Nehanda's legacy has a lasting effect on the nation:

> In each circle that she has woven, she sees the completion of something definite and unconquerable. Each circle is a word which will redeem the soil from the feet of strangers, a trap for those who dare follow her footsteps on the ground along the path to ancient wisdom. (93)

Thus, consistent with the general thrust of the narrative, the novel concludes with the notion that Nehanda's death is not synonymous with defeat. On the contrary, as the narrator reminds us,

> In the future, the whirlwind centre of the wind, which is also herself, has collapsed, but that is only the beginning of another dimension of time. The collapse of the wind, which is also of her own death, is also part of the beginning, and from the spiralling centre of the wind's superimposed circle another wind rises, larger and stronger. Hope for the nation is born out of the intensity of newly created memory. The suffusing light dispels all uncertainty, and the young move out of the darkness

> of their trepidation, into the glory of dawn. The trembling wind asserts its eternal fury, and it will not be dominated, or destroyed. (111)

In the above passage Vera's narrator resorts once again to metaphors of darkness and light to convey her vision of postcolonial Zimbabwe. The narrator envisions post-independence Zimbabwe as a utopian land of free people who are conscious of their cultural past. In order that such a future materialize, the text seems to insist, it must be infused with reverberations from the past; that is, it must take stock of the nation's cultural past. The passage confirms Barbara Harlow's characterization of the resistance narrative as a genre that 'analyzes the past, including the symbolic heritage, in order to open up the possibilities of the future' (1987:83). It is worth noting that the terms 'young' and 'newly' are used in the passage to suggest the idea of a new breed of Zimbabwean people. Implicit in this view is the concept of the liberated Zimbabwean nation as a new, regenerated nation and of Zimbabwe's national space as a new, green valley as articulated in the passage below:

> In the future the valley will once again regain its colour and its growth. It will bear new lives, which will be born out of the old. There will be a growth there, among the swinging branches, among the sheltering leaves. Her death, which is also birth, will weigh on those lives remaining to be lived. In the valley, where they have prayed all night for rain, is heard the beginning of a new language and a new speech. (112)

Semantically, the text suggests the renewal in the country by using words such as [regained] colour and growth, 'swinging branches', 'sheltering leaves' to describe the new appearance of the valley. It is pertinent that Vera has her narrator mention 'new lives' and 'new language and speech' in this extract. This use of language could be read as suggesting a new national consciousness and new ways of experiencing and expressing

it. The particular importance of this idealistic vision becomes apparent in the following extract from the novel which illuminates the narrator's concept of the cultural ideology she envisions for her nation:

> The newly born come into the world bearing gifts. They walk and speak. They have eyes that hold memories of the future, but no one is surprised: they have received their sight back. The newly born come into the world with freed souls that are restless: they seek ways to outwit their rivals. They speak in voices that claim their inheritances. But those to whom they speak have filled their ears with insects. The sky which has betrayed them sends spears of rain into their midst, and they pick them up and cover the plains. (113-114)

It is clear from this passage that Vera sees it as crucial to conceive of the new nation in terms that combine a concern for preserving the cultural past and the future, here suggested by the narrator's use of such expressions as 'memories of the future', nheritances' and 'received their sight back'. By introducing the terms of oppositional relations into her vision of her nation, Vera warns against the cultural lethargy that has made it possible for cultural imperialism to take root in her country. Nehanda's last and succinct statement that

> My people will not rest in bondage. The day has ceased too quickly. (117)

emphasizes again the vision of Zimbabwe as a free nation even more clearly and establishes that despite, or perhaps because of, the national sacrifice endured in the war, the nation's future is full of hope.

It should be clear from these perspectives on Vera's text that it provides two imaginings of the Zimbabwean nation. In contrast with Eppel's construction of colonial Rhodesia as

consisting of a settler centre and a 'native' periphery, 'the space of the people' in Vera is represented as a dry valley with rivers severely affected by the drought. As has been seen, Vera's narrator presents the reader with the picture of the black birds or vultures hovering over the valley and dropping their black feathers on the land or overlooking it from their position in trees. As indicated earlier, the presence of the vultures in the landscape symbolizes the colonial invasion of Zimbabwe. Another image frequently used in this connection is that of darkness which, as suggested earlier, is a metaphor for the dimming cultural consciousness which has resulted from colonialism's cultural imposition. Fanon has remarked in his essay 'On National Culture' that, by denying the existence of a pre-colonial African culture, colonialism's purpose was 'to convince the natives that [it] came to lighten their darkness' (1968:169) Read in this light, Vera's reference to colonial rule in Zimbabwe as a time of darkness is clearly an attempt to reverse the terms, which Eppel's first novel has highlighted, that construct African culture in colonial discourse.

As has also been seen, this representation of the national geography as a site of national resistance to imperial culture and foreign occupation entrenches a nationalist discourse that presents foreign presence as a threat to national identity. It is the kind of representation which Edward Said sees as typical of resistance narratives built around the theme of 'Restore the imprisoned nation to itself' (1993:215), which is clearly the case in Vera's text. This discussion has revealed that the substance of Nehanda's message to her nation is a retrospective call for liberation through armed struggle and a 'journey to our origins', which signifies a return to the cultural consciousness of the nation. Her vision of a liberated 'green valley' is one in which 'new speech' and 'new language' are used to express the recovered national culture. Thus Vera's text illustrates Said's view that in this

type of resistance text national language and national culture are given a central role. He focuses on national culture because it 'organizes and sustains communal memory...; it reinhabits the landscape using restored ways of life, heroes, heroines, and exploits; it formulates expressions of and emotions of pride as well as defiance...' (Said, 1993:215). All these ingredients are present in the novel. Nehanda and, to some degree, Kaguvi, embody defiance of imperial power, and pride in their African culture.

An important aspect of the representation of the nation in *Nehanda* which this discussion has revealed is that of 'spirit-nation' or 'family-nation', in the terms Caroline Rooney (1995:124) uses in her discussion of Chenjerai Hove's *Bones*. This is borne out by the way Vera constructs her protagonist as a gift from the ancestors to their descendants and by Nehanda's own role in the text as a spirit medium on a mission to provide ideological and military guidance to the enslaved nation.

As already discussed, postcolonial Zimbabwe is imagined in the novel as a green valley inhabited by a new breed of people, endowed with a new cultural consciousness. It is clear from the narrative that such a situation can only happen as a result of the collective sacrifice which the war embodies. These two imaginings of national geography - under colonialism and after it - may be seen as subverting the colonial one reflected in the statements by Smith and Browning. As has been seen, their image of Zimbabwe is rooted in the imperial discourse of Africa which portrays the continent as a savage space that must be tamed and civilized.

In analyzing Vera's representation of the nation in *Nehanda,* this chapter has thus far tried to keep in check the importance of the female element in the imaginary construction of the Zimbabwean nation. The significance of this element is in part manifest through the fact that women dominate the landscape in the novel, and in part through their suggested association with the birth of the nation. As noted earlier, the women in the room awaiting Nehanda's birth are described in the text as a versatile group of people who have been chosen to receive Nehanda. By being accessories to the birth of Nehanda, constituted as she is in this novel as a symbol of hope for the nation, the narrative elevates them to the status of mothers of the nation.

Frequently in the literature, the woman symbolizes the country as the expression motherland or *mere patrie* suggests. Doris Sommer in her seminal book *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (1991) explains the connection between women and the nation in a way that illuminates the present discussion, although her discussion of this connection is made in the context of an institutionalized creative practice that served to promote patriotism in the newly-independent nations of South America. In the African context, one can think of many works in which the woman embodies the nation. In Kateb Yacine's *Nedjma* (1956), a novel set in the Algerian liberation war, Nedjma the heroine represents at the same time 'mother, loved one and the country' (Farida Abu-Haidar, 1996:73). In Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons*, the prophetess Anoa is presented as the symbol of the 'African' race and unity. In *Nehanda*, Yvonne Vera achieves the gendering of her nation by presenting the woman in such significant roles as dreamer, midwife, mother, peasant, trader, victim, visionary and martyr. As noted earlier, it is through their dreams that the women sitting in the delivery room learned about

Nehanda's coming into the world. The fact that the ancestral spirits communicated with them only is significant in the Shona context of this story. Particularly important is Vatete's role as a midwife who facilitates Nehanda's passage from one section of the nation to another.

The gendering of the nation in *Nehanda* is further suggested through the way in which the colonized woman's body is inscribed as a landscape of colonial experience. The episode in which a village is burnt down and its inhabitants massacred plays a significant role in the construction of women as victims. The boy's witnessing of the murder of his mother, aunt and sisters leaves him with the kind of awareness that only the rape and murder of relatives can cause. As the reader will recall, the episode ends with the boy's determination to stay alive. In this sense, the village thus serves as a microcosm for the Zimbabwean nation which has suffered physically and psychologically from the liberation struggle. Nehanda's own beating by the agents of the colonial administration, and her subsequent death as a consequence also points to the construction of women as victims in a liberation war fought to reclaim land and identity. In this way, Nehanda's and the female villagers' battered bodies become the most powerful symbols of the colonized nation. It is possible that women are presented in these various roles 'to state the centrality of the woman character in the Zimbabwean experience' as R. Zhuwarara (1996:41) has noted with reference to Chenjerai Hove's *Bones*. As has been argued throughout this chapter, Nehanda also comes to represent the spirit of the land which, as Jones (1997:50) correctly states, 'is the source of the people's strength which will ensure their survival against the powerful forces unleashed against them by the colonial invader.' The novel insists through its inscription of Kaguvi as leader of the resistance war and, perhaps more

strongly, through the participation of people from all categories in the war incidents recounted in the novel, that this war is truly a collective and national experience.

The next chapter pursues the investigation into the imaginary constructions of the Zimbabwean nation by considering Dambudzo Marechera's texts written in exile and those written after his exile. Although he is a fellow black Zimbabwean, Marechera's construction of the nation differs from Vera's: his conceptualization of identity as essentially universalist, as opposed to Vera's as traditional, impacts on his construction of the Zimbabwean nation, as is seen in the discussion on his writing of the nation in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR:

DAMBUDZO MARECHERA AND THE ZIMBABWEAN NATION

It is now a commonplace, in speaking of Dambudzo Marechera, to observe in the light of his 'doppelganger' statement (quoted in Chapter One) that his work emphasizes the priority of a universalistic identity, alluded to in the previous chapter.. On the strength of this and other statements by this Zimbabwean writer, Flora Veit-Wild in 'Words as Bullets' (1987:113) characterizes Marechera as a writer who 'refuses to identify with a particular race, culture or nation... .' According to David Pattison (1994: 222), the 'doppelganger' statement embodies Marechera's 'utter rejection of any identity with or responsibility for a specific place or people', an ideological standpoint which distinguishes this Zimbabwean author from Eppel and Vera. There is no doubt that the views of both the above critics appear a sensible interpretation of Marechera's explanation of his relation to locality and culture and that they are validated by autobiographical readings of his texts, more especially *The House of Hunger* (1978) and *The Black Insider* (1990). But one potential problem with this outlook is that the emphasis on Marechera's universalism might discourage an exploration of aspects of his work relating to his nation. Perhaps more disturbing is the reluctance, by critics who privilege a nationalistic critique, even to start to consider that Marechera's work could provide a representation of his nation that is worthy of interest. Dan Wylie (1983) exemplifies a trend in Marecheran scholarship which argues that Marechera failed his country because his work does not serve any nationalist purposes. As Gerald Gaylard (1993:92, 93) has argued, this position is revelatory of what he identifies as a confusion between a 'nationalistic or *ethnicist* political agenda' [emphasis mine], which Marechera did not have, and his 'concern with 'post-colonial and neo-colonial

issues'. Marechera's portrayal as a rebel, manifested in the refusal of Zimbabwean publishers to publish his work, has also contributed to the lack of critical attention to national aspects in his writing, aspects which the present study seeks to redress.

It is against this background that the need for a discussion of Marechera's representation of the Zimbabwean nation, an important aspect of his writing which has not as yet been the object of a detailed analysis, must be seen. As Patrick Brantlinger (1992:260) has pointed out, building on Benedict Anderson (1983) and Homi Bhabha (1990), 'The existence of the nation-state... forms the invisible subtext, context, or horizon of every novel, no matter domestic, privatistic, or perhaps even overtly anti-nationalistic it may be'. Indeed, despite his rejection of nationalist identity, it remains the case that Marechera's corpus - particularly his novellas and short stories - is of great value as a work that not only delegitimizes the concept of nation, as Stewart Crehan (undated) has suggested following Kwame Anthony Appiah (1994), but also represents Rhodesia/Zimbabwe in the new ways the notion of nation is seen at these times. Furthermore, it is evident that, as one of the most prominent Zimbabwean writers who wrote both within his country and in exile, before and after its independence (that is, as a colonized subject and an independent citizen), Marechera occupies a privileged vantage point from which to provide a representation of his nation that is worth examining. This position is, of course, different from that of Eppel who, notwithstanding his birth right and self-perception as a bona fide citizen of Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, is forever cast as the Other by black Zimbabweans, although he too represents both the colonial and postcolonial Rhodesian/Zimbabwean nation

This chapter consists of two sections. The first section examines three texts by Marechera - *The House of Hunger* (1978), *The Black Insider* (1984) and what appear to be as fragments of a novel, 'The Concentration Camp', published in his book *Scrapiron Blues* (1994) - which reveal his representation of Rhodesia/Zimbabwe as a place of captivity and a site of alienation but also as a cultural space. This section also focuses on Marechera's representation of the Zimbabwean postcolonial nation in his books *Cemetery of Mind* (1992) and *Mindblast* (1984). The second and last section discusses the ways in which Marechera, by contrast to Vera, puts into play notions of marginality, mimicry and displacement in his representation of Rhodesia/Zimbabwe. Obviously, an adequate exploration of this topic requires one to take into consideration the largely autobiographical mode of Marechera's writing. As David Buuck (1997:121) has noted, Marechera locates questions of identity within this discursive mode. In his view, Marechera's work consists of a series of 'elaborate conversations between his multiple selves and identities'. As he goes on to argue:

> Marechera constantly relocates himself (and his written self) within the shifting allegiances and constructions of identity, preferring to refract the self into many rather than invent a cohesive and stable subject position. (121)

Buuck's perceptive comment suggests the possibility of examining Marechera's representation of the nation through his narrator's self-representation as a national subject and even the rejection of that identity. Indeed, as will become clear from a few examples in the course of this discussion, one frequently finds in Marechera's texts that the autobiographical narrator assumes different identities depending on the space in which he situates himself. Stuart Hall's (1995) notion of the 'pluralized self', alluded to in Chapter One, can be seen as emphasizing exactly the terms in which Buuck describes Marechera's

work. Indeed, Hall describes this multiplicity of identities in terms of the self's crossing of mental and cultural boundaries. Hall's perspective is helpful to the reading offered in this chapter because it enables one to understand how the nation, as represented in the ways mentioned above, is framed as a space between an ethnic space which Marechera refused to identify with and a universal space he always claimed to be his. This perspective is further clarified if one agrees with Melissa Levin and Laurice Taitz (1997:111) that the thrust of Marechera's autobiographical work lies, as they put it, in the

> splitting off or fracturing of a communal identity in order to write the 'I' into prominence, and a necessary rewriting of the position of the 'I' in relation to particular communities/identities which then allows for the possibility of a reinsertion of the "I" back into the commun(I)ty with which it both identifies and dis-identifies simultaneously. What becomes clear through Marechera's writing is his struggle to locate himself in relation to a range of institutional structures: the family, community, nation and state, and to give definition to these structures.

It is precisely the ways Marechera attempts to locate himself in relation to the nation that this chapter explores, as it insists that he not only rejects family and nation but also adopts a posture that suggests his strong identification with what Daniela Volk (in Anthony Chennells and Flora Veit-Wild, forthcoming) terms 'the universal storehouse of thoughts'. Volk's argument in her essay that Marechera's concern is not so much with the locality of the experiences he narrates but with their universal significance will, nevertheless, be shown to be problematic in terms of an important argument of this chapter, which is that Marechera's treatment of violence and mimicry serves to suggest an intellectual distance between him and his nation.

The raw material for autobiography is memories. In order to understand the representation of the nation in Marechera's texts, it is therefore helpful to concentrate on the narrator's

memories of 'home' insofar as they present Rhodesia/Zimbabwe as a national space. However, an adequate examination of the topic of this chapter requires that one focuses on those aspects of Marechera's work that may illuminate the representation of nation filtered through such recollections of home. Specifically, it seems essential to examine how notions of margins, displacement and mimicry inform his representation of his nation, a task devoted to the last part of this chapter as already indicated. This focus is warranted by the fact that, a bohemian writer, he has written at the margins of his nation; that his work projects the image of this nation from the vantage point of an exile both within his own country and outside; and, finally, that perhaps more than any other Zimbabwean writer, his work conveys the notion of the Zimbabwean subject as an individual who fluctuates between hybridity and mimicry.

PART ONE

In Marechera's first novella *The House of Hunger* (1978), the narrative focuses on the autobiographical narrator's memories of life in a Rhodesian township. From the opening page, the reader is made to realize that the central trope around which these recollections of home are concentrated is the narrator's family home referred to as the 'House of Hunger'. The House is depicted as a nerve-racking place dominated by the brutal presence of Peter, the protagonist's elder brother. It is a place

> where every parcel of sanity was snatched from you the way some kinds of bird snatch from the very mouths of babe. And the eyes of that House of Hunger lingered upon you as though some indefinable beast was about to pounce upon you. (1)

This image of the house as a predatory and violent place that drives its occupants to insanity is reinforced by its personification as an awesome beast. This personification subtly indicates that the reader should interpret the House of Hunger as more complex than the architectural image suggests. The inability to identify the beast represents menace. Thus, more than the harsh conditions of existence, the real danger in living in the House is to the mind. In the scene of the fight between Peter and his young wife Immaculate, the young man says that he is determined to stamp the fighting spirit out of the girl. Yet, somewhat paradoxically, it is this fighting spirit (the narrator implies in his work) which is what is needed to sustain the self in a colonial setting. Because of the danger it presents for the mind, the house is a place where one does not want to stay, as suggested by the opening sentence of the novella: 'I got my things and left' (10). This departure foreshadows other displacements in the text which the characters, and notably the narrator and his friend Patricia, make in order to escape the unwholesome mental conditions at home, a point that is returned to later in the chapter. Throughout the narrative, the house remains the site of violence that the main protagonist crosses, re-crosses, and then flees again so that the novella becomes for Marechera, as Laurice Taitz (in Chennells and Veit-Wild, forthcoming) observes in her essay 'Knocking at the Door of the House of Hunger', 'a journey through the events that have been determinate in forging the narrator's identity'. In her discussion of the novella, Taitz also speaks of 'the inability of the protagonist to move beyond the house of hunger itself'. This assertion seems contradictory in light of her correct characterization of the text as a 'journey'. While it is true that the setting of the title story in the collection remains the house of hunger in the different senses of this trope within Marechera's first novella, the fact that the

narrator-author is able to tell his experiences from where he has the freedom to do so suggests that the protagonist has actually left the house of hunger.

The narrator has vivid recollections of home that reveal it to be a place of violence. The first evocation of violence in *The House of Hunger* appears at the beginning of the novella when the narrator recounts his disinterested intervention in the quarrel between Peter and Immaculate, which precipitates a frenzied reaction on the part of his brother, leading to a violent beating of the girl. Peter, who dominates the family by his physical strength and by virtue of his close affinities with his mother, symbolizes, at the level of the house, the brutal force that, at the level of the nation, holds in bondage a large section of the nation.

The narrator's own physical, as well as verbal, abuses at the hands of Peter also suggest a parallel for the violence and alienation the self experiences at home and the type of alienation it experiences when it inhabits the national space. But Peter's association with violence is, however, doubly-nuanced: he is both a perpetrator and a victim of violence for he is described by the narrator as an angry young man whose imprisonment after being set up by a police spy resulted in a deep hatred for the white-ruled establishment. The description of Peter in this dual capacity in a disunited and fragmented family becomes somewhat emblematic of the mental condition of the colonized nation. It also exemplifies the way in which the novella reveals the intricate relationship between spaces (family, township and nation) and the thin boundaries between them by showing the self to be implicated in a hierarchical structure of violence.

Violence is hardly an ideal for a community that strives to become a nation. Yet in a multiracial society like Rhodesia the possibility always exists that race-motivated violence may erupt. There is a note of pessimism in the novella when the narrating self recounts the beating up he and Patricia, a fellow university student and lover, received from right-wing students demanding the segregation of university residence halls. A fascinating illustration of the self's 'multiple identities' is given in the account of this incident by the narrating, experiencing self, with many layers of identities (inter alia gender, class, race) clearly involved. In addition to occupying a gendered (male) space, by his relationship with Patricia, the narrating self (a student) inhabits a national space insofar as he identifies himself with 'those disturbingly concise and adult youths whom our country either breaks or confines in prisons and lunatic asylums' (71). However, there is also a layer of racial identity given prominence by the racial motive behind the violence, which brings home to the novella's protagonist the realization that he is racially different from his liberal friends.

But even in Rhodesia violence is not always racially motivated, as is evident from the bullying brother, already mentioned, and the narrator's recollection of his being beaten up by two black thugs as he returns home after a meeting with his friend Patrick. The two aggressors are motivated by revenge for the beating up of their friend, Leslie, by the narrator and Patrick. Painfully, he manages to drag himself to the House of Hunger. When he shouts for help, no one comes out to his rescue. He then realises that the House is a deserted place:

> I turned the door handle. The door immediately opened. I walked in. There were no curtains on the windows; and the wind and light streaming through the broken one showed me that this was a big black empty room. There was nothing in it; no furniture, nothing, nothing at all. My mind felt like nothing... . A doorway yawned blankly into me: it led to a smaller room: numb, dark and also utterly empty. I could

> not bring myself to touch the walls to prove that they were really there. For some reason I began to wonder if I was really in there; perhaps I was a mere creation of the rooms themselves. Another doorway brooded just ahead of me. It led into a tiny veranda that looked out over an overgrown wilderness of garden into the starry dark-blue immensity of the night. Was there then nothing here also? Had I called out for nothing? I took a step down from the veranda and as I did so something big and sly slouched suddenly through that wilderness of weeds and maize stalks and disappeared through a hole in the far garden wall. My hand involuntarily rose to my head: the sudden pain had been as though a sliver of the grey matter of my brains had been plucked cleanly with a pair of tweezers.
>
> I ran from that house like a madman who has seen the insides of his ravings. (76-77)

Some critics have approached this episode as an account of a nightmarish reality conceived by a stimulated imagination. While this reading is justifiable in terms of Marechera's own state of mind, what is evident is the suggestion it carries of the self's failure to recover its own identity. Through the notion of a phantom self, Marechera, it seems, is making the point - forcefully yet subtly - that fixed identity is an illusion. This pivotal passage plays an important role both as a referent of the narrator's home and as the metaphor of a disunited nation. If the house is seen as a symbol of the nation, then this episode can be read as undermining the very notion of national identity. It is telling that, in the following paragraph, the memory of the house becomes identified with the pain in the narrator's skull: 'And the picture of my skull has since blended into the memory of that empty but strangely terrifying house which - when I called - merely maintained an indistinct silence' (77). It comes as no surprise that the House is also presented as the cause of the narrator's confused mind: 'It is the House of Hunger that first made me discontented with things' (77).

