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*WHITE DISCOURSE IN POST-INDEPENDENCE ZIMBABWEAN  
LITERATURE.*

Submitted in accordance with the  
requirements for The Degree of  
Master of Arts (Literary Studies)  
at the University of Cape Town.

1993.

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**acknowledgements:**

I acknowledge the financial assistance of the University of Cape Town Research Fund. The contents of the dissertation, however, do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of the above institution.

I would like to thank Professor A. P. Brink for his efforts in supervising this dissertation, for the invaluable references and for pressuring me to keep to schedule. And I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Chennells, Irene Staunton, and Betty Finn for their views and ideas.

With most particular gratitude to my parents: Liz McClelland for 'allowing herself' to be taken advantage of, dropping everything from her own schedule to arrange meetings, to buy books and to search for material for me; and Bill McClelland for his continued support, financial and otherwise (the contents of the dissertation, however, do not necessarily reflect their views or opinions!!) And grateful thanks to Zipp for showing so much kindness and generosity in allowing me to stay (for so long!)

To Chris, Robyn and Fiona, whose tasks involved so much more than proof-reading, a big thank you. They carefully treaded their dissections, commentaries, criticisms (and squash games) around my temper and confidence.

**Dedication**

To my Mother and Father.

## abstract

Literally hundreds of novels were written by white Rhodesians during the U.D.I. era of the 1960s and 1970s. Since Independence, however, not much more than a handful of literary texts have been produced by whites in Zimbabwe. This dissertation, therefore, involves an interrogation of both white discourse and the (reduced) space for white discourse in postcolonial Zimbabwean society. In addition to the displaced moral space, and the removal of the economic and political power base, there has been an appropriation of control over the material means of production of any discourse and white discourse, which has become accustomed to its position of superiority due to its dominance and dominating tendencies, has struggled to come to terms with its new, non-hegemonic 'space'.

In an attempt to come to some understanding of the literary silence and marginalisation of white discourse in post-independence Zimbabwe there has to be some understanding of the voice that was formed during the British South Africa Company's administration and which reached a crescendo of authoritarian self-assertion at the declaration of unilateral independence. Vital to this discussion (in Part I) is an uncovering of the myths that were intrinsic to white discourse in the way that they were created as justification for settlement and to propagandise the aggressive defence of that space that was forged in an alien landscape.

These myths have not been easily cast aside and, hence, have made it so difficult for white discourse to adapt to post-colonial society. Most Rhodesian novels were extremely partisan and promulgated these myths. Part II, discusses *ex post facto* novels about the war (from the white perspective) to investigate whether white discourse is recognising the lies that make up so much of its belief system. This investigation of this particular perspective of the war, then, will help to define at what stage white Zimbabweans are at in the development of a national culture.

Part III takes this discussion of acculturation and national unity further. Furthermore, through the discussion of a number of novels in this chapter, it is argued that white discourse is struggling to come to terms with its non-hegemonic position and is continuing to attempt to assert its control. The 'space' available to the early settlers' discourse for appropriation, however, has been removed and, in the reduced space available to white discourse, one continued area of possible control is that of conservation.

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Yet, I can write of hope,  
though the voice I hear  
in the icy dawn  
is still frail and tremulous,  
and the mists are a portend  
of a familiar and savage storm

I can sing a hymn  
to the glory of my land,  
from the ashes something stirs,  
new voices are being heard.  
- Achmat Dangor.

**WHITE DISCOURSE IN POST-INDEPENDENCE ZIMBABWEAN  
LITERATURE.**

I N T R O D U C T I O N .

... Nor does the phrase *white writing* imply the existence of a body of writing different in nature from black writing. white writing is white only insofar as it is generated by the concerns of people no longer European, not yet African.<sup>1</sup>

Flora Veit-Wild has recently brought out a comprehensive history of Zimbabwean literature entitled ***Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers: A Social History of Zimbabwean Literature***<sup>2</sup>. In this overview she focuses on Zimbabwean writers' contradictory attitudes towards settler colonialism, the liberation war and a post-colonial government. By way of introducing my central thesis I propose to focus on three particularly interesting (and, to my dissertation, relevant) aspects of this piece of literary research: the title and two endnotes.

Veit-Wild's concern is (apparently) evident in the title she has formulated and her introduction confirms that the text will deal with three generations of

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1 J.M. Coetzee. (1982). ***White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa***. Radix. New Haven.

2 See Veit-Wild, F. (1993).

Zimbabwean writing - "pioneering" nationalists; writers of the 1970's, disillusioned with nationalism; and, finally, writers in the post-colonial mould. What is interesting is the way she uses the term 'Zimbabwean literature': endnote number 31 to the Introduction states that

"Zimbabwean literature" will in the following, unless otherwise specified, be used to mean black Zimbabwean literature. (sic) (Veit-Wild;1993;13)

Any queries as to white Zimbabwean literature are answered cursorily: according to her, "because of the completely different social and political background of the two races, the two literatures would have to be considered in different contexts" (ibid. p. 6). At this point we are referred to those "different contexts": endnote 32 states that

A comprehensive analysis of white fiction in Rhodesia was presented by Anthony Chennells in his **Settler Myths and the Southern Rhodesian Novel** Ph.D thesis 1982. (ibid. p. 13).

This is not to belittle Flora Veit-Wild's substantial and important enterprise but to raise a question, the answer(s) to which will be the central challenge of this dissertation: what has happened to the white writer in Post-Independence Zimbabwe? Ensuing questions are thereby revealed: why is it that the prolific number of novels written by whites up until 1980 did

not continue after Independence? How is it that Anthony Chennells' dissertation <sup>3</sup> on white fiction in Rhodesia seems to be the last word on the subject - can white writers not be included in the literary canon of "Zimbabwean literature"? Have they no space, nothing to say, no relevance in terms of "Zimbabwean literature"? My argument is that critical discussion of white discourse has only referred to an extended period of white rule in (Southern) Rhodesia and this voice (or perhaps it should be referred to as a whisper?) since independence has been marginalised or/and neglected.

In this dissertation I shall examine what has become of the 'space' available for white discourse in post-independence Zimbabwean fiction. This will require, in Part I, a brief look back in time to the establishment of settler dominance and its synchronous Western Christian mythical idealism of 'civilisation': the colonial enterprise, using religious and/or cultural hegemony as legitimation, appropriated more than just land - it appropriated a moral space which whites defended aggressively with rifles, laws and the pen. And the pen becomes a central metaphor in any discussion of colonial discourse and particularly of Rhodesian discourse, for it symbolises the limited education provided to the majority of the population and represents the writing of the race laws that were passed. The metaphor culminates in the Unilateral

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3 See Anthony Chennells (1982).

Declaration of Independence, signed on the 11th November, 1965, in the post-script to which the Rhodesian Prime Minister added:

We have struck a blow for the preservation of justice, civilisation and Christianity and in the spirit of this belief we have this day assumed our sovereign independence. God bless you all. <sup>4</sup>

In colonial society, as Ashcroft et al (1989: 7) point out, persistent use of English as the dominant language perpetuates the hierarchical configuration of power precisely because language is "the medium through which conceptions of 'truth', 'order' and 'reality' become established". But this hierarchical structure of domination, Ashcroft et al continue, "is rejected in the emergence of an effective post-colonial voice" (1985: 7). Thus in post-independence Zimbabwe the moral ground of white discourse was removed by a new political power base which inherited (from the Rhodesia Front <sup>5</sup>) an influence over publishers, printers and the media. White discourse now had to find a new space over which it could exert control. And this space became shrunken not only because of the removal of its power base but also because of the mass exodus of a white population, fearful of recrimination, after independence in 1980. All of this has led to the

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4 Ian Smith, 11th November 1965, as quoted by Julie Frederikse (1982: 48).

5 The Rhodesia Front was the ruling party in Rhodesia, consistently voted into power by the white electorate between 1962 and 1980.

marginalisation of the white voice in Zimbabwe which is only now, fourteen years later, if not exactly asserting itself, at least tremulously venturing forth to affirm its status in a Zimbabwean national culture.

Since independence many writers in Zimbabwe have attained a certain amount of notoriety and interest. Writers such as Chenjerai Hove <sup>6</sup>, Shimmer Chinodya <sup>7</sup>, Raymond Choto, Charles Samupindi, Dumbudzo Marechera <sup>8</sup>, and Tsitsi Dangarembga <sup>9</sup> (among many others <sup>10</sup>) have dealt with various aspects of the liberation war and, more recently, neo-colonialism. T.O. McLoughlin states that much of Zimbabwean fiction "implies an engagement with some aspect of the liberation war, and thereby attempts to define or describe what stage we are at in the development of national consciousness" (in **Current Writing** 3, 1991). The review article, "Men at War: Writers and Fighters in Recent Zimbabwean Fiction" is

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6 Chenjerai Hove won the Noma award in 1989 for **Bones** (1988).

7 For instance, see **Harvest of Thorns** (1989), which won a Commonwealth Writers Prize and the Zimbabwe Literary Award for Chinodya.

8 Marechera can be regarded as more of an iconoclastic outsider than any other Zimbabwean novelist, and seems far removed from the struggle for independence, but **House of Hunger** (1978) and **The Black Insider** (1990) form vital portrayals of a dislocated Zimbabwean psyche - of an exiled black Zimbabwean who belongs nowhere: not in Africa nor in Britain.

9 See **Nervous Conditions** (1988).

10 For assessments of Zimbabwean writing see, for example: Zimunya, M. (1982). **Those Years of Drought and Hunger: The Birth of African Fiction in Zimbabwe**. Mambo Press; Gweru. Veit-Wild, F. (1993). **Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers: A Social History of Zimbabwean Literature**. Baobab Books; Harare.

too short to proffer an account of retrospective war novels attempting to define a nationalist consciousness and, again, we are presented with an endnote as a reference to the white point of view towards the war. And that endnote alludes to Anthony Chennells' definitive account of the Rhodesian war novels. Part II of my dissertation will therefore discuss novels written by whites in post-independence Zimbabwe about the war.

The last chapter in this dissertation, Part III, will centre on the question of national culture. Government policy, according to Simbarashe Makoni <sup>11</sup>, has been to promote national culture:

A national culture does not mean a single cultural identity or pursuit or projection. A national culture is a culture which adequately and accurately reflects all the components of that nation.... Also culture is not a static phenomenon. It is a dynamic experience. [Makoni; 1984; 9-11].

Makoni goes on to say that the "culture of the Caucasian race" has been influenced "during the period of interaction with the indigenous people" (ibid; 9). Have all people from these European mountains been

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11 Since 1980, Simbarashe Makoni has been one of many Ministers responsible for 'culture'. Stephen William's article, "Art in Zimbabwe: From Colonialism to Independence" in Kaarsholm (1991;61-75), deals briefly with links between ideology and culture, and with connections between acculturation, multi-culturalism, culture change and national culture. These ideas will be developed in the main body of this dissertation.

influenced? Which indigenous people? Ignoring this sense of belonging and not-belonging for the moment I would like to use the former quotation from Makoni's article as a point of departure to discuss a number of Zimbabwean authors and the divergent ways in which they deal with their discourse. According to Ashcroft et al (1989;36):

[t]he post-colonial world is one in which destructive cultural encounter is changing into *an acceptance of difference on equal terms*. Both literary theorists and cultural historians are beginning to recognise cross-culturality as the potential termination point of an apparently endless human history of conquest and annihilation justified by the myth of group 'purity', and as the basis on which the post-colonial world can be creatively stabilised. (emphasis mine).

Thus if a strength of post-coloniality lies in its possibility for a syncretic view of the world, a view which goes beyond 'dominated and 'dominating' and proffers a framework of "difference on equal terms", then the perspectives of all post-colonial society provide not only significant contributions to that post-colonial world view but necessary ones - and the 'white' perspectives are no exception. The interrogatory emanating out of the discussion of these Zimbabwean novelists will focus particularly on the extent to which these texts contribute to a national culture in Zimbabwe and whether any of these writers (of the "Caucasian race") assimilate any Shona, Manyika or Matabele culture and tradition into that discourse.

PART ONE: "White Space, White Discourse, White Writing".

'Or think of a decent young citizen in a toga - perhaps too much dice, you know - coming out here in the train of some prefect, or tax-gatherer, or trader even, to mend his fortune. Land in a swamp, march through the woods, and in some inland post feel the savagery, the utter savagery, had closed around him. .... He has to live in the midst of the incomprehensible, which is also detestable. And it has a fascination, too, that goes to work on him. The fascination of the abomination - you know, imagine the growing regrets, the longing to escape, the powerless disgust, the surrender, the hate.' <sup>1</sup>

One of the main aims of this part of the dissertation will be to elucidate what I mean by the terms *white space*, *white discourse* and *white writing* because, by doing so, the prevailing attitudes and world views of the pre-independence white Rhodesian <sup>2</sup> will be emphasised. If, then, we can come to some understanding of the voice that was formed during the British South

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- 1 Conrad, J. *Heart of Darkness*. (1973; Penguin; London).
  - 2 Outlining the 'attitudes' and 'world views' of white Rhodesians will be, of course, a generalisation. But the basis of this assessment will be indicated in the course of the chapter - and so too will many of the sources. One of the major sources that I have used for outlining Rhodesian attitudes and world views has been Frederikse's *None But Ourselves: Masses vs. Media in the Making of Zimbabwe* (Anvil: 1981). I am indebted to her for the vast collection of interviews, pamphlets, transcripts and quotations included in her study, otherwise unavailable in Cape Town.

Africa Company's administration and which reached a crescendo of authoritarian self-assertion at the declaration of a unilateral independence, perhaps we can reach some understanding of its subsequent literary silence in post-independence Zimbabwe.

Firstly, it should be pointed out, *white* refers to skin pigmentation (or, rather, a lack of it). In other words the following use of the phrase *white writing* does not necessarily allude to what Roland Barthes (1970)<sup>3</sup> refers to as *écriture blanche*, or 'white writing', in ***Writing Degree Zero***. Barthes' essay does, however, provide an interesting point of departure for this discussion on discourses and writing. For Barthes there is no such thing as "*écriture blanche*": no writing can be truly objective, nor could it ever be a completely transparent mode of literary discourse - rather it will "shape reality in its own image, acting as the institutionalised carrier, transmitter or encoder of (a specific) way of life and its values"<sup>4</sup>. The way *white writing* is used here is in a more ironic light, highlighting the very lack of neutrality and transparency in the writings of the white Rhodesian colonial enterprise. "The way of life and its values" that are studied here are those of the coloniser in a

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3 Philip Dine, too, uses Barthes's essay as a starting point for his discussion on literary form in Lessing's ***The Grass is Singing*** and Yacine's ***Nedjma***, in "The Formal Implications of Anti-Colonialist Commitment" (Ngara & Morrison 1989: 27)

4 Terence Hawkes: ***Structuralism and Semiotics*** (Methuen; London; 1977: 107).

continent that is extraneous to his or her European cultural heritage.

**Discourse, Literature and Early White Settlement.**

*To analyse the texts of imperialism is to confront a discourse of triumphalism valorising gladiatorial skills. Benita Parry (1987).*

Unlike Marlow's toga clad coloniser who feels a deep ambivalence towards the Otherness of his surrounds, the pioneer settlers and their descendants in Rhodesia <sup>5</sup> had an apparent determination to overcome any ambivalence they might have felt and to forge a domain, a space, for themselves outside Britain. To Conrad's narrator, the Romans

were no colonists; their administration was merely a squeeze...[t]hey were conquerors, and for that you want only brute force - nothing to boast of, when you have it, since your strength is just an accident arising from the weakness of others. [and] they grabbed what they could for the sake of what was to be got. It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a grand scale. (Conrad 1983: 31).

Meanwhile the British enterprise (again, according to Marlow) was more exemplary ("what redeems it is the

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5 'Rhodesia', in this instance, would include the land occupied by the British South Africa Company after the establishment of Fort Salisbury in in 1890 Mashonaland and Matabeleland, renamed Rhodesia in 1895, and would include the settlement in Northern Rhodesia (to be named Zambia after Independence) and Nyasaland (to be named Malawi) under the federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

idea only" p., 32) because of its messages of Christianity and civilisation. Following Conrad's redemptive line of argument for the moment, the British saw their occupation in Southern Rhodesia as more than just a land and resources grab. (As Doris Lessing [1992: 4-5] so succinctly puts it: "the British were so smug about themselves partly because they never went in for general murder, did not attempt to kill out an entire native population..."). The early pioneers, 'redeemed' by "the idea" of colonisation, came to settle in Mashonaland for the sake of the Empire, for Rhodes, and for the *fin-de-siecle* challenge that imperialist ideology apparently upheld: the chance to correct the ills of degenerative decadence in modern European civilisation <sup>6</sup>. They came to forge a future for themselves and the space they created was an ideological one. The economic and political structures created by those 1890 settlers at Fort Salisbury were subsequent and subservient "at least in part... to ideological ends" (Chennells 1982; 1). Rhodesia, then,

as a space, defines an English race that *discovers through the process of conquest and appropriation, the nature of its own civilisation...* Any social discourse proclaims within itself the space which has produced it, and which it has appropriated and named. (Chennells 1982;1. Emphasis mine).

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6 See George Marcus' article (1993) for more on the *fin-de-siecle* challenge and the way it makes problematic the notion of modernity.

And it is "the process of conquest and appropriation" that is our primary concern here; the vicissitudes of that process effecting the white Rhodesian's sense of cultural hegemony - which was finally dissipated in the second Chimurenga war <sup>7</sup> of the 1970's and Independence in 1980.

In a letter to W. T. Stead, editor of the London newspaper *Pall Mall Gazette*, in 1891 <sup>8</sup> Rhodes states:

[t]he country is all right and from my reports I feel sure that the gold is good. It will be one of the great producing gold centres of the world and it will be the indirect means of civilising Central Africa.

