

**"X-RAYS" OF SELF AND SOCIETY: DAMBUDZO
MARECHERA'S AVANT-GARDISM AND ITS
IMPLICATIONS FOR DEBATES CONCERNING
ZIMBABWEAN LITERATURE AND CULTURE**

BY

DREW CAMPBELL SHAW

Submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in the Department of English
University of Cape Town
1997

The University of Cape Town has been given
the right to reproduce this thesis in whole
or in part. Copyright is held by the author.

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

UT 820 SHAW

97/11064

1 DEC 1997

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My deepest gratitude goes to Joan and Syd Shaw, my parents, for their unwavering support throughout this project.

I am also indebted to Roshila Nair, Gabeba Baderoon, and Angelo Fick for their expert advice and assistance; and to Pumla Qqola, Maura O’Gara, Colette Guldemann, and other graduate students at UCT, whose support and reassurances have been invaluable.

Finally, I am sincerely grateful to my supervisor, Kelwyn Sole, for the thoroughness and professionalism of his advice and feedback.

The views expressed in this thesis are my own.

ABSTRACT

This thesis discusses Dambudzo Marechera's avant-gardism and its significance in the context of Zimbabwean literature and culture. I use the term avant-garde to describe Marechera's defiance of hegemonies, traditions, and prescriptions for writing, as well as his innovations with form and style. In the context of Zimbabwe, Marechera's avant-gardism involves a rejection of cultural nationalism, and an eschewal of traditional realist criteria for writing.

The thesis locates Marechera in a socio-historical context, and in the framework of black Zimbabwean literature (written in English). It discusses his rejection of the nationalist tradition set by his literary predecessors; and it compares him with his contemporaries, Stanley Nyamfukudza and Charles Mungoshi, who also reject the concept of a 'pure', homogeneous, national culture in their writings.

Marechera's writing explores new (and often taboo) subject matter, and it thus illustrates the diverse, complex nature of the Zimbabwean experience. It also abandons the unified, linear narrative; and it has been sharply censured by nationalist critics -- largely on the grounds of its transgression of traditional narrative form.

Nationalist critics have tended to privilege traditional realist criteria in their discussions of Zimbabwean literature, and Marechera, as an avant-gardist, has been marginalized and denigrated for his non-conformity. In this thesis, I challenge the privileged status of traditional realism, question the prescriptions of nationalist/realist critics, and attempt to demonstrate the value of Marechera's non-realist writing.

While many nationalist critics allege that Marechera's writing is 'unAfrican', I argue that it is a fallacy to assume his work is 'Europeanized' while nationalist/realist writing is not.

Moreover, I contend that Marechera's avant-gardism is in direct response to a set of extraordinary socio-historical, political and cultural conditions -- which are specific to Zimbabwe.

In analyzing Marechera's alternatives to realism (such as expressionism, stream of consciousness, surrealism, grotesque realism, the carnival, magical realism, and Menippean satire), I maintain that his experiments are not without strategy, but that they address pertinent literary, social, political, and cultural issues.

The thesis furthermore attempts to show how the 'individualism' -- for which Marechera has been roundly condemned -- is paradoxically transformed into sharp and poignant social commentary. This is particularly evident in two texts which I focus on: "House of Hunger" -- his irreverent pre-independence vivisection of Zimbabwean society; and Mindblast, his much neglected anti-realist post-independence compilation, which I discuss in some detail.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
1. REJECTING NATIONALISM: MARECHERA'S LOCATION IN BLACK ZIMBABWEAN LITERATURE WRITTEN IN ENGLISH	31
2. MARECHERA'S TRANSGRESSION OF TRADITIONAL NARRATIVE FORM	74
3. <u>MINDBLAST</u>: AVANT-GARDISM IN THE POST-INDEPENDENCE ZIMBABWE CONTEXT	125
CONCLUSION	177
BIBLIOGRAPHY	181

INTRODUCTION

Political pressure on writers has existed for a long time, indeed from the time when Plato, in his Republic, recommended that the poet must be banned into exile from the ideal State; from the time when Socrates was condemned to death by poison in Athens; from the time when the poet and novelist, Petronius, had his veins opened and was left to bleed to death at the orders of Emperor Nero, his erstwhile comrade in pleasure. Financial measures can also force writers out of business. This can be indirect, as in the case of publishers, who, afraid of the government, continually reject a particular writer's work: I have had three manuscript novels rejected this year alone...