In an extension of this cameo technique, the House of Hunger broadens its symbolism to encompass the township and to the entire country, for the boundaries of the territory in which the self experiences alienation and lack of freedom do not end with the protagonist's family home. In fact, Marechera's technique in the novella is to indicate an overlapping of the family home with wider conflictual spaces: the township and colonial Rhodesia as a whole. In his interview with Kirsten Holst Petersen, published under the title *An Articulate Anger* (1988), Marechera illuminates this connection when he states that:

> You must remember that when I wrote House of Hunger I had left Zimbabwe without knowing most of Zimbabwe. All I knew was Rusape, St. Augustine's School at Penhalonga and the university here. I had never been somewhere else. But you see, because of the political designs there, enforced on the blacks, it meant that what one black was experiencing in one ghetto was practically the same as what another was experiencing in another ghetto. (16)

So, because of this similarity of the experience of the colonized population which Marechera stresses in his comment, the connection between the violence he describes in the township and in the country as a whole is clear enough: in the same way as life in the house is fraught with violence, life in the township and in Rhodesia as a whole is punctuated with incidents of violence involving all sections of society. The country youth are caught in violence, drugs and drinks to compensate for their thirst for freedom. Not only black youths like the protagonist, but also white youths, yearn for the freedom that their country denies them and so they have to flee the country to avoid the kind of military service John Eppel recounts in *The Great North Road* - (hence the metaphor of the House of Hunger). The narrator gives his reader a sense of that thirst for freedom in the following passage:

> The freedom we craved for - as one craves for dagga or beer or cigarettes or the after-life - this was so alive in our breath and in our fingers that one became intoxicated by it even before one had actually found it. It was like the way a man licks his lips in his dream for a feast; the way a woman dances in her dream of a carnival; the way the old man ran like a gazelle in his yearning for the funeral games in his youth. (3)

Marechera has explained in his interview with Petersen (1988) the underpinnings of the motif of violence in his work in terms that undermine the basis of nation:

> I am not talking about violence as something that one suddenly notices when one grows up a bit, but violence which surrounds you from birth. From the time you are almost a baby and not able to understand anything you already have all those violent visual images around you. As you get to be two or three or four years old you take it to be the normal way of life. (Marechera and Petersen, 27-28)

The relation of nation to violence is also articulated in Marechera's work in terms of his figuration of colonial Rhodesia as a concentration camp and an asylum. Many scenes in *The House of Hunger*, for example, point to the fact that the township, and by extension, the entire place, is not merely a migraine (as already intimated) but also a concentration camp or an asylum. The narrator's comment quoted above about his country's treatment of its youths leaves no doubt about this representation. In the microcosm of the House of Hunger, Peter, the narrator's brother, is a former prisoner who continues to hold a grudge against an establishment that has used police tricks to entrap him:

> And Peter got jailed for accepting a bribe from a police spy. When he came out of jail Peter could not settle down. He kept talking about the bloody whites; that phrase 'bloody whites' seemed to be roasting his mind and he got into fights which terrified everyone so much that no one in their right mind dared cross him. (2)

Elsewhere in the text, the narrator describes himself as having had experience of prison. A clear example occurs when he is detained with other schoolchildren for a few hours for

protesting about discriminatory wage-structures. His comment, that this 'meant fingerprints and photographs and a few slaps on the cheek 'to have more sense' (2), delineates a critical stance towards a society divided between jailers and prisoners.

A glimpse into the police's invasion of people's personal lives is given in the scenes involving Harry. The narrator's former schoolmate, Harry is presented as a police informant who has been reporting on the narrator and other radical students. Behind his 'civilized' appearance Harry hides a hideous agenda that Marechera works to expose: he makes it clear that Harry's line of activities functions against the cause of black liberation. The contradiction between his outwardly friendly disposition towards the narrator and his police surveillance of the latter is highlighted in the episode where the two young men drink in a tavern frequented by Rhodesian soldiers. Harry is confronted by Julia, the protagonist's friend, as a police agent. An involuntary gesture reveals that he is carrying a police revolver. The climax of the episode is when Harry drops a packet of photographs, including the narrator's, and notes intended for the police. For the narrator, the point is clear: there is no hope of building a united nation in a country under surveillance. This surveillance, leading to suffocation, is paradoxically linked with 'the freedom we craved for - as one craves for dagga or beer or cigarettes or the after-life' (3), already quoted. The arrests of students and workers and other social categories attest to the fact that colonial Rhodesia is represented, in Marechera's work, as a prison.

The episode in the novella, in which the narrator tells about the newspaper photographs of a captured guerrilla standing among twenty-two dead guerrillas, reinforces the notion of Rhodesians/Zimbabweans as a nation of captives. Edmund is remembered by the

narrator as the poor schoolmate whose mother was driven to prostitution to support his education after the death of his father. But it is Edmund's savage beating by his schoolmate Stephen that allows Marechera to make Stephen embody the notion of the African violating his own people. Marechera achieves this by describing Stephen not only as a bully but also as an intransigent Africanist: 'He had appropriated for his own specific use such notable figures as Nkrumah, Kaunda, Che, Castro, Stalin, Mao, Kennedy, Nyerere ... he was always taking the geography master to task about his ironic comment about the primitive state of Africa's roads; he was always petitioning for African history to be taught...' (64-65). Yet it is the same young man who boasted of sleeping with Edmund's mother and who subsequently beats him up so violently that 'There was blood on his shirt; a rather large stain which seemed in outline to be a map of Rhodesia' (65). Kevin Foster (1992:60) is probably right to see in the fight between the two youths a symbol of what he calls 'intra- and inter-racial political and cultural relations in Rhodesia'. As he explains, the fight and the demolition of Edmund carries great importance in the narrative because of Edmund's status as the doubly-colonized:

> It not only dramatizes white intolerance of political or social change from the blacks, but by having the school's champion of authentic black identity embody a violent white dictatorship, Marechera demonstrates the tyranny implicit in all expressions of cultural centrality. (60-61)

Edmund's position in these photographs as 'sole survivor' (61) could be considered as an unimportant detail in the narrative. In reality, and somewhat paradoxically, Marechera seems to see in his survival a reason of hope for the nation. Although still a prisoner, Edmund embodies those 'black heroes' that Marechera's narrator suggests are needed to promote the cause of liberation. Edmund, the captive, thus symbolizes a nation in captivity.

The theme of the nation living in captivity resurfaces in 'The Concentration Camp'. Structurally, this narrative consists of eight parts. The structure of the story indicates Marechera's intention of highlighting different facets of the experience of living as a prisoner in one's own land. For the purposes of this discussion, attention will be given to Parts One, Two, Four and Eight. Part One subtitled 'The Camp', stages a world divided between prisoners and their jailers. From the opening paragraph, the prisoners are presented as the survivors of an ordeal in the land brought about by sadistic perpetrators.

> In a narrow winding valley in north-west Zimbabwe, there lived two families: the Makoni family and the Murehwa family. Once there had been a big village there with more than two hundred families; but the Rhodesian soldiers came with guns and bombs and most of the villagers were killed. The rest were taken in trucks to concentration camps miles away. (158)

The narrator's focus on the two families of prisoners signals the way in which Marechera attempts to depict the image of a nation not only physically and mentally crippled but also subjected to forced displacement. One is struck not so much by the historical specificity of the incident described in this passage as by the way it reveals the police brutality which is perpetrated against innocent villagers. The jailers consist of African guards and white officers. These guards are portrayed as totally alienated from their people. Of interest is the way Marechera narrates the scene where the commandant puts it to one of the African soldiers that 'You (Africans) breed like flies' (159). To which the soldier replies: 'Yes, sir. We breed even more than flies' (159). This scene illustrates how the colonial subject is conditioned to internalize and mimic what Homi Bhabha (1994b:72) calls 'those terrifying stereotypes of savagery... which are the signal points of identification and alienation'. Because Marechera is writing here from a position that is sympathetic to the prisoners, not to the black population in general, the purpose of this scene in which he focuses a satiric

eye on the guards is to enlist the reader in a distancing from this category of natives who collaborate with the subjectivization of their own people.

The impression of concentration in this first part of the story is created through the small number of the carceral population and the harsh conditions in the concentration camp, including lack of suitable accommodation and difficult access to water, which further confer on the prisoners the aura of victims. However, it is the constant harassment of women and children and the ceaseless questioning of prisoners by white soldiers, usually followed by their beatings or deaths, that dominate life in this particular camp. The focus in this part of the story on the two children Rudo Makoni and Tonderai Murehwa and their interactions with the soldiers, strategically enables the narrator to explore the destabilization of identity caused by life in the camp.

Tonderai's discovery that his father was beaten up by the white soldiers is presented as an awakening experience of the division within what his child's mind took for granted as the nation.

> His father, Tonderai could see, had been beaten again. One eye was closed and seemed to throb through the fiercely swollen flesh; the other was half open. The right arm was in a rough sling; they had broken it for him the week before. Through the rends in the dirt khaki shirt, Tonderai could see his father's weakening ribcage. How thin, how terribly thin he is, Tonderai thought, watching his father's gaunt bulbous knees perched on the dry maize stalks of his feet. The heels and soles were split in many places. When he looked up at his father's bowed head, he realised in shock that his hair had turned completely white within the last twenty-four hours. Or am I mistaken? Tonderai wondered. Surely only yesterday it was...
>
> A bitter darkness flashed past his eyes - the beginning of a terrible knowledge. But he did not yet understand. He saw again the sergeant turning, and himself turning his gaze away... the sergeant was tall, heavily built, with a very black cruelly

> rectangular face squat on a disciplined neck. The combat uniform made him look like the fearful face of law and order. But whose law and whose order? (159-160)

The awareness Tonderai develops in the narrative is that, because law and order are not the same for all, there is no national unity and that the colour of the skin does not necessarily constitute the dividing line. He grows into this realization when, returning in a group of boys from grazing cattle, he witnesses on his way to the camp the slaughter of four of his companions by a party of Rhodesian soldiers. Another disaster follows this tragedy as Tonderai's mother is killed by one of the guards when, recognizing her bloodstained son among the survivors, she tried to approach him. The narrator's focus on a woman's body through the narration of how Rudo felt as the guards always 'put their hands inside her mother's dress' (158), and the narration of Tonderai's mother's killing, if read in the light of theories of body in relation to nation, may be located within Marechera's attempt to inscribe the female body as the nation. Such an inscription is illustrated in *The House of Hunger* by the scenes of the beatings of Immaculate and Patricia, where Marechera puts themes of marital violence and racial violence to work as symbolic of the sufferings of the Zimbabwean nation under colonial rule.

In reading this episode from 'The Concentration Camp', the experienced Marecheran reader is reminded of the scene in 'The Slow Sound of his Feet' which describes the accidental killing of the narrator's mother by a patrol of white soldiers following his arrest and beatings by one of them.

> I shook my head and it hurt so much I couldn't shake my head any more. There were running feet behind me; my mother's and my sister's voices. There was the sharp report of firing. Mother, struck in mid-stride, her body held rigid by the acrid air, was staring straight through her eyes. A second later, something broke inside

> her and she toppled over. My sister's outstretched hand, coming up to touch my face, flew to her opening mouth and I could feel her straining her vocal muscles to scream through my mouth. (136)

It is possible to read this association of the tragic deaths of mothers and the prison motif as Marechera's way of presenting the mothers as historical objects of violence in his narration of the nation. In many episodes of his work, Marechera establishes the link between the woman and the nation by representing both of them as suffering at the hands of their jailers. Thus the image of the tortured and abused woman suggests that of the colonized and brutalized nation. For example, Patricia in *The House of Hunger* is presented as a martyr of the racist politics of a divided nation. Her story in the novella is that of a young white woman who transcends the racist boundaries of Rhodesian politics and pays a heavy price for this transgression. She not only feels compelled to go into exile but also suffers in her body. She becomes half-blind and loses her voice. What the episode offers is more than the account of an ordeal of a female white person who is sympathetic to a black man. Her status as a white female problematizes the notion of the nation in a way that is historically significant because of the fact that it displaces emphasis on race, thereby undermining and even repudiating the construction of the nation in terms of discourses of blackness that inform, for example, Yvonne Vera's *Nehanda* (see Chapter Three). It may be relevant to add that Patricia is inscribed in *The House of Hunger* not as a mere location of the narrator's sexual desires but as a celebration of a new multiracial identity in the emerging Zimbabwean nation. Certainly, such a sympathetic treatment has something to do with her willingness not to compromise her vision of her society. It is also possible that her beating by the white conservatives may have symbolically stripped her

of her racial identity so that she becomes a symbol of hope for the new nation as indicated above.

Marechera is perhaps unique, among African writers, in inscribing the body of the white woman in the way that he has done. While the reading of this episode in the novella indicates his figuration of Patricia in the terms suggested above, in his other writings, and particularly his famous poems to Amelia in *Cemetery of Mind*, he inscribes the white female body as an object that needs to be dominated. He has asserted in an interview with Veit-Wild (in Marechera, 1992:215) that his objectification of the female white body was necessary to his project:

> Amelia is white, I am black. But I am the one full of digressions and frustrations. Amelia does not have any sense of race. In a very personal sense it does not matter at all what race Amelia is but there are times, especially when I have gone through some shitty incidents or I remember some of the things which were happening here before 1980, that's when I feel very violent towards Amelia. That's when this brutality from the township comes out and even when I am making love to her I find that I am actually with my whole self trying to fool myself that I am revenging myself against the whole white race. Afterwards, of course, one realises that it was simply an illusion that one can revenge oneself on history.

In another part of the interview, he admits that 'I think if she had not existed I would have had to invent her'. These observations point to the important function of the white female body in Marechera's work, simultaneously, as a site of interracial meeting and a site where the self confronts its own identity. The inscription of Amelia as a site where racial boundaries are effaced suggests Marechera's belief in what Bhabha (1994b:251) sees as 'the hybridity of race and sexuality'. Amelia is figured both as an object of love and of hate. Her whiteness, with its association to colonial power, makes her an object of hate. But she

is also the desired female object the poet is in love with. Given the colonial context of these Amelia poems, such a complex inscription of the white woman conveys Marechera's ambivalence about the nature of his relationship with his racial Other. For, as Dirk Klopper (1993:15) rightly states, Amelia 'is described as the other who both undermines and affirms [the colonized writer's] identity.' In this sense, Marechera again demonstrates a treatment of the racial issue that is quite distinct from that of either Eppel or Vera. This very ambivalence is yet another important reason for comparing and contrasting his writing of the nation with that of these other Zimbabwean writers.

There is a parallel between the figuration of Amelia as a metonym for colonial power and that of Mrs Warthog, the wife of the professor of English literature in the short story 'The Writer's Grain', who has an affair with an African student named Marechera. In this context, the black student 'fucks back', as Marechera would put it, the colonizer who has subjected his nation to a history of shame and domination. In a revealing passage in his interview with Petersen alluded to above, Marechera admits that his intention in the section of the story where Mr Warthog teaches Andrew history is 'to destroy the conventional way in which we are taught to interpret history, or events which become history' (Marechera and Petersen, 1988: 29). In this light, the self-reflexive and metafictional aspect of the story, which allows the white subject to make this shameful admission, serves as an astute tactic to suggest the shift of power from the colonizer, and thus the woman becomes a metonym for 'conquered' power.

Even the woman prostitute contributes to the metaphoricity of the nation. The narrator in *The House of Hunger* tells about women he and his friends used to follow in the bush

where they entertained their clients. One of these women, he says, he wanted to use as a symbol of Zimbabwe in a story. But in the text it is Nestar, the young girl who grows up to become the 'queen' of prostitutes, who captures this symbolism. Her career as a prostitute is figured as a lifelong sexual slavery at the hands of her mainly white clientele. The association between the prostitute and the colonial nation is established when Nestar tells the narrator that during her intercourse with one particular client, himself a friend of another client, identified as 'one of the few whites to "promote" black sculpture in the country' (52), 'he would chant a thing about the Congo, the Mau Mau, Algeria, and one of our leaders who shall remain nameless' (52). The association between the woman and the nation is also made clear when Julia, a friend of the narrator's and a revolutionary who operates underground, is introduced to the reader as wearing a T-shirt with the legend Zimbabwe on it. Taking support from Peter's beating of Immaculate, Huma Ibrahim (1990:81) is probably right to suggest that in Marechera 'the doubly-colonised African woman becomes the symbol for the colonised land, and must suffer, usually in brutal silence, the consequences of a double betrayal'.

In Parts Two and Eight of the short story, subtitled 'The City of Anarchists', Marechera attempts to give voice and the upper hand to the victims. These two sections focus on three black men who decide to use the situation of the revolutionary struggle to their own advantage by serving as agents for external forces. Otto, the university drop-out and the idealist in the group who composes revolutionary pamphlets, is a Marechera-like figure. Indeed, Flora Veit-Wild in her introduction to *Scrapiron Blues* notes that in this part of his short story 'Marechera projects his own anarchist inclinations into a small group of bomb-throwing city fighters' (3). The moment of their accommodation to the liberation

struggle occurs when they manage, with the complicity of a prostitute named Cora, to bomb a hotel frequented by Rhodesian soldiers, killing Jim, a soldier who embodies racism and who tortured many blacks in the process. Jim's death at the hands of this woman-victim can be seen, within Marechera's economy of the association between woman and nation, as a punishment meted out to those who fight the nation.

Part Four, 'Tonderai's Father reflects', concentrates on Tonderai's father's experience in his progression to awareness of identity. It registers his attempts to understand the meaning of his predicament as he undergoes torture after being accused of helping the guerrillas. He hangs upside down in a cell at a concentration camp while electrodes are applied to his body and particularly to his genitals. While under torture, he remembers a previous torture which then consisted of eating all the food that he intended to take to the freedom fighters. The two tortures are now blurred in his mind. In a repeat of the tragedy that caused his wife's death, his son is accidentally shot. After hearing that his father has been hanged, Tonderai runs to the scene and arrives as the father's tortured body has been taken off the roof it swung from. The entire traumatic experience only serves to intensify Tonderai's father's hatred for his jailers and the system they represent. However, the white priest who pleads for Mr Murewha's life and the white nuns who save his son's life – all these elements subvert the conventional dialectic in which the white is portrayed as the natural enemy of the black.

In a sense, the narrative implies, Tonderai and his father undergo a liberating experience because, although physically they remain prisoners at the hands of those who have the power to inflict torture upon their bodies, they have stripped off the mantle of colonized

individuals. They both symbolize the seeds of the new spirit that challenges the colonial order, the new spirit of the emerging nation. Thus the concentration camp as described in the episodes discussed above appears as a 'contact zone' in Mary Louise Pratt's (1991:34) definition of this term as a social space where 'cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly assymetrical relations of power'. As already intimated, such relationships are given further significance through the narrator's inscription of the camp as a metaphor for the country and the nation as consisting of jailers/oppressors and prisoners/oppressed.

In *The Black Insider*, the police nature of the colonial nation-state is evoked as being at the source of the narrator's displacement: 'A sudden crackdown on the campus by the secret police had forced me to decamp clear out of the country and I found myself awarded an Oxford scholarship' (29). Significantly, in the dramatic sketch the author includes in the novella, the character Marota, speaking to Bishop (Muzorewa) points out, referring to the situation in Rhodesia during the interim period, that

> The people still live under the old oppressive laws. They are smouldering in the prisons and in the detention camps. They eke out a pitiful living out of the stone of the protected village. The schoolchildren are deserting their schools to join the Patriotic front. And at the university there is a new and hard edge, cutting the quiet of the campus. (39)

This brief catalogue of scenes highlighting violence in Marechera's texts should alert the reader to the fact that the violence that takes place in the country is particularly damaging to the mind. As an earlier reference to Peter in *The House of Hunger* should have suggested, he was clearly troubled by his experience of prison. Perhaps because he is less given to books and culture than some of the characters in the novel, Peter inflicts

violence upon his young wife as a means of assuaging his anger against the establishment. The novella's concentration on his bullying of his young brother, the narrator, appears to be a strategy to throw into relief Peter's difficulty in grappling with the insanity that becomes a way of life in colonial Rhodesia. Unable to intellectualize the situation as the narrator does, he thinks he can find release for his anger in a fight. In the same novella, Patricia's departure to South Africa and her roaming through Africa is premised, as was intimated earlier, on her disillusionment with a national community with which she misidentifies after the racial incident at the university. The description of the incident insists on the physical damage she sustains as a result of her beatings by white conservative elements on the campus, but it can also be seen that her decision to leave has a great deal to do with the mental pain that this experience inflicted upon her. Significantly, the narrator's description of her when they meet for the first time after her return in Doug's studio identifies her as a changed person: her sight was restored but 'she would never be able to talk again' (71). He also noticed, when she handed to him her newly published book, 'a tiny burning in her eyes; a fierce tenderness I had never seen before. No, I had seen it before - in Immaculate' (71). It is clear from this scene that the stress is on her extraordinary mental recovery in a nerve-racking environment like colonial Rhodesia.

Kevin Foster (1992:64) has interpreted Patricia's loss of her speech as

> mark[ing] the completeness of her identification with the black cause in Southern Africa. It is a metonym for the blacks' powerlessness, deprived of a voice in the control of their own affairs. Yet her speechlessness is also a positive statement.... A promising metaphor for impending political liberty, her silence is a powerful statement of personal conviction and cultural optimism.

The comparison in the text between Patricia and Immaculate suggests the author's intention to present both young women as the hope for the future of the nation. The reader is here returned to the narrator's observation about Immaculate which was made earlier in the text: 'It was not possible that a being like her could have been conceived in the grim squalor of our history. She made me want to dream, made me believe in visions, in hope' (12). The comparison between the two women thus seems essential to Marechera's construction of them as symbols of hope in a future Zimbabwe.

Perhaps none of the characters in *The House of Hunger* reveals the degree of damage caused by the type of violence, and the adjacent lack of freedom in the nation, as much as does the narrator himself. His account of the experiences leading to his exile is rendered in a way that suggests impatience with the conditions of existence that his mind objects to, but the experiences he relates are themselves the watershed experiences of alienation. The entire narrative mirrors the liminal state - severe hunger - in which he and the other victims of colonialism find themselves, the severity of which is not unlike that suffered, in a different context, by the oppressed natives in Vera's *Nehanda*. The hungers suffered by the narrator and the other characters in *The House of Hunger* are, of course, metaphorical as well as literal, as Grant Charles Lilford (1996; forthcoming) points out in his study of drought imagery in Marechera's first novella.

Thus far the chapter has concentrated on Marechera's representation of colonial Zimbabwe as a concentration camp and a site of alienation and, tangentially, as a severe headache. In a comment that supports this reading, Derek Cohen (1981:338) observes that Rhodesia comes across in Marechera's first novella as

> a word beyond the family that offers more vice and cruelty in the form of bullying the weak and being beaten by the strong - a word which is secure only for the traitor and the whore who have grasped its terms. Yet the novella is redolent with a deep black rage against the whites who have confined the African spirit into the houses of hunger where the only release is intestinal violence.

Postcolonial Zimbabwe is presented in exactly the same terms as colonial Rhodesia in those of Marechera's texts which are set after the country's independence. In this context, it is pertinent to consider first the poem 'Christmas 1983' from the collection *Cemetery of Mind*.