The falsehood that resources were plentiful and largely untapped would later become a deception. The country north of the Limpopo was, as Rhodes's letter reflects, full of promise of land and wealth. But gold was not readily available: it *had* already been tapped - "centuries of Shona gold mining had depleted the reef", according to Frederikse (1982: 351). Thus the British South Africa Company lost heavily but continued with gold market speculation and attempted to manipulate the gold share market to encourage investors. A Second

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7 The first Chimurenga war took place in 1896-1897, in reaction to Rhodes's settlers and the pretexts they created for confiscating cattle and obtaining labour. The first documentation of this reaction was Terence Ranger's *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia* (1967). More recently David Beach has researched this 'rebellion' in "Chimurenga: The Shona Rising of 1896-97", *Journal of African History*, 1979.

8 See Julie Frederikse (1982;9).

pioneer column went north "with the promise of mining claims" (ibid: 351) and tracts of land were opened up to investors.

Nonetheless, being disillusioned by depleted gold reserves, those early pioneers stayed, settled and dominated indigenous people in Mashonaland and Matabeleland by conquering their armies with superior fire-power, and appropriating labour, land and cattle under the auspices of British legislation and forms of government <sup>9</sup>. This domination continued through the appropriation of language, art and culture. As Anthony Chennells (1982: 4) states:

[the] settler discourse always attempted to externalise 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 civilised or adult space.

Part of the strategy of sustaining political and economic dominance would have been by cultural denigration, the "conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture by a supposedly superior racial or cultural model" (Ashcroft et al 1989: 9). Africa, and the 'discovery' of African culture (together with the subsequent Eurocentric

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9 The British South Africa Company received a "Royal Charter". Thus the ability to implement taxes and legislature enabled the company to administrate the country, which was later to become the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

naming of African culture as a model of 'low culture') is significant in terms of the way it was absorbed into the "European frame as a mirror image, or more appropriately, the negative of the positive concept of the civilised, the black other to the white norm, the demonic opposite to the angels of reason and culture" (ibid 1989: 159). The Europeans, leaving the metropolis, have only moral principles to cling to and even that faces disintegration. According to Northrop Frye:

[t]he human mind has nothing but human and moral values to cling to if it is going to preserve its integrity or even its sanity, yet the vast unconscious of nature in front of it seems an unanswerable denial of those values.

As a consequence of this confrontation with silence the explorer/coloniser is forced back upon himself <sup>10</sup>, forced to explore the interior darkness (as Joseph Conrad's Kurtz does, to find... "the horror, the horror") or else is forced to deny subjugation into that darkness by using his own resources. And one of those resources is *language*. Language becomes in itself the 'perfect instrument of Empire <sup>11</sup> ': the colonists

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10 I have deliberately used the masculine here as British colonisation was a fundamentally masculine enterprise (the discursive practices in which Edward Said [1985: 23-4] perceives "the narrow correspondence between suppressed Victorian sexuality at home, its fantasies abroad, and the tightening hold on the male late nineteenth century imagination of imperialist ideology").

11 The phrase was first used by Antonio de Nebrija in 1492 (quoted by Barker & Hume in John Drakakis: *Alternative Shakespeares*, p. 147).

come from the centre to 'name'; they use human and moral values to name that unknown; and, in attempting to reproduce the culture of the metropolis in the wilderness, categorise and so exclude the colonised 'other' from that discourse to establish a disarticulated subaltern.

This cultural construction renders the imperialist as sovereign self, the indigenous person as voiceless other and thereby creates a colonising self/colonised other binary opposition. And any binary opposition, Jacques Derrida reminds us, is a "violent hierarchy" (1978: 114). Thus, as Benita Parry points out, this binary opposition is not only "encoded in colonialist language as a dichotomy necessary to domination" but it is "also differently inscribed in the discourse of liberation as a dialectic of conflict and a call to arms.." (1987: 29). It is in this way that colonialists became victims of their own discourse: Rhodesian/ Colonial discourse neglected or denied the possibility of any equally violent inversion of that binary opposition. The notion of retaliatory appropriation - or re-appropriation - together with the idea that white Rhodesians become more and more victims of the perpetuation of their own settler discourse, are vital to an understanding of discourse generally (and white discourse particularly) in postcolonial Zimbabwe, and will be dealt with again later in the chapter, in the discussion of ideas about discourse during the U.D.I years.

Another important form of conquest that contributed to the establishment of a (white) discourse in Southern Rhodesia, is that of a conquest of nature. An example of what Raymond Williams sees as fundamental concepts of capitalist and imperialist ideology, "limitless and conquering expansion" (1980: 110), is evident even in 1935. A letter from C.R. Dreyer (the manager of *Rhodesian Land, Cattle and Ranching Corporation Ltd*, Nuanetsi Ranch) to L.D. Ryan, dated 27th May 1935 states that:

... I have a very shrewd idea that Buffalo are responsible for the introduction of foot-and-mouth disease into our country during 1931 and 1934. As a result of this I am having a heated scrap with the Agricultural Department, and I shall not be content until Buffalo are declared 'vermin' and destroyed. (Dreyer 1935 - unpublished letter).

This paragraph illustrates two important issues. Firstly, there is the idea of limitless expansionism; agriculture and ranching are all-important and anything that gets in the way of agricultural expansion must be exterminated. The underlying assumption is that land and wild life are limitless; for instance, the settlers are entitled to take as much land as they wish (there is plenty to go round) and game can be killed for the same reason, or pushed off the land into the vast expanses of land to the north. Secondly, it illustrates the analogy that settler control over nature acts as a preliminary for control over people: the 'taming of nature' acts as a foundation for

colonial relations to be, or tend to be, dominative. These subjugative tendencies pervade the Rhodesian discourse and occur anywhere in social relations from labour to sexuality. Thus when Benita Parry outlines a general classification of "values enunciated by imperialist discourse - virility, mastery, exploitation, performance, action, leadership, technology, progress.." (1987; 55) it becomes apparent that colonial discourse en-genders (pun intended) British race and male gender dominance. It is at once a racist and a patriarchal discourse, used to justify the establishment of a hierarchical society based on race and gender.

Hunting is another form of establishing 'control over the wilderness' - particularly as an expansionist resource: it was used as a means of clearing land for ranching, as a food source, as labour payment. But, as John MacKenzie (in Kaarsholm 1991: 20) points out, game was a "wasting" resource and "offered only a temporary subsidy to frontier settler" before game was "shot out, or, disturbed, moved on". And notions of elitism were soon to become a prerequisite for hunting as its more utilitarian aspects declined. Hunting became a sport, along with its codes. Europeans were using their cultural hegemony particularly selectively: with the possibility of shortages looming, a set of moral and legal criteria came into operation. "'Clean kills' became the order of the day and all methods adjudged cruel, like the use of spears, poison, traps, snares or

pits were banned" (ibid 21). These criteria, and the affiliated gun laws, excluded the indigenous hunter.

The colonisation of nature, according to John Mackenzie (in Kaarsholm 1991: 13-31), acted as a prelude to the colonisation of people and society <sup>12</sup>. His article goes on to posit the theory that the war against poachers could be read as a continuation of the colonial binary opposition between nature and the indigenous population. Indeed, this notion becomes important to the thesis of later chapters of this dissertation - where it will be argued that space available to the early settlers' discourse for appropriation has been removed and, in the reduced space available to white discourse, one area of possible continued control is that of conservation.

One of the most important aspects established thus far is the extent to which 'myth' is intrinsic to white discourse in white Rhodesian society. Myth and Ideology are to be taken to be wholly interdependent, the reasons for which will be explained, and both terms need elaboration. Barthes's assertion that

[m]yth is a system of communication,  
that is a message. This allows us to

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12 John MacKenzie's article, "The Natural World and the Popular Consciousness in Southern Africa", (in Kaarsholm 1991: 13-31) discusses the way colonisation of nature is a prelude to the colonisation of people and discusses how this is reflected in literature dealing with hunting, travel and exploration.

perceive that myth cannot possibly be an object, a concept or an idea; it is a signification, a form... since myth is a type of speech, everything can be a myth provided it is conveyed by a discourse. (1973: 109)

works well as a definition of myth for the purposes of this dissertation. As Barthes explains, main purpose for Myth, as a signification, is to present a justification to an historical intention. As Maughan-Brown states: myth "produces the primary ideological effect, which is that of naturalisation. It functions to produce ideological effects in that myth is the form ideological interpellations normally take in seeking assent to the proposals of ideology" (1983: 96). Ideology, according to Terry Eagleton,

is not in the first place a set of doctrines; it signifies the way men live out their roles in class-society, the values, ideas and images which tie them to their social functions and so prevent them from a true knowledge of society as a whole. (1976: 16).

A Marxist meaning of 'ideology' is the most appropriate definition for this analysis of colonial discourse for two reasons. Firstly the racially-based class system that was established in Rhodesia has to be considered and, following on from this first point, it is 'ideology' - the Eurocentric supposition of Empire as cultural and moral superior - which has been the foundation for that very racial segregation. Terry Eagleton's definition of ideology, then, becomes

especially relevant to a discussion on the way myth works in literature and discourse because ideology acts as an exemplary of an author's imaginary relationship to a real environment. Thus a Marxist theory of ideology uncovers some of the colonialist myth making (and, in so doing, expunges those myths): myth and ideology are seen to be interdependent, with myth taking the role, when attempting to be taken in the light of the higher realm of ideology, of an ideological interpellation and a structural necessity.

The first myth of Rhodesian discourse outlined here was that of the wealth of resources available (see pages 13-14). Ironically this was the myth that brought settlers north from the Johannesburg gold-fields: the colonisation of Rhodesia was based on a falsehood. Other important aspects pertaining to white discourse are the facts that the discourse is dominative, patriarchal, and exclusive. The discourse - a discourse based on a notions of superiority (of religion, civilisation, race and culture) - is thus based on a series of myths, myths paradoxically perpetuated by the very discourse they support. Cultural hegemony was maintained only through canonical assumptions about the 'other', the 'wilderness', about the heroic activities of the early settlers. This is the brief history that has influenced white Rhodesian discourse, which will in turn influence white Zimbabwean discourse as it struggles to come to terms with its post-coloniality and reduced space.

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**The U. D. I era.**

*The Beatles, international finance groups, and colonial freedom agitators are all agents of a Communist plot to achieve world domination.* Ward. H., Director-General, Rhodesian Broadcasting Corporation (18 January 1969).

Anthony Chennells (1982: 1) argues that using a moral analysis of pioneer history is in a way reductionist: seeing the formation of Rhodesia for nothing more than its morally reprehensible actions (the confiscations of land, the hut and poll taxes and the discriminatory legislation) will not take us very far in an attempt to understand the settlers' and their descendants' mentality or world view. But why not? It is understandably expedient to ignore this moral overview in favour of a reading which sees Rhodes's expansion of the British South Africa Company's holdings north of the Limpopo as "an attempt to create a radically new space" (1982: 1) but surely it is as important to bear in mind *the methods* of expansionism as it is to outline the ideology behind that expansionism?

Certainly it would be reductionist to see the colonial enterprise categorised as an unnecessary, evil force. But the point is this: the methods used in creating this "radically new space" play an important part in the moral and intellectual education of subsequent generations of white Rhodesians. As for the methods of

colonial expansionism in Rhodesia: it is a long, involved and complex phenomenon in Zimbabwe's history. This notion of how the space is created involves a moral and historical complexity beyond the scope of this dissertation - it is not a reductionist way of reading the "radically new space" that is created by the British South Africa Company's land north of South Africa. The creation of the space and the space itself are indispensable for an understanding of the Rhodesian identity.

The available discourse, and the material conditions for the production of literature, was in the hands of the white Rhodesian community, thereby shutting out any perspective of life in Rhodesia that lay outside the constraints of that discourse. Methods of settler expansionism, and white distortions of that expansionism, were not only taught at schools, but those values of "virility, mastery, exploitation, performance, action, leadership, technology, progress" that Parry (1987: 55) outlines as being enunciated by imperialist discourse are lauded as exemplary. Julie Frederikse (1982: 9) states:

[d]istortions of history were not confined to Rhodesian school texts. They shaped the way Rhodesians saw the world. If Cecil Rhodes and the settlers indeed made Rhodesia, what did they make it from? From nothing, said the Rhodesian history books. From a savage country and people, we created civilisation. Rhodesians found no evidence to contradict this claim. They learned and believed

that the settlers discovered a land  
and made it theirs.

Frederikse also depicts the opening pages of M. Williams's 1925 text *A Child's History of Rhodesia*, recommended in the Rhodesian Ministry of Education teaching syllabi for white school children in the 1960's. From this it becomes apparent that a settler mentality of the early twentieth century depicted in this text (and in J. Boggie's *First Steps in Civilising Rhodesia*) is the same mentality being passed on, heralded without any form of self-criticism, to school children in the 1960s. These children thereby include these myths into their belief systems and continue to do so even in adulthood - as the 'education' appears to be an unending process. Rhodesian discourse gorges on these myths until the myths become the belief system - as the example below seems to show:

We are concerned, and always have been, not with the protection of privilege, but with the protection of liberty and justice. This has been the grand tradition of our country from its inception, and follows from the thinking of the men who made Rhodesia, such as Cecil John Rhodes, and those early Rhodesians...

- Partridge, M., Rhodesian Defence Minister, 8 September 1977, at RLI Barracks medal parade. Quotation from Frederikse (1981: 50).

W. A. Ballinger's novel, *Call it Rhodesia* (1966), was an attempt to recreate the history of the country up to the unilateral declaration of independence. Following

is an account which (apparently) is meant to give a reason for the Strang family making their way north:

It was then that Strang got the idea of striking north. He had heard from prospectors and stray travellers about the rich, bountiful land that lay beyond the limpopo. The place called Mashonaland.

'She's lying up there,' he said to Hamish McIver. 'Lying up there like a woman, a beautiful woman, with her legs apart - waiting for the first man to come along and take her. She doesn't care who he is - black or white - just as long as he comes soon'... (p. 19)

This text takes the patriarchal settler discourse to its extreme: the African landscape is not just seen as 'woman', but (by extension?) as whore. The metaphorical figure of the woman integrated into the wilderness show both the appeal of that landscape to the settler, and shows how the appeal works both ways - Africa 'wants', needs, the penetration of the white pioneer into 'her' centre as much as the settler wants the space Rhodesia promises. And the myth of the (sexual) virility, mastery and racial superiority of the early settlers is carried forward in this novel to the inherited attitude in the 1960's. A remark such as: "it's not the guns, it's the man behind the guns. Are we afraid of black invasion? I say no" (Ballinger 1966: 315), incorporates one of two central myths about why whites have been able to maintain political authority. The first myth is that of the racial superiority of the white man:

I know this country better than you. I've seen it grow from a wilderness of savages murdering each other to a sweet and pleasant place. *I know the minds of the people.* And believe me, I love and respect them too. But that doesn't mean that I want to have them *set up* in power.

(Ballinger 1966: 318 emphasis mine.)

Ballinger's attempt to recount how much better off Rhodesia is since the advent of the pioneer is humiliating, racist and narrow-minded. Belief that the whites could "know the minds of the people" and that the only way the Africans will come to power in the land is if they are "set up in power" reflects the arrogance that could enable Rhodesia to declare unilateral independence. Incredibly, white Rhodesians believed they could "know the minds of the people" and this was incorporated into Rhodesian discourse giving rise to the second myth, that of the contented African population.

This myth is probably best illustrated by none other than Ian Smith, the then Rhodesian primeminister:

I have been taken to task in certain quarters for describing our Africans as the happiest Africans in the world, but nobody has yet been able to tell me where there are Africans who are happier - or, for that matter, better off - than in Rhodesia. <sup>13</sup>

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13 Ministry of Information, Immigration and Tourism press release, 21st December, 1972, as quoted by Martin & Johnson (1981; 1)

This is what he told a Rotary Club lunch on 21st December, 1972. And, as if this was not enough, he went on to say:

The reasons for this relaxed racial climate which we enjoy here are many. First and foremost is the nature of the people who make up our country. The Africans of Rhodesia [as opposed to the 'Mau Mau' of Kenya?!] are by nature unaggressive, and they have an instinctive leaning towards a peaceful communal life. <sup>14</sup>

This myth of the 'contented African' was used, according to M. F. C. Bourdillon, as justification for the privileged position whites held. What is more, it allowed that "status quo to be maintained" <sup>15</sup>. However, Smith's assessment of '[His] Africans' had been undermined: ironically, a matter of hours before he made this speech, guerillas had attacked Marc de Borchgrave's property on Altena Farm - the first such attack since May 1966. From this point on the war steadily escalated.

There are a number of ways of looking at this. On the one hand Rhodesian discourse (and, particularly, the speeches made by Ian Smith mentioned above and in the introduction [see pages 3-4] ) could be seen as symbolised by Ian Smith's war-wound - as a result of which, one eye is closed to reality - and that

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14 *ibid* p. 1.

15 Bourdillon, M. F. C. (1976). ***Myths About Africans: Mythmaking in Rhodesia***. Mambo Press. Gwelo, as quoted by Frederikse (1981; 16).

Rhodesians had become victims of their own discourse. This may be partly the case for the general populace but for the government subsequent information casts doubt on this assumption - in fact they played on that very discourse to keep their support. The war produced a substantial quantity of propaganda and myth-making.

Smith's Rotary Club lunch speech is an example of this: on 4th December 1972, seventeen days before the Altena Farm attack, Smith held an interview with selected journalists whom he informed: "the position is far more serious than it appears on the surface, and if the man on the street could have access to the security information which I and my colleagues in Government have, then I think he would be a lot more worried than he is today" <sup>16</sup>. As well as justifying the status quo, the propaganda hid the reality of the war (for a while). The rather considerable body of literature arising out of the war situation in Rhodesia, and presenting a largely monolithic view of that conflict, "was an important, perhaps most important component of that propaganda" (Maughan-Brown 1983: 93).