In such conditions, the writer in Africa who has courage is fast becoming something like Dostoevsky's underground man, in Notes from Underground, veering between idealism and paranoia, between honourable principles and grossly humiliating circumstances. I submit that Ngugi and Soyinka are the new underground writers, sniping away from their nuclear bomb shelter of high education and astonishing imagination. They strike with novels, they mug us with brilliant essays, they destroy our illusions by the penetrating insolence of their plays. Their X-ray poems and articles expose the corruption in the marrow of our bones. Even the dead are not exempt from this autopsy and inquest...

-- DAMBUDZO MARECHERA (1987b: 109; emphasis added).

Like the authors whom he describes above, Dambudzo Marechera can himself be considered an 'X-ray' writer. His refusal to submit to political pressure, his "sniping away" at forms of authority, and his "exposure of the corruption in the marrow of [society's] bones" (ibid.) are features of his avant-gardism which will be an underlying concern in this thesis.

While this study attempts to take some cognizance of the growing body of critical work which is developing on the author, its main focus will be the impact of his avant-gardism on current debates concerning Zimbabwean literature and culture. It is my view that Marechera's unconventional approach to writing was in response to an extraordinary set of socio-historical, political and cultural conditions; rather than, as a number of African nationalist critics have attempted to argue, a 'betrayal' of his 'Africanness' and an attempt to be 'European'.

Avant-garde is a term which I use as a metaphor -- not a category. According to Holman's Handbook to Literature, avant-garde is:

A military METAPHOR drawn from the French (vanguard, or van of an army) and applied to new writing that shows striking (and usually very self-conscious) innovations in STYLE, FORM, and subject matter. The military origin of the term is appropriate, for in every age the avant-garde (by whatever name it is known) makes a frontal and often an organized attack on the established FORMS and literary traditions of its time (1972: 50).

The military connotations of the word are fitting for Marechera's writing in view of its deliberate assault on conventions and traditions, and also its proactive, calculated, strategic quality.

Marechera was also an experimentalist. As Renato Poggioli observes:

One of the most important aspects of avant-garde poetics is what is referred to as experimentalism;...the anxious search for new and virgin forms, with the aim not only of destroying the barbed wire of rules, the gilded cage of classical poetics, but also of creating a new morphology of art, a new spiritual language (57).

Marechera's writing certainly breaks new ground in Zimbabwean literature. With Marechera, however, the "anxious search for new and virgin forms" is checked by a recognition that many of these have already been traversed. Thus, there is an ironic, self-critical quality to his work, which distinguishes it from many other types of avant-garde art. With his avant-gardism, Marechera does not so much aim at "creating a new morphology of art [and] a new spiritual language" as he emphasizes continuous disruption.

In observing the political impact of avant-gardism, Poggioli notes that its "task ...is to struggle against articulate public opinion, against traditional and academic culture, against bourgeois intelligentsia" (123). By the same token, however, as Poggioli notes, it often "opposes ...mass culture and ...proletarian art" (123). The latter occurs mostly in totalitarian countries which are ostensibly socialist, and will be discussed in relation to Marechera's rejection of the 'socialist literature' didactic proposed in the newly-independent Zimbabwe,

which attempted to turn the artist into a functionary in 'socialist development' and 'nation-building'.