> No statement but digresses and winds
> Away from the point
> The eyes look anywhere but into your eyes
> And no one seems to know which bandit infested road
> Clint Eastwood should take to track down the hopeless six
>
> On a bar stool, the man on my right
> And the man on my left
> Are both listening to what I have not said
> Which their itching handcuffs would have me say
> I sip my beer, I am thinking of similar scenes
> In London
> In West Berlin
> In this town when Christmas was white.

The poem suggests, through its focus on seeing and avoiding being seen, the poet's entrapment in an environment that denies individual freedom and obliterates truth. This focus has a crucial significance in Marechera's project in this poem: to emphasize the police nature of the postcolonial Zimbabwean nation-state and therefore the continuous use of violence against the Zimbabwean nation by the new ruling class. The world of lies and hypocrisy which the narrator offers is presented as threatening to the citizen. The

reader with a prior knowledge of the police brutality experienced by Marechera in London and in West Berlin realizes that these recollections underscore the poet's scepticism concerning the new order in his country and the ability of the new political class to rule. The poem implies that no real change has occurred since independence, as the nation represented in the text by the artist continues to live under police surveillance.

The poem 'Oracle of the Povo' expresses the narrator's disillusionment with his nation as it dramatizes the plight of the freedom fighters after the country's independence:

Her vision's scrubland
Of out-of-work heroes
Who yesterday a country won
And today poverty tasted

And some to the hills hurried their thirst
And others to arson and blasphemy
Waving down tourists and buses
Unleashing havoc no tongue can tell -

Her vision's Droughtstricken acres
Of lean harried squatters
And fat pompous armed overlords
Touching to torch the makeshift shelters
Heading to magistrate and village court
The most vulnerable and hungry of citizens-
Her vision's Drought Relief graintrucks
Vanished into thin air between departure point
And expectant destination-
In despair, she is found in beerhalls
And shebeens, by the roadside
And in brothels: selling the last
Bits and pieces of her soured vision.

The division of a nation which was supposed to be united by independence is suggested by the contrast between the dominant classes ('fat pompous overlords') and the underclasses ('lean harried squatters', 'The most vulnerable and hungry of citizens'). In this poem, the freedom fighters are figured as sons of the land whose dreams of a better future have been betrayed by those they have helped to occupy positions of power in the country. The betrayal of their dreams, which causes them to resort to criminal acts, and the parallel the poem implies between this betrayal and the woman's degeneration is the thematic concern of the poem. Typically, Marechera uses here the image of the fallen woman to suggest the idea of a nation in a state of moral collapse. The description of the process by which the woman, as embodying a nostalgic vision of an egalitarian national community, loses her integrity inscribes the narrator in the position of an observer and a scribe, who witnesses and records the end of a dream. In her reading of this poem, Veit-Wild (1997:559) draws attention to the way Marechera turns on its head the 'high-flown "vision" of the nationalist rhetoric of plenty for everyone', thus highlighting 'the povo's vision of the nation's welfare, which through experience is opposed to that of the leaders'. It is clear, as Veit-Wild implies, that the contrast between these two visions is emblematic of the division within the nation and thus is essential in Marechera's representation of his nation in the terms presented in this chapter.

The same kind of critical stance towards the nation underlies the poem 'The Coin of Moonshine', which also deals with the social division within the nation:

Hunger in the belly
Rose to the brain.
Its bright eyes clenched
In anger to smite with white-hot steel
The reinforced glass between my want
And your plenty.

The traffic signs on the road
Are your signals of brotherhood;
The blind and the idealists have to be warned-
Children and the sick timely carried across
To safety. The fast expensive imported cars
Leave in their wake mangled workers
Deranged peasants and crazed radical intellectuals

Your nights are luminous with our neon progress
Exhorting the homeless to bank with Beverley
Exhorting the thirsty to have a Coke and a smile
Exhorting the ill-educated to take a correspondence
Course in Self-Confidence. And ever the circling
Moon gleams, a bright distended coin above the dark
decade
Casting beams of greed through my shantyhut door.

Marechera's masterly use of language to offer his view of the Zimbabwean nation is well displayed in this text. The two words 'hunger' and 'anger' are closely linked in the first stanza, and suggest a cause and effect relationship that can be found, for example, in *The House of Hunger* and *The Black Insider* whereas the division within the nation is given expression by the use of two opposites: 'my want' and 'your plenty'. The poet lingers over this division as he notes the contrast in life-style and mindset between the owners of 'fast expensive imported cars' on the one hand and, the marginalized classes, which include not just the underclasses ('mangled workers' and 'deranged peasants'), but also non-conformist artists and intellectuals ('crazed radical intellectuals'), on the other hand. The word 'brotherhood' is especially ironic as the link revealed in the poem is, in reality,

between oppressors and oppressed. The degree of social and moral separation between these two groups is emphasized in the poem by the cynical exhortations that are made to the poorer members of the nation. The essence of these exhortations is to maintain the impoverished nation in a state of economic slavery and mental backwardness as the references to the bank and Coke, suggest, through their association with capitalism and exploitation. Not surprisingly, the narrator identifies with the oppressed through the reference to his 'shanty hut door'.

The poem 'Raid!', which is also concerned with Zimbabwe's transition from a colonial to a postcolonial state, presents the image of a nation that lives under a new form of violence: homelessness.

Fear's single round eye dilates
Bright white corolla, pupil sternly pristine,
Pistil-keen: yet another gunship's honeyed napalm.
From toothless cavern of Night dull engine's throb
Controlled hew and cry baton-wielding gravel cry
As who should say
The war is over
Independence is our fact
But melon gushed skulls frantic feet strike and gong
Tin/plastic shacks shooting up in flames see-through
Polythene dress a searing walking human torch (eerie
Statue of Liberty) all dragged/dashed the steel door
    crashing down
As who should say
Yes it is independence
But your homelessness is a great crime
Yes it is independence
But your homelessness is a great crime
Yes we have Uhuru
Your poverty does not make prostitution legal

I packed away my camera and notebook.
I headed for the nearest bar.
I always said When this kind of Uhuru comes
Thank god for alcohol, any alcohol.

It is worth noting how a vocabulary of war ('fear', 'gunship's honeyed napalm', 'dull engine's throb', 'gushed skulls' , 'flames', 'crashing', 'walking human torch', inter alia) is used to suggest a parallel between the atrocities suffered by the nation during the war for independence and the violence inflicted on the nation's homeless. The repeated refrain 'But your homelessness is a great crime/ Yes it is independence' is vital to the narrator's purpose for it enables the reader to perceive the irony of the situation. This refrain deconstructs itself in light of the atrocities suffered by the nation's homeless. Their sufferings are enhanced by the image of 'a searing walking human torch', its pointed association with the Statue of Liberty referring to the abuse of human rights in Zimbabwe. The poem also reflects the exclusion of those who are homeless. Here again, Marechera proves to be a master in using what the reader is invited to perceive as an official discourse and in distorting it for his own purposes. The cynical tone in this discourse and the implicit othering of the homeless are achieved through the emphatic use of personal pronouns and possessives in a number of key phrases and sentences: 'independence is our fact', 'your homelessness', 'We have Uhuru', 'Your poverty' and so on. In this way, Marechera subverts this official discourse from within. Not surprisingly, Marechera, 'the Steppenwolf who survives on the fringe of society, always poor, homeless, alone, sleeping on park benches, spending on drink what little he occasionally earns with his publications', in Veit-Wild's (1987:113) felicitous formulation, is sympathetic to the homeless as is evident from his disapproving comment in the last stanza.

In *Mindblast*, Harare, the capital, is a place where the narrator feels unsafe because violence is everywhere. The potential for violence and brutality is captured in the passage below:

> And that is one thing I have learned, from coming back home. To sleep with the whole body alert for sudden violence. To sleep aware that any hand, any eye, any boot out there - these people passing by looking at me with quizzical eyes – may mean my death. And this is no melodrama. It is as real as the sheer heat, as the prayed-for rain. Here it seems extreme lassitude and impulsive brutality alternate like day and night. (111)

Marechera makes it plain, as the following extract indicates, that at the heart of the violence that hits the nation is the social violence inflicted upon the have-nots of the Zimbabwean society:

> The *haus des hungers* of Harare. Her, him, me. The rotting minced meat underneath the tablecloth of political slogans. And I thought of all the hundreds of unemployed youths – boys and girls – whose everyday was spent leaning against a wall or a streetlamp, playing pinball or the jukebox in some weird but cheap restaurant, or just sitting out hours in a whorehouse bar hoping something or someone would turn up and maybe the drink would flow. And I wonder what thoughts spark in their heads at such as is their time probably till they die. Is it a wonder that occasionally they freak out in vandalism, hellish hallucinations which they act out on the passer-by. Their lives are a blank; the only model Zimbabwe offers them is that of crude and corrupt capitalism: cars, videos, a suburban house, a telephone, a wife, a mistress, a name in society... (153-154)

The extreme desperation of the nation's underprivileged justifies the increasing rise in criminal violence and, eventually, puts into motion what Marechera refers to as 'the gun-culture that is now a permanent feature in my country' (*Mindblast*, 153). The danger of such a culture materializes in Marechera's unpublished narrative *The Depth of Diamonds* (1985) in the form of a coup that topples a post-independence government. The theme of this 'novel' is an all-too-clear illustration of Marechera's anarchistic view, expressed through one of his characters in *The Black Insider*, that

> It's the way we not only adapted very easily to the materialism of the West but also quite deliberately inherited their kind of social class distinctions hereby a man's worth is measured by his wallet and his educational certificates - and this penny-certificate elite has been ruling Africa since so-called independence was granted, especially where military coups have not happened for the military coup was the response of the uneducated. (84)

It is significant that those who organize and stage the coup are marginalized individuals or/and from the marginalized classes. They are a boxer with his assistant, an alcoholic writer, and a feminist civil servant (Veit-Wild, 1992a:345). This cast is necessary in order to indicate the dissociation of the subaltern groups of the nation from their leaders, who are presented as alienated from the common people. The coup signals the collapse of the humiliating subject-object relationship between these two social categories and enables a turn towards people's liberation. Thus the importance of this unpublished work in Marechera's thematics is that it questions the notion of 'nation' as a political organization but also, by deconstructing the notion of an organized and unified nation, celebrates resistance and anarchism, an important aspect in Marechera's aesthetics, as Veit-Wild (1987) has asserted.

PART TWO

As indicated earlier, the question of the representation of nation in the texts under scrutiny can be addressed most productively by a closer consideration of the ways such a representation in the texts under scrutiny is revealed in terms of marginality, displacement and hybridity. As should be clear by now, Marechera's writing of Rhodesia/Zimbabwe is done at the margins he inhabits both in his home country and in exile. As will now be argued, from these margins, he captures a shattered image of the nation. In *The House*

of Hunger, the autobiographical narrator and the old man live at the margins of the family home. The old man is reminiscent of the figure of Okonkwo's father in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958). He has a creative, poetic side. For this reason, the narrator feels close to him. Not coincidentally, the marginalized community of the narrator and the old man, united as it is in their shared interests in things artistic, has a counterpart at national level in the bohemian milieu of Harare, which is replicated in exile in the community of artists (The Faculty of Arts) of *The Black Insider*. The marginalized artistic community in *The House of Hunger* comprises such characters as Philip, Doug, Citre, Richter, Ada, Patricia, the triplets, the narrator himself and so on. In one of the novella's most significant episodes, all these characters assemble in Philip's office to watch what he refers to as his 'novel'. In fact, it is a film featuring scenes of inter-racial love-making, a black woman nursing a white baby, an old black man cycling, a traffic accident involving the old man, and rugby scenes. Foster (1993:63) has commented that these visual sequences offer 'scenes of a future, better Rhodesia'. This interpretation is confirmed by the passing of a peace-pipe among the members of the multi-racial audience on this occasion, a gesture not only of peace but also of love. One could suggest that this scene emphasizes the disjunction between the camaraderie and peace among this group of artists and the violence that characterizes Rhodesia. In this way, this artistic community appears to be presented as an oasis of sanity in an extremely violent environment but also as a cultural haven.

As indicated earlier, there is an equivalent of this artistic and bohemian community in the Faculty of Arts of *The Black Insider*. Liz, Cicero, Otolith and the narrator form a community that is portrayed as superior to the barbarians involved in the war raging outside. It is at

the margins of the larger world at the Faculty, that 'last desperate ditch of a state of mind bred in the tension of war' (31), that the narrator tells about his autobiographical experiences of exile. It is also from these margins that the narrator is able to narrate his nation, using various strategies for this purpose as will be seen later.

Given that Marechera's work requires his reader to know about his life as well as about the texts, it is relevant to refer to his interviews where he evokes his experiences as a tramp in the slums of Harare and in Britain. In his interview with Petersen (already alluded to) he says of his tramp life in London that 'I was for instance the only black person among the several hundred squatters at Tolmers Square, where I was living in a squatter community which is close to the corner of Euston Road and Gower Street' (Marechera and Petersen, 1988:13). He goes on to explain that the squatter community 'was a very astonishing mixture', which included radical and drug-addicted girls, 'professional doctors... 'junkies... school-drop-outs, university drop-outs, people who for some reason had a total commitment to some cause' (14). In another part of the interview, he speaks of how this community nurtured itself on 'the idea of society being totally abnormal and therefore only functioning precisely because its citizens are the abnormality in a totalist society. So we would see ourselves as the only ones who really knew what was going on, in terms of parents, background, etc' (25). This outlook is prominently projected in *The Black Insider*, as Marechera has acknowledged in the same interview.

His life as a homeless writer living among the tramps in Harare is captured in the journal section of *Mindblast*. As he explains:

> ...that was simply a factual record of what was happening to me each day whilst I was homeless. In it I recorded even anything that walked by as I was typing, how I had slept the night before, etc. I did that precisely because the idea, that someone can actually write a book, while being a tramp, is not accepted here. (Petersen, 37)

Perhaps Marechera also corresponds to Ross Chambers' definition (1991:147) of the flâneur in Baudelaire as

> the loiterer as exile, an exile from his own self but distinguished also from those with whom, on other accounts, he communes in the "bain de multitude". But it is specifically in his role as the man of discourse, the mediator, that the flâneur is simultaneously distinguished from the workers in the streets and isolated from his personal essence. He is rendered eccentric with respect to the "foyer" of his soul but associates him with the community, from which in turn, however, as one who recalls a "foyer" - both a home and a center - and its "ma aim", he remains isolated.

Describing this personage, Chambers reminds us that, in nineteenth century France, the 'flâneur' was identified with street people, notably the beggars, prostitutes, drunkards, tramps, dogs, and so on. He characterizes the 'flâneur-artist' as 'both a man of memory and a mediator of reality, the one because the other' (143). This appears to be an apt description of Marechera, considering his intention of recording what was going on around him, and his outspokenness about social and political issues in his country as he was living at the margins of his society. Also for these reasons, Marechera in his work appears to identify with 'the flâneur as socially marginalised individual (who) is brought into relation, through his loitering, with those characteristics of discourse as a mediated phenomenon that make it similarly suspect in the eyes of social power and cause it to be similarly trivialised' (145). In this regard, the poem 'Identify the Identity Parade' from *Cemetery of Mind* is worth considering.

I am the luggage no one will claim;
The out-of-place turd all deny
Responsibility;
The incredulous sneer all tuck away
beneath bland smiles;
The loud fart all silently agree never
happened;
The sheer bad breath you politely confront
with mouthwashed platitudes: "After all, it's
POETRY."

I am the ra' every cat secretly admires;
The cat every dog secretly fears;
The pervert every honest citizen surprises
in his own mirror: POET.

This poem highlights the way in which Marechera fuses two types of identity – that of a marginalized artist and that of an individual self - into one. It posits that these two identities are inseparable. The poet presents himself not just as someone who represents a threat for those in power, an embarrassment to some of his fellow writers and his friends, but also as the guilty conscience of his nation, as is clear from the last two lines of the poem. The intertextual relation of this poem to Marechera's observations in his interview with Petersen, about people's attitude towards his work, is evident.

In *Mindblast*, Buddy (obviously a fictional representation of Marechera), Dr Grimknife, Tony, Rita and Grace constitute a community that has been marginalized for refusing to accept state censorship. They have accepted hardships rather than conforming to what they perceive as a limitation of their artistic freedom. Such focusing on liberal intellectuals and artists is part of Marechera's effort to fight against the intimidation of artists he personally suffered from on his return to Zimbabwe. The reader experiences a sense of

their plight in the scene in the pub where they gather to socialise in order to try and forget their troubles.

Given that many scenes in Marechera are set in such places as pubs, squares, and so on, it is worth considering the importance of such places in his politics of representation of the Zimbabwean nation. In light of David Chaney's (1994:153) suggestion that there is an interface between culture and place, the question to be asked is what the bohemian lifestyle associated with those places reveals about Marechera's representation of the Zimbabwean nation. In the passage from the journal section of *Mindblast* quoted above, Marechera makes it clear that his intention to write in public places was to prove that a tramp could write a book. There is another dimension to his observation, which is that writing in such places, that is, observing society from such places, gives one a more realistic picture of the society under observation. This is consistent with the point made earlier that Marechera conforms to the figure of Baudelaire's flâneur-artist.

As 'a man of memory and a mediator of reality', Marechera, as his work demonstrates, was able to record images of his society and to organize them so that the society can see itself reflected through his work as in a mirror, thus validating Gerald MacMaster's assertion that '[b]orders hold up 'a reflecting mirror' to the dominant society...'. In the journal section in *Mindblast,* the narrator, that is Marechera, indicates that

> I found my ideal listener and reader in the real drunk, the types who like me, had given up conceding that the world was a particularly sane refuge from nightmares, massacres, violent wives, vicious school kids, sadistic policemen... he did not care too much about religion, or duty, or patriotism... (121)

In this regard, Marechera's intention of plying his trade on the streets of Harare and other public places also appears as an act of claiming territory for the underclass of the nation or, as Dirk Klopper (1993:16) puts it, it is 'a quest for a voice that is sufficiently articulate and strong to speak from the margins in an authoritative manner, displacing the voice of white, middle class, male hegemony'. This is well illustrated in *Mindblast* when a white Zimbabwean woman offers to have sex with the narrator for fifty cents so that she can buy something to eat. She tells a story that the narrator does not believe. But the point is taken. Even her improbable story is a message to the dominant classes, which is captured in the '*haus der hungers'* passage quoted above. While it is true that 'Marechera ... refused ... to be a spokesperson/representative for any group or individual, including the 'lost generation', disavowing any immediate or easy role that we might be tempted to slot him' (Gaylard, in Chennells and Veit-Wild, forthcoming), there is no question that his self-positioning as 'an outcast writer was a way for Marechera to connect himself to his history and the history of Zimbabweans, a connection via rejection, for he admitted his story in the act of repudiating it' (Gaylard, ibid.). Indeed, as Klopper (Chennells and Veit-Wild, forthcoming) points out in his illuminating discussion of marginality in the poem 'Throne of Bayonets', 'Marechera chose to align himself with the social outcasts of prostitutes and indigents, placing his belief in social renewal with these marginal groups'. In this sense, it can also be said that Marechera purposefully locates himself at the 'borderzone', in MacMaster's definition of this term as 'the space between cultures', because of the access it gives him to many discourses from different communities. This is not to suggest that he negotiates his identity between the tramp community and the dominant classes but, rather, that his location at the margins gives him, in Yang's

(1996:233) words, 'distance, geographical and subjective, for diagnosis and cultural critique of the center'.

To speak of borders is to refer to space and displacement. In the imagined space of the nation of *The House of Hunger*, the border as a theoretical construct is a strategy that serves Marechera to demarcate the boundaries between classes, races and cultures. After being abused by his brother and in order not to witness the violence perpetrated by his brother on his young wife, the narrator walks out of the family house only to realize that the threshold of the house of hunger does not constitute a border. He experiences the same violence and alienation both inside and outside the house. Similarly the episode where the narrator as a child returns home and gets beaten up by his mother because he has spoken to her in English and not in Shona illustrates the notion of the colonized as a subject brutalized both within and outside his home environment - the brutality outside the house is presented as mainly the work of the colonial administrative and cultural machinery. At the same time this episode implies that, for the mother, the beating will help her son to become more respectful of the cultural boundaries that exist within the national space. Patricia's border crossing is also worth mentioning. First she crosses the racial barrier by her involvement with the narrator. As a result she is beaten up by right-wing elements who want to teach her a lesson and punish her for the transgression. Second, disgusted by the folly and racism of the demonstrators' demands and possibly aware that there is no future in their divided nation, she urges the narrator to leave the country with her:

> 'It 's easy,' she said. 'We'll just walk off campus and never come back and just keep trying to get out of this wretched country. We'll run to Botswana. And from Gaberones fly to London. I'll paint and you'll write. (72)

The symbolic meaning of her border crossing is to indicate her dis-identification with her nation. To her, leaving the country is an act of liberation from tyranny. In exile in South Africa, she leads a bohemian life, marked by arrests and police harassment, similar to Marechera's own life in England. She was 'living in a shanty town outside Cape Town' (70); a life devoted to artistic work and drugs. Her return to Rhodesia suggests that she has gathered enough strength from her experiences in South Africa and in other parts of Africa to brave the conditions at home, despite the fact that she has lost her sight and voice. The fact that she has recovered a voice and published her first book is presented as evidence of her growth. It is significant that, despite the positive change which the narrator in *The House of Hunger* noticed in Patricia on her return from exile in South Africa, her reappearance in *The Black Insider*, where she expresses her disillusionment with her country, suggests that independence did not bring the freedom and unity which were expected.

In the short story 'Thought-tracks in the Snow' from the collection *The House of Hunger*, crossing the border means escape from violence. In the comfort of his London home the narrator remembers his crossing of the Mediterranean sea in the plane taking him to Britain as the time of the complete dissociation between him and his communities of origin (home, country and continent):

> Who was I leaving behind? My own prematurely grey head still sat stubbornly upon my shoulders; my family did not know where I was or whether I was alive or dead. I do not think they would have cared one way or the other had they known that at that moment I was thousands of feet above the earth, hanging as it were in the emptiness which my dabbling with politics had created for me. I felt sick with everything, sick with the Rhodesian crisis, sick... Would Oxford University be different - was I so sure of myself then? (144)

A further point about the spatialization of the nation in Marechera's work concerns his representation of the nation from an exile's perspective, as indicated earlier. In this respect, too, his approach is distinctive when compared to that of either Eppel or Vera, who write only from within the nation. A glimpse into this representation is first provided in 'Black Skin What Mask', a short story in the collection *The House of Hunger* that recounts his life in England and, as might be expected from the title, illustrates the Fanonian theory of the mental condition of the colonized, focusing on two black Rhodesian students at Oxford University: the narrator himself and a character known as Stephen. (Fanon's concept also underlies the works of other Zimbabwean authors, including Yvonne Vera, of course, and Tsitsi Dangarembga in *Nervous Conditions* (1988), a text which interlinks with *The Black Insider* in its choice of characters' names. The narrator and Stephen are the only students from their country. While the narrator, a non-conformist, leads a bohemian lifestyle, Stephen is the type of African abroad who strives to be accepted and even liked by the whites and to whom success in fostering relationships with white girls amounts to integration into western society. This difference in their personality makes it difficult for them to get along well and to socialise openly. At one point in the story he rebukes the narrator for being friendly to a black tramp who has accosted him. Because he is ashamed of his countryman and in order to preserve his respectability, Stephen lends him a suit and even proposes to lend him money so that he can look clean. Stephen's embarrassment at being identified with his fellow Rhodesian illustrates the Fanonian notion of the psychology of the colonized. He becomes in the context of this story the symbol of the degradation of Africa. This symbolism reflects badly on black Rhodesians as members of a nation ashamed of itself.