According to Chennells (1977: 177) most of these novels are "at best indifferent and at worst very bad indeed... It is because most of the novelists... are intensely partisan that they are interesting. All of them, to a greater or lesser degree, write within the

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16 BBC Monitoring service, 6 December, 1972, as quoted by Martin and Johnson (1981: 3)

framework of white Rhodesian politics and consciously or unconsciously their work registers with particular denseness the myths and prejudices of the white community". And these myths propagate a moral, economic and political justification for the established form of government in (then) Rhodesia. These myths, as Monica Wilson points out, "imply, if they do not state specifically, that a given system is right and just"<sup>17</sup>.

It would be redundant in this dissertation to repeat a line of argument that has already been accomplished, more than adequately, by Chennells (1977 & 1982) and by Maughan-Brown (1983). What does need reiteration, however, are the points that the Rhodesian settler ideology is derived from European metropolitan ideology and that the discourse used is one which defends (aggressively, if necessary) the space that has been forged in this alien landscape. The most notable aspects of the discourse of the space is the use of mythology: as has been outlined, myths were created as justification for that settlement and to propagandise the aggressive defence of that space.

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17 Wilson, M. "Myths of Precedence", in Dubb, A. (ed) (1960) **Myth in Modern Africa**. Lusaka, p. 1, as quoted by Maughan-Brown (1983: 96)

PART TWO: "War Stories.... continued" .

*The old is dying and the new cannot  
be born; in this interregnum there  
arises a great diversity of morbid  
symptoms.*<sup>1</sup>

Colonial discourse continuously reproduces the binary opposition between culture and nature and preserves associated dichotomies such as civilised-primitive, white-black, and male-female. This racial and patriarchal discourse served (and serves), then, as legitimation for cultural hegemony. In Rhodesia (as well as in other colonies) this was achieved to the extent that history was almost exclusively the preserve of white men.

From the time the first settlers arrived in what was to become Rhodesia until the fight for white supremacy in the 1970s the discourse was, in one word, colonial. That is, it was a process of taking and naming and in so doing, controlling. All indigenous people were named as inferior - "savages" - to the 'civilised' standards of the British Empire (and as "munts" or "gooks" at the time of the bush war or, in the white discourse, the "rebellion"). Thus this 'moral' position had not

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1 From Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*. (see Hoare and Smith 1971: 276).

changed up until Independence: there was a presupposed position of whites as subject of their own discourse and blacks as monolithically represented object.

After Independence in April 1980, however, this position was to change drastically. Zanu (PF) took over (from the Rhodesia Front <sup>2</sup>) all influence of the media, publishers, and education departments. While the pioneers had asserted their physical presence and 'superiority' these were the tools which were used to forge and control the 'space', the moral ground, of white discourse and, in turn, colonial discourse would be as important to the colonial enterprise as that physical domination.

Since the material conditions of literary production fell under the control of the Rhodesian ruling class texts could, as Ashcroft et al say of colonial literature in general, only "come into being within the constraints of a discourse and the institutional practice of a patronage system which limits and undercuts their assertion of a different perspective" (1989: 6). In other words, the conditions of literary and media productions were used to enforce cultural and political hegemony and the powerful weapon which is language was used by whites to impose their presence

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2 Zanu (PF) is the ruling party in Zimbabwe, and has been since Independence. The Rhodesia Front was the ruling party of the then Rhodesian government.

and their power (which they had attempted, desperately, to cling to using the same means) on a relatively powerless indigenous people.

This white power, and its associated cultural and political and moral 'superiority' and 'sophistication' was weakened by the mass exodus of whites, fearful of re-primination, at Independence. While, economically, whites retained an element of control in the country, the cultural, political and moral justifications for this economic superiority were to be removed by the new, post-colonial, political power base. After Independence Zimbabwe started to rewrite its official <sup>3</sup> history and it challenged those binary oppositions that were once encoded in colonial language to ensure domination.

Obviously, the war has an important role in that history and, as T. O. McLoughlin (in *Current Writing* 3, 1991: 147) points out:

much of Zimbabwe's current fiction... implies an engagement with some aspect of the

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3 This is not to say that Zimbabwe's history was a totally one-sided affair with the official Rhodesian history being the only history. Far from it: *pungwes* - night meetings which reiterated the history of the Shona people - and *chimurenga* songs were vitally important to an outline of the cause of the liberation and to boost morale and national pride. See "Why I joined the Struggle" and "All through the nights" in Frederikse (1981) Pages 52-55 and 56-63 respectively.

liberation war, and thereby attempts to define or describe what stage we are at in the development of a national consciousness.

The main aim of this chapter will be to present a discussion of a (white) retrospective look at the war. This, therefore, will involve a study of the white point of view of the war as seen through the widely different texts (and their respective narrative forms and methods of representation) written by Ivan Smith (1980), Peter Stiff (1985), Bruce Moore-King (1988) and David Cauter (1983), and will involve an interrogation of the shifting world view of this white perspective from its position in post-colonial society. In this way white reaction to the 'shrunk space' that their discourse became can be related to their contribution to "the development of a national culture".

Relating the quotation from Antonio Gramsci, which serves as the epigraph to this chapter, to white Rhodesian discourse is, to say the least, a tongue-in-cheek aggrandisement of that discourse. The irony of it is that this discourse played an important part in giving white Rhodesians exaggerated notions of their own self-importance. Another, and more accurate, reason for an epigraph which inspires notions of apocalypse is that the Rhodesian bush war and its aftermath will be the focus of this chapter: the new political order that is Zimbabwe arising out of the ruins of Rhodesia.

Preben Kaarsholm (1991: 33) illustrates this point quite well when he states:

The struggle has been continued since [independence] in the attempts by Zimbabwean writers, poets and artists, musicians, dramatists and educationalists, media professionals, politicians and co-operative members to consolidate and develop the foundations of a new, autonomous national culture that were established during the war.

Independence heralded the death of the colonial-Rhodesian discourse, but to what extent did a new, cultural discourse arise out of the ashes of the old? And, in a related issue relevant to this dissertation, to what extent did white writers accept and take up the (reconciliatory) challenge to contribute to the creation of a Zimbabwean national cultural identity? Only David Caute's 1983 journalistic account of the war, *Under the Skin: the Death of White Rhodesia* (1983), and Ivan Smith's *Come Break a Spear* (1980) were published between 1980 and 1985 - and the latter text may have been written during the short, transitional Zimbabwe-Rhodesia era and only published subsequently. Thus when attempting to answer the largely rhetorical question concerning the challenge for whites to contribute to Zimbabwean literature one could say the challenge was rejected. Perhaps, though, this is an oversight. Firstly, as Anthony Chennells stated in his dissertation on white Rhodesian novels:

nearly all of those [novels] dealt with here are at best indifferent and at worst very bad indeed.... A bad novelist who writes about political issues.. will fail to register the social and economic issues and forces that make these ephemera take the various forms they do. More dangerously he will be partisan and treat sympathetically only one side of what may be a many-sided confrontation (1977: 177).

Chennells' dissertation points out that almost all Rhodesian novels were unquestioningly partisan and accepting of the myths that made Rhodesia a sanctuary for whites. Following Chennells' analysis, it would seem that to attribute a semblance of cultural awareness to the ex-Rhodesian writer would be an unwarranted, not to mention unfair, contribution to the Zimbabwean national identity - which fought a particularly horrific war to be free from that very 'contribution' to national identity! Secondly, though, perhaps the white Zimbabwean has had difficulty converting to a new national identity that is so far removed from the identity founded on the premises of Rhodesian colonial discourse. On the other hand *white writing*, for J. M. Coetzee, does not necessarily

imply the existence of a body of writing different in nature from black writing. White writing is white only insofar as it is generated by the concerns of people no longer European, not yet African (1988: 11).

What this does imply is that white writing, established thus far as an alien, racist, and patriarchal colonial discourse (and "different... from black writing"), is

*unnatural*. And Independence, or existence in an independent African state free of colonial mythology, could be the precursor to the ex-colonial's eventual embodiment of 'Africanness'. Or perhaps this cultural schizophrenia, this identity which is "no longer European, not yet African", will continue in the white discourse of post-colonial society? White Zimbabweans, victims of their own (out-dated) discourse, have "a set of paradigms and schemata, of conventions and expectations, that are unadapted to the new world" (Berthoud 1989: 79) that is Zimbabwe.

The new visions of national Zimbabwe, the new perceptions of the self that arose out of the old discourse (or out of the rejection of the myths of that discourse) will have taken the white Zimbabwean a while to adjust to. In other (more dramatically Gordimerian) words, the white Zimbabwean has been temporarily blinded by the light of the apocalyptic new political and cultural order.

Ivan Smith's novel, *Come Break a Spear* is about as apocalyptical, non-partisan and as far removed from colonial discourse as its Rhodesian antecedents. Which means that it is enormously prejudiced in the way it vivifies and perpetuates Rhodesian myths. As with the novels Anthony Chennells discussed in his article (1977: 177-202), this novel is not likely to tell us

anything new about the war since it is so prejudiced and can only gain validity through the myths of what had made Rhodesia. Perhaps, though, it can illustrate some of those myths (discussed more theoretically in Part I) and shed some light on the white Zimbabwean identity at about the time of Independence.

Immediately it becomes clear that while *Come Break a Spear* is written by someone with first hand experience of the war, it is singularly incapable of recognising a national history outside that presented by the ruling regime. The narrator, who has an annoying predilection for stating the obvious, tells us that

Death in Africa has gone on for years and in all countries. And the sole motivation is greed, for Africa is fat with mineral and agricultural wealth, a fatness that attracts the hungry and the greedy, the men from parts of the world already overrun by men. Greed sits eating at the same table as death (1980: 100-101).

Could this possibly hint at a recognition of the (obvious) motivation behind colonialism? This revelation, combined with the fact that the novel is concerned with a young white man contemplating his existence during the war, could allow its protagonist to reach some semblance of historical anagnorisis. Perhaps, then, the protagonist, with a notion of his own place in that history of exploitation, could feel some sense of guilt for past wrongs, or for a war that

should not have been fought. Unfortunately this is not the case for this narrative: it is almost entirely non-confrontational with the discourse of its predecessors. Ben Swartz is consumed by guilt ("Ben felt the guilt and the fear that he had been carrying in him start up again" [1980: 128]). But this is not the guilt of a history of one race's explitations perpetrated over another. No, Ben's guilt is for fucking Jan, his best friend's wife - which he did in a car while that best friend snored drunkenly in the back seat. Two ironies arise here: one is that his guilt is alleviated only when his "stick" (patrol unit) are in a contact situation (!). Fighting the "Charlie Tangos'" - the C.T.s, or 'Communist Terrorists' - and thereby defending Rhodesia and the myths that founded it is noble action that acts as temporary absolution. The second irony is that Ben ostensibly did not really want to dally with Jan (especially not with drunken Nick asleep in the back seat!):

'Nick, wake up, please wake up,' he howled..

He was free of his pants. Jan looked over the seat at Nick and shook her head and her hand came to him. Her legs moved round his waist and she crept on to him. A sliding and he was in her, and he moved his strength and they fell back on the seat, with Ben on top.

'Nick, Nick,' he screamed; she moved powerfully. 'You bitch, you bitch,' he rasped.

'All, all, all,' she mewed.  
Nick snored.

'You whore, whore.' He shook, drained.  
'For you, yes, for you only, a whore' (1980: 136).

For Ben "the woman smell of her filled his throat, filled his mind" (1980: 135) and from that moment he is rendered powerless and can do nothing. And apparently he does nothing: "A sliding and he was in her"; this sex seems to happen without any apparent movement on his side (surely not *total* passivity?!). He rather miraculously loses his trousers without his doing anything: we are told just "he was free of his pants". Besides, she is a "whore". Ben not-so-adeptly absolves himself from any responsibility in this adulterous affair through his use of a patriarchal discourse - just as white Rhodesians have attempted, through their own discourse, to absolve themselves from any sense of responsibility in the national war. Responsibility belongs with the woman who does not "know her place" as it does with the "natives" who do not "know" theirs.

The novel is dedicated "To those who fell" and, because it was published in 1980, this begs the question 'who'? To those who fell fighting for Zimbabwe - or those fighting for Rhodesia? Or anyone who fell fighting for the ideologies they had been fed? The novel centres around a P.A.T.U. (Police Anti-Terrorist Unit) "stick" (patrol group) whose job it was to track and reconnoitre guerilla groups that had infiltrated into areas throughout the country. The story's main protagonist, Ben Swartz, is particularly friendly with two of the five others in this group (all of whom have

first and surnames provided, save Sergeant Josiya). The novel consists of their experiences as they "hunt" (p. 52) another of the black characters: the Moscow-trained Felix Muchagara. We are provided with background information to the characters through Ben's thought-processes, in the form of a series of flash-backs, as he sits and waits in hiding with his P.A.T.U "stick" for the guerillas to show themselves.

Immediately we have some potentially provocative points that need exploration. Smith has provided a narrative which establishes *the opportunity* to break with old traditions of Rhodesian discourse. But the novel does not fulfil this potential. Interestingly, the plot revolves around Ben and Ben's boyhood friend, Phinias ("now using an adult name", Josiya) and another of Ben's long-term 'friendships' with someone called Nick Els. Ben and Josiya's 'friendship' is established along the same grounds as almost any Rhodesian race-relation. The friendship is fine but only within certain limitations: there is no question about who is the 'superior'. Smith does not use the derogatory suffix "-boy" (for instance the term "cookboy" - a break through for the ex-Rhodesian novelist?!) but Phinias is Turo's (the "cook's") son. Their future relationship is based on a system of hierarchy that perpetuates, rather than questions, Rhodesian discourse. Ben is placed as 'superior' by virtue of the fact that he is

"Baasie" to Phinias's father. In adulthood, as they 'defend' Rhodesia together, Ben continues as Josiya's superior officer. In the space that Rhodesian discourse provides for inter-racial relationships, their friendship could never be more than farcical.

While the narrative may claim "there is an understanding" (1980: 7) between the black and white boys, it soon becomes abundantly clear that this is merely another Rhodesian misnomer. There is only an apparent "understanding". In the following flashback to Ben's childhood, for example, the narrator shows off his cultural dexterity by highlighting some knowledge of Shona custom:

Under the trees [Ben] extends one thick slice [of bread] holding it in one hand to show that it is a small gift. Phineas claps gladly and takes the bread in two hands, politely indicating the gift is so big that it needs both hands. (1980: 7).

Cultural dexterity? As is shown in the above quotation we are not so much presented with an insight into the knowledge Ben Swartz has of Shona culture as with another instance of cultural denigration. Rhodesian discourse has blocked the narrator from seeing outside a certain type of knowledge: whites are portrayed (or, rather, portray themselves) as providers. Providers of culture, jobs, progress, technology and, in this case, bread. And, in an extension of the myth of the

contented African, blacks are portrayed as grateful. In the light of this myth one question comes to mind: how is it possible for people who are ostensibly happy with white rule to enter into a war of liberation? As one of Ben's friends states:

Freedom. Freedom from what? Have the sodding reporters ever been to a place like this? Have they ever been to a reserve to see how the blacks live? Freedom from what, for Christ's sake? They had the best life in the world until they were told different (1980: 167).

This myth of the contented African extends into mythologies of the war in the following way: white discourse could see no other reasoning than that communist expansionism, and not colonial oppression, was the cause for the war. Felix Mucahagara, we are told,

was angry. He was always angry, he was filled with a pointless and directionless anger. He was young and he was educated and *he needed something to be angry at and he did not have much*. His parents gave him no reason to be angry and had always given him the best. In the administration, the white man, he found a target (1980: 156, emphasis mine).

This shows an incredible lack of perception. It highlights the inability of this discourse to look outside of white self-interest; to alter the way whites see themselves as extensions of glorious and brave pioneers of the colony and, importantly, it shows an amazing lack of understanding of African nationalism.

According to white discourse African nationalism was not only unwarranted, but it would never have come about without communist interference. The fact that Felix is portrayed as having been trained in Moscow, and that his discontent stems from a psychological and not a sociological problem implies that Felix (along with other 'terrorists') is psychopathic. And it implies that Felix is inherently unable to form his own political initiative and, because of this is easily manipulated by the Soviets.

Ben has a childhood 'friend' who is black. The other white characters portrayed in this book have had daily contact with blacks to the extent that they fight alongside each other. And none can escape from the racist belief that Felix and his people would have remained superstitious savages without the progress brought to them by the colonisers - because their author is caught up in the myths of white discourse.

White discourse is particularly and transparently mythological when, in the narrative, it includes the metaphor of death and greed eating "at the same table" (see page 40 above), feeding off the riches of the land. There is absolutely no (self-) recognition of colonial greed. Instead there is only the hypocritical fear that Communists will steal and plunder the wealth

of the land - most of which lies in the hands of white Rhodesians:

Croak 'freedom'. A farmer is chopped to bits in front of his family. 'The vote for everyone' is the urgent cry. A land-mine blows up a bus and the dead and dying are robbed and raped. 'Equality' is gulped, and a man's feet are cut off because he was seen near a government post. The pleasure is in the killing; it must be, for man finds new ways to kill, without number, a new way each time he becomes jaded. Freedom, majority rule, wealth. Above all, wealth. This is the Communists' promise, made by those without anything to wield, and yet they are believed. The glitter of gold blinds all the senses (1980: 101).

The narrator attempts to undermine the cause of the freedom struggle by opposing freedom slogans with what is meant to be the 'reality' of that struggle as perceived through Rhodesian discourse and its myths. White discourse justifies its cause by denying the African any moral right to be at war, by implying that the African was content until such time as a 'power-hungry', wealth-oriented, communist world interfered. Perhaps white ex-Rhodesians would be better off if they could recognise a major feature of their own discourse: hypocrisy. The reason there was a war in Rhodesia, according to one of the characters, is because the blacks were talked into it, and if one "shouts a lie at [a person] long enough and he will believe it" (1980: 167).