It is pertinent to consider the passage below, which encapsulates the narrator's view of his nation as filtered through the minds of the black girls in Oxford:

> The black girls in Oxford - whether African, West Indian or American - despised those of us who came from Rhodesia. After all, we still haven't won our independence. After all, the papers say we are always quarrelling among ourselves. And all the reasons which the black girls choose to believe. It was all quite unflattering. We had become - indeed we are - the Jews of Africa, and nobody wanted us. It's bad enough to have white shits despising us; but it's more maddening when one kettle ups its nose at another kettle. And this he had to learn. (97)

The reason Marechera makes this satirical transposition into the heartland of imperial culture is easy enough to perceive: in order to mock the notion of national identity, the implicit message being that true feelings of national identity should start at a personal level. The narrative projects a negative image of Rhodesian national identity, focusing on the way the two Rhodesian students interact outside their country; an image which is reinforced by the way they are perceived by other black people, as captured in the passage above. The mixed metaphors convey fragmentation and so endorse the dysfunctional sense of nationality and/or brotherhood. At one crucial point in the course of the narrative, the two youths discuss return to their country of origin. The narrator, who has been diagnosed as suffering from mental illness, faces the choice between staying on in England in a psychiatric care unit or being deported to Rhodesia. He decides to stay on. To a pointed question by Stephen who wants to know why he does not return to Rhodesia to join the guerrillas, he has this to say: ' But take a good look anyway, a good look at me and all you know about me and tell me whether you see a dedicated guerrilla' (99).

If it is evident the story does not celebrate nationalism, it is also clear that as a creative artist dedicated to universalism, the narrator sees no point in returning to his native country, not because he feels he has nothing to do with it or that he disapproves of the liberation war, but because he feels at home wherever he is able to ply his trade. At the same time, his failure to maintain a relationship with a fellow Rhodesian scholar has revealed to him the extent of the cultural distance between him and his nation. He has learned through his interaction and conversations with Stephen that his people are often unwilling to accept each other's differences. Thus it is possible to read his decision to stay on in England in terms of Marechera's desire to embrace a universal culture. Stephen, on the contrary, seems to be fleeing his past identity. His strong desire for integration into British society signals the direction he wants to take. In both cases, it is clear to the reader that that the narrator's reminiscences of Rhodesia convey an image of his country as Otherland.

By contrast, *The Black Insider* offers an insightful glimpse into Marechera's other representation of the Rhodesian/Zimbabwean nation. As will be seen, Zimbabwe is sometimes evoked as a distinct nation, at other times as part of what Africa embodies. These constructions are made clear through a number of strategies which involve some of the characters at the Arts Faculty expressing their views on Zimbabwe and Africa as a whole. In one instance, Marechera breaks the narrative to give the reader direct access to a play which his narrator is writing and which exposes the mediocrity of Rhodesian rulers, both whites and blacks, in the years immediately preceding the independence. In the dramatic sketch, Rhodesia is evoked once more as a place of violence, although this time, the stress is on the way the nation is misled by a ruling class which condones

violence. The characters Smith and Bishop (Muzorewa) are shown to be rambling in their arguments to justify their partnership. Marota, who tries to instill some wisdom into the bishop, captures the predicament in which the bishop has put himself and the nation by condoning attacks against the freedom fighters:

> You carry your God too high above the trees. The people cannot see him. All they see is the smoke and shrapnel of their own kind being killed at your orders.... We who are now ruling the country alongside the very man who once reviled and spat upon us are not the end but the beginning of a surge towards what I have so far believed as unimaginable. (39)

Otolith's story of one of Zambia's executioners who, after retiring, 'returned to pastures green in Rhodesia on a fat pension' (55), serves to portray Rhodesia, and the rest of Africa as suggested by the references to Kenya and Nigeria, as a dictatorship where irresponsible rulers butcher their populations. Cicero, another character in the novella, speaks of the blindness, and, indeed, complicity of Africans, and by implication, the Zimbabwean nation, in forging their unflattering history. Here are his words:

> Oh, black insider! We should have turned at that corner where the crucified man pointed the way. At that corner where Chaka washed his hands in blood. At that corner where the road to Kampala leads to Buchenwald. At that corner where black learned men in disgrace sink their differences with the rest. But we will drive through to the independent countries where lucid minds shatter through thick windscreens... . Where promising youths are driven to drink cynical toasts while you and I clap with one hand the praises of the human traffic. We should have gone the other way: ... with Soyinka drawn typewritten portraits of madness rooted in sanity in the Africa hereafter. I should have turned at that corner where history moulders in grimy basement rooms. (74)

Through his character Cicero, Marechera concurs with Ayi Kwei Armah's depiction of Africa in *The Beautyful Ones are Not Yet Born*, a novel that, Cicero believes, 'forced

(Africa) to undergo a baptism of shit' (82). He voices a concern about the African image projected by the Negritude-orientated strand of African literature; an image that has served African ruling elites in gagging the press and in perpetrating countless horrors on the continent. However, even such an image has not been able to erase the following more realistic image of Africa:

> A continent of wounds which no longer knows what it is to be whole and healthy. A country disfigured by scars and broken teeth and smashed testicles can only writhe in nightmare over and over, reliving the horrors that started it all. A village milked of its youth and left to fester on a hill, inhabited only by the old and lame, can only bask in the sun, waiting for death. These new towns crowded with thousands of homeless unemployed whose dreams are rotting in the gutters, are only the new dunghills from which will emerge iron flies in a cloud to scatter all over the hills. (79-80)

Rhodesia fits into this picture as a country, as has been seen, which not only has ruined the hopes of its youth by depriving them of freedom but also has enslaved and executed its citizens. As the last sentence in the passage above suggests, the narrator is convinced that the conditions of life in his country constitute a fertile ground for disturbance and even revolution, particularly through the striking image of 'iron flies', suggesting as it does a resolve that will 'buzz' persistently in an apocalyptic vision.

David Pattison (1990: 231-2) has drawn attention to the fact that these characters locked, in the Arts Faculty, 'represent a facet of the author as they engage in a series of dialogues in which Marechera talks to Marechera about Marechera' and thus 'the Arts Faculty is Dambudzo Marechera'. This use of the author's multiple selves to tell the nation, which in a different context could be seen as polyphony, is merely a way to emphasize his

distancing from the nation. Not surprisingly, at the end of the novella, the narrator questions the very existence of the nation itself:

> The sense of having lost our nation was indivisible from the feeling of the nation having lost us.... Indeed, had there ever been a nation at all? The white pioneers and adventurers who had carved out for themselves farms and estates and had for a time exercised the pirate's right to booty were the sort of origins we had as one nation. The tribal adhesions had unstuck themselves from that experiment and, only united, we cast off the yoke that had left us with the responsibility of continuing the experiment under another brand name. At the same time the schools and colleges had churned out people like Owen and myself who had not the ruthless stamina required to breathe the mighty breath of a united nation. Was this not an expansion of the limits of the imagination rather than a drawn-to-earth nation planning the exercise? (105)

The positioning of this passage late in the text is strategic. It pronounces a final verdict on a nation the narrator feels intellectually distant from, as was indicated earlier in the chapter. The body of the text has served to accumulate damaging eye-witness accounts of the subject, to use legal jargon.

Earlier in the text, through the episode in which the narrator argues with Nyasha, a friend from Rhodesia he had not seen in five years, the reader is made to realize how alienated from his country and his friend the narrator-exile has become. The distance between the friends is encapsulated in their use of English rather than Shona to converse, and that between the narrator and his nation is suggested by the friends' physical and moral distance from the multitudes struggling and toiling in their faraway country:

> Emigrés in a racially colour-conscious country, artificiality came quite easily to both of us. We were talking in English, feeling like hippopotami that have been doped with injections of English culture, and we were quite conscious of how we knew no useful skills besides blasé comments about the book world. Indeed, a new kind of

> decadence had caught up with us. Even the struggle for political independence had become no more than an articulate adze on which we could cut our milk teeth. We had come full circle, at once the circumference and the centre of ourselves, no longer knowing the poverty and degradation which had flung us up like waves from the masses of the sea. As I listened to him and to the inner unspoken discontent inside, I caught myself thinking how can we and the likes of us ever presume to lead the multitudes out there, thousands of miles away who day by day eke out a sordid existence, from the bullets and the toil and the bringing-up of children who will grow up to become just like us, sitting there in that Bloomsbury pub talking about the ennui that was like salt in our brains? (63)

The moment of truth between the two friends arrives when they drink at the Africa Centre, an African microcosm at the heartland of the British empire where African exiles meet to keep up their Africanness: 'Here then was the womb into which one could retreat to nibble at the warm fluids of an Africa that would never be anything than artificial. A test-tube Africa in a brave new world of Bob Marley anguish, Motown soul, reggae disco cool, and the added incentive of reconceiving oneself in a friendly womb' (66). Instead of 'reconceiving' themselves, the two countrymen, like the narrator and Stephen in 'Black Skin What Mask', experience otherness towards each other as Nyasha accuses the narrator of hypocrisy, selfishness of 'hat(ing) being black' (61) and of being alienated from his own people. Far from a self-centred hypocrisy, what is, in fact, illustrated in this episode is an acute self-knowledge on the part of both men.

Another angle of the relationship between Zimbabwean exiles is provided in the novella through the account of the narrator's dealings with Owen and his sister Tsitsi. The narrator identifies with Owen because of the similarities in their conditions and their background but also because of his fighting spirit: 'Owen had been one of those brilliant students whom our country nourishes solely in order to break their spirit on the anvil of crude racial

antagonism' (104). In contrast to many other Zimbabwean youths, he and Owen 'enjoyed the common and sordid freedom of being born in the slums and hacking our way out of them by the skin of scholarships. It gave both of us that inner knowledge of gritty insecurity which cements in some a love of intellectual pleasure and a particular distaste of' mediocre occupations' (104). But Owen's fighting spirit is a plus that the narrator is ready to acknowledge: '... whereas I fled the country, he remained and fought for the survival of his sanity among those whom he knew he could neither love nor trust' (104). In a word, like the narrator, Owen was an insider, and, therefore, different from Nyasha and Stephen.

Svetlana Boym (1998: 499-500) analyzes the notion of diasporic intimacy in relation to diasporic communities and observes that

> diasporic intimacy is dystopian by definition; it is rooted in the suspicion of a single home. It is rooted on unpredictable chance encounters, on hope for human understanding. Yet this hope is not utopian. Diasporic intimacy is not limited to the private sphere but reflects collective frameworks of memory that encapsulate even the most personal of dreams. It is haunted by images of home and homeland, yet it also discloses some of the future pleasures of exile.

In view of the prominence in Marechera's texts of exile of this motif, it is possible that an application of this concept to his texts could offer insights into his attitude towards his country. Many accounts of his relationships in exile seem to hold clues to this link and only some will be examined here.

First, in the short story 'Black Skin What Mask', Marechera tells his reader how strongly Stephen felt about entering a relationship with the black girls at the university. Once he is rejected, he dismisses them as only interested in whites. But the reader knows that such

a rejection has a political meaning which is not lost on the narrator, who, as already noted, comments that Rhodesians were the 'Jews of Africa'. Second, the narrator's relationship with Patricia in exile is illuminating. If it is true, as has been suggested in this chapter, that Patricia in *The House of Hunger* represents for the narrator a link with the racial Other, partly because of his love for her and partly because of 'her commitment to the cause of racial equality (Foster, 1992:64), one could also argue, on the basis of their encounter in England, that the end of their relationship in Aberystwyth marks the rupture of his link with his country. 'This was the tearing cloth of exile, and of the sense of being in a world in which one yearned to leap out of one's mind' (61), he comments as he meditates about the significance of their estrangement. As Stewart Crehan (Chennells and Veit-Wild, forthcoming) notes, 'The feeling of exile is not a longing for home but a painful self-exile, a perpetual yearning. The torn cloth is more honest than the nation-state's hypocritical covering...'. As Boym also reminds her readers,' 'Diasporic intimacy does not promise a comforting recovery of identity through shared nostalgia for the lost home and homeland' (1998:501). This is what the narrator realizes even as he prepares to celebrate with Patricia the signing of a contract for his new book. He is now disillusioned with Patricia. For some reason, she has ceased in his mind to represent the link with their nation and with their past.

Tsitsi in *The Black Insider* is a Patricia-like figure. Like Patricia, she is an artist. She also has two children by the narrator from a marriage contracted on the spur of the moment. In exile, they seem to have a cordial relationship. But she decides to divorce him when she reads a review of his new book which describes it as containing 'stories (that) are damaging to the morale of the world bent on liberation' and not appropriate 'to be shared

by people who want to know what it means to be in Southern Africa today' (109). But the narrator now realises that in marrying Tsitsi he has in fact married 'the African dream'. 'It was a mistake to marry the African Dream' (112). 'And I think in marrying her I was trying to marry a part of Owen, and not anything about her' (113). As in the case of Patricia, the end of this relationship suggests the loss of the narrator's umbilical cord with his country and past. It tells us that the narrator's anarchist tendencies and his embraced universalism are at variance with commitments to nationalistic or regional causes.

This point brings this discussion to the question of mimicry. In an essay discussing syncretism in Southern African literature and arts, Veit-Wild (1995:21) links Marechera to a strand of southern African literature and art which, as she puts it, 'challenges all notions of cultural purity and essence'. According to Veit-Wild, this strand comprises 'artists who have used the third space at the margins of society and of sanity, to denounce the mechanism of power'. She writes of cultural hybridity in Marechera that it 'is reflected particularly in his use of metaphor and myth which is borne from his "cross-cultural imagination"' (21). Marechera's writings bear out this notion as Veit-Wild (1997) has shown in a subsequent article wherein she considers elements of hybridity and carnival in Marechera and Lesego Rampolokeng. In exploring Marechera's representation of his nation, it would seem necessary to consider whether and how he inscribes the Rhodesian/Zimbabwean national as a hybrid subject.

Homi Bhabha (1994b) theorizes colonial hybridity as

> the reevaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It displays the necessary deformation and

> displacement of all sites of domination. It unsettles the mimic or narcissistic demands of colonial power but reimplicates its identifications in strategies of subversion that turn the gaze back upon the eye of power. For the colonial hybrid is the articulation of the ambivalent space where the rite of power is enacted on the site of desire, making its objects at once disciplinary and discriminatory - or, in mixed metaphor, a negative transparency. (112)

And again:

> Hybridity is a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other 'denied' knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of authority - its rules of recognition. Again, it must be stressed, it is not simply the content of disavowed knowledges - be they forms of cultural otherness or traditions of colonialist treachery - that return to be acknowledged as counter-authorities.... What is irremediably estranging in the presence of the hybrid - in the revaluation of the symbol of national authority as the sign of colonial difference - is that the difference of cultures can no longer be identified or evaluated as objects of epistemological or moral contemplation: cultural differences are not simply there to be seen or appropriated. (114)

It is an interesting point that colonial hybridity conceals cultural difference . And yet, as Bhabha implies in his observation about the effect of 'disavowed knowledges' on the colonial discourse, this concealment is never complete. This point is interesting because it points to cultural difference as a specificity of the colonial nation, as argued above in relation to Eppel's *The Great North Road* and Vera's *Nehanda*. It is possible that examining the concept of colonial hybridity in these terms could illuminate Marechera's representation of the nation, along the same lines, for he too makes space for a difference between colonizers and colonized. However, as the foregoing discussion demonstrates all too clearly, Marechera's representation of his nation undermines any positivity associated with hybridity, and it is this aspect that this chapter seeks to emphasize in order

to explain Marechera's universalist stance. As Helen Gilbert and Jacqueline Lo (1997:70) argue,

> The concept of hybridity stresses the productive nature of cultural integration as positive contamination. Hybridity offers an effective way of resisting the replication of Manichean binaries and the discourses of cultural purity which underpin colonialist relations.

From the discussion offered above, it appears as though Marechera reinforces the negativity of his representation of the nation not by suggesting the hybridity of the Zimbabwean national culture, but by highlighting mimicry. Thus it is necessary to show how this concept of mimicry articulates the significance of Marechera's project. Bhabha writes that

> colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference... mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry is, thus, the sign of a double articulation; a complete strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which appropriates the 'Other' as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an immanent threat to both 'normalized' knowledges and disciplinary powers. (1994b:86)

This passage suggests some troubling closeness between the two concepts of hybridity and mimicry in Bhabha's theorization. The main difference between them seems to lie in the fact that the latter concept relies on the subject's propensity to 'produce its slippage, its excess' and on the fact that it is theorized not as difference, but rather as a representation of difference. As 'slippage' and 'excess', it falls under the carnivalesque,

the inappropriate, and the negative. Consequently, the mimicking subject is identified and displayed as a comic, something to be laughed at, to distance oneself from or, as Bhabha (1994b:75) also puts it, 'a misfit'.

A number of episodes in Marechera's texts illustrate the point being made here that Marechera emphasizes mimicry as a strategy to undermine the notion of a culturally stable national subject. Early in *The House of Hunger*, the narrator presents the success of Solomon's township photo studio as a testimony to the black Rhodesians' desire to map and to record their 'cultural hybridity' through this form of visual representation:

> Solomon the township photographer is now a rich man. His studio at the back of the grocer's is papered from floor to ceiling with photographs of Africans in European wigs, Africans in mini-skirts, Africans who pierce the focusing lens with a gaze of paranoia.(11)

The sheer number of photographs displayed - 'from floor to ceiling' - attests to their function as metaphors for cross-culturalism. The above passage emphasizes that, by being photographed in different kinds of European apparel, the photographed subjects locate themselves at the intersection of their Africanness and Western culture, the moment of this location being captured in the 'gaze' on their faces. Corinne A. Kratz (1996:57) describes the gaze in visual images as 'intended to capture viewers' capacity to objectify the subjects through visual scrutiny'. The subjects on the photographs are presented in a way as to invite the viewers-readers to see them not exactly as hybridized cultural objects, but, most probably, as mimicking subjects. This is implicit in the narrator's observation about Solomon's financial situation as a result of the crazy search for such photographs. The number of people who come to the studio also suggests that the type of cultural

phenomenon described through this passage is neither restricted to a small section of the population nor a passing trend. Kevin Foster's (1992:62) perceptive reading of this passage is worth quoting:

> The photos in which the Africans seek confirmation of their authentic experience of life signify not only their estrangement from its benefits but also their loss of the only cultural assets they have. Alienated from his/her own cultural heritage, by ignorance or apostasy the African can purchase a comparable iconic cultural package, ostensibly designed to enhance what Soyinka calls the "process of self-apprehension".

Closely connected to the images on the photographs in the studio is the description the narrator offers of Julia in the scene in the beerhall:

> Now she had straightened out her hair with that damnable hot comb. Her lips were a flaming crimson, like the blood. There were darkened patches around her eyes, and false lashes. The eyebrow pencil seemed to have completed the transformation of my old Julia into a beerhall doll. (20)

As with the description of the photographs, this passage, which implies a criticism of the way Julia decorates her face, can be read very usefully in conjunction with Marechera's reflections, concerning articles in the British press that prescribe an image of the black ladies and the ways they should organize their lives. Marechera's satirical commentary on such prescriptions underscores his disgust with such imposed cultural norms. Nevertheless, this westernised image conforms to that of the national subject his work has consistently constructed.

Harry in *The House of Hunger* also epitomizes the mimicking colonial subject. This is manifest in his infatuation with symbols of European culture and his preference for white

girls over black women. As Foster (1992:63) argues, 'To possess one is to live authentically, to assume a kind of (dis)honorary whiteness.' His refusal to identify with his race is established in contrast with his sister Immaculate's stubborn insistence on staying on in the House of Hunger, despite the violent treatment she receives from her boyfriend Peter. In a nation dominated by the hegemonic culture of the colonizer, Harry's behaviour brings to mind that of the black guard in 'The Concentration Camp' who repeats after his white officer the stereotypes about the Africans.

The way Harry or any other colonized subject is portrayed 'as both victim and perpetrator of violence and meaning, chaos and order, civility and resistance' (Buuck, 1997:225) - a representational discourse emphasizing mimicry - and appears to be pitted against the narrator, himself a replica of the cosmopolitan Marechera, supports a reading which considers that Marechera refuses any identification with his nation. It is this cleavage between his fellow citizens' mimicry and his hybridity that creates an intellectual and emotional distance between him and his nation. For Marechera, unlike Eppel and Vera, home is not a particular geographical location. His 'nation' consisted of those who shared his intellectual and cultural interests, as this argument has striven to show.

Marechera's texts set after independence reveal mimicry as an enduring feature of the Zimbabwean postcolonial culture. The extract below from the poem 'Throne of Bayonets' sheds further light on Marechera's inscription of the postcolonial Zimbabwean national subject:

I will smear my face soft with Lanoline,
With American Girl Hand Body Lotion
With Ambi skin-lightening cream -
With pasteurised and bionised dung.

It's Disco Time at Scamps and Chantelles
You and I in platform boots and imitation Levis
will mimic the hours in twirl and stomp
The like of Gary Glitter;
Icecream hats and Rasta T-shirts the emblems
of our liberation's arrival - Guitars, trombones,
Ukeleles, harps, synthesisers, instruments of wind and air,
I think of Stravinsky (Soldier's Return)
And hibiscus / violets in the shadow of great Zimbabwe.

In his discussion of this extract, Dirk Klopper (in Chennells and Veit-Wild, forthcoming) argues that the extract does not necessarily denounce mimicry:

> By the poem's own dialectical logic, what appears at first to be a legitimate denunciation of disempowering identifications, apparent in the use of skin-lightening creams so as to "whiten" the skin, proves to be untenable, founded as it is on a notion of original plenitude. The poem has demonstrated that there is no essential self to which the subject, including the postcolonial subject, can return. Therefore there can be no African identity conceived in terms of an "African" consciousness. Even the skin-lightening treatment, used to illustrate an attempted assumption of European "whiteness", may point to a value that predates colonialism, when a light skin was a valued property for a traditional African woman as it contributed, without any reference to a European norm, towards a definition of her beauty. Likewise, the mimicry of dress and dance invoked by Marechera in a pejorative manner is not in itself a debilitating practice.

Klopper's suggestion that mimicry, as highlighted in the extract from the poem quoted above, is not in itself a negative experience is not entirely supported by the way the postcolonial subject's identity is constituted and claimed in the quoted extract. As Klopper perceptively observes, the 'I' in this extract 'inscribes her other' and there is a double

dimension to this inscription, for the extract does indeed articulate both 'an avowal and disavowal of identity'. The 'I', here the black Zimbabwean female, disavows her African identity in a movement of identification with her European other through the use of skin-lightening creams and other items. The Western reference is affirmed in the naming of these creams - Lanoline, American Girl Hand Lotion and Ambi. Here Marechera is undeniably engaged with the question of mimicry. The same act, it is true, conceals a threat directed against the Other whom the postcolonial subject wants to resemble. In the same extract, an assertive recognition of an African identity is foregrounded through the use of the pronouns 'You and I' and their possessive equivalent 'our'. The associative meaning in these pronouns and possessive, together with her evocation of the 'emblems of our national liberation' seem to suggest an African identity that is positioned in oppositional relation to its Other. This Other is re-created in the second stanza of the extract through reference to European music, European dress ('platform boots and imitation Levis') and a European composer ('Stravinsky'). As has already been argued in this chapter and as Klopper reminds his reader in his essay, Marechera's work questions the construction of the self in terms of fixed identity. But the focus in the extract is upon a self associated with the kind of grotesquerie Marechera refuses to identify with.