*Come Break a Spear* features a few black characters in the text and, through the portrayal of Felix Muchagara, attempts to provide a guerilla perspective on the war. This perspective is used, however, to imply that it is only communist greed and its influence over a population otherwise inherently incapable of forming its own political initiative that has brought such turmoil to the country. The future under 'communism' is a bleak and barren landscape which even Josiya, the good (synonymous with subservient) black man, rejects: "Those who seek power will kill the police. You know that. They do not wish to have law when they rule" (p. 230).

The white population were lulled into a false sense of security through the myths they established and which perpetuated their own discourse. They fully believed such myths as the ones that the African population were contented (and the supplementary myth that blacks lacked any political ambition), and that the security forces were invincible. Their discourse denies victory to the African and the transition, in those terms, meant that evolution into Zimbabwe was a victory for Communism. In other words, whites in the country continued to be victims of their own discourse. Still believing those myths about themselves and about the Africans this white Zimbabwean novelist has obviously had incredible difficulty in admitting defeat and in

letting go of that old discourse which was seminal to the Rhodesian identity.

Defeat comes hard to the Rhodesian ego. Peter Stiff's 'factual' account of the war as seen through the eyes of an unnamed mercenary is nothing if it does not bear testimony to that fact (it does not do much else). The subject of Stiff's biography, one 'Taffy' (code name for the leader of a team of the Central Intelligence Operations), tells us that at election time in April 1980, "just about everyone who called himself a Rhodesian was sharing my bitterness" (Stiff 1985: 13). From this one would presume that to be Rhodesian one had to be white (for very few black Rhodesians would share with Taffy the same reasons to be bitter) and male and believe that the Rhodesians never lost the war but were betrayed. In line with Rhodesian discourse, the security forces never succumbed but were tricked by the British into handing over the country to the communists:

The Brits had sold the Rhodesians down the river. I guess they had been determined all along to hand over to what they so finely called black majority rule... by which Soviet and Red Chinese backed black terrorists could snatch power (Stiff 1985: 13).

***See You in November***, published in Alberton, South Africa in 1985, is as uninformative about the war as Smith's novel. It may, however, enlighten us as to why

the proliferation of Rhodesian war novels ground to a rather uneasy, silent halt: there is no space in Zimbabwe for the embattled, embittered, die-hard discourse that makes up this novel.

The text is presented as factual; the "first definitive book on the subject of the Rhodesian Intelligence operations". The authenticating devices used by Stiff are a bibliography and the fact that this is meant to be a biography - we are just not told whose biography it is! The claim to veracity is presumably meant to point out that the text is unprejudiced, based on the 'truth' and presents facts as objectively as possible. But the subject is an unknown entity, and Stiff bases the text's historicity on two doubtful facts: his subject, and his source material. We are told that "this book has been compiled mostly from prime source material, in the main, from 'Taffy', the code name of the ex-British 22-S.A.S soldier who headed [a] C.I.O. Intelligence team" (ibid., 9). So how historical can this be? Some of Stiff's other claims in the "bibliography" also add to throw authenticity into doubt: "the whole world had ganged up against the country", says the author. And we do not have too much difficulty working out where his prejudice lies.

This prejudice is thereafter hidden (none too well) behind the central character, "Taffy". This

unquestioned, 'heroic', authority figure is a racist bigot ("in spite of the trainees being their top men, none, as is common with most Africans, could shoot straight, or seemed able to learn" [ibid.,p. 45]) and yet Stiff wants this character to be *believed*. As becomes patently obvious, the only people who would be induced into reading (and enjoying) the novel as a representation of the "real" situation in Rhodesia are those embittered few who implicitly believe the myths of Rhodesian discourse.

It is presented as 'real': "when I think of what you have achieved in real life in the past few years, it makes the fictional jackal look like a pussycat" (ibid.,p. 16), says "Colonal Joe" to "Taffy" (names withheld to "protect identities" against the prejudices of some malevolent force in Zimbabwe). The reference to Frederick Forsythe's *The Day of the Jackal* is useful enough, however, in situating "Taffy's" role in Rhodesia: he is no more than an assassin. According to this novel "Taffy's" missions have included: a failed attempt on Joshua Nkomo's life; and aborted (but planned!) attempts to kill Colonel Gadaffi with the British MI-6 ("it was called off at the last minute" [ibid., p. 92]) and Robert Mugabe with the Rhodesian security forces. "Taffy" admits to killing Jason Moyo, a leader in ZANU, by parcel bomb. Here is his callous, almost sociopathically gleeful, account:

Jason 'JZ' Moyo must clearly have been an avid Reader's Digest fan. He received the parcel on the 22nd January 1977 and opened it personally. He was blasted to eternity as a permanent lesson for his carelessness (ibid., p. 148).

As was stated earlier, we are not likely to learn much about the war from this novel. The text and its authenticating subject merely continue using the old war myths and so perpetuate old discourses. An example of this is "Taffy's" account of the Green Leader<sup>4</sup> mission into Lusaka. "Taffy", presents us with this version of the Rhodesian Air Force officer's message to Lusaka control during the air strike:

'Lusaka Tower, this is Green Leader. This is a message for the station commander at Mumbwa from the Rhodesian Air Force. We are attacking the terrorist base at Westlands Farm at this time. This attack is against Rhodesian dissidents and not against Zambia. Rhodesia has no quarrel, repeat no quarrel, with Zambia or her security forces. We therefore ask you not to intervene or oppose our attack. However, we are orbiting your airfield at this time and we are under orders to shoot down any Zambian Air Force aircraft which does not comply with this request and attempts to take off. Did you copy that?' (ibid., p. 221).

This report is exactly the same as that issued by the Combined Operations communique. Subsequently it has been learnt that this message to Lusaka control tower,

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4 On October 19th 1978 Rhodesian security forces attacked Westlands farm (twenty kilometres north of Lusaka) - "an attack... aimed only at the ZAPU terrorist base". Combined Operations Communique, 20th October 1978, as quoted by Frederikse (1982: 168).

asserting Rhodesian control over Zambian air space, was only recorded *after* the attack. This narcissistic message was broadcast over national radio in Rhodesia to boost morale by showing the Rhodesian security force's superiority and apparent invincibility. It was even incorporated into a "Troopie Song" by John Edmond<sup>5</sup>. The actual comments during the strike were these rather less than eloquent ones:

Steady, steady... I'm gonna get them... yah, steady now, bombs gone, they're running... Beautiful, Jesus Christ, those fuckin' bombs are beautiful... Roger, just let me get onto the fuckin' tower and give them our bloody message here. Where's this fuckin' piece of speech..... That was mushi, fuckin' hundreds of gooks... there are fuckin' kaffirs *everywhere* (transcript from Martin & Johnson 1981: 297).

This 'historian', "Taffy", presents another Rhodesian war myth which, like many others, was used to boost morale and to perpetuate white control. One would expect myths to fall by the way-side in a "definitive", historical account of the war. ***See You in November*** becomes yet another example of Rhodesian discourse, its myths and values and in so doing adequately (but unintentionally) reflects the attempts of a white minority to uphold its political and cultural hegemony, material privelege, and racial supremacy in Rhodesia.

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5 "The Green Leader Theme", by John Edmond. The song, when it continues after the recording, states: This is what God would have willed/ Kill or see the children killed/ My little country cries for peace...

No novel as blatantly racist as this one would be published in many countries, let alone a newly Independent African state. Presumably no Zimbabwean publisher would touch it, and an obscure South African publishing house (Galago) does not add to the book's international appeal. In fact, its racist ideology and its lack of literary merit in a country attempting to forge a new nationalist status could not be better highlighted than by having it published in apartheid South Africa - a country which embodies the political ideals of white supremacy that vanished in Zimbabwe in 1980.

David Caute's *Under the Skin: The Death of White Rhodesia*, published in 1983, is presented as a narrativised account of the war. It is composed of a collage of journalistic reports in chronological order: articles for newspapers; statistical data; dates, events, actualities and anecdotes; descriptions or portraits of landscapes, people, politicians, and bloody massacres; and sociological analyses. But is this as close to Barthesian 'white writing' as writing comes? Is this (the impossible) degree-zero objectivity? Or does writing, including historical discourse, necessarily "shape reality in its own image, acting as the institutional carrier, transmitter or encoder of (a specific) way of life", in the way that

Hawkes (1977: 107) would insist that language inevitably does?

To quote Hayden White, the irony of the tension between objective representation and an inevitably formulated hierarchy of discourses <sup>6</sup> is that while "historical narratives without analyses are empty... historical analyses without narrative are blind" (1980: 10). In *Under The Skin: the Death of white Rhodesia*, hence, it is necessary for an historical representation to be a product of possible conceptions of historical reality. History in Rhodesia had 'belonged', as such, to the white historians and novelists: to those who wrote during colonial involvement and upheld colonial, settler or, at least, dominant metropolitan ideologies. Cauter is one of the first whites to write about that Rhodesian era from a different perspective. He intends to break many of the myths, to distance himself from that discourse:

what is the reach of this narrative? Not, surely, to prove that white Rhodesians, whether Pioneers or followers of Ian Smith, are uniquely rapacious, exploitative and

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6 A hierarchy of discourses signifies the "existence of a level of discourse over and above those overtly signalled by the text (dramatic dialogue, interior monologue...)" (Dine 1989: 29). It is the hierarchy of discourse which aligns a reader with an autonomous author who acts as the source of information and evidence. The reader's perception of the text's 'truth' relies, therefore, on his or her "interpretation of the world as it is perceived by an author" (Belsey 1980: 68).

imperialistic. Our subject is, in fact, a collective state of mind; more particularly the extraordinary mental manoeuvres by which pillage is termed responsible government, repression becomes law and order, usurpation is called authority, violence is lauded as restraint; the peculiar indignation, the outrage, the sense of ingratitude, experienced by the conquerors when the dispossessed natives attempt to recover by force what was taken so recently from them by force. Our subject is the myths, evasions, legends, reifications, and strategies of false consciousness; the bones, nerves and flesh of an ideology (Caute 1983: 32).

But, it will be argued, by destroying the myths and distancing himself from white Rhodesian discourse, Caute merely presents another, alternative, "story" <sup>7</sup> of that history. The text problematises the accuracy of history as presented by the settler ideology yet, at the same time, it depicts a 'correct' version of historical fact. Hence, Caute exposes himself to criticism in the form of privileging a version of history as 'truth'. In the prologue to his book he tells the reader:

a white man from England had come to meet the 'boys' <sup>8</sup>, had been accepted by the 'boys', and had learned the truth (ibid., p. 23).

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7 "Historical events dispose themselves... as 'stories' waiting to be told" (White 1980: 10).

8 'Boys' is the word in translation from the Shona 'vakomona'. Events such as *pungwes* (nightmeetings) and *chimurenga* songs were used as morale-boosting attempts to build feelings of nationalism. 'Vakomona', during the war years, implied young 'comrades' of the struggle.

Objective presentation of history is, again (and always) made problematic by the notion of narration. And, furthermore, any assumptions of a value-free language are negated by interpretative context. Hence, the veracity of Peter Stiff's diatribe against "virtually the whole world [which] had ganged up against [Rhodesia]" is undermined by the choice of an obviously prejudiced, unreliable narrator. And David Cate's *Under the Skin: The Death of White Rhodesia*, published in 1983, at an opposite pole of the continuum to Stiff's racist text, is also problematised as an historical account of the war.

Real events cannot 'speak for themselves', Hayden White (1980: 8) reminds us, before going on to point out that historical discourse is problematised by the distinction between real and imaginary events. The real and the imaginary are both possible components of the narrating of any event. It is these two "orders" which the 'storyteller' is impelled to expose so as not to mix the real and the imaginary in that historical discourse. Furthermore,

what we call 'mythic' narrative is under no obligation to keep the two orders distinct from one another. *Narrative becomes a problem only when we wish to give to real events the form of story.* It is because real events do not offer themselves as stories that their narrativisation is so difficult (White 1980: 8, emphasis mine).

This problematic is observed in Caute's text where a compositional friction arises between the claims to be an impartial account of determinable, quantifiable data in a naturally chronological, historical sequence and its position as a formal, "narrative account" with beginning, middle and end. The narrative progresses inexorably towards the promise of its subtitle, the "**Death of White Rhodesia**", the "messy end of white rule" (back cover, emphasis mine). As Hayden White points out, narrative reveals events "as possessing a structure, an order of meaning, which they do not possess as mere sequence" (White 1980: 9). For instance, Caute has consciously chosen where chronologically to start this text. It has also been his equally conscious decision to include or exclude certain events, portraits or information. An example of this is the four and a half page description of the once president of Women for Peace, Lady Wilson, used solely to undermine this liberal movement. It follows a two page report (in a text 448 pages long) subtitled: "white liberals" (1983: 212). Caute makes very little distinction between "liberals" and "conservatives" and states with certainty that: "these whites share the same gut fear... as do those who support Ian Smith. At root it is the fear of black rape" (ibid., p. 214). He has used this sort of hype to belittle the liberal cause, perhaps consciously - so as to make a point about its ineffectiveness - for not taking a more

definite stance against the Rhodesian Front. As such, the one "liberal" who stands as an exception to liberal hypocrisy is Garfield Todd. He escapes Cauté's viciousness and sarcasm by virtue of the fact that he apparently harboured guerillas during the struggle while liberals (all?) "loathe Smith but serve in his security force, as reservists, without a qualm" (ibid., p. 213).

To return to the earlier point: the privileging of information depends on presentation, argument or even the inclusion of certain information, and this is left, here, to the historian's integrity. And, in all of this authorship, in addition to his choice to end at (the start of) African Nationalism's rise to power, David Cauté has presented a specifically ordered, sequential, and thereby expository argument - a specific system of representation which is, thereby, ideological <sup>9</sup>.

The most obvious illustration of the ideology that Cauté is re-presenting here has already been mentioned: it appears in his prologue, thereby setting the scene for the demythologisation that is to follow, and occurs when he meets with the "vakomona". The meeting presumes

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9 'Ideology' was defined (in Part I, page 21) and based on Terry Eagleton's premise (1976: 16) that it was a set of "doctrines" which signify roles, values, ideas, doctrines, and images of society. In short, ideology signifies the way people see the world.

two factors: one that he "had been accepted by the boys" and, two, that he "had learned the truth" from them (Caute 1983: 23). But, has he been "accepted" or has he been used to carry nationalist myths of the war in retaliation to the Rhodesian ones? It is interesting to note, in this regard, that the first words one of the guerillas (whom Caute so matily calls "vakomona") utters are "So what will you write about us then?" (ibid., p. 19).

And how is it that he questions one version of 'the truth' and not another? The accepted version that Caute, "historian" (back cover) and "distinguished British journalist" (ibid., p. 236), has presented as 'truth' is based on the accounts of two unknown, unnamed guerillas. He uses one version of the truth (as presented in the prologue) as a starting point to subvert another. Thus, while he tells us about the 'reality' of the circumstances surrounding the Rhodesian situation ("No other interpretation is possible" [ibid., p. 433]), there is a rather large question mark over any ultimate truth. And this is exacerbated by the amount of unverifiable information (the text provides very little information pertaining to source material, and when sources are referred to there is no accompanying bibliography) and an assumption of authorial credibility ("the poem said in essence.." [1983:444, emphasis mine]).

Is the "vakomona's" version the 'truth' because it is what Cate wants to hear? Because it represents what he wants to portray? Because it is more believable? Because it is the natural reaction against a system of exploitation? Cate tells us "it's odd - or is it? - that the genuine article, the real SAS commando, should want to soak up a mythological version of his own exploits. Yet we are all amazed by our own photographs... [by] the miracle of mimesis" (ibid., p. 289). Cate should heed his own words: it is odd - or is it? - that the genuine article, the self proclaimed "distinguished British journalist" should want to soak up the mythological version presented to him while "under fire" (from bullets, the public and the Rhodesian government). Yet we are all amazed by our own words (see Auden 1963: 17)... [by] the miracle of mimesis.

Those values, roles, doctrines and images of society that Cate uses are drawn out of African nationalism. One oppressive minority's world view is thereby replaced, and the substituted world view, in this book, is actualised and sustained by the ideological misrepresentations of another repressive regime which Cate, conveniently accepting the mythic demarcation of Independence in 1980, prevents himself from having to view critically. This is precisely what needs to be avoided in the Zimbabwe national situation so as to be

sure that the 'post' in 'postcolonial' signifies the complete severance of any links with an exploitative past. In order to facilitate this a critical awareness is indispensable. A lack of vigilance, a blind acceptance of African nationalism holds the possibility of the "post" in postcolonialism merely signifying the substitution of one kind of authoritarianism for another <sup>10</sup>. Cauté's text, his contribution to Zimbabwe national culture - while important for its part in the demythologisation of white Rhodesian culture - bears an unhealthy, unquestioning embracement of African nationalist myths.

David Cauté, in his rejection of Rhodesian discourse, has simultaneously embraced an African Nationalist version of 'truth'. By demythologising the white Rhodesian version of the war and the events leading up to the war, Cauté has attempted to speak from the place of the "Other". But is it possible for a white outsider (neither white Rhodesian nor oppressed, marginalised indigenous Zimbabwean) to speak for the subaltern without merely inverting the binary oppositions set up by white discourse? In this text Cauté has failed to resist 'claims' to truth. And, as Tony Bennet (1990: 54-55) observes, such a position is a dangerous one because, at best, some accounts are merely more truthful than others.

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10 See *Current Writing* 4, October 1992, pp. 10-14.

The last text to be studied in this chapter uses autobiography as its narrative form. This novel is Bruce Moore-King's *White Man Black War*, and the Baobab edition uses an *Africa South* quotation on the front cover to tell the reader that the book is "the first book to tell the truth about an ignoble war, written by a former soldier who strips away the lies he had been fed from his cradle". The confessional tone of the first half of the book is extremely effective, but it does tend to disguise Moore-King's own involvement in the atrocities of war. The concept of narrative disguise will be dealt with in the course of the analysis but the main mechanisms used by Moore-King to shift responsibility from himself and to 'camouflage' personal involvement are his use of style, subject matter and narrative form. The style includes a form of impressionism; the subject matter is made up of continuous transferences between descriptions of brutal slaughters and a scathing indictment of the "Elders" (the white ruling class); and the narrative form necessarily includes a 'creation' of the self. The second half of the book comes across as an egotistical and sycophantic platform for an assertion of his new African nationalist ideologies. His comment, "choose to be Zimbabwean or choose to be enemy" (ibid., p. 132), assumes no ideologies other than Rhodesian discourse and Zimbabwean nationalism based on Zanu (PF) premises. The text signifies that Moore-King has conveniently

chosen unquestioning loyalty to the government - just as he did to the Rhodesians, and (presumably) as he will do to a future government.

While parts of this discussion will be devoted to observations on the role that a white Rhodesian soldier-turned-writer like Moore-King has in re-writing history, the main aim is to look into the issue of 'authority' in autobiography: what is the status of the self in an autobiography which integrates philosophical, linguistic, historical, social and personal complexities? And what is the role of the (self-conscious?) narrator who not only writes from a temporal distance to demythologise the Rhodesian enterprise but who now sees himself as a patriotic Zimbabwean? Is total acceptance of the *status quo* the only possible position?

T. O. McLoughlin states that the "atrocities by white soldiers on blacks are described with poetic vividness" (*Current Writing* 3, 1991: 150) in Moore-King's novel and this is certainly apparent throughout the text. For instance:

The orange glow and punishing heat of the ruins reached us when we were still fifty metres from the last line of huts... The jagged edges of glowing huts crumbled and split as we watched, scattering seared lumps of clay that bounced on the ground, small blue flames licking briefly across them... The singing numbed our minds, washing thought

away, there was only the music of a thousand voices, there was only the red searing hell before us, and we were scared and silent (1988: 24-5).

This is the description of an incomplete Collective Village (CV) <sup>11</sup> in Mtoko, which Moore-King and his troops are meant to be protecting. Two guerillas had infiltrated the CV and, in an attempt to kill these two, one hundred and twenty-three people would be massacred. The killing reaches a crescendo:

The reply, the order, was swift, terse: "Take them out".

The clatter of the rifle bolt and the click of the grenade sliding onto the muzzle seemed awfully loud. Then the corporal fired the grenade into the visible area between the high walls and everyone opened up.

As the grenade exploded inside the walls, people began to rise and turn on the top of the walls, but we began firing then, trying to search out the two armed figures we had seen, and people dropped like dead pheasants, rolling, arms loose, down the steep sides of the walls (1988: 26).

Obviously one of the most important factors for consideration, here, is the uncovering of an untruth, one of many in a propaganda effort which exaggerated the bravery, courage and worth of the Rhodesian soldier to keep up morale ("my people talk of the courage and bravery with which we... fought. And in the same breath, without any sense of contradiction, they talk

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11 People from any given area were gathered together by security forces; their homes were burned and they had to rebuild at the enclosed central points where guards were posted. Hence, Collective Villages were built to deny guerillas access to supplies and information.

of the cowardice of those who were our enemies, how poorly trained they were, how they did not compare as soldiers. How, then, did it require such courage to fight them?") Exaggerated, too, was the number of guerilla deaths, while the death of civilians was grossly played down and hidden from public view. As the author puts it: "the SB [Special Branch] officers who arrived said that certainly a few of the one hundred and twenty-three bodies had belonged to the enemy, having had their weapons and webbing removed... but no-one believed him (1988:33)". No-one except, perhaps, those not directly involved in the war. And this is to become a major focus of the book: to uncover the propaganda, to reveal the inhumanity, and to protest at the pointlessness of a war based on lies. Running parallel to this probing, analytic text is a poetry of words. McLoughlin introduces the idea that the poetic vividness used to describe the atrocities suggests that such violence "had its own seductive pleasure which required neither justification nor reflection" (op. cit., p. 150). The idea of the poetry of writing neatly introduces the notion of fiction in an historical account. For, as Kazin tells us, "autobiography, like other literary forms, is what a gifted writer makes of it" <sup>12</sup>.

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12 Kazin, A. "Autobiography as Narrative", in Michigan Quarterly Review III, 1964, as quoted by Cohen, R (1974:221).

Two factors need to be considered at this point. First, it is inevitable that Moore-King's perspective at the time of writing has somewhat unavoidably reordered and renewed the past in the circumstances of the present moment of writing. Secondly, the way synchrony is established through the distortions of time, space, event, analysis and proposition in the text immediately makes more obvious the author's creative input in 'factual' autobiography. In fact he tells Jane Perlez<sup>13</sup> that "it was very important for [the book] to be truthful so it could be checked out but I wanted to reduce the basic blood and guts. What happened was far worse than what I wrote (op. cit.,: 43). Inevitably, then, we need to look at the notion of 'writing' in a work which is a portrayal of the self and, because of this bases itself on the premise of verifiable, determinable data. **White Man Black War** reflects the development into adulthood, not only of Moore-King but of a generation of white Rhodesians fed on the same myths of manhood, courage and glory of war. And we need to interrogate the way that writing 'the self' simultaneously becomes a construction of that self.

Deconstructionist criticism is perhaps the most obvious (and hard-hitting) theoretical inquiry into any notion of an ontological status of the self. And the referential basis of autobiography, the self, is in

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13 **The New York Times**, Friday 13 January 1989: 43.

deconstructionist epistemology (itself a questionable phrase!), inherently unstable - to the point of being an illusion produced by the structure of language. It seems impossible to disprove the idea that the text displaces the subject ("the writer is, as it were, written by the discourse he employs; the self is displaced by the text, with the result that the portrait of the self is eclipsed, supplanted instead by knowledge of the trope of self-reference and its structural function in a rhetorical system" [Eakin 1972: 72-73]). But does deconstruction announce the death of autobiography? Can deconstruction not posit for autobiography a reasonable and viable theory on self-conceptualisation? If the transcendent subject is based on nothing but an illusion then "not only is autobiography... no longer possible, *it never was*" (Lang 1982:5). Autobiographies cannot be disproved as such and one would be mistaken to believe this is the deconstructionist enterprise, but what deconstruction does is to proffer a suggestion that autobiographies cannot be read as before. Deconstruction suggests the problematic of the self where any attempts to capture or reveal the self on paper are ineffectual <sup>14</sup>; it suggests that there is a gulf between the self and

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14 In a Derridean analysis the very act of writing is itself only the mark of its own absence. Speech can only connote the desire for presence - which is forever absent; presence is itself only an assumption of Western metaphysics. (See Derrida, "Signature Event Context", in *Limited Inc* [1988: 9-10]).

language and as such the writing of the self in autobiography becomes a process of self-invention. Bruce Moore-King's attempts to assimilate his own journey into adulthood into the maturation of a whole generation of white Rhodesian soldiers ("we the battered generation") becomes in itself "poetic self-invention" <sup>15</sup>.

When describing the actions of the security forces in situations like the follow-up operation, the attack on the C.V., and the questioning of prisoners, Moore-King never uses the pronoun "I". The open signifier that is "I"/ "Corporal" / "Sergeant" / "we" is constantly shifting and elusive to its author. But while this is a linguistic problem it is also a political phenomenon. Moore-King and his contemporaries were fighting to retain their identity as Rhodesians. Self-identity is elusive because the text groups all whites together and so disguises and hides admittance of self-involvement in those atrocities. But it is also not a little symbolic of the way that Moore-King was both depersonalised by the war and alien to the landscape - hence he had no right to fight and kill for what was not uniquely his.

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15 Candace Lang (1982:5) quotes William Spengemann (1980. *The Forms of Autobiography*. Yale U.P. New Haven) and his idea that the radically altered notion of the subject in autobiography reveals not the self, but a "nostalgia for a pre-cultural self which lingers in... 'poetic self-invention'".

In "Notes for an Anatomy of Modern Autobiography" Francis Hart outlines 'confession', 'apology' and 'memoir' as traditional forms and goes on to interpret the correlation between form and intention:

'Confession' is personal history that seeks to communicate or express the essential nature, the truth, of the self. 'Apology' is personal history that seeks to demonstrate or realise the integrity of the self. 'Memoir' is personal history that seeks to articulate or repossess the historicity of the self. 'Confession' as an intention or impulse places the self relative to nature, reality; 'apology' places the self relative to social and/or moral law; 'memoir' places the self relative to time, history, cultural pattern and change. Confession is ontological; apology ethical; memoir historical or cultural (1974; 227).

Any autobiographer's intentions change, clash and/or overlap and we are left to interpret the relation between writer and his personal subject (in this case "I" / "corporal" / "Sergeant" / "we [the battered generation]"). Somewhere within the clash between intentions and between forms is "I"/Bruce Moore-King. And we are left to decode the ambiguous "I" through the authority of personal memory and the fluctuations of roles, identities, and ideologies.

Following, for a moment, this line of argument concerning narrativity and form, a question arises as to Moore-King's reliability as a narrator. In 1978 he, and four others, were deported from the country *by the Rhodesian government - for atrocities committed against*

prisoners. A news report had alleged that a unit under his command had mistreated prisoners. Moore-King states that the account was "exaggerated" (*The New York Times* 1989: 43). But to what extent? The mistreatment of prisoners obviously did happen for them to be 'exaggerated'. And Frederikse insinuates that the five were scapegoats. But is this humiliation of being deported, and of having to confront his actions in the face of international criticism, partly the reason for his scathing attack on the "Elders"? For instance, according to the narrator "there are many aspects of our past that the "Elders" pretend never happened. What happened to the "Elders'" children, for example, when they were sent to war? The "Elders" would like to ignore the things their children did in the war" (1988:35). Just as he has had to face the consequences of his own actions, it appears that he wants the same for all the white ruling class of Rhodesia.

Furthermore, *White Man Black War* is based, apparently, on a letter the author was writing to a newspaper (never sent) on what seems to be an epiphanic moment at Beit Bridge customs. "It was the friendliness of the greeting", Moore-King tells Jane Perlez (*The New York Times* 1989:43). He interprets the "sincerity" of the official's hospitable "Welcome back to Zimbabwe" as "Forget the war and let's get on with life" (ibid., p. 43) which is, to say the least, a rather convenient re-

start for a man who, in another place or time, might just as easily have been tried for war crimes. A customs official opened his eyes to "the myth that was Rhodesia" (1983: 131)? Considering the 'disguising' of his own involvement, and the creative input in his 'factual' narrative, then, when Moore-King states that "callous though it may sound, I am not consciously aware of any [war] guilt" (Moore-King 1988: i) it becomes apparent that the book may be used to sublimate responsibility. Yes, it acts as an effective demythologisation of the premise for the war, of white soldier's role in protecting the country 'against the threat of communist rule', and of the Rhodesian soldier's invincibility. But one of the text's main aims is (unconsciously?) to proffer excuses by indicting the "Elders".

It is the parents who become the focus of the text ("a brutal and unforgiving book about how white parents dispatched their sons to an immoral cause", says Perlez [op. cit., p. 43]). It was the "Elders" (parents) whose avarice overcame their morality ("these Elders valued the comfort of their own life-styles beyond the lives of their own children.... it was for greed that they sent us, the battered generation, to war" [Moore-King 1988: 113]). It was the parents who fed the young with lies ("[the young] are taught not to question, but to show respect to the Elders, to believe implicitly in

in the values the Elders held when they sent their sons to war" [ibid., p. 3]). The "Elders", we are told, "never came closer to the reality of the war than reading the daily obituary column as they stood warm and safe" (ibid., p. 130). To Moore-King the "Elders" are more than just incriminated in the soldiers' war crimes: they are regarded as demented, crazed animals ("what aberrations, then, are these, the parents of my generation.... who take such pleasure in the pain and fear they sent their sons to endure, these twisted mentalities" [ibid., p. 131]). Ian Smith, the "High Priest", Moore-King "accuse(s) particularly" (ibid., p. 114, and see pp. 115-121). And hiding behind all this blame that is handed out is a man who was deported for "exaggerated" reports of his crimes against humanity (now cleansed).

[The Elders] would like to ignore what the war did to their children.

With every act of brutality, the sons themselves were brutalised. As they became more brutalised, their acts became more brutal... In the end, none were wholly normal, and many were no longer human (1988: 35).

The text hides his own involvement in the war: frequent use of the third person singular to describe himself acts as an obfuscating device ("six weeks later the corporal makes [becomes] acting sergeant" for obtaining information from a little boy. The information is gathered rather 'harmlessly' - considering his deportation - or is this not the torturing?). And the

use of the third person plural ascribes the 'guilt' to a group, or more accurately and conveniently, to a system headed by the "Elders" and their "High Priest".

Nonetheless, the history of the bush war had belonged originally to the Rhodesian enterprise, and subsequently the emphasis has fallen on the opposing side: the black Zimbabwean writers and their accounts of the war. Moore-King, proceeding from Cate's journalistic account, questions the premise of the war. He is one of the first white writers, and the first ex-Rhodesian soldier, to provide an alternative voice to that of the 'western', 'Christian', 'democratic' Rhodesian patriot who glorified the conflict: his is a vanguard attempt to rewrite the war. It is an inside story on an experience over-documented from the outside, the ruling-class Rhodesian side. Perhaps his position as 'insider' could best be explained by comparing the role of this writer's text to what Stephen Clingman calls "History from the Inside". **White Man Black War** provides a uniquely subjective observation of an historical experience, thus providing an insight into history and a consciousness of past experience. He provides an entirely personal interpretation of the war rendered plausible by the lack of Rhodesian influence and by his authority as having "[been] part of, or worked with at various times, the RLI, 1RR, PATU, 2RR, RIC, RAR, and Grey's

Scouts <sup>16</sup>. I have commanded ex-SAS troopers, re-trained ex-British 'Red Devils', worked with Australian and American Vietnam veterans, laboured to communicate with French mercenaries, been under the command of a former Legionnaire, and been under the command of the highest ranking American mercenary in the Rhodesian army" (1988:i). The text is not merely a product of history, or observation: it is influenced by legal and financial restrictions, suppositions, ideologies and obsessions, and by (autobiographical) narrative form; it reflects a developing consciousness which will become important as a history of consciousness in Zimbabwe.

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16 These were all Rhodesian security force regiments: Rhodesian Light Infantry, 1st Battalion Rhodesian Regiment, Police Anti-Terrorist Unit, 2nd Battalion Rhodesian Regiment, Rhodesian Intelligence Corps, Rhodesian African Rifles, and the mounted regiment, the Grey's Scout's, respectively.

**PART THREE: "Culture, Acculturation and Zimbabwean National Unity".**

*The post-colonial world is one in which destructive cultural encounter is changing to an acceptance of difference on equal terms*  
(Ashcroft et al 1989:36).

The past decade has been one of wide-ranging political, economic and cultural change in Zimbabwe. The country, in its process of transition from colonial to post-colonial hegemony, is still, however, heavily reliant on the Western imperium <sup>1</sup>. Obviously this limits the country's economic autonomy, but it is the notion of culture and acculturation <sup>2</sup> which is of interest here and the contribution, if any, that white discourse makes to a 'national culture'. Of particular interest is the notion of a white discourse in a reduced space - reduced because of the formation of a counterhegemonic culture "which pits itself against a discourse of colonial capitalism", as Trump says of black South African writing (1990:161).

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- 1 See Mandaza 1987: 99-141. In its efforts to correct the imbalances of the Rhodesian social security system - in health care, education, and distribution of wealth, for instance - Zimbabwe, paradoxically, is linked to western donors all the more closely. It has vast debts to repay, and because of this the World Bank has outlined the economic line the country must follow for this aid to continue.
- 2 'Acculturation' is defined, in the context of the Zimbabwean situation, as the effect of contact between traditional and colonial cultures.

The notion of a 'national culture' has been widely debated in recent years <sup>3</sup>, particularly in South Africa. Participation in such a controversial discussion is beyond the scope of this dissertation but the concepts 'culture' and 'national culture' do need clarification. Culture in this case is to be taken as an objectification of human experience for, as Ernst Fischer proclaims, "in order to be an artist it is necessary to seize, hold, and transform experience into memory, memory into expression, material into form" (1964:9). If this is taken further, culture is, therefore, the ideological illustration of the material and historical reality of a people. It becomes, as Kimani Gecau describes, "the measure and indicator of a people's level of development at every stage of their history" (in Kaarsholm [ed] 1991:77). What is of interest here is the "level of development" of white Zimbabweans, at this post-colonial stage of *their* history.

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3 See, for instance, Albie Sachs's notorious article "Preparing Ourselves for Freedom", in De Kock and Press (1990) which started a string of responses. The most interesting reactions (on opposite poles of the 'national culture' continuum - national culture as vital for an identity free from colonial hegemony versus national culture as a 'myth') are: Karen Press's "Building a National Culture in South Africa" (in Trump 1990:22-40); and Degenaar's "How Texts and their Reception will Change in the Post-apartheid Era" (*Current Writing* 4 1992:10-14). Discussion on the relevancies of these poles are put forward in Ndebele's "Redefining Relevance" (*Pretexts* 1 [1] 1989:4051); Brink's "Towards a Redefinition of Aesthetics" (*Current Writing* 3, 1991:105-116) and in the essays collected in Brown & Van Dyke (1991).

White participation in any aspect of Zimbabwean life, let alone in continued assertion of cultural presence, would have been largely inhibited by the mass exodus of whites, fearful of retribution, from the country at independence. Whites, in an apparent state of perpetual victimisation by their own discourse, were apprehensive about their future and their space in the country. Their belief was that Mugabe was not only the enemy but also that he was evil (he was, after all, a Marxist and as such was Godless and - along this line of imperialist propaganda - by extension, nefarious!) Mugabe's cliched but vitriolic revolutionary sloganeering ("whites will be culled" [Hills 1981:161]) did not help to quell capital flight. Whites left in droves:

[t]he most ready victims of the white settler ideology and the related negative propaganda about black rule, the white workers constituted the majority of those whites who fled Zimbabwe just before and after independence. The white exodus was at the rate of 1,500 per month; and between independence and October 1981, 32,000 had departed (Mandaza 1987:47-8).