The scene in *Mindblast* in which Marechera describes Buddy's visit to a rich friend's house highlights the taste for a European lifestyle on the part of the post-independence middle class:

> Watching out for the tricks, the sordid games they played on him - making him see at rare intervals what he was missing by giving him a bed in the posh suburb for a few hours of the night and talking about cars, bank accounts, and the fine luxuries of conforming. Buddy would listen but not touch. He would drink nice liqueurs and

take with a smile the string of jokes being made at his expense. He would take a bath, settling back in the warm water, letting himself enjoy the temporary pleasure of it; later washing his underwear in the hand basin, wringing and leaving it to dry by the hot geyser. And then sleep. A defiant sleep that struck to all the corners of his brain, not letting go until the angry alarm clock rang and a gruff hand shook his shoulder saying, "Wake up! It's time for us honest folk to go to work. Wake up! I can't leave you here alone in the house."

Buddy rising suddenly from the cloggy depths of an unreal dream would open a bleary eye, knowing the time was half past five in the morning, and all his life he had hated waking up any earlier than ten o'clock. He would rush to have another bath, a hasty scrub-all-round one, not knowing when he would have the chance for another one.... It was years since he had marmalade and toast, with real coffee, freshly ground. The newspaper right there in his left hand. The other joking, "Back to the rigours of poetry, eh? You would not be able to do that, you know, if some of us did not positively respond to the call of duty. I suppose you are a sort of anarchist?"

"Not at all, I would say I am that conservative of conservatives who is an extreme individualist."

"Don't you ever dream of possessing some of this?" And the hand would indicate the TV, the Hi Fi, the Video, the thick, lush carpet, the bemused wife still in her silk dressing gown asking him to help himself to more of the scrambled eggs and the roasted fish.

"Not at all," Buddy said smiling. He had had enough of "this" for years in Europe. It was a dead end, as far as he was concerned.... And Buddy would look out of the window at the gleaming car hard by the garage, at the crisply mowed lawn, at the large comfortable garden in which the "modern" house was set.

In this sardonic description of a middle-class Zimbabwean family house and its owners' new 'rich' mannerisms, the reader is offered two reverse mirror images of the postcolonial Zimbabwean subject. Buddy is inscribed in the position of the self who confronts his Other in the form of friends who have secured material comfort in the new dispensation. These are the comprador bourgeoisie, the neo-colonialists or sell-outs of the nation. Their urge to accumulate the icons of a western lifestyle corresponds to an unconscious desire to identify with the Western world. Similarly, to his friends the homeless poet represents the Other (although simultaneously the same) they no longer want to identify with, a figure of

the menacing yet familiar reality of living in the margins that they want to suppress from their memories. What underlies this fear is the 'cultural' difference that they perceive between them and Buddy.

The following extract from 'Throne of Bayonets' plainly shows the love of money and the pursuit of it as being at the core of the postcolonial national culture:

> From underneath the ditchwater
> Of my dwelling
> I watch them leisurely passing by
> With their shopping bags, handbags, husbands
> Their bland faces certain
> Of the night and bedroom to come.
> Strident music shrieks from every doorway
> To the gold in the pocket. There are no
> People, but dollars – or the want of dollars;
> No heartwrenching love or feud but the goldthought
> In its dark deep; no handshake or greeting
> Or secret appraisal from dim doorway
> But the goldvein pulsing in every heart.

This extract in which the poet observes his society from a position of marginality ('From underneath the ditchwater / Of my dwelling') underlies the argument that the materialist culture of the post-colonial society is the canker that destroys this society from within. The absence of love and the de-centering of the people in the society that this extract evokes bring to mind the following words from Wole Soyinka in *The Man Died* (1972), which Marechera would certainly agree with:

> (it) is better to believe in people than in nations. In moments of grave doubts it is essential to cling to the reality of peoples; these cannot vanish, they have no questionable a priori - they exist.

By foregrounding the people's inhumanity in the above poem, Marechera not only interrogates the notion of the nation but also precludes any possibility of real identification with it. The instances of mimicry just examined reveal that in Marechera's texts, mimicry is achieved through the narrator's inscription of his Zimbabwean subjects as participants in a 'cultural' spectacle which he invites the reader to witness. The prostitute who bleaches her face, Harry, the spy who indulges in an imitation of the white man, the post-independence elite who show off their western lifestyle - all these characters are portrayed derisively to this effect.

It will be clear from the above discussion that the two representations of colonial and postcolonial Zimbabwe offered in the texts analyzed above are not set in opposition to one another. As has been seen, colonial Zimbabwe is constructed as a world of violence, a nerve-racking environment for those who aspire to freedom and try to make sense of their conditions of existence. Within such a universe, relationships between the colonizers and colonized are constructed as those of jailers to prisoners. Colonial Zimbabwe is also figured in Marechera as a site where the problem of oppression is posed not only in terms of race whereby the white colonial master imprisons and oppresses the Other, but also in terms of where the Other oppresses itself, as Peter's aggression against Immaculate and Harry's police surveillance of his comrades attest. This is a contradiction that causes Marechera to deplore the absence of those 'black heroes' he laments in *The House of Hunger*.

Marechera's texts set after Zimbabwe's independence reveal a representation of a nation divided along binary lines. Only this time the binarism is one that reads: rich/poor,

dominant classes/underclasses. The former perpetrate a subtle form of violence and oppression against the latter, which the narrating self, who observes his society from the margins of the nation, captures so well in the poems and prose texts analyzed above. As this discussion has revealed, Marechera is wary of identifying with a nation like this one. The narrative voice in all these texts mocks the national subject' whom he figures as indecently eager to mimic the former colonial master, to the point of even maintaining his oppressive laws.

As has also been shown, the narrating self stresses his dis-identification with a nation in which the colonized self subjects himself/herself to colonial authority by acts of mimicry. Mimicry in his texts is achieved through his inscription of his characters as participants in a 'cultural' spectacle which he invites his reader to witness. The Zimbabwean prostitute who bleaches her face, Harry who strives to sound, behave and look like a white man, the new 'comprador bourgeoisie' who show off their westernized lifestyle - all these characters are portrayed derisively to suggest the author's sense of estrangement from his people. In any case, Marechera refuses to endorse the idea of a unified national community, split as it is between a dominant, oppressive ruling elite and an oppressed underclass. Indeed, as Abdulrazak Gurnah (1995:104) has pointed out, 'all his writing, from *The House of Hunger* to *The Black Insider*, contests the possibility of community' - be it family or nation. Marechera's claim for a universal identity has as much to do with this kind of contestation as with what Stewart Crehan (in Chennells and Veit-Wild, forthcoming) rightly sees as his 'empathy with those "who have no nationality"'.

This discussion of a complex representation of nation in Marechera's work - undercut, as it is, by his skeptical questioning of the concept of nation - is followed in the next chapter by an exploration of how in his novel *Hatchings* John Eppel articulates the problematics of representation of the nation which are implied in his focusing on a subterranean culture and inclusion of characters who are immigrants.

CHAPTER FIVE: 'HATCHING' A NEW NATIONAL CULTURE

In this penultimate chapter, a second novel by John Eppel is examined. Whereas Chapter Two discusses a late colonial novel by this author, the focus now shifts - appropriately - to his post-independence novel in order to present a careful balance of his representation of the Zimbabwean nation. Eppel's *Hatchings* (1995) is remarkable in that, although it depicts postcolonial Zimbabwe as a site of rampant crime and corruption, the focus on a subterranean culture cuts against a narrative of rebirth of the Zimbabwean nation. This chapter is an attempt to explore the representation of nation provided through this double articulation. It focuses on Eppel's construction, through his novel's interlocking narratives, of an imagined community fragmented along a moral divide.

The chapter, then, begins with an analysis of the ways in which Eppel constructs each community's identity. It shows that, once again, the dominant technique in the novel is to focus on groups of characters that are of significance as representatives of the nation although, here, the context is post- rather than pre- independence. Once again, Eppel utilizes a number of symbols to construct each community's identity, but this time the symbolism suggests a bipolarization of the nation along ethical lines. The focus, then, falls on characters presented as migrants (refugees, expatriate aid workers, foreign researchers, and so forth) in order to address the following questions: firstly, what their association with a subculture of crime reveals in terms of Eppel's representation of the nation in this second novel and, secondly, why their border crossings are framed in the text as having a significant, if negative, impact on the life of the nation. In the first part of the chapter, the argument is that, through such a construction of his immigrant characters,

Eppel complicates the assumption of a supposedly positive national culture emerging from the encounter between a community of migration and the indigenous population. (The term 'indigenous' as used here refers to Zimbabweans of all races.)

Through an analysis of selected poems from his second poetry collection *Sonata for Matabeleland*, Part Two of this chapter considers Eppel's inscription of the postcolonial Zimbabwean subjects, as opposed to the Rhodesian subjects seen in his first collection, for, as in the discussion of *The Great North Road*, the poems can be seen as complementary to the novel. The argument is that the images of the Zimbabwean subjects presented in the poems encode Eppel's construction of postcolonial Zimbabwe, where postcolonial signifies post-independence in contradistinction to Ashcroft, Tiffin and Griffith's definition (1989) of 'postcolonial' as embracing the entire history of a nation from the inception of colonial rule. Finally the chapter discusses the significance of such a complex mapping of the national space in terms of Eppel's representation.

PART ONE

In a number of ways, *Hatchings* is unlike Eppel's first novel, discussed in Chapter Two. Although strongly satirical in tone like his first novel, the target of this second novel is not just a fraction of the society, but the entire postcolonial society. Gone are the narrative of the Rhodesian nation and the co-operative mythologies of *D G G Berry's The Great North Road*. Gone too is the distance that separated white 'Rhodies' from the 'natives'. More representative of the nation, the characters in this novel are from all races and walks of life. In this 'delegated stage', to use Graeme Turner's term (1993), the characters are accepted as tokens of the whole. In addition to these newly symbolically empowered

individuals, however, *Hatchings* also appears to retain an important selection of characters from the previous novel, making it deeply important to examine this text. The only overtly recognizable character, and the most prominent, is Brother MacBraggert of the Blood of Jesus Temple. But it is clear from the narrative that, despite the change of names and circumstances, some of the other white characters in the novel are those people whom Moral MacBraggert persuaded to join his church at the end of the first novel. Eppel's narrator simply describes them as 'white Rhodesians, who, after losing the war of liberation, after witnessing their beloved Rhodesia become dreaded Zimbabwe, had turned for solace to the church...' (13). A discussion of the importance of this church in the representation of the nation in the novel is offered later in the chapter.

Hatchings is also different from *The Great North Road* in that, as noted above, Eppel presents to the reader a community divided along ethical lines, and occupying spaces which, for convenience, are referred to here as a positive space and a negative space. The positive space is occupied by what De Kock (1993:180), in his review of the novel, refers to as 'the sacred'. 'The sacred in *Hatchings*,' he writes, 'are the children, the Fawkes family, and Jet Bunion, Elizabeth Fawkes's romantic partner'. The negative space, on the other hand, is occupied by 'venal satyrs and moral hypocrites of the worst kind' (ibid.). Consistent with this cleavage between good and evil characters, Zimbabwe is presented as functioning both as a site of regeneration and as a den of crime. Each of these two communities and spaces is now examined in terms of the symbols associated with them.

In *Hatchings*, the positive space is associated with the Matopos National Park, with the good characters, and particularly with the novel's heroine Elizabeth Fawkes, and with the

Asil Khan egg. Appropriating ennobling mythic properties, these three elements conjoin to create a timeless, classic space, the panoramic dimension of which serves to oust the narrowly historicized spatial 'scenery' of *The Great North Road*. Indeed, the connection of positive space and the Matopos is established early in the narrative of *Hatchings*, which appropriately unfolds with the Fawkes family on a campsite in the Matopos National Park. In the following passage, the narrator describes the camp in terms of the positive influence the Matopos exerts upon the Fawkes and society in general:

> Mtshelele Dam was Elizabeth's favourite spot in the Matopos National Park, especially now during the rainy season when the dam was reasonably full of water and the lilies were in full flower. The white variety prevailed here. Elizabeth called them lotus plants but her mother liked to be more specific. She called them *Ottelia exserta*. Mrs Fawkes was surprised that none of the more common blue variety, *Nymphaea caerulea*, grew on this dam. The lilies reminded Elizabeth of a poem they had studied with their English teacher, Mr. Lipp. How did it go?
>
> > In the afternoon they came unto a land
> > in which it seemed always afternoon.
>
> That's what it is like here. Time seems to stand still. "There is no joy but calm." A calm disturbed by the occasional gusts of wind that rippled across the dam and caused the lily pads to flip limp-wristedly in the direction of Bulawayo: a kind of synchronized farewell to the hustle and bustle of school life. (10-11)

Presented as it is in the above passage, as a place of extraordinary natural beauty, the Matopos National Park offers scenery that is experienced by the Fawkes family, and particularly by Elizabeth, as refreshing both physically and psychologically. The passage suggests indeed that the frequent camping in this setting is important to Elizabeth as a source of renewal. In this way the Matopos becomes a trope for the source of the regenerating national spirit which the narrator sees as necessary for the nation's self-creation. The white lily, a symbol of purity which receives prominent mention in the

passage, extends its symbolism to the whole of the Matopos, and, also, to the land, as the quoted lines from the poem suggest. Such an association of nature with purity is also evident in the final episode of the novel, where the Matopos National Park serves as the scene where the Asil Khan egg hatches and the two lovers, Elizabeth and Jet Bunion, confess their love to each other.

In his essay '"Great Spaces Washed with Sun": The Matopos and Uluru Compared", Terence Ranger (1996) makes observations that illuminate the symbolic significance of this setting. Discussing the significance of the Matopos and Uluru, an Australian landscape, Ranger notes that 'like the Matopos, Uluru is at one and the same time an extraordinary rock formation, an icon of national identity, a major tourist attraction, and the site of struggle between black and white over possession, representation and control' (157). Ranger quite rightly considers the naming and re-naming of the Matopos by successive groups of the population (Ndebele, Shona, Banyubi/Kalanga) and its christening by the whites, as well as its choice by Rhodes as his burial place, as many attempts to appropriate this symbol of national identity. He also points out that under the white colonial government 'there was violent appropriation.... The rocks were appropriated by renaming... the Matopos becoming the Rhodesian Matopos Park' (158). According to Ranger, the politics of conservation of this 'national icon' under both the white colonial state and the black postcolonial government remained largely the same. As he explains:

> The imperatives of international tourism have ensured that the park still presents much the same symbolic face that it did under settler rule. People still visit Rhodes's grave and the other colonial monuments; still camp out and have barbecues; still photograph indiscriminately; and are still ignorant of the African history and cosmology of the hills (161).

Ranger's insights illuminate the fact that the setting of two major episodes of the novel at this locale serves to underscore just in what way Eppel endows them with special symbolic significance. Indeed, in addition to the Matopos offering the scene of the negotiation on New Year's Day between Elizabeth Fawkes and her father for the hatching of the Asil Khan egg, a significant act itself as will become clear later in the discussion, it is also the site for the actual hatching of the egg and the consummation of the romantic love between Elizabeth and Jet Bunion, alluded to earlier. As will also become clear, given the symbolic and historical importance of the site Ranger has outlined, part of Eppel's strategy is to appropriate the holiness, the creativity and the fertility associated with this place and to impart it to the character of Elizabeth in her role of 'hatcher' of a new nation-building ethos.

As an extension of the Matopos in the Fawkes's minds, their garden is also figured as a positive space, thus reinforcing the symbolism of the Matopos:

> The Fawkes' garden in Hillside was one of the few gardens without working boreholes that did not look like a desert. That was because Philippa, her friends called her Gay, planted only indigenous things - not just trees, but bushes, shrubs, flowers, even grasses....
>
> Neighbours complained about the condition of the Fawkes' garden. Their immediate neighbours were the Macimbis who were Ndebele, the Mashitas who were Shona, the Verwoerds who were Afrikaans, and the Pigges who were English. The white neighbours thought that the Fawkes' 'bushveld' lowered the tone of the neighbourhood. Presumably the Pigges' seven foot Instarect wall, and the Verwoerds' six foot breeze-brick wall with inset wagon wheels, raised the tone. The black neighbours who couldn't bear to see a single blade of grass, let alone wild flowers - or even trees, for that matter - anywhere near their houses, accused the Fawkes of infesting the neighbourhood with ticks and snakes and scorpions and centipedes... (30)

In the above passage, the natural purity associated with the garden is contrasted with the potential for conflict suggested by the differing perceptions of the Fawkes's garden held

by their neighbours. These perceptions, in turn, point to the divisions the following passage establishes:

> While the Fawkes' garden was an affront to all their immediate neighbours, they themselves were not unpopular. They never complained about any of them. And when it came to factional fights between the Afrikaners and the English, or between the Ndebele and the Shona, or between the blacks and the whites - the Fawkes remained neutral. Indeed, they negotiated peace. The Verwoerd children weren't allowed to entertain the Macimbi or the Mashita children in their own territory, and it was unthinkable that the Verwoerd children should ever visit the homes of the Macimbi or the Mashita children. (The Pigges don't come into this because they didn't have any children.) So the children gathered in neutral ground where there were trees to climb, snakes to catch; where they could watch the crested barbets nesting in the *Euphorbia ingens*, the sparrow weavers nesting in the *Acacia nilotica*, and the African hoopoes nesting in the eaves of the house. Elizabeth and her father helped them build a tree-house made out of the wooden packing cases which, with the help of ropes, they secured high up in the *Commiphora mollis* - the Elbow tree. When they built a den, deep inside the *Bauhenia galpinii*, Elizabeth provided them with a piece of old carpet and a few scatter cushions that she herself had made. There she brought them tomatoe sandwiches and cups of Mazoe orange. There she read to them, taught them songs about Jesus, and played "I spy with my little eye". (30-31)

It is readily apparent from this passage that the Fawkes's garden, and by extension the space they occupy, is presented as a neutral ground, a meeting place, in a binary world still divided along the lines of race and ethnic groups. While the relations among the adults are strained, the passage underlines the easy camaraderie between the children and suggests that, for the narrator, hope for a harmonious multiracial Zimbabwean society, hinted at both in the multiracial neighbourhood and in Elizabeth's actions, lies essentially in the younger generation. That the children's group symbolizes an ideal Zimbabwe is suggested in the name they choose for their den:

> *Ubungane* is a Zulu word meaning comradeship. The children called their den, the one built with Elizabeth's help, deep in the *Bauhenia galpinii*, *Ubungane*. (32)

Thus, *Hatchings* associates the positive space with children and youthful figures whose innocence becomes the symbol of the new nation, as already stated.

In his essay alluded to earlier, Terence Ranger mentions the religious importance of the Matopos by reference to the fact that the place is also a sacred landscape containing rain-shrines. The *Ubungane* den can, in turn, be considered a shrine where these children from different backgrounds celebrate unity. It is typical of Eppel that he uses this small community of children as a microcosm for the ideal Zimbabwe. It has been seen how in his first novel he focuses on a stratum of Rhodesian society - the white working-class community of Umdidi - to deconstruct the ideology of Rhodesian nationalism. In the episode described here, the narrative appears insistent that the kind of utopian unity that the *Ubungane* group embodies is precisely what Eppel envisions for his imagined community. Indeed, it is not difficult to realize his preference for the type of consultative democracy and the spirit of human brotherhood the small community displays, over the prejudice and lack of communication that characterize relations between the adults. There is no inferior/superior complex (which is a marker of a colonist/colonized, white/black economy) in the relationships between the children and Elizabeth. It thus seems that Eppel's reader is presented with a choice between the intercultural connection and egalitarian ethos which characterizes the children's universe, and a vision of the nation enmeshed in racist and violent culture. It is indeed a choice between what Graeme Turner (1996:124), writing in the context of Australia, refers to as 'a creative, resistant, cultural form of becoming' and 'a conservative, already completed form of exclusion'.

That the image of Elizabeth stands in the narrative as a symbol of the Zimbabwean nation is made evident by the role of peace maker which the text shows her playing in this divided microcosm of the Zimbabwean nation, through the way she helps keep goodwill and friendship between the children. The text makes it clear that this is no unrequited

friendship, as demonstrated by the show of support Elizabeth receives from the children after her family's interrogation by the police (on their return from holiday in the Matopos) over the dead baby found in their garden.

Perhaps more than her role as mediator within the *Ubungane* group, it is the fact that she is constituted as an embodiment of the rebirth of this nation which gives her character the status of a symbolic figure in the novel and one which combines natural and political metaphors, projecting Elizabeth imaginatively as 'creator' of the nation. This is why her sexualization becomes an important motif in the narrative. The opening sentence of the novel - 'Elizabeth Fawkes was turning sixteen (9) - draws attention to her nubility. This strategy of emphasizing her nubility is repeatedly used in the narrative. Thus, the reader learns shortly afterwards that

> Elizabeth Fawkes, who was turning sixteen, was thinking of Jet and only half-concentrating on her father's story about the Asil Khan. (10)

In the above passage Elizabeth's age and the fact that she is in love with Jet Bunion are foregrounded to reinforce the reader's awareness of her sexuality. In the passage below, which records the conversation between Elizabeth and her father in the Matopos, an aura of romance around Elizabeth is created through the sexual insinuations that permeate the conversation. Appropriately, the Matopos National Park serves as the setting for the negotiations between Elizabeth and her father on the hatching of the Asil Khan egg:

"Do you think you could hatch it, Lizzie?"

"Sorry, Dad?"

"My egg. Do you think you could hatch it?"

"Not in my bra, Dad?" Elizabeth was serious. "It's too much of an effort, especially with school coming up soon. I'll put it under Mrs Noodle when we get home. She started sitting yesterday."

"Not this egg, Lizzie, it s too precious. Mrs Noodle may reject it. This is an Asil Khan, Lizzie; it's got to hatch. Your bra is the safest bet. Damn these tiddlers; they've taken my bait again... Will you do it, please?"

Elizabeth closed the book she had been dipping into and placed it carefully on the ground. It was one of her recommended novels: Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*. "Twenty-one days is a long time, Dad. And what about nights when I am asleep? I could crush it."

"You won't, my love. You didn't the last time with Mrs Noodle. It was a perfect delivery. I hope it turns out to be a cock. I wonder what colour it is? I think the Asil Khans are supposed to be a very dark red with pale coloured legs... ."