Interestingly, this exodus came despite Mugabe's offers of reconciliation - a policy "which sought to embrace anyone who was willing to be liberal enough" (Mandaza 1987:56) - hence illustrating the depth to which the myths that sustained Rhodesian discourse had been internalised. In Zanu (PF)'s election victory speech Mugabe forestalled whatever retributive action white

Rhodesians may have expected under 'Marxist-communist-black' rule. On the 4th March the new Prime Minister was introduced to the nation as 'Comrade Robert G. Mugabe'. This term 'comrade' signalled a 'rebirth', a significant break from the pervasive imperialist hegemony, while simultaneously terrifying the white population whose discourse portrayed Marxist philosophy as capitalism's morally corrupt opposite <sup>4</sup>. White discourse acted as a fuel for the apprehensive white person's imagination, whereby the signifier 'comrade' acted as apparent confirmation of the belief that Mugabe embraced the Marxist-Leninist philosophy that they saw as 'evil'. 'Comrade Robert G. Mugabe's' victory speech was, in fact, not at all ominous. He told the nation, on the evening of the 4th March:

We will ensure that there is a place for everyone in this country. We want to ensure a sense of security for both the winners and the losers... Let us forgive and forget. Let us join hands in a new amity (Caute 1983:427).

Despite this offer of reconciliation, and despite the Lancaster House Agreement <sup>5</sup> which protected vested white interests, the white exodus continued unabated.

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4 See Frederikse (1982: 186-193). The chapter, "Mozambique is a good Example" uses as its epigraph a Rhodesian military memo detailing a directive for psychological warfare campaign (the heading of which is 'The Evils and Effects of Communism') outlining eight degrading effects of communism. The rest of the chapter details more of this psychological campaign and the effects it had on the general population.

5 See Mandaza 1987:33-41.

Ideological prejudices, and years spent in total acceptance of Rhodesian propaganda and myth-making, won out over nationalistic, patriotic, pragmatic, rational and generous reasons to stay and contribute to the pursuit of a Zimbabwean national unity. And it was not only international legislation but also the pursuit of national unity which prompted the offer of reconciliation. In spite of "an atmosphere of intense suspicion and even hostility on the part of those he defeated" (Mandaza 1987:42), in need of western aid and white expertise and capital, and in heed of the Lancaster House Agreement, Mugabe would have to begin to build the nation.

A notion of 'national culture' becomes an important concept in any such nation-building, and literature - as has already been argued - plays an important role in the formation of predominant ideologies. As Ashcroft *et al* establish, liberation involves freeing people from their former servitude to colonial ideology. This formerly dominant ideology contributed to cultural denigration ("the conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture by a supposedly superior racial or cultural model" [1989:9]) as part of a strategy of maintaining political, economic and cultural dominance. As such this culture, in which English plays a pivotal role, would have to be

subverted, abrogated and appropriated <sup>6</sup> and a new, positivistic ideology of non-oppression would have to be reconstructed. Fanuel Sumaili, speaking generally of the reconstruction that is necessary after the "conclusion of the wars of liberation", says that writers "not only register the pains and joys of national rebirth but begin to constitute an important source of critical consciousness for the nation" (in Ngara & Morrison 1989: 8). For Zimbabwe this "critical consciousness" is indubitably salient so as to avoid replacing one authoritarian ideological campaign with another. Critical consciousness, therefore, is an important component of national culture, used to avoid implicating a national identity with the view of nationalism interpreted by the politician who formulates "another, more convenient notion of national culture" for political expediency (Amuta 1989:63). Hence, it is used to exclude national culture from the tendency towards neo-colonialism and from acquiescing in the influences on culture of economic and political strategies demanded by imperialist powers.

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6 Ashcroft et al (1989:38-44) outline how language, in this case English, functions as a medium of power and as such demands that "post-colonial writing define itself by seizing the language of the centre and replacing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonised place". The processes by which this is completed are: abrogation (the denial of the privilege of English) and appropriation (the "capturing and remoulding [of] the language to new usages").

This definition of 'national culture', as outlined by Simbarashe Makoni, one of the Ministers who have been responsible for 'culture', bears repeating:

A national culture does not mean a single cultural identity or pursuit or projection. A national culture is a culture which adequately and accurately reflects all the components of that nation. It is not a static phenomenon. It is a dynamic experience (Makoni 1984:9).

This affirms culture as a reconstruction free from colonial authority, and it makes available a space for multi-culturalism and cultural autonomy for each separate cultural identity. And when Makoni goes on to recognise the process of acculturation that has taken place ("it is not correct to argue that the culture of the indigenous people has remained unaffected by the culture of the foreigners and conversely it is not correct to say that the culture of the Caucasian race has remained unaltered during the period of interaction with the indigenous people" [ibid p. 9]) it is in recognition of the positive attributes that such a process holds. "Critical consciousness", meanwhile, will contribute to a recognition of ideological oppression by any dominant ideology and allow a space for the learning, growth, and understanding that is permitted by cultural contact and interaction.

White Zimbabweans, with regard to the literature written in the early years of independence

(particularly that pertaining to the war) as analysed in the previous chapter, can hardly be said to have made use of the offer of reconciliation, nor does their (autonomous) contribution to national identity compare positively with the reconstructive attitude of the black Zimbabwean literature. While exception may be taken to Makoni's reference to white culture (which assumes a single, British metropolitan centre) as 'foreign', the reference is to the culture itself, not people. The discourse of this once-dominant culture was built on a series of misleading myths. These myths, it has been argued, were used as justification for settlement and to propagandise the aggressive defence of the space that this discourse provided. Mphahlele reflects an attitude prevalent among a (majority of) people subservient to a dominant ideology but still prepared to embrace acculturation - a component absent from Rhodesian culture:

[the white man] may teach me how to make a shirt or to read and write, but my forebears and I could teach him a thing or two if only he would listen and allow himself time to feel (1971:218).

One literary genre under the wide umbrella of white discourse that has made the most significant steps towards cultural heterogeneity is children's literature. Two examples of this are Margaret Tredgold's *The Baobab Children* (1990) and Lewin & Kopper's *Jafta - My Mother* (1982). Both are single

texts taken from their respective series, Tredgold's as one of her *Four Tales of Africa*, and *Jafta* as one of many in the Althea series. This latter series reflects its educational concerns in its titles. These include, for instance: *Fighting Fires; Building a House; Going into Hospital; Visiting the Dentist* and, lastly, *Starting School* <sup>7</sup>. The importance of these texts is self-evident: they are providing information to people who have not before enjoyed the benefits of these personal, medical and educational services now provided by post-colonial society.

*Jafta - My Mother* is slightly different. Like the others, this is fully illustrated but, rather than being an introduction to a social service, this is a celebration of motherhood, an acknowledgement of an unappreciated 'role' that women hold in society. But patriarchy is international, and this text does nothing to change established ways of educating children socially about gender roles where woman is compared to nature, man to culture. The second sentence of the text is: "My mother is like the earth - full of goodness, warm and brown and strong". From there on she is "like the sun rising", "like the sky", "like the willows on the bank of the river". In other words, she is always there, and she provides comfort, security and protection. Interestingly Jafta says "I think I almost

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7 All published by Dinosaur Publications, Cambridge.

love my mother best" when "after supper it's time for stories". Kopper's illustration is of women and children sitting listening to a wise-looking old man who tells them stories. The English language is providing its input to national culture in the form of established binary oppositions of nature - culture, male - female (as though indigenous culture did not have its own patriarchal ideologies to overcome). It retains age-old patriarchal symbols of woman as nature, man as provider of culture.

Tredgold's text is an adaptation of the brothers Grimms' fairy tale *Hansel and Gretel*. It involves three children (Tombi, Chipso and Sam) whose mother had died and whose father had erected a tree house for his family to keep them safe while he was out hunting. The tale is not without its problematics. Having these three well-behaved black children chatting with their animal friends Nzou, Twiza and Mrs. Njiri - the Shona names for elephant, giraffe and warthog respectively - does not help in demythologising the concept of the African as close to, and at one with nature. But, on a more positive note for acculturation, the images are drawn entirely from the African bush and, as an educational process, children on the periphery of Shona custom can learn the Shona names given to certain animals in this text and others in the series *Four*

*Tales of Africa* <sup>8</sup>, by Tredgold. Furthermore, these children's existence, as it is portrayed here - making use of what is available in the bush to hunt, grow and play - reflects a reality for African children in a rural atmosphere (as a gentle reminder for bourgeois urban children reliant on technological progress for entertainment).

Meanwhile the tale continues! A witch, advised by the "n'anga" (shaman or 'witchdoctor') as to how to change her voice, deceives the children into thinking she is "baba" returned early from a hunting trip. In this way she kidnaps them and makes them toil in her fields and cook her meals. On the one hand, then, this could be read not only as an Africanised version of *Hansel and Gretel* but as an allegory of the history of revolution. The evil witch (of the west!), strikingly symbolic of the capitalist oppressor, is defeated in the end. The children - reacting against this exploitation - join forces with their protective (Marxist) father. They sabotage the oppressor's (physical and psychological) means of domination, her (phallic) spear. Once her weapon is destroyed her language, which is based on threats and orders, is rendered powerless. Baba provides the ability and strength and so, together,

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8 The other texts in this series are: *Why the Bush Fowl Calls at Sunrise*, *The Riders and the Baobab Tree*, and *The Hare in the Moon*. All are published by Baobab Books.

they become all-powerful and they are able to kill the witch.

The witch, realising her rule is over, is remorseful for past wrongs and she does turn out to be true to her dying words ("I am not so horrible as you think" [1990:9]) and by throwing her amputated little finger into the fire all the people, property and animals stolen by the oppressor are restored. Simultaneously the tale presents a neat little Eurocentric/Christian morality ("bad deeds are punished in the end. Always do as my father taught me. Treat others as you wish to be treated yourself" [1990:19]) - a lesson for all children and imperialist oppressors!

In literature as a whole, however, it appears that whites continue to be victims of their own discourse even well after independence. And ironically so. One would have expected those who did not join the mass exodus to be committed to a contribution to Zimbabwe especially considering independence, offers of reconciliation, and attempts to involve white culture in a national identity. On the whole this was not to be: white discourse, established thus far as 'foreign', racist and patriarchal in its defence of supremacy, persists in clinging to the myths that contributed to notions of cultural and racial superiority with no sense of self-criticism. This is reflected in the (few)

novels written by whites during the early days of independent Zimbabwe, and in the 1985 elections where the white electorate revealed their continued support for Ian Smith by voting his Conservative Alliance of Zimbabwe into 15 of the 20 seats reserved for whites (Mandaza 1987: 58). Disillusionment in liberal and nationalist circles with the general white populace is illustrated by the following editorial from **The Chronicle** (1st July 1985):

The Prime Minister had his now famous hand of reconciliation extended to his former oppressors for the past five years now, a gesture which, it now appears has not been appreciated by those who should have gripped that hand firmly, the whites who elected to stay on in Zimbabwe after independence...

The majority of the white electorate have clearly shown that *they are not capable of changing, that they have not reconciled themselves to the new order* now prevailing in Zimbabwe. The only positive aspect of the election is that the whites of Zimbabwe have at least shown all concerned their true colours. (emphasis mine).

The white populace's inability to change or reconcile "themselves to the new order" has been adequately reflected by this election result, and in the novels of Peter Stiff and Ivan Smith (and, to a certain extent, Maughan-Brown who, while questioning the myths that made Rhodesia, is as unquestioningly accepting of a new social order, and a new set of myths of a nationalist government as he was under a white minority). But what of white discourse in Zimbabwe after 1985, post CAZ-

fiasco? <sup>9</sup> Is Mandaza necessarily correct when he describes this short-sighted (again the analogy to Smith's war wound which closes one eye to reality!) white electorate as being "embarrassed"? Mandaza adds that the majority of whites accepted reconciliation after the outcry against the election results and that "the confluence was developing; and perhaps the slow but certain discovery was being made by the whites that they had nothing to fear out of black majority rule after all" (ibid., p. 60). But to what extent is this the case and to what extent is white discourse still struggling to come to terms with defeat to a nationalist government which has put an end to the enforced cultural, political, economic and moral superiority so enjoyed by the colonisers?

Maureen de la Harpe, a self-proclaimed liberal ("in my own family... there was much sympathy for the black fight against discrimination" [de la Harpe 1992: 85]) has written a particularly ineffectual novel which nostalgically looks back on her time in Africa before her emigration to Australia. *Msasa Morning* is interesting, however, in so far as it will be shown that the text illustrates the inability of white

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9 This is a reference, again, to the victory that the Conservative Alliance of Zimbabwe won in the 1985 election and to the uproar in liberal and nationalist circles at the apparent inability of the majority of the white population to grasp the significance of the offer of reconciliation.

discourse to face up to its own myths as late as a decade after independence. And it is interesting in the fact that it becomes apparent that de la Harpe, as one of the 'enlightened' (liberal) few, places herself as doubly morally superior: superior, firstly, because she never supported Smith, and superior, secondly, to a supposedly obtuse colonised culture which liberalism condescends to educate and 'civilise'.

The 'liberal ideology' (assuming a difference, for now, between this ideology and that of the white settler) was shown to be a minority group in the white camp - by the fact that the Rhodesian front was consistently and overwhelmingly voted into power from 1963 to 1979. In post-colonial Zimbabwe, however, it is the liberal ideology that should identify most with African nationalism's commitment to non-racialism, justice, equality, and to individual rights since these expectations are "reflected on the African nationalist ideology as an offshoot of liberal ideology" (Mandaza 1987: 58). During the colonial situation, liberal ideology was presented as a counterpoint to white racism, placing itself as 'protector' of African interests through the educational system, Christian principles, economic betterment and political structures (as part of capitalist ideology) (ibid., p. 22). It thereby created a false dichotomy between the racial supremacy of the settlers and the liberalism of

the British Colonial Office <sup>10</sup>. It becomes apparent that this was a false dichotomy as there seems to be very little difference between liberalism and settler ideology, save a little moral distancing: they share much the same discourse, and, therefore, many of the same myths. And they fought the same battle - a battle against "the sinister and threatening face" of "black nationalism" (de la Harpe 1992: 85). An example of the false dichotomy, for instance, is illuminated by one of the myths perpetuated by Rhodesian discourse and masticated by the not-so-discerning de la Harpe: it is that of the contented African ("countering the antagonism generated towards whites by the black nationalist movement, there was an abundant fund of goodwill between the races" [ibid., p.86]). Liberalism, *a la* de la Harpe, presented this war - in one sense - as British 'protection' for the African:

what we could not comprehend (and what was ultimately to erode much white support for nationalist aspirations) was the often appalling savagery of attacks by nationalists against fellow blacks in their fight for independence (ibid., p. 85).

The illustration of liberalism's closed-mindedness, and its hidden but racially bigoted attitude is the way black nationalism was viewed as some external force

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10 On these and other aspects of the relationship between liberal and African nationalist ideologies, see Mandaza, I. "The Post-White Settler Colonial Situation", Pp 21-23, in Mandaza (1987).

threatening not only the white population, but also an otherwise contented African population. The myth of African savagery ("if [my son] had known of Africa's savage past" [ibid., p. 161]) and white security forces moral integrity are soon internalised. The war becomes not only a case of 'protecting the African', but a matter of self protection - more and more so as the myths promulgate themselves and all Rhodesians (liberal and otherwise) become victims of white discourse. The liberal author's asserted sympathy for "the black fight against discrimination" is soon (one sentence later, in fact) "offset by equal measures of horror and fear at the violence that has bloodied the road to freedom elsewhere in Africa" (ibid., p. 85).

In this light we see that de la Harpe's "sympathy" was a convenient misconception. 'Convenient' for three reasons. Firstly, her sense of moral integrity is heightened by this sense of sympathy which, in fact, comes from a sense of superiority to 'African "savagery"'. Secondly, this 'sympathy' can be laid aside whenever it suits her, and rather too easily - for instance, as has been illustrated, when she rejects African nationalism by unquestioningly believing the myths of nationalist "savagery". Thirdly, it is a 'convenient' sympathy because it (falsely) precludes personal involvement in the system of oppression. De la Harpe's affinity towards "the black fight against

discrimination" takes the form of a bourgeois and patronising attitude. Her sympathy only seems to go so far as being against "the degradation of 'whites only' signs, against restrictions on the movement of black people in their own country, and the areas in which they could live and own land" (ibid., p. 85). Factors such as the equality in education and health services, and equality in the provision of economic and political opportunity immediately spring to mind as worthy of liberal sympathy, but there is no mention of this. It is very interesting to see how de la Harpe absolves herself from moral responsibility by (again, 'conveniently') separating herself, her views and her morality from the government. In other words, she sees herself as bearing no responsibility for this discrimination.

But she *is* included in the system. In the text she omits further mention of "the areas in which [black people] could live and own land" which holds her sympathy. This is a reference to the 1930 Land Apportionment Act (see Mandaza 1987: 167-169), which restricted areas of tenure available to black people. Yet earlier in the novel she mentions the fact that "the Government had opened [the Horseshoe Block] for settlement and divided it into blocks suitable for tobacco and maize cultivation" (1992:17). Thus her sympathy does not subject her to a rejection of the

opportunities available to the white citizens. She and her husband are financed by the "land bank" and buy land in the Horseshoe Block, an area, presumably, restricted to white settlement.

It is difficult to decipher de la Harpe's 'sympathy', in *Msasa Morning*. Her attitude is patronising (for instance, her reference to the forced removal of the Tonga [Batonka] from the Zambezi valley is no more sympathetic than: "now the twentieth century had caught up with them" [ibid., p.,51]). Furthermore, she persistently refers to her adult house-staff with a derogatory suffix (-boy/-girl) which merely highlights her prejudices. This suffix reduces men to 'boys' and women to 'girls' and an example of this is: "we had recently taken on a new houseboy named Juwawu" (ibid., p. 158). Juwawu happens to be a husband and the father of children (ibid., p. 158).