"I'm not that keen on cocks," said Elizabeth. Mrs Fawkes heard this and wondered, with alarm, what father and daughter have been talking about. She quickened her steps. She was uneasy on the subject of human sex and, hitherto, had avoided it in the company of her daughter. (11-12)

The above extract leaves no doubt about Elizabeth's inscription in the novel as the female body prepared to give birth. Her femaleness is highlighted in the passage through a vocabulary referring to body parts: 'egg', 'breast', 'bra', 'cock', and 'perfect delivery'. In her book *Torrid Zones* (1995), Felicity A. Nussbaum notes that a woman's breast is a symbol of sexuality and maternity, This view helps the reader to see that Eppel's insistence in this passage on this part of Elizabeth's body serves to construct her in the role of the incubator needed to hatch the Asil Khan. In the long term, the strategy prepares the reader to accept her in the role of hatcher of a new ethos that privileges reconciliation and racial harmony. The significance of this role is suggested by the reference to the title of the book Elizabeth reads: *Great Expectations*. It is a fact that *Hatchings* is about the great expectations, for the future of the postcolonial Zimbabwe, that have been dashed by generalized corruption.

Corruption is not foreign to Dickens's novel either, as Ross H. Dabney (1967:128) has noted:

> Moral corruption spreads in two ways in *Great Expectations*: by overt all-dramatically direct influence - and by seepage from a generally corrupt society. The direct line of infection runs from Compeyson, through Miss Havisham and Magwitch, through Estella, to Pip, who is rotted by his expectations. The expectations are at the centre of the novel, and they are centred on Estella.

In Eppel's text, corruption is embodied by Sobantu 'The Butcher' Ikerhothi's crime syndicate and it is on Elizabeth that the expectations are centred. Elizabeth's hatching of the Asil Khan egg is thus rationalized as the crossing over to a new moral order and a new culture. This point is returned to later in the discussion.

It is significant that the scene of the negotiation between father and daughter is the Mtshelele Dam where Elizabeth's father is indulging in his favourite hobby, which is fishing. The setting of the negotiation for the hatching of the egg at the dam invites a consideration of the symbolism of water, for the idea of regeneration symbolized by water in the text is closely allied to that of birth (hatching). It is of further significance that both are associated in turn with the Matopos. As with the hatching of the egg, there seems to be a symbolic dimension to water. In this context, the discussion between Elizabeth and her mother about the spiritual symbolism of water is worth considering, for it enables the reader to associate water and the Matopos in a way that suggests a correspondence between the revitalization implied in the water symbolism and the birth of a new national spirit suggested by the hatching of the Asil Khan. The point here is to suggest that this correspondence is essential for Eppel's construction of Zimbabwe as a place of hope, for

it appears that in this novel Eppel seeks to widen the symbolism of the river by showing that the Matopos, because of its association with water, symbolizes regeneration.

It also does not appear to be a coincidence that the discussion between mother and daughter on water symbolism follows that on the significance of the New Year. The fact that both discussions are informed by the insights of the same thinker (Mircea Eliade) invites the reader to consider them together. Elizabeth and her mother discuss the New Year briefly in the morning of New Year's Day. The previous night Elizabeth had what her mother describes as 'a religious experience' (79). Unable to find sleep, possibly, because of 'the egg inside her bra' (47) she left their encampment and sat on the boulder nearby. Her religious experience consisted in a prayer to God to 'help me to guide [Jet] away from darkness, towards the light' (49). It is an experience that has some religious significance because it leads her to consider the paradoxes in biblical religions pointed out to her by her English teacher Boland Lipp. When Elizabeth is found alone that night by her father, she tells him that she is love with Jet Bunion. To her mother and to the narrator - for at this point in the novel their two voices merge - the experience has symbolic significance because it coincides with the beginning of a New Year:

> "... But to get back to your experience last night: it's the New Year, and the New Year is a very significant time, not only for Christians but for all mankind. Eliade has a lot to say about New Year's rituals, you know." Elizabeth did not speak, so she went on, first disposing of a piece of bread which she had run round her plate in order to soak up the juice. "The New Year is an earthly imitation of the first day of Creation with a big 'C'...". Elizabeth sighed and lay back with a tight mouth... Here we go again."
>
> "... on earth joins sacred time which is eternal ... vestige of those saturnalia which symbolized the moral chaos of the Old Year.... With each New Year man is reborn ...reintegrated with the Dream Time ...sacred and profane...
>
> "Elizabeth, are you listening to me?"

> "Yes, Mom, but I don t understand a word you re saying."
> "What I'm trying to tell you Elizabeth, is that last night you were present at the creation of the world." (79-80)

By this tactic the reader is made to understand the implications of Eliade's views for the novel. The idea that there could be a new beginning for the new nation is suggested through the symbolism associated with the Old Year and the New Year. The dying of the Old Year is a metaphor for the old order, the colonial era. The New Year, in contrast, symbolizes the ushering of the nation into a new phase of its existence, which the novel figures as the moral order. The man who is reborn is the postcolonial man. The Dream Time may be a reference to the moral culture that, the narrator implies, should replace the existing order.

The inscription of the Matopos as a symbol of regeneration is also achieved by reference to the water motif. Water is a symbol of creative life. Out of water comes life. This symbolism is recognized by scientific theories of life which postulate that life comes from water. In the biblical stories of creation, water is presented as the source of creation, the beginning of creation. In the biblical story of Noah, water symbolizes life but also destruction and punishment. It destroys and punishes the unfaithful and the sinner. But at the same time it carries the lives of those on board the ark, the offspring of a new beginning in God's work of creation. In the biblical story of the passage of the Red Sea, waters part to save the lives of those chosen by God and destroy those who pursue them.

The contrast between the Matopos and the rest of the country is figured in terms of the contrast between a place where water is available and where it is not. Repeatedly, in the

novel the importance of water is emphasized. On the morning of the New Year, Mrs Fawkes appeals to Elizabeth to take advantage of the water in the Matopos National Park: 'It might be an idea to take a good shower while we're here, love. Remember, we're going back to stringent water rationing' (80). The text, already quoted, tells the reader that the Fawkes's garden was particular in that it 'was one of the few gardens without working boreholes that did not look like a desert' (30). This comment emphasizes once again the Fawkes's territorialization in the positive space.

Just as Eppel's novel offers a dual representation of Zimbabwe, so, too, it allegorizes water in a dual function: as a symbol of the rebirth of the new nation, but equally as a symbol of corruption. This duality in the symbolism of water emerges in the scene of the New Year's party at the Twots's house. Doef Mackmark, the wife of the Black Rhino High School headmaster, is surprised that water at the Twots's house is used rather unwisely:

> "I must say I'm surprised, Elaine, that you permit the flushing of toilets at a time when Bulawayo is about to run out of water. Do you know that I empty our WC - I do it once a day, usually just before we get to bed, don't I, Dolphie? - with an old soup ladle? Not a pleasant job but it does save water."
>
> "It's Daylene. We don't have to worry about water," she replied with a mixture of irritation and superiority in her voice. "If we exceed our ration, and we do every month, we simply pay the fine. We can afford it. Besides which we have two excellent boreholes in the garden. We got loads of water." (25)

With Daylene Twot's reply - from a character occupying the negative space - the text seems at odds with the thrust of narrative. But it is important to keep in mind that water in this space assumes a different symbolic function. The effectiveness of the negative symbolism of water in this scene is brought home by its association with bodily waste and

corruption. It is water that the Twots can afford out of ill - earned money. Thus the symbolism of water in this scene is the opposite of regeneration and renaissance.

The Twots's garden is viewed by the headmaster as 'a veritable oasis in the Bulawayo desert with something like four months of water left in the supply dams' (26). This is in contrast with 'the gardens of all those Bulawayo residents without boreholes or with boreholes that had run dry, or who had by-passed their metres' (26). Rudolph McMackmack's remark that those Bulawayo residents who could afford water were a 'Bunch of Neros' - a qualification which applies to the Twots and those like them - reveals that water as associated with the likes of Twots, is figured as a commodity that criminals and their associates can afford. As can be seen, by comparing Bulawayo, and by extension, the national space to a desert, the lack of water is converted into a symbol of the spiritual degeneration the country is shown to be in.

The idea that the water at the Twots's house symbolizes degeneration is given confirmation by the smell that pervades their house:

> Rudolph and Doef arrived fifteen minutes before twelve, a most inappropriate time for the Twot household, since Strontium, only half dressed, was only half-way through one of his mighty public holiday shits, a four-pounder which left him drained, slightly clammy to the touch, and mildly euphoric. The smell, much to the embarrassment of his family - for they always seemed to have guests on public holidays - would pervade the entire house for up to an hour after delivery. By one o'clock it would have cleared. (23)

The symbolism of water in this scene is the very opposite of the regeneration and renaissance. The references to smell and faeces in the passage are reminiscent of Ayi

Kwei Armah's depiction, in his novel *The Beautyful ones Are Not Yet Born*, of the smell that accompanies the minister Koomson as he escapes arrest through the latrine at the Man's house. In that episode Armah uses images of smell and shit to suggest that the process of decay in Ghana has reached the point of no return. Similarly the Twots's house is figured as a place of decay.

The conversation between Elizabeth and her mother about the significance of water in religion sheds light on Eppel's reference to water in order to suggest the double image of the nation his text conveys. Once again, it is informed by Mircea Eliade's ideas in his treatise 'The Sacred and the Profane'. Here are some of the most important ones in the context of this discussion:

- Water is a useful religious symbol because it is paradoxical (103).
- It symbolises degeneration as well as regeneration; death as well as life. (103)
- Being immersed in the water symbolises a kind of death; being emersed... means, symbolises a kind of re-birth (103).
- ... there was sacred time and there was profane time. By means of rituals primitive woman or man could move between the two. Sacred time is the beginning of creation ... (104)
- And profane time, of course, is historical time... But Christianity is a historical event which took place in profane time... So it kind of merges the sacred and the profane. Christianity valorises profane by sanctifying it with Christ's historicity... (104)

These statements validate the representation of water at the Matopos Dam as a symbol of regeneration, and that of water at the Twots's house as a symbol of degeneration and death. The notions of historicity and its double relation to sacredness and profanity,

transposed into the context of Eppel's representation of the postcolonial Zimbabwean nation, also underscore his attempt to provide a meeting space for those forces of darkness and light which the novel presents as shaping the two spaces of the postcolonial society represented in the novel. It also becomes obvious in the passages above that the narrator conceives the beginning of the Dream Time or Sacred Time as coinciding with the nation's turning back on the existing immoral order. A discussion of the Asil Khan and the episode of its hatching will, hopefully, allow a better understanding of the relevance, for the novel, of the ideas Mrs Fawkes relays.

The setting of most of the main events of the novel on New Year's Day is also important in that it places Elizabeth in the process of new creation, as is implied by Mrs Fawkes as she explains to her daughter (the fictional author of the nation, as already suggested) and to the reader the meaning of the New Year. In her mother's view, Elizabeth's experience can be interpreted as 'being present at the Creation' (80). This qualifies her for the role she has been assigned as 'hatcher' or 'author' of the new moral ethos Eppel envisions for the country. Thus, with this incident, Eppel succeeds in redirecting the Matopos's national symbolism away from the sectarian political and ideological dimension attached to it by the political and racial groupings which Ranger mentions in the essay referred to above.

As with the Matopos National Park, the Asil Khan egg occupies a central role in the text, as suggested by the association of the egg with the title of the novel. The reader learns that the egg was won in a raffle by Elizabeth's father, who is a senior mechanic by profession and has two interests in life: fishing and poultry. The circumstances of the egg's

arrival in Bulawayo seem far from consistent with the moral character of the space it occupies:

> Originally there had been six eggs, apparently smuggled out of India in somebody's diplomatic bag, but five of them had become cracked in transit and had ended up, scrambled, on lightly buttered toast. The single sound egg was now in Mr Fawkes's proud possession. (11)

Despite these unflattering circumstances, the Asil Khan egg has immense symbolic importance in the novel. It symbolizes a new, moral culture. Its hatching is figured allegorically as the beginning of a new life, a new beginning for the nation. The novel's dual focus on the hatching of the egg and the dumping of the dead babies is intended to highlight the opposition between life or regeneration on the one hand, and degeneration or death, on the other hand.

The hatching of the egg reinforces the narrative centrality of the character of Elizabeth Fawkes and the already noted symbolism of the Matopos and the New Year. Having been invited by Jet Bunion to spend the night with a group at the Matopos to watch the moon rise, Elizabeth is surprised that, instead of the grave of Cecil Rhodes, it is to the Mtshelele Dam that Jet has taken her. For, 'They had chosen World's View for the vigil near the grave of Cecil John Rhodes. Weather permitting, they would spend the night next to his remains. Elizabeth had suggested Mtshelele Dam but the others had out-voted her' (109). It is pertinent that Jet should choose to ignore the grave. As suggested by Ranger, the grave of Cecil John Rhodes has strong ideological associations with imperialism, yet Eppel's appropriation of the Matopos does not include Rhodes's grave. This is entirely appropriate given his attitude towards the founder of colonial Rhodesia, as reflected in his first novel *The Great North Road*, and considering the argument in his second novel that

the hatching of a new nation can only take place in a context that is not associated with the Empire. In contrast, the Mtshelele Dam, as already suggested, points to the possibility of regeneration through its association with the Matopos and water.

It is while Elizabeth and Jet talk about their feelings on a spot in the Mtshelele Dam that the hatching of the egg begins. The narration of the hatching is given in a passage that is powerful in its evocation of the new life:

> "What's that sound?" He lifted his head. He would have cocked his ears if he could.
>
> "What sound?"
>
> "Shh! Listen."
>
> They listened intently, both realising simultaneously how utterly quiet the world had become. As if the diurnal creatures had gone to sleep and the nocturnal creatures were yet to stir. A minute's silence for the earth's abandoned babies. Elizabeth's hand groped for Jet's and held it tightly. Then they heard it: cheep, cheep, cheep... click, click, click... cheep, cheep, cheep.
>
> "I don t believe it," said Elizabeth, "It's the chick."
>
> "The what?"
>
> "The Asil Khan, Jet, it's hatching." She began to unbutton her blouse.
>
> "Are you mad? What are you doing? Elizabeth, I don't expect you to have sex with me. Don't undress. Lizzie, I respect - "
>
> "I'm not undressing, Jet, I'm getting the egg out of my bra. It's beginning to hatch and it's only due on the twenty-first. It must have begun germinating in the cubby hole of the car. It gets pretty warm in there."
>
> "May I get it out?"
>
> 'Yes, if you're ever so gentle." Her breathing picked up. She lowered her hand and submitted herself to his. "That's the wrong side, Jet. Try the left one. Gently now." His exploration went on rather longer than it needed to - they had begun to kiss - but at last he retrieved the egg and offered it to her.
>
> "Look," she said, "Its little beak is poking through the crack. It should be out in half an hour. Isn't it wonderful?"
>
> "Aren't you wonderful?" the boy replied. "Fancy hatching out an egg against your beautiful warm tit."
>
> "Breast!" (116)

Arguably, this extract enacts a simulated act of delivery, with Elizabeth as 'mother' and Jet in the role of both 'midwife' and foster father. The hatching of the egg in this romantic context is clearly intended to symbolize the birth of hope. Through the description of this hatching, Eppel successfully ends his construction of Elizabeth as the bearer or 'hatcher' of a new life and, given her wider role in the novel as a whole, of a utopia for Zimbabwe. One is also struck by the power of evocation of the main theme of the novel. In the passage the time is dusk - a time-frame that invokes the end of colonial rule. With the first sound of the hatching, Nature appears to be at a standstill. The silence is presented as offering the possibility of a new beginning for the opposite forces: the sacred ones - referred to as diurnal creatures; and the 'evil ones' - referred to as nocturnal creatures. With this episode the reader receives a clear sense of what is meant by a time of sacredness in the novel. For the hatching is evoked as a time which offers to the profane - 'the nocturnal creatures' - 'the possibility of being sanctified'. It is figured as a 'sacred time', that is 'the beginning of creation'. The narration of Elizabeth 'giving birth' is thus pivotal in the text as it suggests the dawning of a new era in the history of the imagined Zimbabwean nation of this novel.

While the space occupied by Elizabeth, Jet Bunion, and the children is figured as positive, the 'nocturnal forces' occupy a space dominated by the underworld which,as stated above, is presented as a negative space. Within the narrative discourse this latter space is inscribed as Other in the sense that it disrupts the postcolonial economy of nation building. As one reads the novel, there is an inevitable impression that Eppel sides with the 'sacred' and invites the reader to witness the pollution emanating from the negative space and invading the positive space. The first manifestation of this invasion occurs when

Nightingale Macimbi, one of the *Ubungane* group, discovers a parcel containing the dead body of a baby, already alluded to. In the passage describing Nightingale's discovery, there is a sense that the discovery is equated with the loss of innocence:

> Inside this hollow Nightingale was surprised to see a parcel wrapped in newspaper and tied up in a plastic bag. She heard her brother shout "Coming!". The marula - sorry - the *Sclerocaria birrea*, was dense with foliage at that time of the year so Nightingale felt well hidden from her brother. She decided to help pass the timer by opening the strange parcel in the hollow of the tree. It was with some difficulty that she undid the knot in the handles of the plastic bag. She had to use her teeth. She was surprised at how heavy it was. Treasure, she thought with a skipping heart; stolen goods, more likely. Carefully she took the parcel out of the plastic bag and then proceeded to unwrap it.
>
> By the time Washington and the others had found her, she had screamed herself into silence. (36)

Eppel's inscription of this invasion into the children's universe, as captured in the above passage, underscores the corruption that invades the national space, striking as it does in this instance the most vulnerable members of the society. In this context, the final part of the story of Tom Thumb, withheld by Elizabeth, is of significance. 'Tom is killed by the poisonous breath of a spider' (36). The parallel of this conclusion of the story with the invasion of pollution can be seen in the death which the discovery of the parcel both embodies and brings into the world. The story of Isaac's sacrifice, which Elizabeth tells the children in the same scene, offers a different perspective on the narrative as it suggests that an alternative to death is possible.

Two other incidents concerning the dumping of dead bodies emphasize the shock that accompanies the discoveries and reveal the extent to which corruption has eroded the fabric of society. When another dead baby is discovered in a dustbin outside the Prince

Charming High School girls' toilets, police investigations reveal that fourteen other girls 'were either pregnant or had recently given birth' (20). As in the case of the incident involving Nightingale Macimbi, with the discovery of the dead baby's body in the school premises, the narrator locates the invasion of death at the heart of what should be regarded as a citadel of learning and culture, as well as of innocence. In this way the presence of dead bodies on the school premises also becomes a metaphor for the moral corruption that plagues the postcolonial nation.

In this regard, it can be argued that the schools are used as cameos of negativity which undermine the regeneration motif. All four schools referred to in the novel serve to illustrate that there is something 'rotten' in the nation-state of Zimbabwe. While Prince Charming is notorious for the high number of pregnant girls, another school, Kipling Primary, is depicted as a den of corruption. The reader learns that one of the teachers, Comrade Iyapipi, 'regarded fornication with his pupils as a perk and not as rape' (33). The headmaster too is found wanting; he is presented as incompetent and too politically oriented for the good of the school: 'The headmaster, Comrade Clever Ruforwokuda-Jones BA, was too busy with a Marxist-Leninist inspired project to convert the decadent colonial cricket, rugby, and hockey fields to maize... . Most of the labour was performed by the children. The headmaster called it Education with Production. The first few seasons were good' (34). But beneath the political face the headmaster wears is a corrupt individual, as indicated in the following passage which highlights his propensity to appropriate school property and pupils:

> Kipling Primary had bumper crops of maize. One or two ears went to the kitchen, one or two were stolen by boarders; the rest were appropriated by the headmaster and the school bursar who had been appointed on the recommendation of the headmaster and who was his cousin's aunt's nephew's sister. She was also his mistress during school hours. With the sale of these mealies combined with the school's General Purpose fees and the salaries of three non-existent teachers, Comrade Ruforwokuda-Jones was able to purchase a small farm on the outskirts of Bulawayo where he raised cattle, goats, pigs, and chickens. So you see, the headmaster of Kipling Primary was much too busy to bother himself with piffling rumours about teachers 'doing it' with pupils on the school premises. In any case, the conditions of service for teachers were so abysmal, why shouldn't they be allowed the odd perk? (34 - 35)

Cast in this light, the school appears to be the institution that corrupts or pollutes the innocence of youths instead of relaying the new moral ethos that, the novel posits, is so needed by the nation for its survival.

Black Rhino High, the school attended by Elizabeth and Jet, two of the 'sacred' ones in the novel, is depicted as a metaphor for retrograde conservatism. The narrator describes it as 'a school which would ensure that the high standards of Rhodesian education - the highest in Africa, if not in the entire world - would be maintained' (9). This aim appears inconsistent with the general thrust of the novel. The conservatism of the school is also evident in the way Matilda Bauls, the wife of a school Board member, designed the school badge to reflect an association with Christianity and the Boer republic of the Orange Free State:

> Matilda gave out publicly that the colours had no symbolic value, but privately - only to her closest friends, mind you - would she confess that the red was the Blood of Christ, and that the orange, her favourite colour and her favourite fruit, was her homage to the place of her birth: Bethlehem in the Orange Free State of South Africa (10).

Perhaps more than these symbols, it is the way Black Rhino functions as a site where outward righteousness contrasts with inner corruption that is most significant. The description of the activities of the school's sponsors - some of them are identified in the novel as 'sleeping partners' of Sobantu 'The Butcher' Ikherothi's crime syndicate - and the close link the school maintains with the notorious Blood of Jesus Temple - provide another window for the reader to glance at the corruption the school embodies. Thus, through Black Rhino, education *per se* is exposed in Eppel's text as an evil legacy of the past.

A negative portrayal of a fourth school, Imfukumfuku School, is provided through the depiction of the parents of the pupils attending that school. Through the following extract, in which the mothers of the pupils discuss their domestic servants, the reader is made aware that it is not only the school that fails its youths but that parents, too, perpetuate a mindset that militates against a sound future for all. Although there is no suggestion of a racial divide in the narrative as a whole - for the satirical thrust indicts both black and white - it is of interest that the authorial stance in the discussion of servants implicitly evokes the settler motif seen in *The Great North Road*.

> "You simply can't trust them anymore."
> "They're all thieves."
> "Can't resist my sugar."
> "Neglect their children."
> "Thinks I don t know she uses the phone when I'm out of the house."
> "I won't have her bringing boy friends onto my property."
> "Breed like flies."
> "No wonder there's so much AIDS around." (94)

Some of these stereotypes of the African were discussed in Chapters Two and Three, in the discussions of *The Great North Road* and *Nehanda*. It was noted then that they

constitute part of the settler discourse that inscribes the native as the dirty and animal-like Other. It suffices to add that the AIDS stereotype is a fairly new addition. Judith Laurence Pastore (1993), in an essay on the representations of AIDS in literary and non-literary discourse, observes that in America both discourses reinforce existing stereotypes about the blacks. Her view that such 'reductive characterizations only reinforce existing stereotypes which dominate our racist society' (1993:29), is also relevant in the context of *Hatchings*. For Eppel, the evil that characterizes the Zimbabwean postcolonial society of the novel also lies in the perpetuation of these racist prejudices and stereotypes. This evil is foregrounded here by contrast with Elizabeth's positive capability to establish contacts with the other groups.

Through a description of the fathers of the children attending the school, Eppel offers an evocative portrayal of Zimbabwe as a den of corruption:

> ...the husbands of these young women who had far too much money to spend on their children and themselves, were.... talking about money-related matters like their latest vehicles, house-boats, and farms. Not only were these young men Company Secretaries, Finance Managers, and Chief Accountants - they were also farmers, safari-owners, and stock-brokers. Now in their middle and late twenties, despite the fact that they were enthusiastic joggers ... they were showing signs of going to seed. Bellies were beginning to bulge over the top of their Ted Lapidus trousers, hair was thinning on the crowns of their heads, dewlaps were slowly swinging after receding chins. It's not only your sperm that suffers when you make lots of money. (95)

These characters are depicted as figures who move rather fast toward decrepitude (physical and sexual) despite their relatively young age. The paradox implicit in this description points to their association with a space of destruction. Consider also the following passage:

> These chaps are not in the same league as the Boxer Cocks of this world, you understand, and absolute peanuts compared to multi-millionaires like Craig Wick, Strontium Twot, and Sudbury Bauls; but the time is on their side, and if you are that desperate to make a lot of money, you'll make it. And they are, so they will'. (95-96).

Snobbish and empty-headed, these 'young nouveau riche of Bulawayo' (96), predisposed as they are to do anything to make a quick fortune, constitute part of the clientele of Sobantu 'The Butcher' Ikherothi's syndicate. The irony is not lost on the reader that they are guests at the Old Year's party thrown by the Cocks, which suggests an association with the old and obsolete order that the narrative attempts to erase. What the text also seems to point to is that with such members there is sadly a future for corruption, greed and violence in the national space.

Thus there is a clear relation between dead bodies, the physical locality of the school, predatory teachers, dishonest mothers, corrupt fathers and the imagining the nation in *Hatchings*. Dead bodies symbolize the corruption at the heart of the Zimbabwean society. An explanation of why schools are chosen as dumping places is contained in Sobantu 'The Butcher' Ikherothi's threatening reminder to Gimnogene Pigge, at the New Year's party at Ingeborg Ficker's house, after the operative had failed to deliver properly:

> "It's too bloody late for you to do anything about that one. Just be more careful in future. You know, I've got a lot of shareholders to satisfy; I can't afford to close this business down. I've told you before, if you can't get rid of them entirely, dump them in public places - school dustbins, municipal lavatories, factory sites, not, for shit's sake, private gardens, especially when the owner turns out to be some fucking do-gooder." (46)

So the school is chosen as a dumping ground because it is a public place and institution. But, as has also been seen, this is not the only reason. It represents the corruption that pervades all aspects of life in Zimbabwe. The promiscuity, inhumanity, the teachers' predation, the mothers' dishonesty and the fathers' corruption conjoin to reinforce the image of Zimbabwe as a nation in need of moral salvation, so much so that its very foundations (the family and the school) are presented as reeking of decadence.

There is clearly a satirical parallel between Eppel's deconstruction of education in post-independence Zimbabwe, as revealed by the foregoing discussion, and the pre-independence Rhodesian working-class of *The Great North Road*. Just as The Umdidi working-class community with its entrenched racist practices is the epitome of the Rhodesian settler society, so the school (with its corrupt headmaster and teachers) is shown in *Hatchings* as a symbol of a corrupt postcolonial society. Both Umdidi and the school thus function as sites of moral degradation. In both cases, Eppel has focused on these two sections of the Zimbabwean society to explore factors in national culture that destroy the fabric of national life.

Thus far the negative space has been discussed in relation to its main activity, namely the dumping of dead babies in places of national importance. In a sense, the novel is dominated by the account of this deplorable business. The chapter now turns its attention to the characters associated with this space, before it explores how the crucial link between the diasporic community and the syndicate enables Eppel to destabilize the notion of the 'borderzone' as a site of cultural encounters which leads to the emergence of a new national culture. To this end, it is appropriate to start with the most prominent

occupant of this space and member of the diasporic community. The following passage, which introduces Sobantu 'The Butcher' Ikherothi and reveals both the man and the nature of the activities of his syndicate, is quoted in full :

> Ingeborg's current lover was a black South African refugee called Sobantu 'The Butcher' Ikherothi. He was a supporter of the Jogskyites, and he claimed to have coined the slogan (which the PAC appropriated): "One settler, one bullet". He made a good living smuggling mandrax into Zimbabwe, and smuggling emeralds out of Zimbabwe. But his most lucrative venture, avidly supported by Ms Ficker because of its high moral content, was the disposing of unwanted babies for thousands upon thousands of mothers in southern Africa. He'd started off modestly enough, operating in one or two of the smaller Zimbabwean towns like Gwanda and Chegutu but demand for his services grew like wildfire and he expanded rapidly. He now controlled a network of operations that was vast and that earned very good money for a number of people in very different walks of life. He'd even considered forming a company, as a front, and then floating it on the Zimbabwean stock exchange, but one of his 'sleeping' partners, a man called Sudbury Bauls, had dissuaded him. Too risky, he'd said.
>
> It had been through his smuggling ventures that Sobantu had discovered this inexhaustible demand for the disposing, dumping, it was sometimes called, of unwanted babies. Most of the girls and young women involved were poor but they were prepared to pay almost anything - in cash and in kind - for the service which Sobantu offered: to relieve them of the responsibility of having to abandon their babies. He had what he called scouts posted near schools, colleges, universities, markets, nunneries... wherever girls and young women were to be found in large numbers, all over Southern Africa, but concentrated in Zimbabwe. These scouts found out which of the girls had unwanted pregnancies, when they were due to give birth, where they would be giving birth, how much they could afford to pay, and then arranged to dispose of their babies, discreetly and efficiently. Although this venture made a lot of money for Sobantu and his partners, sleeping or awake, they liked to think of it as a service and not as a business. Unfortunately, the larger the venture grew, the less discreet and efficient became the disposals, and babies were being discovered in dustbins, in river beds, and in hollow trees. Luckily for the mothers, however, police men and women tended to be most reluctant to pursue cases of baby-dumping for fear that they might uncover their own or their superiors' babies! (38-39)

This passage raises a number of issues which converge, directing attention to the decaying character of Zimbabwe's post-colonial society. It reveals that there is a political dimension to Sobantu Ikherothi's activities, as suggested by his membership of an anarchistic ('Jogskyite') movement and his supposed coining of the slogan 'One settler, one bullet'. It is ironical that his syndicate enjoys the service of prominent members of the settler group, ranging from radical leftists like his girlfriend Ingeborg Ficker to bourgeois capitalists like the 'sleeping' partner who advised him against floating one of his companies on the stock exchange. The passage also points to drug smuggling as one of the syndicate's main activities, thus suggesting the extent of the physical and mental pains it inflicts on the Zimbabwean people. On the question of dumping sites, the above passage reinforces the view expressed earlier that the location of the sites is meant to underscore the national dimension of corruption which is symbolized by the syndicate's baby dumping business.

Sobantu 'The Butcher' Ikherothi's warning to Gimmogene Pigge, considered earlier, reveals the strategies of his crime syndicate and the extent to which corruption is widespread in the national space. First, dumping what he calls consignments in the public places, he claims, will make it difficult for the police to trace those who are responsible and, therefore, in his view, will hamper any pursuits, although the police force, which includes many of his clients, would turn a blind eye to such discoveries. Also implicit in his reminder is the assurance that dumping at those sites would not cause exaggerated reactions, as most sectors of the society use his services. There is in his words a suggestion that certain members of the society, the 'some fucking do-gooders', are not

dependent on his syndicate. This is another indication that the society is divided between 'the sacred' and 'the profane'.

Perhaps most significant in this passage is the suggestion that the syndicate's activities are facilitated by the willingness of the larger population to use its services, which, in turn, reinforces the view that the nation is rotten from the inside. Another significant element in this passage concerns the complicity of police officers, suggesting official sanction of corruption, and influential members of society, referred to as 'sleeping partners. Precisely, on the question of partners of the crime syndicate, it is clear that they coexist with the inner circle (consisting mainly of operatives) as the main force behind the syndicate's activities. What can be seen in the underworld ruled by Sobantu 'The Butcher' Ikherothi is its power to wreak havoc on the nation. Indeed, one can evaluate the power of this mafia-style underworld through the way he controls political and economic power. He holds in his power most of the influential members of the community. These people are his 'sleeping partners'. They appear loyal in their submission to his crime syndicate. So do the operatives who must show loyalty, must constantly be on the alert and must deliver, as the warning given to Gimnogene Pigge and referred to above shows. The alternative is to incur Sobantu's displeasure and to risk death. For he has the power to slaughter those who are ineffective.

The syndicate's most important 'sleeping partners' have gathered at Strontium Twot's New Year's party, already alluded to a number of times. At the Twot's house gather the rich and the famous in the city: The guests include

> city's businessmen, commercial farmers, successful criminals, and senior civil servants. At least one of the guests, a token black, Strontium's response to the President's call for reconciliation, was not only a businessman but a commercial farmer, a successful criminal, and a civil servant as well. (22-23)

Sudbury Bauls and Craig Wick, for example, two of the richest men in this gathering, are identified as two of the syndicate's prominent shareholders. But a consideration of how they made their wealth is telling, in terms of Eppel's pointed satire which portrays those men as the 'big pricks' of society (to use Eppel's own less than subtle choice of terminology):

> Mr Bauls's second biggest money spinner had nothing to do with farming. It was more of a charitable pursuit, Sudbury liked to think. He never talked about it with anyone except those who were directly involved with him. Even with these people he forbade the term "baby dumping". For fuck's sake, he had three children of his own. He doted on them, young Lace in particular. No, he liked to call it "helping out unmarried mothers," even though more than half the mothers he and his colleagues "helped" were actually married.
>
> Hard to tell with these people, who's married and who isn't. Deep down Sudbury knew that this was a dirty business he was involved in, so he kept his distance from it, invested in it as a "sleeping" partner. In any case the profits that poured in were used mainly in philanthropic pursuits like the creation of Black Rhino High, the commissioning of the twice life-size statue of Moral McBraggert outside the Blood of Jesus Temple, and the building of a new rugby stadium for the edification of all true Matabeles. So, what the hell!
>
> Both Craig Wick and Sudbury Bauls had had, and were still having extensive dealings with Sobantu 'The Butcher' Ikherothi; each knew something of the other's involvement - Craig with emeralds, Sudbury with unwanted babies - but as they were both Pawpaw Old Boys (both had excelled in rugby, water polo, bullying, and the sciences), they felt bound by a code of honour, a kind of latter-day virtue, to pretend that they knew nothing of each other's involvement; so there was a tacit understanding between them not to mention their mutual partner. (67-68)

As clearly indicated in the above extract, through its associates' involvement in philanthropic activities, the crime syndicate reaches all sectors of society, including the church. Moreover, the reader is also made aware of the pervasive nature of the corruption embodied by the crime syndicate as, in addition to the baby dumping activities, various other corrupt practices are reported to be at the origins of other wealthy Bulawayo residents' fortunes. The passage below focuses on the way another group of guests at the Twots party made their fortune:

> Boxer Cock and all the younger businessmen at the party, had become rich, and thereby Bulawayo's cultural elite... as a direct result of Zimbabwe's Independence.... In ten years they had grown from travelling salesmen... apprentice plumbers, primary school teachers and post office clerks to Managing Directors who owned businesses, farms, and pretty but unintelligent wives. How did they achieve this, these (in normal circumstances) oafs? Simple: they had stayed on in Zimbabwe while the majority of their white comrades had fled, taken the gap, to other countries where people talked English, played rugby, and enjoyed barbecues. This mass exodus of people with established skills and years of experience, provided wonderful opportunities for unskilled inexperienced men who could be trusted with the petty cash (this ruled out the "blacks"), if not their bosses' womenfolk, to rise rapidly in the worlds of commerce and industry. (63)

The reader gains further insights into the corrupt practices of this group of erstwhile 'Rhodies' in the story of how Boxer Cock rose from being a representative for a furniture company to a wealthy man. By buying furniture at low prices from his fleeing compatriots and the widows, the sick and the poor who stayed in the country, he built himself a considerable fortune. Two of his victims are a coloured couple, the Reebocks, who now live at Cornwall Crescent, an undesirable, multicultural suburban address.

The portrayal of Moral MacBraggert as equally corrupt, despite being a church leader, and his Blood of Jesus Temple as a site of corruption and a bastion of conservatism in Zimbabwe, is a further instrument in Eppel's construction of the corrupt community of the nation. Under the facade of religion, the church operates as a business venture. In *The Great North Road*, where Moral MacBraggert and his church are introduced for the first time to Eppel's readers, he is seen as using tricks, blackmail and his eloquence to persuade disillusioned 'Rhodies' to join his church. In *Hatchings*, the church is described as having conservative political as well as capitalist leanings. It is right-wing, with an exclusively white congregation, materialistic, and modelled on the most conservative American churches. The congregation consisted of

> white Rhodesians who, after losing the war of liberation, after witnessing their beloved Rhodesia become dreaded Zimbabwe, had turned for solace to the church - not those commie bastards like the Catholics or the Methodists who had supported the fuckin' terrs, and the poor, and the humble, and all that shit - but the right-wing, violently anti-communist, pro-capitalist, American churches like the Brotherhood of Christ, and holy Roller Rhapsody, and the Blood of Jesus, who preached the doctrine of material prosperity, and reminded their frothing congregations that it was Jesus himself who said: "The poor will always be with us". The preachers at these churches weren't over-educated nerds, f'ck'n homos, kaffir *boeties* ... they were men; they held their heads high. (12- 13)

It therefore comes as no surprise to the reader that at Strontium Twot's party 'the adornment of the party was Brother Moral MacBraggert of the Blood of Jesus Temple where most of these people worshipped, threw fits, spoke in tongues and publicly confessed their sins. Brother MacBraggert's Gospel of Prosperity was of great comfort to them' (23). It is also no surprise that on serious theological issues Brother MacBraggert should prove incompetent and unhelpful, as when Elizabeth asked him about contradictions in Jesus's Word that her teacher Boland Lipp and her friend Jet Bunion had

pointed out to her, such as his call to his disciples to leave their parents and follow him, which contradicts his commandment that one must honour and obey one's parents. Characteristically, Brother MacBraggert's response was to say that 'the Truth of God would not reveal itself to over-educated homosexuals with communist leanings like our friend Mr Lipp, nor to upstarts too clever for their own good like our young friend Jet Bunion' (51). In a subtle innuendo, the text reveals that Elizabeth was only partly convinced, wondering 'Surely the Bible must speak to the unconverted?' (51). There is a parallel between Moral MacBraggert and Sobantu Ikherothi in regard to the hold they have on their followers. Eppel portrays MacBraggert's congregation as loyal if naive. These followers would do anything to please their spiritual leader for, in their eyes, he stands as go-between between God and material possessions. Their religion (' a Gospel of Prosperity' (33)) is more akin to a materialist and supremacist culture than to faith for, as the above passage clearly indicates, they worship a God who provides them with wealth, not One who expects them to love their brothers. Thus, by casting The Blood of Jesus Temple in the role of spiritual refuge for the rich and corrupt, Eppel has created another symbol that allows him to highlight the tension between the two halves of the nation.

The social representation of the nation replicated in the crime syndicate's inner circle is interesting in the way it represents racial and ethnic groups which come from all walks of life in the Zimbabwean society. Ingeborg Ficker, Sobantu 'The Butcher' Ikherothi's current lover and closest ally, is, as already said, a leftist and a white artist. Her leftist tendency is evident in the choice of her guests at the party at her farm: 'Ex-pat aid workers, South African refugees, ex-dissidents, rogue politicians, homosexuals, dope addicts, actors, serial killers, and writers' (23). The narrator reveals, somewhat satirically, that Ingeborg 'was one of the few, the very few, native born Zimbabweans who had not been corrupted

by colonialism... she despised everything Rhodesian. Her parents, by Rhodesian standards, had been liberal' (38). She pushes her sense of radicalism to the point that she even allows her labourers to have sexual intercourse with her, just to show that they are equal to her. Like the two Prince Charming High expatriate teachers, Simon and Nicholas, she believes that involvement in the baby dumping business is both a moral and a political statement. Ravi Chunder, another member of this inner circle, 'was a Zimbabwean of Indian descent', 'a full time poet' and 'dependent on his friends for dagga, food and shelter' (41). Jealous Umbankwa, another operative, is described in a passage that is chilling in its suggestion of the analogy between his previous occupations and the business of the syndicate: 'The line he used to sell his carvings - and it was the truth - was that this same knife he now used to carve his Mother and Child studies... he had also used to kill a number of real mothers and real children' (41).

It is telling that the crime syndicate is presented as the offspring of a South African refugee and that some of its main operatives and sympathizers are immigrants who have joined forces with a section of the local population from the public and business sectors as well as from the Church. Indeed, in addition to Sobantu 'The Butcher' Ikherothi, the immigrant community also includes the two Prince Charming High expatriate teachers, Nicholas and Simon, mentioned earlier, and a host of researchers: the two researchers attached to the University of Zimbabwe, the Canadian Fark Ruckles and his Dutch girlfriend Doss; an Irish drama teacher and PhD student from Trinity College, Dublin, called Kathleen O'Toole-bag; Scottish researcher Litotes; and Afghan, an Australian PhD student. With the inclusion in the text of these immigrant intellectuals, Eppel seems to have constructed Zimbabwe in the image of the modern nation expounded on by such celebrated postcolonial theorists

as Homi Bhabha, Salman Rushdie, Edward Said and Stuart Hall, to name a few, without necessarily subscribing to all its characteristics. For the migration inscribed in the novel is from the so-called First World countries to the Third World, from the former imperial centre and other postcolonial societies to the postcolonial African nation-state of Zimbabwe. (The emphasis is important because, as implied in the narrative, there is a racial dimension to the migration.) Although the border zone the novel depicts is certainly a space of encounter between different cultures, it is clear from the text that the characters involved in this encounter represent the worst of their communities of origin so that the end result of this confluence of 'cultures', sanctioned as it is in this text by the apparent blurring of boundaries between the immigrant and the local community which is involved in the crime syndicate's activities, becomes the antithesis of the cultural hybridity which, as Bhabha and others posit, takes life at 'the borderline community of migration'. If, as Gerald R MacMaster (1995:80) states, 'the border zone spatializes cultural possibilities,' then it becomes clear that in this novel Eppel implies that no such possibilities exist or, if they do, then they are not of the positive type.

The novel can be read as suggesting that Eppel disrupts Bhabha's optimistic theorizing of the positive contribution of the immigrant community to the creation of a modern nation; this can be seen via a consideration of the ways in which some of the immigrant characters, to the exclusion of Ikherothi already discussed, are described and their credentials reported. The two Prince Charming High School expatriate teachers, Simon and Nicolas, make it a duty to convert such subjects such as history and English into leftist propaganda instead of teaching the subject that each of them was supposed to teach - that is, English for Simon, and History for Nicholas. As the narrator puts it, 'they both saw this

compartmentalizing of subjects as a load of bourgeois crap, as part of an overall strategy to keep a corrupt establishment of Anglican sodomites in power. So they taught politics. They were both paid up members of an ultra-left wing breakaway group called Gallopskytes. They had broken up from the Trotskytes who, they claimed, were not moving quickly enough in the direction of world revolution' (19-20).

Tellingly, their contribution to world revolution consists in serving Sobantu 'The Butcher' Ikherothi's crime syndicate in 'get(ing) rid of unwanted babies' (54). The reader is given access to the two men's thinking through the narrator's comment that:

> It was part of their contribution towards the rehabilitation of a country that had been corrupted and almost destroyed by colonialism, racialism, and imperialism. They wanted no money for their assistance. The occasional screw, perhaps - yes - but for Chris' sake no money. It was Sobantu 'The Butcher' Ikherothi who wanted money. He had shareholders to satisfy. Simon and Nicholas were just middle men, motivated by morality not filthy lucre'. (54)

The sarcasm of the above passage, captured in the words 'motivated by morality', forces the reader to take stock of the nature of the corruption that the two men's vision of the world revolution implies. By foregrounding the implication of this leftist politics for the country, Eppel deliberately undermines the idea that all imports from abroad are good for the nation.

Much as Simon and Nicholas's usefulness in promoting progress and development in Zimbabwe is questioned, so the research conducted by the foreign researchers is sarcastically reported. Fark's and Doss's research topics, in Sociology and Psychology, are '*The Ramifications of Steatopygia in Unmarried Women Aged between Thirteen and*

Seventeen along the Confluence of the Nuanetsi and Save Rivers' and *'The Psychological Ramifications of Steatopygia in Unmarried Women Aged between Thirteen and Seventeen along the Confluence of the Nuanetsi and Save Rivers*' (42), respectively. The narrator goes on to inform the reader that many institutions, including the University of Zimbabwe, were interested in the research but in particular that the researchers 'were sponsored by no less than seventeen aid organizations throughout the world: fifteen from Canada, one from Holland, and one from Sweden' (43). Similarly, Kathleen O'Toole-bag (a name resonant with negative connotations), 'who was making a study of 'township' drama in Bulawayo's high density suburbs' (43), is said to have 'gained a good deal of credibility from the local people because of her vociferous stand against the corrupting influence on African culture of decadent, reactionary, colonial art' (43). The sarcasm of the quoted passage is not wasted on the reader who knows about her plagiarism of Irish plays as well as her intimate relationship with Skies Izindebe, the corrupt chairman of the Bulawayo's Writers' Union. Litotes's and Afghan's studies, on 'the role of the nostrils in the transition from puberty to adulthood in left-handed Zimbabweans' (73) and 'the correlation between intelligence and penis-size in bilharzia infected men who lived within a ten kilometre radius of the Mzinguane Dam' (74), respectively, also serve to illustrate the point made in this chapter that Eppel pokes fun at the contribution of immigrant intellectuals to the re-vitalization of the Zimbabwean national culture.

Mayfair Met-Hui Yang (1996:231), in an essay that touches on the distinction between exile, immigrant and anthropologist/scholar, writes:

> Both exile and immigrant are in turn differentiated from the colonialist and anthropologist who "apprehend the new culture, not as a field of subjectivity, but rather as an object of/for their gaze".... Whereas the exile and immigrant must confront the issue of "a rupture between and re-suturing of individual and collective subjectivities", the colonialist and anthropologist are not troubled with a profound realignment or threat to subjectivity.... The anthropologist must seek to become not only like the exile who gains a certain perspective on his or her own culture while residing in another culture... , but especially like an immigrant who starts to absorb a new subjectivity, interprets the world from its standpoints, and acts upon its historical concerns as if she were a member of that culture.

What is instructive from Yang's analysis is the insight that the migrant characters in this text act from subject positions which cannot lead to the development of a refined national culture and which have ambivalent connections with Zimbabwe. That these characters can be identified with anthropologists is clear from their obsession with the native. As has been seen, Simon and Nicolas are physically attracted to female natives. Kathleen O'Toole-bag has a native boyfriend. All the thesis titles mentioned above reflect a preoccupation with natives' sexuality so that it is not just the case of 'the native in the non-Western world [being] used by the West to promote and develop its own intellectual contours' (Rey Chow, 1994:132) which Eppel exposes through his inscription of this migrant community. His focusing on the relationship between these intellectual migrants and the natives also provides a useful illustration of how 'the "pornographic" image of the native' (Chow, 1994:132), is constructed in Western discourse. In Chow's analysis, this image is closely linked to the issue of displacement and is co-terminous with what he calls 'more *general* questions of exploitation, resistance, and survival by using the historical experience of the "native" as its shifting ground' (143). The mention in the text of the generous financial assistance allocated to these projects indicates that Eppel considers as problematic the willingness of Western governments and aid organizations to fund such projects, which at

the end not only perpetuates an obsolete image of the African and encourages the exploitation of the African continent but also guarantees the survival of those doing 'research' in the field. In an aside in the text, the narrator informs the reader that he had heard that Fark Ruckles transfers research money to his private bank account. Thus the passages examined above emerge as critical of the discourses of assistance to development which are vehicled by developed countries and aid institutions from those countries. The alert reader would also see in the above passages the terms of Eppel's subversion of the so-called Third-Worldism of leftist political and educational institutions from the West. It is of significance that the novel does not inscribe the foreign contingent as a positive community. Instead, it establishes its members as belonging to a subterranean culture.