Another way she is implicated in responsibility for discrimination is outlined in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Writers in Politics* (1981). Here Ngugi presents a scathing attack on liberal humanism:

Why do the liberals preach gratitude, humility, kindness, forgiveness and meekness to the oppressed classes?.. The aim is obvious: it is to weaken the resistance of the oppressed classes and here imaginative literature comes in as a useful medium of mental conditioning, making the oppressed believe that the root cause of their problem

and hence the solution, lies deep in their spiritual condition, in their sinful souls. (1981: 22).

Liberalism is associated with "cultural imperialism" which, for Ngugi, is as important a means of political and economic domination as the gun. As such, the liberal is associated in any oppressive regime alongside the settler: both play an important role in control over the colonised people in the colonial and neocolonial periods. Ngugi's rejection of liberal literature stems from a recognition of the necessity for blacks to determine their own consciousness, and to do so without any other forms of imperialist intervention. Western influences continue in Zimbabwe: in education, the presentation of history and the prevailing materialist attitude - to the detriment of ethnic culture, consciousness and values. De la Harpe, then, is implicated in this system of 'cultural imperialism' through her attitude and behaviour in the then colonial Rhodesia and through the fact that she publishes this book in an era of Zimbabwe's post-coloniality.

Ntongela Masilela, discussing South African literature, asserts that "the principle aim of [a] national literature, whether in its black or white shadings, whether in African or European languages, is to give a correct interpretation of our national history" (1988: 49). It would be difficult indeed to include de la

Harpe's nostalgic, chocolate-box-type romanticising of Africa ("the magic of Africa. I had been bewitched by it" [de la Harpe 1992: 37]) in such a literary canon. Her ideologically-induced misconceptions and moral superiority leave her autobiographical text far short of any such claim to a "correct interpretation".

One of the few texts that have been able to portray the country and its people outside an antiquated white Rhodesian discourse (comprised of myths, expediencies, lack of originality and misplaced patriotism) is John Eppel's *D.G.G. Berry's The Great North Road* (1992) <sup>11</sup>.

As leitmotif 'the Great North Road' of the title becomes symbolic of the history of colonialism in Africa. At once it signifies Rhodes's dream to open the north, to journey into the 'heart of darkness' - where (depending on ideological perspective) lands can be conquered (or stolen), and people can be 'educated' and 'civilised', (or dominated and exploited). There is,

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11 Other exceptions include Bruce Moore-King's *White Man Black War* (1988); Andrew Whaley's *The Rise and Shine of Comrade Fiasco* (1991) and Doris Lessing's *African Laughter: Four Visits to Zimbabwe* (1992). Because of the restrictions (length and time) on this dissertation a number of works have had to be omitted from discussion. (These texts and issues could be followed up in a longer dissertation in the future). Unfortunately Whaley's play falls into this bracket of omission because it really requires inclusion in a separate chapter - one which discusses the implications for politics and culture of dramatic and theatrical work of this kind.

however, an ever-present sound of traffic on the Great North Road: history has not stopped with colonial jurisdiction. The ever-present, continuous drone of the movement of traffic on the highway of history signifies African nationalism's retaliation which, in this text, is fast moving south, threatening to reappropriate its former losses. Meanwhile the only traffic moving faster is that of dislocated whites, fearful of recrimination, in search of protection south of the Limpopo. The road divides Africa in half - vertically - and, as such, is symbolic of the binary oppositions (right-left, civilised-primitive, white-black, male-female) created by colonial intervention. These violent hierarchies (save the latter, gender-based, hierarchy) are being inverted, equally violently, by African nationalism's reclamation of that symbolic road. Many died in the making of the Great North Road. And now, for the Matabeleland community that is the focus of this novel, people are again dying on (and because of) the road:

'Christ, that bladdy road,' said Blesbok through clenched teeth, 'that's three people it's killed in the last few years'.  
 'Plus a stack of kaffirs,' added Spawnch. " [Eppel 1992:164].

One of the victims is the well-loved (especially by the men in the community), but morally suspect Rose Hadi (an anagram for Rhodesia). Hence, Rose Hadi's dead body symbolises her anagrammatical namesake's degeneration and decay. Both are inevitable victims of the road of

colonialism and are responsible for their own deaths. Rose is killed by her curiosity; a truck - that symbol of technological advancement and the exploitation of resources - runs her over when she goes to observe the dead donkey. Meanwhile Rhodesia's greed (and the attempts to forge white supremacy) provokes nationalist retribution and the country falls in the wake of African nationalism's expedition south (on that self-same Great North Road that was forged by colonialism) to reclaim the land, history, and identity denied to Africa's people.

The portrayal of Rhodesia and Rhodesians that Eppel presents here is one which satirises the myths behind the veneer of patriotism, history and fundamentalism. An obvious example of this is the invention of "Perfumed Wind" by the protagonist (Duiker Gilbert Grace Berry). "Perfumed Wind" is an ointment which is used to disguise the rancidness of nether odours ("apply it liberally to the old brown eye and, bingo, your farts will smell of roses" [ibid., p. 19]). In the same way government propaganda and the myths and legends presented in tales, novels and Rhodesian history text books were used to present a superficial facade of patriotism to hide the regime's inherent rottenness.

Duiker Berry is the protagonist and author of the 'autobiography' within the novel, but the text is framed by the Foreword and Postscript. These 'frames' are written by "John" Thomas and "Big" Dick respectively - two former teachers of Berry's, both of whom feature in the novel - in a parody of this authenticating device. Eppel has used this form for his satire on a white working class community and the form is appropriately 'playfully postmodern': the parody of 'high culture' and literary technique is effective because they are so singularly unbecoming of this bigoted, crude white Matabeleland community. Berry's literary pretentiousness and the (extra-literary) self-confident attitude of the other Rhodesian characters (how else but with the support of overly large egos, could a landlocked minority regime declare U.D.I?) are both mocked by Eppel:

He put his towel, a replica of the Rhodesian flag, and his book, *Whispering Death*<sup>12</sup> by Daniel Carney, between his knees so that he could put on his "Rhodesia is Super" T-shirt, then he strode after her.... Pump those legs, swing those arms, flare those nostrils; try not to show awareness of all the admiring faces you pass by...

"Jesus, you bladdy clumsy elephant..."  
(*ibid.*, p. 14).

Duiker, as seen by this amusing depiction of him in Durban in the 1970's, is a walking, talking - no,

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12 Carney's *Whispering Death* (1969) is one of the overtly partisan Rhodesian novels discussed by Chennells (1972).

rather a stumbling, mumbling - manifestation of white, male Rhodesian characteristics. Physically large, his place in society is heightened only once he makes the Milton school first rugby team. He is absolutely self-conscious, but not self-critical. He is largely ignorant (amusingly confusing Samuel Beckett with Thomas à Beckett) and is educated and disciplined to accept and not question the word of his elders (hence his disbelief and exasperation at the double jeopardy of dealing with Aunty Frances's revision of his education which presented "history from the white man's point of view, specifically the white businessman's point of view" [ibid., p. 53]). All in all, he has been taught to thrive on government propaganda ("the word [Marxist] - communist was another - upset him terribly" [ibid., p. 14]) and as such is a rather naive citizen and over-the-top patriot. While these features condemn him as a member of an oppressive, illegal, racist, chauvinist, (etc) regime, they are also his redemption: he, too, is a victim of the discourse which is the medium used for the presentation of his ancestry, history, country and identity.

Duiker Berry, brought up to do everything he is told, is particularly prone to believing the myths of his history lessons:

History had been [his best subject], 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. Duiker could still remember the facts. Old 'John' Thomas was a superb teacher (ibid., p. 25).

Rather like the settler presentation of the history of the pioneer, Duiker's ability to memorise the "facts" is apparently clouded by his sentimental tears: the uprising was in fact in 1896-7 (see Beach 1979). Duiker is the product of his education. His view of 'his' history (for it is not the view of all the people of the country and, "after all, he, Duiker, came from pioneer stock"), reflects the view of history presented by whites: both are sentimental and idealised accounts of white occupation.

Rhodesian history presents one perspective - that of the settler - and Duiker unquestioningly accepts that history as 'truth'. For instance, he believes that the 1896 uprisings "were just a few isolated incidents... organised by the leaders of the Matabeleland insurrection and a couple of religious fanatics" (ibid., p. 53) because this is what his teachers and text books have informed him. He merely has to learn and to believe. But, as Ashcroft *et al* say of colonial literature and historical texts in general, "texts of this kind come into being within the constraints of a discourse and the institutional practice of a patronage

system which limits and undercuts their assertion of a different perspective" (1989: 6). Hence, Duiker (and any other such student of Rhodesian history) would not have had any other perspective to consult. It is in this way that the myths of Rhodesian history went unchecked in the white community. After independence, once this dominant discourse had been abrogated, Duiker and other white Rhodesians struggle to make the necessary adjustments from a position of patriarchal, racial, cultural, economic, and political superiority to a position of non-dominance. In short, then, Duiker had become a victim of his own discourse. In an environment where he is forced, for the first time, to admit another perspective he consciously attempts to overcome his prejudices, but this he struggles to do:

Not that Duiker had anything against Africans as such. He couldn't bring himself to call them blacks which most of them seemed to prefer - black consciousness and all that stuff. It had been hard enough getting used to "Africans" (Eppel 1992: 196).

Duiker is a representative (or a caricature) of those Rhodesians who have become victims of their own discourse, and as such is inadequately equipped to deal with the country's transition from white rule to independence:

'I'll tell you something.... Rhodesians will never die. We may have been driven from our land by communist terrorists, we may have been scattered all over the world... but as long as

we live, and our children live, and our children's children live, we will keep Rhodesia alive in our hearts....'

'....Ian Smith gave us... the best years of our lives, and we ought to be eternally grateful to him' (1992:53).

While Brett (1984:17) may argue that the "first duty of parody is to entertain", this is not necessarily the primary function of the parody in this case. In this representation and imitation of Rhodesian discourse is revealed an instance, in Bakhtin's terms, of the conditional, relativising struggle in language:

The most ancient forms for representing laughter were organised by laughter - these were nothing more than the ridiculing of another's direct language and another's direct discourse. Polyglossia and the *interanimation of languages* associated with it elevated these forms to a new artistic and ideological level, which made possible the genre of the novel (Bakhtin 1981:132).

In terms of post-colonial Zimbabwe, polyglossia can be seen to denote linguistic fluctuation between the country's languages and cultures. As such the "parodic travestying" (ibid. p. 134), the "corrective of laughter and criticism" (ibid. p.139), subverts the Rhodesian ideology and thus generates a counter-discourse. In Bakhtinian terms, then, "language is transformed from the absolute dogma it had been within the narrow frame-work of a sealed-off and impermeable monoglossia" (ibid. p.140). Arising out of this 'corrective', then, is the possibility of an

ideological position different from, or opposed to, the once dominant white discourse.

It is by focusing his satirical humour on white Rhodesian/Zimbabwean discourse that Eppel's text becomes an effective form of social criticism. As Sutherland points out:

You cannot be a satirist just by telling the truth; you are a satirist when you consciously compel men to look at what they have tried to ignore, when you wish to destroy their illusions or pretences, when you deliberately tear off the disguise and expose the naked truth (Sutherland 1958:7).

Eppel's criticism may not be as explicit as Sutherland suggests satire is/should be. Instead, as Meihuizen argues, "the world [Eppel] presents to us is its own executioner" and if he "treats this Rhodesia with contempt he also treats it with a certain warmth" (in *Current Writing* 4 1992:149). On the one hand this may seem a luke-warm form of satire and social criticism that, once it has exposed shortcomings in white society, holds back on derision and condemnation. On the other hand, this satire that treats Rhodesia with equivocal "contempt" and "warmth" could be a more successful form of 'corrective' than Moore-King's moralistic finger-pointing and nationalistic condemnation - both of which are forms of criticism previously proudly ignored by Rhodesian discourse in its history ("Rhodesia was one country that would not

surrender to the communists... What did Wilson do? He imposed sanctions. Did that worry us? I said did that worry us? No way" [Eppel 1992:23]). One of the strengths of *D.G.G. Berry's Great North Road* is that the discursive context is non-hegemonic: in fact, it parodies the precariousness of hegemony and refrains from imposing another white viewpoint. Eppel uses the parody and satire as self-mockery; 'laughter' is used as an effective means of demythologising white discourse whereby white Zimbabweans are presented with the opportunity to laugh at themselves and their discourse rather than face condemnation from another (nationalistic) discourse.

Literature has a vital role in influencing and shaping attitudes (as Ashcroft et al 1989:3-11, among others, have shown). Zimbabwean writers, then, need to continue in their attempts to destroy colonial myths, dismantle imperialism, and assert their presence as agents of critical consciousness in the formation of a national heritage. Ironically, literature in Africa has itself been encumbered by the constantly recurring theme of oppression. An example of this is the way that Albie Sachs summarises the South African situation in "Preparing ourselves for Freedom":

our artists are not pushed to improve the quality of their work, it is enough that they be politically correct (in de Kok and Press 1990:24).

Furthermore, oppression does not necessarily end at independence and thus a critical consciousness is an essential element of a national literature. Hence the literature of white and black discourses can share a common bond. This 'bond' lies in the need to expose a history of oppression - past and present - and to assert cultural identity. However, this need to expose oppression, in itself, becomes another form of oppression if political awareness and correctness are the main determinants of literary merit. Not all writers will have a political inclination nor will they all be on the same level of awareness.

Certainly not all Zimbabwean writers could necessarily write effectively within politically aware discourses: some writers may struggle (as Moore-King has struggled) to come to terms with the necessity of separating literature from rhetoric and of separating the altruistic impulse to help from the egotistical temptation to act as redeemer. Unlike Moore-King, Eppel has essentially circumvented the (unself-critical) rhetoric of nationalism just as he has avoided the temptation to act as redeemer to a 'fallen' white race. While the humour and imagery in John Eppel's text may "appear a bit heavy-handed at times... reminding one of the less inspired extracts from a Rag-magazine" (Meihuizen op. cit., p. 150) the novel does effectively provide a space for white discourse in a national

culture. It neatly combines a criticism and awareness of white discourse and heritage without necessarily rejecting all the inherent values of that discourse. Duiker Gilbert Grace Berry may not ever overcome entirely the prejudices of his old Rhodesian discourse. But he does not "Take the Gap"<sup>13</sup>: he stays in Zimbabwe and professes a genuine love for his country.

Doris Lessing, in her book ***African Laughter: Four Visits to Zimbabwe***, describes three disparate categories of white Zimbabweans<sup>14</sup>. In the first group there are those who "take the gap", and thereby contribute nothing to the country. In the second are those whose contribution to Zimbabwean affairs goes little further than participating in what Lessing calls "The Monologue" - a exasperating diatribe of complaint about the country's economy, politics, and leadership. Vincent Crapanzano (in the ***New York Times Book Review***, 18 October, 1992: p. 13) points out that this "litany of regret" serves little purpose except to perpetuate

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13 A colloquialism for those whites who left the country - at any stage of the country's history - rather than staying to see through the turbulent times of war and drought, or the uncertainty of a change of government. Most were destined for South Africa.

14 Lessing's novel is being used here to further the discussion of white discourse. Any analysis of Lessing and her text(s) would otherwise inevitably include discussion of her (multitudinous) volume of works. This analysis, however, will concentrate only on aspects of *this* novel (particularly her portrayal of the white community) and on her own position in white discourse in Zimbabwe.

white arrogance (by criticising or belittling anything done by black Zimbabweans). And this sense of superiority, in turn, merely "perpetuate(s) their shock, their paralysis, their frail sense of community" (ibid., p. 13). The third type of white Zimbabwean described by Lessing is the one who is committed to the country. The focus of this discussion is on the formation of a non-hegemonic white discourse and the concerns and moral 'space' of such a discourse in Zimbabwe - as illustrated by the examples of Lessing's text. But what are the qualifications that give Doris Lessing the right to demarcate moral grounds for residency? And what position does she hold in the hierarchy of white discourse? Hence, Lessing's own place in white discourse will become a further issue of interest.

In *Going Home* (1957), Lessing's account of her journey to Southern Rhodesia in 1956, Lessing equivocated that

Africa belongs to the Africans; the sooner they take it back the better. But - a country also belongs to those who feel at home in it. perhaps it may be that the love of Africa the country will be strong enough to link people who hate each other now. Perhaps (Lessing 1957: 12).

Nearly twenty-five years later, Lessing's sentiments are similar: she does see a moral 'space' and a sense of belonging for the white settler. That 'space', though, is an ambivalent one where the white settler is

always an outsider and bearer of a foreign culture. This sense of alienation is ever-present, according to Lessing (which is not necessarily a truism, but it is a significant reflection of Lessing's own sense of extraneousness) but devotion to the welfare of the country is the necessary and salient component of a moral 'space', and:

if there is one thing that has distinguished the whites, right from the beginning, it is love for the country (Lessing 1992: 392).

At this point an interesting question arises pertaining to this "love for the country" apparently shown by whites. *Why* do they love the country? It is not so much for what it is but for what they bring to it (from foreign cultures and heritages). In other words, they love the country because they can occupy it - 'own' it - and believe that they created it (from the savage primitiveness of its beginnings). In *Going Home* Lessing describes the (non-material) appeal that the country held for the settler and associates what she values in the country with what she sees as "the best in the older type of white men who have come to Africa":

[the best in the early settler] did not come to take what he could from the country. This man loved Africa for its own sake and for what is best in it: its emptiness, its promise. It is still uncreated (Lessing 1957: 15)

It is apparent that Africa's appeal lies, for Doris Lessing, in what she can bring to it, what she can

create out of it as an artist. "The best in it [is] its emptiness, its promise. It is still uncreated". And, for the white person, Africa is an empty space which holds the possibility of being occupied and 'owned' and developed or created. The "love" whites show for their country, then, is not necessarily benevolent or altruistic.