In *Hatchings* border crossing has a dual function. While the initial border crossing is evoked as detrimental to the nation because it has brought into the country the seeds of corruption, the re-crossing is figured as deliverance. When, at the close, the situation gets out of hand, Eppel voices his critique of those earlier immigrants who later leave Zimbabwe after it becomes clear that they cannot prosper further under the new dispensation. Corrupt church leader Moral MacBraggert and Sobantu 'The Butcher' Ikherothi are among the first to leave. Sensing that things are turning to the disadvantage of people of his kind, the church leader decides to leave his congregation and the country, not before an emotional church service is organized during which the congregation 'prayed for the families of businessmen, commercial farmers, successful criminals, and senior civil servants...in short they prayed for themselves. Well why not? Wouldn't you if you felt that your world was falling apart, for the second time in a little over ten years? I mean, be

reasonable!' (111). This is a further indication of the coming of a new, moral order, which is the central message of the novel.

The passage describing the re-crossing of the border for these characters is sinister in its suggestion that their criminal activities are now exported to other countries. 'Sobantu has returned to his homeland to take his rightful place in the negotiations for a new political order in South Africa' (108). Gymogene Pigge crosses the border into Zambia. Such displacements, the text implies, are painlessly made, thus further stressing the rootlessness of those involved, as revealed by the following passage that tells - in biting satire - about the destinations of other members of the immigrant community:

> Simon and Nicolas are on their way to Namibia, someone told me, there to vilify the boers, screw the hottentots, and bolster the fledgling Gallopskyte party which has opened an office in downtown Swakopmund. Apparently, Fark and Doss and Afghan and Litotes have found research posts at the University of Bophutatswana where they could spend the next decades writing their PhD theses. Aid money from Canada and Sweden is still available to them. As long as your research is relevant - and theirs is - and in the interest of human welfare - and theirs is, by God - the precious foreign money will keep pouring in. (108)

In the sense suggested in the passage above, the novel explores the role of both academic institutions and Western aid agencies in the displacement of people, and also the nature of the moral, political and academic aspirations which take the immigrant academics and aid workers to Third World nations. Behind them the immigrants leave a country where they were able to amass wealth or to experiment with their ideological political views. It is perhaps not too much to say that Eppel critiques the kind of immigration discussed above. It may seem ironical that these characters are portrayed exactly in the way immigrants were figured in last century's Argentine anthropological

discourse, studied by Julio Ramos. In such a discourse, Ramos (1994:37) writes, 'immigrants were figuratively a virus which infected the body of the nation...'. This is precisely the image that Eppel appears to have conveyed in this text that links immigration with criminality, in a comparable manner with the texts analyzed by Ramos.

Thus, the first part of this chapter has brought to light the tension between two halves of the nation: one that is thoroughly corrupt and strives to spread its tentacles over the whole; and another, that the narrator encourages his reader to see as holding the hopes of regeneration. The second part, below, focuses on two poems from *Sonata for Matabeleland* two poems to examine how they complement *Hatchings*.

PART TWO

In his poem 'Waiting for the bus', Eppel returns to the theme of displacement by employing the image of commuters waiting for the bus and travellers in a jet to symbolize the division of the nation between unscrupulous rich people and the underclasses. The poem's overt message is the lamenting of the decline in living standards through the recounting of what might appear as an ordinary incident: the waiting for the bus. Beyond the recounting of the incident it is the collective experience of a nation that the poet exposes to the reader. Stanza 1 stresses the nature of the men's ordeal in temporal and geographical terms:

> All along the road from Bulawayo
> to Gwanda or Matopos or Vic Falls;
> at bus-stops, lay-bys, under shadeless trees,
> the people wait beside their bundled things.
> All day long they wait, and sometimes all night
> too, and the next day - anxiously waiting.

Geographically, the waiting is presented as involving people in different parts of the country. In other words, it is presented as a national experience. The repetition of the term 'people' throughout the poem reinforces this notion. The waiting is also presented as an endless experience, as the temporal signpost words 'all day long', 'sometimes all night', 'and the next day', indicate. The emotive thrust is underlined in the waiting which is compounded as both physical and psychological burden, as can be seen in the following extract.

> Waiting for the public transport to stop
> and let them in and take them home. Waiting
> with babies to nurse, children to comfort
> and feed, chickens, the occasional goat.
> they have learned to come prepared, with blankets,
> izinduku, pots for cooking sadza.

So Stanza 2 dramatizes the human side of the men's experience. It is not just the adults who undergo the ordeal. Babies and children are also involved. The reader is made to feel shocked at learning about their predicament. Bus stops are transformed into permanent dwelling places for the multitudes - and also for animals - who wait desperately for the buses to take them to various destinations.

> Waiting for ZUPCO or SHU-SHINE, AJAY,
> to get them to their Uncle's funeral,
> their cousin's wedding, their baby brother's
> baptism. Watching the new Camper Vans
> cruising by. Anxious not to lose their jobs. Waiting.
>
> They take their time now not by wrist-watches
> but by the sun and the stars and the moon;
> by the appearance of mopani worms;
> by the ripening of marula fruit;
> by the coming of the rains. Not by bus
> timetables but by birth, marriage, and death.

The motives for travelling, mentioned in Stanza 4, reinforce the anxiety associated with the waiting. The sheer inhumanity of waiting has caused the people to relapse into traditional modes of telling the time. In Stanzas 5 and 6 the hardship of the commuters is contrasted with the more luxurious and modern mode of existence and means of transport of those travelling in the jets.

> And while they wait they count the jets that fly
> to Harare and Johannesburg.
> Liverish businessmen sucking whiskies
> are in these jets. And Chefs with mistresses
> wearing the latest digital watches.
> Digital dolly-birds. All carry brief-
>
> cases with combination locks, and next
> to nothing inside: dark glasses, perhaps;
> and a newspaper to study the Stock
> Exchange; something digital, perhaps, for
> calculating profit and ... more profit.
> It's something for the people to do while
>
> they wait - counting the jets high overhead.
> Often the vapour trails are the only
> clouds in the sky. No Forex for buses,
> they tell us, but the five-star hotels go
> up, and another Boeing is purchased.
> All day they wait; all night; long-suffering.

The strategy of the speaker in the above stanzas is to show how, metaphorically and socially, jet travellers are above the commuters.

> And when, at last, a bus does stop, its tyres
> are likely to be bald, its brakes likely
> to be held together with wire, its body
> battered, belching clouds of brain-tightening,
> lung-collapsing smoke. Who's responsible?
> Not me, says the Chef dipping his fingers

in his girl-friend's cocktail, shifting his vast
belly, vast enough to accommodate
at least seven baby goats. Don't look at
me, says the Managing Director, my
bottom line is profit. I owe it to
the shareholders. Another whisky, please

And don't think it's going to be any
different tomorrow or the next day
or the next. The time of sweet-becoming
is over. For those millions who depend
on buses, nothing has changed; only their
expectations have once again been dashed.

The time of bitter arrival is here:
not safe new buses, but the amassing
of personal wealth, the cultivation
of another crop of heroes. Street
names change, statues change; hotels go up, jets
go up, and the people go on waiting.

It is clear that in this poem the speaker situates himself on the side of the commuters waiting for the bus, presented as the marginalized, and against the travellers in the jet, cast as uncaring and too much concerned with profit. The poet is virulent in his attack against the hypocrisy and irresponsibility of the 'comprador bourgeoisie' as he analyzes the politics behind management of public institutions in his country. Such politics is depicted as careless towards the general population in its insistence on profit. The poem concludes with statements about the difficulties that lie ahead, as a result of the unjust social system that prevails in the country. Thus, In 'Waiting for the bus', Eppel brings to the fore the theme of disillusionment with the postcolonial situation in Zimbabwe while, at the same time, offers an eminently plausible representation of the postcolonial nation.

In terms of Benedict Anderson's concept of the nation as an imagined community, this poem identifies the nation as travellers. Two groups of travellers representing two sections of the nation are highlighted in the poem: the common people who suffer the vicissitudes of the postcolonial situation and the scandalously rich. The contrast in social fortunes between the two groups is inscribed not only through an evocation of the means of transport they use but also through an imagined geography, in which those in the jet are represented as occupying a space above that of the commuters waiting for the bus. The space occupied by the jet travellers is figured as a dream world that the commuters can never reach. But at the same time, the text seems to suggest that, because of the association with profit, the jet travellers occupy the position of exploiters of the nation, comparable to the disposers of babies in *Hatchings*. Their journey to financial centres outside the country, where they pursue profit and enjoy themselves, underlies their dis-identification with the rest of the nation.

The poem 'Laws that lie with folded claws'provides a further indication of the poet's polarized representation of the postcolonial Zimbabwean nation.

> "To live outside the law you must be honest."
> BOB DYLAN
> Those who live inside the law
> decide the law, providing
> for themselves. Those who keep
> the status quo sleep late,
> and sow and reap, and so
>
> reward themselves. Those who
> can't afford to be aboard
> to see cupidity;
> the bored aboard a ship
> of fools, a slip of stools,

a school of lips like clips
that clench, a bench of laws,
a cause, no cause: they can't
rely on lies that lie
like laws with folded claws.

With a clear reference to the Zimbabwean situation, the speaker ascribes a meaning to the Dylan song. Thus, the reference to 'those who live under the law' comes to refer to those in the high spheres of power. The image of the ship connects with that of the law to emphasize the division between the rich and powerful, on the one hand, and the common people, on the other hand. For the narrator, the world of those 'who live inside the law' and 'those who keep the status quo' is one governed by cupidity, corruption and lack of concern for others. Eppel' s revolt against this world is conveyed through his use of the words 'fools', 'stools', 'bored', 'lips'.

The predatory connotation of the phrase 'folded claws' in the title and in the last line of the poem hints that those in positions of power will not surrender their privileges and serve the interest of the people. As the use of the word 'lies' also suggests, this poem is a statement of the poet's distrust of the ruling class and points to his attachment with 'those who can't afford to be aboard', a clear allusion to the 'gravy-train' of African independence.

As has been seen, the three texts - the novel *Hatchings* and the two poems - are concerned with crime. In the novel the author highlights the danger to the nation of a culture of crime and proposes to the reader a choice between the moral dimension of a national vision and its opposite. Although clearly concerned with the corruption that characterizes modern Zimbabwe, the novel is ultimately optimistic. It is significant in its

suggestion that, after years of racial injustice (such as depicted in *The Great North Road*), a real conversion to moral national politics is possible and that, despite the rampant corruption, the new society bears in itself the seeds of its own regeneration. It is the way this novel articulates this duality and reconciles this contradiction that the first part of this chapter has explored. Another significant aspect of this novel is that, in contrast to *The Great North Road*, *Hatchings* makes it clear that the culture of corruption is not a racial phenomenon. The poem 'Waiting for the bus' is concerned with the crimes perpetrated by an oligarchic ruling elite, that has reneged on the promises made during the war of liberation. 'Laws that lie with folded claws' exposes a criminal oligarchy that perpetrates social injustice against the other half of the nation. Unlike some Zimbabwean writers, Eppel does not lay the blame on one particular racial group of the population. In essence, it is as though, through the dual representation this novel offers, he places his fellow Zimbabweans in front of a mirror in order to question their actions. As he puts it in his interview with Richard Saunders, already alluded to, and as this chapter has shown, '*Hatchings* is just the reflection of the whole social scene in the new Zimbabwe, where all races and social groups exist and engage in unseemly practices' (Eppel and Saunders, 1995:15-16).

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis has been to examine representations of the Rhodesian/ Zimbabwean nation in selected texts by Zimbabwean authors John Eppel, Dambudzo Marechera and Yvonne Vera. The idea has been to consider a diversified corpus of narratives of the nation. There are obviously other Zimbabwean literary texts which can provide representations of the Zimbabwean nation, and although choice is always somewhat arbitrary, as pointed out in Chapter One of this study, the chosen authors can be regarded as representatives of their country's literature. The selection of texts was motivated by range - a white male settler writer whose pioneer heritage roots him firmly in and of the country, a black female 'native' Zimbabwean author and a deracinated exiled poet and novelist - and by variety of perspective - from the 'Rhodie' viewpoint to the mythic traditionalist, to the self-confessed alienated cosmopolitan, for example. Thus, as has been argued, the selected texts tell stories of the nation from a variety of thematic perspectives, using various literary techniques that enable their authors to challenge the reader's conception of the nation.

As should become evident, a consistent pattern in these representations has been to imagine a national space occupied by communities usually in oppositional relations to one another. In these spatially articulated representations, the border functions as a marker of division in the imagined national geography and difference. Each of the entities so demarcated is in turn presented as a site where identities are constructed, constituted and, sometimes, negotiated. Thus, as has been seen, in *The Great North Road*, Eppel imagines colonial Rhodesia as a space polarized between a centre occupied by the settler

community and a periphery occupied by the black population. Within the boundaries of this 'national space', a common race and a common (western) culture are conjured up as markers of difference between the colonists and the racialized subjects. The latter's otherness is enunciated in an ambivalent settler discourse that legitimizes their exclusion. Eppel's first novel, in contradistinction to Vera's *Nehanda*, for example, is interesting in its emphasis on the silence and invisibility of the black population, as opposed to the narrative centrality of the settler characters. With this novel, Eppel breaks new ground for Zimbabwean literature in the way he highlights and then subverts the settler discourse of the nation. The poems from *Spoils of War* were shown to contribute to Eppel's deconstruction, in their interrogation of the notion of a Rhodesian identity defined in relation to the racialized Other. The satirical tone in the poems invites the reader to join the poet in his mockery of the negative images of the settler and of the Rhodesian historiography.

In Yvonne Vera's text *Nehanda*, examined in Chapter Three, the imagined space of the nation under colonial rule is a valley hit by drought. Images of birds of prey and scavengers hovering over the valley symbolize colonial invasion and the dimming cultural consciousness which resulted. In this narrative, the land is identified with the ancestors who, the reader is constantly reminded, are its natural owners. The hills on one side of the valley are figured as the ancestors' domain while the hill on the other side is presented as the colonizer's headquarters and, implicitly, as the outpost of Western imperialism in the land. The emphasis in the novel on the link between land, ancestors and the black population is essential in order to overturn the Rhodesian discourse on land ownership and the figurative representation of the African within such a discourse as deservedly

occupying the periphery of the colonial territory. It also serves to highlight cultural and religious differences between the settler and the native, which are prominently displayed in the novel. As was argued in Chapter Three, Vera's canvas for her treatment of difference includes Shona mythology and symbolism. The world depicted by such narrative devices is an African world that excludes the settler. It is through this implied exclusion that the novel also predicts a postcolonial African identity which, it posits, will be articulated in a language that will be comprehensible only to the former colonized.

Thus, a common feature between *The Great North Road* and *Nehanda* is that both novels debunk the myth of a Rhodesian nation by offering representations constructed on the basis of the notion of racial and cultural difference. They differ in terms of the purpose of each text. Whereas Eppel's novel disavows difference and suggests the coming together of all the races, Vera's emphasizes difference as part of her project to remap the national space. Her main strategy to this effect consists in 'empowering' her native characters and in reducing her settler characters to relative silence and invisibility, in contradistinction to *The Great North Road* where the same strategy is used by Eppel to suggest the blacks' marginality. In this way, the positioning of the black people is reversed - from a marginal subject to one which occupies the centre.

As has been seen in Chapter Five, *in Hatchings* Eppel relies on the notion of moral difference to provide his representation of the postcolonial Zimbabwean nation. The boundaries between the two halves of his imagined national community are moral rather than racial. The point is that, in this allegory of the rebirth of the new nation, the racial tension that characterized the colonial state is displaced and even erased in order to

highlight the moral division within the nation. It is not until the end of the narrative, when the underworld dismantles itself and the hatching of a new moral culture is suggested in the episode of the hatching of the Asil Khan egg, that the reader makes sense of the complex representation of post-independence Zimbabwe as both a negative and a positive space. This mode of representation of the nation reflects Eppel's concern with corruption in post-independence Zimbabwe as highlighted in his interview with Richard Saunders and in his essay 'A Serious Business', referred to in Chapter One, in which he describes his use of satire as his way of engaging with issues of corruption in his multicultural nation. It is worth noticing how the narrator is forced to help the reader understand the moral nature of the conflict between the good and bad characters. This help comes in the form of extracts from Mircea Eliade that permeate the text.

Hatchings contributes to Zimbabwean literature by highlighting immigrant characters in a way that destabilizes the notions of cultural hybridity and cosmopolitan identity. On examining Eppel's inscription of those characters in his text and their interaction with the local population, it has been possible to argue that the novel suggests that the kind of immigration depicted in the novel, justified as it is by self-interest or by a discourse of anthropology, does not produce the kind of postmodern hybridity that postcolonial theorists assert takes place within the boundaries of the modern nation, as a result of an encounter between different cultures.

In Marechera the national territory is imagined as consisting of two parts separated by boundaries that are racial and cultural in his works set in the colonial period, and mainly social, in those writings set after the country's independence. In their depiction of colonial

Rhodesia as a space of violence and a prison, texts such as *The House of Hunger* and 'The Concentration Camp' juxtapose the construction of the settler as a perpetrator of colonial violence and jailer with that of the oppressed black as a prisoner in his own land. However, as has also been pointed out in Chapter Four, Marechera complicates his representation of the Rhodesian/Zimbabwean society by debunking, through his focus on his family home and the account of his relationship with his white girlfriend Patricia, the myth of racial group cohesion. This myth of a cohesive black group is further exposed in his texts set after independence, where materialistic obsessions have contributed to widen the division between the new dominant classes and the people at the bottom of the social ladder. Marechera further destabilizes racial boundaries through the many accounts of intimate interracial relationships in his texts.

In both these representations, the narrator/author situates himself at the margins of his society. In general terms, he addresses the social difference between those occupying the centre and the marginalized members of society. As has also been shown through a reading of some of his texts, Marechera's positioning at the periphery is an important strategy for it allows him to claim both difference from his nation and an intellectual space where he can claim a universal identity. As was suggested in Chapter Four, this difference is located within his narrator's inscription of the tension between the national subject's mimicry and his own sophisticated hybridity. Marechera's work invites the reader right into the debate around the question of whether to identify with an environment of blatant social, political, and physical violence, with a community of mimicking subjects, or to distance oneself from it and enjoy the richness of a universal culture.

In addition to the focus on difference in all the texts analyzed, which can be read as a commentary by all their authors on Rhodesian/Zimbabwean identity, the study has also brought to light the marginality of the characters portrayed as well as of the writers themselves. John Eppel has hinted at his marginality in Zimbabwean literature in his essay referred to in Chapter One, in which he describes himself as 'a White African who belongs and yet does not belong to his country, and has very mixed feelings about his past' (Eppel, 1996:19). Unlike Marechera who writes from the margins of his society to serve as a spokesperson for the marginalized classes, Eppel writes to bridge the gap between two historically opposite cultural communities. In the process, he uses his pen to mock the seriousness with which the 'Rhodies' believed in the idea of an integrated Rhodesian nation. In this respect, by revising the colonial narrative of Rhodesia, Eppel symbolically places himself on the side of the colonized natives, in other words, at the margins. In another respect, the laughter is also self-directed for, as the analysis of selected poems from *Spoils of War* has revealed, he assumes his identity as a member of that settler group. In *Hatchings* and the poems from *Sonata for Matabeleland*, which reveal that the 'Villains are no longer only Whites' (1996:19), he mocks those of his countrymen, both black and white, who indulge in corrupt practices. His work indicates that Eppel seems to have come to terms with his past and has moved a step further from the margins, to denounce in his writing the corruption that plagues his 'beloved' country.

Marechera's representation of the nation can be understood in terms of his decision to avoid *les chemins battus*, the thematic and aesthetic thrusts of much Zimbabwean literature. He rejected the celebration of the nation, through arguably the main genre of Zimbabwean literature, the narrative of the liberation war, which borders on nativism.

Instead, like some writers of his generation, he undertook to deal with the trauma caused by the social and political conditions in colonial Rhodesia, as Veit-Wild's work on Marechera has emphasized. But even in dealing with these concerns, Marechera differs from his contemporaries not only in his idiosyncratic articulation of these concerns – through the use of a hybrid discourse loaded with allusions to classical culture and universal literature (Veit-Wild,1995) – but also by choosing a lifestyle, that of a full-time bohemian writer, which was then regarded as alien in his land. Writing at the margins of the Zimbabwean society and of his country of exile, Britain, Marechera has offered a representation of his nation that is particular in his country's literature. What Timothy D. Taylor (1997:81) has written in another context appears to apply perfectly to Marechera: '... marginality either as positionality or in representations plays a pivotal role in forming and altering world views and, thus, aesthetic processes among other things'. As was intimated in Chapter Four, Marechera's writing of the nation is engineered to include the voices of those at the fringe of the society (the homeless, the tramps, the drunks, the hungry, the poor, and so on) and, through his mediating artistry, to confront the national community with the realities of being at the periphery. Resulting from this strategy, the reader is made to feel that the representation of the nation offered in Marechera's narratives is not the author's alone. This strategy thus becomes a collective narrative enterprise with which less privileged members of the society are associated. Among fine examples of this strategy are those pieces of poetry, such as 'The Coin of Moonshire', 'The Oracle of the Povo' and the journal section of *Mindblast*, in which the author presents contrasting images of the nation's social classes.

Though not a marginalized writer, Yvonne Vera writes from a position that can be considered as marginal. And, for this reason, a discussion, of her work provides a useful entry into Marechera's. As already indicated, her writing is influenced by her life experiences in the rural area. Such an experience is easily detected in her work, and most particularly in *Nehanda*, a novel in which the nativist world views associated with narratives of the liberation war are clearly foregrounded. The purpose of this text is to reclaim the land that settler discourse has claimed as the white man's. Here, Vera portrays colonial Zimbabwe as a place under siege by a foreign imperial power. In this context, the struggle to resist the foreign invasion is presented not only as an enterprise to recover the occupied territory but, perhaps more importantly, as a determination to preserve cultural purity. In this sense, this novel decentres the settler myth of the nation discussed in relation to Eppel's *The Great North Road.* In *Nehanda* the space occupied by the white colonizer is constructed as Other space or the margins, whereas the native's space becomes the centre.

Thus, as a study about Zimbabwean literature, this thesis represents a departure from previous work on the relationship between literature and nation in its analysis of the varying strategies of representing the nation in each of the texts discussed. It is intended that further research, involving a larger and even more varied corpus, will be undertaken to extend the present study.

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