The paradox of John Eppel's text was that his (white) characters - and particularly, Duiker, his protagonist - were redeemed by their 'love' for the country and by those very features which condemned them. Those characteristics (unappealing as they might be) of boorishness, chauvinism, racism and narrow-mindedness prevalent in so many of the characters were seen to be the corollaries of a Rhodesian cultural identity. The characters were victims of their own discourse, a discourse which has made adaptation to life in independent Zimbabwe a slow process. During her trips to Zimbabwe in 1982 and 1988 Lessing is not nearly so forgiving, sympathetic or understanding of white discourse as Eppel. On her first trip she had the misfortune of sitting next to a white man who ceaselessly grumbled about the situation in the country:

Childish, spoiled, self-indulgent, spiteful..  
yes, he was all this, [whites] were all like  
this, or most of them, but what of it, and why

should I remain so involved? (Lessing 1992: 14).

Her impression that "they were all like this, or most of them", is obviously a gross generalisation. But it may be a fair reflection of a people coming to terms with the fact that their discourse was no longer hegemonic. By the time Lessing makes her penultimate visit in 1989, however, her impressions have changed vastly. Importantly, there is a shift in her attitude towards white Zimbabweans - from one where whites were seen as "childish, spoiled, self-indulgent...they were all like this" [1992: 14] to one where she disagrees with Moore-King's assessment of whites "as - every one of them - arrogant, racist, ill-wishing the blacks" (Lessing 1992: 397). In her view, she admits that "many such exist, but on this trip I haven't met any. Whites who were like this have become good citizens" (ibid., p. 397). This shift has happened for two reasons: because of changes in white attitudes and because of changes in Lessing's attitude. There is a corresponding shift in her outlook on a corrupt ruling elite: at the start of the book there is a certain sympathy and understanding evident in the way she sees the ruling elite "having to learn how to be rich". At the close of her book, however, the tone is aggrieved: she quotes a letter she received: "when I think of our dreams at Independence I want to cry for Zimbabwe. Oh it is so

sad, so sad, don't you think so? I do cry sometimes" (1992: 436).

An example of these shifts in attitudes (by white Zimbabweans and by Doris Lessing) is evident in the description of a white commercial farmer who has decided not only to stay in Zimbabwe, but to pledge allegiance to the leading political party. Lessing describes his interview with Zanu PF thus:

'First of all,' says he belligerently, 'I have to tell you three things. One, I have a big mouth and I'm not going to change.' (He had been famous for his attacks on government policy.)

'And what else, Comrade?'

'I've been farming thirty years in this country, and I'm going to go on farming the way I know best'.

'And what else?'

'I'm never going to leave this country. If you burned my house down around my ears and told me to live in a mud hut I'd stay.'

'Welcome to Zanu PF, comrade.' (Lessing 1992: 418).

Albie Sachs states that "culture is us, it is who we are, how we see ourselves and the vision we have of the world" and that "shorn of its arrogance, the cultural input from the white communities can be rich and valuable" (op. cit., p. 27). The white farmer that Lessing describes is far from a picture of humility and meekness but he, like the more comic Duiker Berry, professes and displays a patriotic love for his country. The white farmer's commitment to Zimbabwe becomes apparent in the way he sees himself as an

integral part of Zimbabwean development and national unity, and thereby partakes in national culture. It is neither here nor there what political affiliation this farmer has: what is significant is that Lessing sees a space for him, and those like him, in Zimbabwe because he "loves" his country. But *what* country? How is 'country' defined in white discourse? This becomes ambiguous when one considers that any such definition will be one which differentiates between the country and its inhabitants and where the latter are excluded from this love-affair. White discourse is struggling to come to terms with a position of non-dominance in an independent African state and 'patriotism' seems a far cry from the demands of Ian Smith's call-to-arms during the war.

But what is this ambiguous 'country' if its inhabitants are not necessarily included into white concern for it? To return to an earlier point, it is the "emptiness", the "promise" of Africa that holds the appeal. And ecological issues - 'the country' as landscape, land, soil, plants and animals - provide a space (in independent Zimbabwe) for the dominative tendencies of white discourse. One of the major concerns of **African Laughter** is conservation and Lessing emphasises the role whites have in this regard, which, interestingly, associates her with this discourse. For instance, Lessing is upset by the disappearance of game and the

failure of conservation programmes and aligns herself with conservationists. She recognises that some myths, detrimental to the welfare of a country reliant on its natural resources, were propagated during the war by the nationalists and need to be corrected and placed in their contexts (as myths). Lessing illustrates two of these:

when Mugabe was fighting his desperate war in the bush, he said.. things that were less than intelligent. One was that compulsory dipping of cattle was a sinister plot by whites to destroy the cattle... at Liberation blacks at once stopped dipping, and as a result there were all kinds of diseases. Hard for the government to begin enforced dipping again. 'But we thought you told us...

The Comrades in the bush announced that making contour ridges to stop erosion was another ploy to undo the blacks. The bad results from this were in 1982 already visible (Lessing 1992: 94).

This concern with environmental issues, then, acts as a corrective to the detrimental tendencies effected by nationalist and colonialist <sup>15</sup> myths. Another example of Lessing's association with conservation issues is illustrated in the episode in which she reminisces with her brother on their youthful practice of making enclosures to keep leopards at bay while they slept in the bush. Here Lessing admits a (personal) responsibility in the degradation of the bush:

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15 Colonialist myths of limitless expansionism were outlined earlier in the dissertation. See Part I (Pp. 17-18)

'Shouldn't have done that. Couldn't have done the bush much good.'

'We used to leave a trampled-down place inside the circle of dead branches, and the burned leaves hanging down where the fire was.'

'But how could we? What did we want to do a thing like that for?'

'That's how we all were in those days.'

'Well, we are paying for it now.' (Lessing 1992:40-1)

This concern for the soils, flora and fauna of the country is something Lessing acknowledges as necessary and is a concern she admires, particularly, in white Zimbabweans who seem to have taken on a role as protector of the environment:

white farmers.. these days are all conservationists to a man, woman and child...

This concern for the land impressed me. These reformed pirates and landgrabbers know about inventions and discoveries from every part of the world. They experiment, they innovate (Lessing 1992: 93-4).

In the first chapter of this dissertation it was argued that whites had forged an ideological space for their discourse. The space forged by this discourse reflected the physical process of conquest and appropriation by the early pioneers and, therefore, was a discourse based on dominance and control. The white settlers imposed their point of view, their culture, and their religion on the indigenous people and, not being free enough nor sufficiently confident in the strength of their political institution to host a plurality of discourses, excluded any other discourse. In 1980

Independence stripped white discourse of its dominance, but those dominating tendencies remained. One area of possible control (in the reduced space available to white discourse) was that of conservation. And, as Lessing has illustrated, in a host of examples <sup>16</sup>, this is the direction that white discourse (including hers) has taken.

What is more, it seems that white concerns for the environment have a possible, positive, effect on their over-all attitude towards life in Independent Zimbabwe. Sentimentality and concern for animals has long been resented <sup>17</sup> as part of a white value system because of the associated perception of "care for animals but indifference" to blacks (Lessing 1992: 349). In a process of acculturation, however, the importance of the preservation of the natural plant and animal life would be taught. And at the same time "white bush-lovers [who] interpret the bush... as modern people" (Lessing 1992: 348) could learn to see "the bush" not just as a luxury to conserve, but as an entity from

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16 The concerns white Zimbabweans have with the environment are prevalent throughout the text, just as Lessing's own concerns with the environment (and, ironically, with white concerns) are prevalent throughout. One important example of this concern is evident when she first recognises that "the game had mostly gone. The bush was nearly silent. Once the dawn chorus hurt the ears" (1992: 23). From this moment of recognition on conservation becomes one of her major concerns.

17 See Lessing 1992, Pages 135 & 349. See also Frederikse 1981: 112.

which people garner food, fuel, homes and belief systems. In her description of a man who (we are told) would describe himself "as the - once - hardest of hard-line whites" (1992: 345) Lessing appears to be promulgating the idea that environmental concerns are inevitably inseparable from a concern for people. Through his interest in conservation this man "had chanced to discover that black children in the townships knew nothing about the bush, or the animals that live in it, and little about the lives of their grandparents" (1992:345). Since this 'discovery' this man had set up a camp outside Harare where he took groups of children from the township for a few days and taught them "about the trees, the plants, the animals" (ibid., p. 345).

White discourse, in this instance of non-hegemony that is Independent Zimbabwe, has the opportunity to act in two ways. Firstly, it could be an effective and active voice in political consciousness whereby white discourse would work in conjunction with other discourses to criticise "the institutionalised rhetoric" (Moyo 1992: 8) of nationalist stagnation and neglect. Secondly, it has been shown to be an effective co-participant in acculturation.

Nicholas Lezard describes Lessing's book as "probably the definitive book on the country" (Lezard, in *The*

*Weekly Mail and Guardian*, January 21 to 27, 1994: 33) on the basis that Lessing "made notes, talked to hundreds of people, and watched her old country try and pick itself up and start again" (ibid., p. 33). Those interviews, and that personal interest, however, act as a particularly flimsy basis for a "definitive" account of a country. As an autobiographical account, and by its own admission, the text is affected by time ("Meanwhile Time erodes, Time chips and blurs, Time emits blue and mauve and purple and white hazes" [1992: 20]). Lessing's perspective of the country (including both the relatively recent perspective of the 1980's, and the more distant perspective of her life in then Southern Rhodesia in the 1940s) at the time of writing has somewhat unavoidably re-ordered and renewed the past in the circumstances of the present moment of writing.

Even her 'interviews' are problematic. We are told that she "began watching the sides of the road for someone to lift" until such time as

I had found what I had been wanting, people of the country, black people, I could talk with. Talk, that is, without being overheard by antagonistic whites, by the new breed of antagonistic blacks (1992: 77).

Evident here is an incredibly condescending attitude. She presumes, firstly, that these blacks will automatically accept her and will want to tell her

about their lives. Secondly, she presumes that she and they can overcome the cultural, racial and class boundaries that will inevitably hinder their relations (which are symbolically apparent in the fact that she is the wealthy white woman from Britain in a hired car giving a lift to "three middle-aged [men who were] shabby. But they were amiable" [1992: 77]). All this would be accomplished in the time it takes to travel from Macheke to Mutare (about three hours) and she "put them down in Mutare's main street" before she "parked and went into the hotel" (further signifying the incongruous poles of their existence). A third significant hindrance to these relations (and to her portrait of Zimbabwe - particularly of blacks in Zimbabwe) is that she "did not know the local language... did not know Shona" (1992: 140). Any writer, any individual will be "caught in the mutually constitutive web of social practices, discourses and subjectivity" (Henriques et al 1984: 117) and Lessing is no different. Her attempts to define reality are accomplished only through specific cultural codes. Which is fair enough - she has every right to write. Except that Lessing is not African, not Zimbabwean, but she *is* a well known and highly respected writer; and it is partly because of this reputation that **African Laughter** is read as "definitive". Doris Lessing lived in England for the twenty-five years prior to her return visit to Zimbabwe, so she is an 'outsider' (or,

as the sub-title of her text suggests, a 'visitor') to Zimbabwe. Her visits to Zimbabwe are transitory and her cultural background is British.

Doris Lessing grew up in then Southern Rhodesia but left in 1949. During the 1940's she was "active in Marxist circles" in Salisbury (Crapanzano 1992: 13) and was adamantly against federation and the subsequent Smith government. It was because of these sentiments and political leanings <sup>18</sup> that she became a Prohibited Immigrant from 1956 until independence in 1980 (Lessing 1992: 11-12). It is by virtue of these facts and her reputation as a writer that it is possible for Doris Lessing to be seen to write "the definitive book on [a] country" which she left in 1949 (which was when she last spent any considerable length of time in the country). Hers is the acceptable face of white discourse in Zimbabwe. Such is the power of white discourse that this colony (Zimbabwe, which is a member of the British commonwealth) is being judged by the metropolitan centre's apparently politically correct representative.

But how useful and how fair is her assessment? Apart from her obvious extraneousness to Zimbabwe, Lessing's

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18 For more on Lessing's Marxism, feminism, her affiliation with Africa, and biographical details, see Eve Bertelsen's "The Quest and the Quotidian: Doris Lessing in South Africa" in Sprague (1990: 3-16) and Ruth Whittaker's *Doris Lessing* (1988).

view is a specifically white one. For instance, by the end of the book she puts all whites under the same ideological roof, and feels that whites should identify with each other: "I have thought how extraordinary it is, the white politico who identifies with black racism? *They hate and persecute their own kind*, while, of course complaining about racism" (1992: 401, emphasis mine). In Part II above (see p. 51) another British citizen with ties to then Rhodesia was branded as a 'racist bigot' for his comment that "none, as is common with most Africans, could shoot straight or seemed able to learn" (Stiff 1985: 45). Doris Lessing, despite the fact that she is consciously aware of the claims she makes about physiological differences between races, is being no less racist, therefore, when she claims that "Africans have rhythm" (1985: 367). In Lessing's text, however, this racism is hidden behind a proposal that it is 'civilization' which is the hindering factor to rhythm. Doris Lessing obviously sees 'rhythm' and 'civilization' as inversely proportional: "the [writers and poets] could not [sing and dance], they writhed with embarrassment, reluctance and self-consciousness, just as civilized people are supposed to" (1992: 367). Unspoken, then, is the view that whites cannot have rhythm, and only rural, 'uncivilized' blacks, 'close to their cultural roots', can. Furthermore, according to Lessing, Western civilization has had a detrimental effect not only on

black peoples' ability to dance, but to walk too: "when I sat... watching a pavement in Bulawayo, of the dozens of people who passed only two walked as they once all did - goddesses is the only word. The rest thumped and clumped and flumped and were clumsy and graceless, just like us" (1992: 367-8). Compounding these observations of racial difference is another apparently racist claim that only black women can walk with cans on their heads. Lessing mentions that "as a girl I.. tried to be like them, but I could not do it" (1992: 368). In the fact that she should even try to carry a can on her head (let alone the fact that she mentions this attempt), she is illustrating not her (white/civilized) inability but her extraneousness and the irrelevance of her attempt.

The enthusiasm of the first two chapters of **African Laughter** reflects what Lessing describes as a vitality, optimism and collective engagement on the part of many of the country's residents ("the best of the Zimbabwe story is the vigour, the optimism, the determination of the people... white and black, who talk of nothing else but how to make Zimbabwe work" [1992: 10]). This enthusiasm collapses by the time Lessing makes her trips in 1989 and 1992 and disillusion sets in. According to Vincent Crapanzano, "Mrs. Lessing's story becomes a tragedy" and Zimbabwe pays testament to the "forfeit of possibility". The metropolitan centre's

representative writes the death of possibility. White discourse, then, has the last word. But Lessing's is not necessarily a reliable judgement, and *her* pessimistic obituary is not necessarily the last word. It is important, therefore, to consider that (as succinct as it may be) the text is merely a collection of the impressions Lessing has gathered together during four brief visits to the country, rather than the "definitive" account of its recent cultural history.

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<b>CONCLUSION.</b>
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White Zimbabwean literature, as has been illustrated, reflects all the Gramscian "morbid symptoms" of a discourse in transition. The literature has not revealed a propensity to be iconoclastic. The opposite, in fact, is revealed to be true: white discourse has found it difficult to release the myths, history and moral space which formed the Rhodesian identity and which preserved associated dichotomies of white-black, civilised-primitive, male-female. And white Zimbabwean literature, to its detriment, has reflected that inexorable discourse.

White colonial discourse relied on cultural, political and economic hegemony for the formation of a moral space. Since independence there has been a re-appropriation of that space and this has occurred in a number of ways - all of which have, in some way or another, contributed to the marginalisation of white discourse. For instance, in addition to the displaced moral space, and the removal of an economic and political power base (which, together, have removed white discourse from its position of dominance and reduced its sense of cultural and moral superiority), there has been an appropriation of control over the material means of production of any discourse. The publishers, printers and media, who provide the

constraints of a discourse, are no longer allied to a once dominant and dominating white discourse. In addition to this, there has been a destruction of the myths of white discourse from outside that discourse, and a re-writing of history has taken place in post-independence Zimbabwe's counterhegemonic thrust, one implemented into the educational system.

All this has meant that white discourse has had to recognise the need to operate in a reduced space. And this dissertation has interrogated the ability of white discourse to adapt to the changes necessary for whites to be able to contribute to a national identity and, hence, have a voice of relevance in a post-independent state. The adaptation, as reflected in its literature, has been slow, progressing from a position of relative silence (as compared to the sheer quantity of novels written prior to independence) to one where white discourse is tremulously venturing to contribute to acculturation in Zimbabwe, as is seen in John Eppel's first novel and in Andrew Whaley's play. In between these two poles of a continuum (this is not to say that white discourse has fully adapted to its position of non-dominance) white literature has either clung obstinately to the myths that formed the identity of white Rhodesia, or has unquestioningly accepted the myths that contribute to a nationalist discourse.

While the aims and ambitions of this dissertation have attempted to be as far-reaching as possible, the restrictions of time and length have meant that a complete assessment of white literature in Zimbabwe has been an impossibility. A number of vital texts have had to be omitted, and counted among these are a number of children's texts and Doris Lessing's anthropological assessment of Zimbabwe's progress as a new democracy.

As Zimbabwe moves well into its second decade of independence, more and more novels are being written by whites who are/ have been associated with Zimbabwe in some way. John Eppel has just released his second novel, **Hatchings** (1993); Doris Lessing has written **African Laughter: Four Visits to Zimbabwe** (1992), recounting her impressions of her eventual return trips to the place of her birth. And David Cate has written a fictional novel, **News from Nowhere** (1993), which includes an involvement with the Rhodesian war. All this is a positive note for literature in Zimbabwe and, more specifically, for white discourse as it makes its contribution to national culture felt.

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