The avant-garde metaphor is thus an apt one for Marechera's writing in the Zimbabwean context. In her social-history of Zimbabwean writing, entitled Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers, Flora Veit-Wild observes that:

Marechera's legacy -- the fragmented, open-minded and polyphonic nature of his work, even pre-independence, has considerable significance for the concept of post-colonial literature. It contrasts strikingly with the closed, static and monolithic stance apparent in other Zimbabwean literature" (1993a: 262).

Marechera's writing directly challenges a number of styles and traditions in Zimbabwe.

Until the publication of Veit-Wild's ground-breaking Teachers, Preachers and Non-believers in 1993, the established view of black Zimbabwean writing (represented by Musaemura Zimunya's Those Years of Drought and Hunger: the birth of black Zimbabwean literature in English) was a monolithic and nationalist one. At the end of his pioneering study, Zimunya concludes that:

now that we have seen evidence of an emerging literature, it remains to observe the virtues and the demerits of these writers and to speculate upon the ideal course for the literature of Zimbabwe.

[In Marechera] ...masochistic artistic engagement overwhelms the social and moral intent. Pleading for admission into the neurotic twentieth century is the worst way to go about revitalizing a culture depleted by the self-same Europe....The "eclectic babble" does not, as a rule, enrich one's own culture, and it certainly chokes the artist himself! (1982: 128; emphasis added).

Thus Marechera's avant-gardism is regarded by Zimunya as aberrant and suspicious.

Zimunya's chastening of Marechera derives from a belief in the homogeneity of Zimbabwean society and of African culture, and hinges on the nationalistic notion of an "ideal course" for Zimbabwean literature, which this thesis will problematize in some detail.¹

¹ In fairness to Zimunya, he states in a subsequent interview that this was written "when I had a tremendous amount of revulsion against modernism", and he has modified his position significantly (Veit-Wild 1988: 61). Notwithstanding, he remains, in my opinion, a strong

Other Critical Perspectives

It is clear that Marechera's work warrants discussion in current debates revolving around hybridity, syncretism, Menippeanism and post-coloniality. Various critics have examined Marechera's relevance within these frameworks. While a full analysis of this criticism is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is hoped that the following overview of some of the more recent critical work on the author will serve to contextualize and situate my own research.²

In Teachers, Preachers and Non-Believers, Veit-Wild gives an overview of hybridity, syncretism and the Bakhtinian carnival in Marechera's writings, and she states that:

The subversive nature of Marechera's writing links him to certain trends in post-modernist and post-colonial literature. In the terminology of post-structuralism, his writing is 'deconstructionalist'....Marechera's writing is counter-discursive, subversive and dynamic in the post-structuralist sense in so far as it permanently questions the conditions of its own making....Like other post-modernist literature ...it contextualises the author and dismantles or 'deconstructs' the myth of the invisible and infallible literary creator....Marechera questions and undermines the concept of one absolute and distinct reality, expressing an affinity to the carnivalesque or Menippean stream of writing in world literature (1993a: 260-1).

The myth of the invisible and infallible author, as well as the carnivalesque and Menippean features of Marechera's work are points which I will discuss in the subsequent chapters.

Veit-Wild further notes that "Dambudzo Marechera was a very conscious and far-reaching syncretist" (21), and quotes excerpts from one of his famous lectures, "The African Writer's Experience of European Literature", in support of this view:

From early in my life I have viewed literature as a unique universe that has no

proponent of cultural nationalism.

² In addition to the following overview, I refer the reader to the proceedings of the Dambudzo Marechera Symposium (held in Harare in August, 1995) which are soon to be published.

head start in written literature is an advantage for the African writer: he does not have to solve many problems of structure -- they have already been solved. I do not consider influences pernicious (Marechera 1987b: 99-100).

Veit-Wild uses the theories of post-colonial critics, such as Homi Bhabha and Helen Tiffin, to explore hybridity and syncretism in Marechera's work, and comments that:

In an astute, consciously postcolonial way and based on an immense and intricate knowledge of world literature, he remasters the colonial language and writes back to the British canon, at the same time parodying both implicitly and explicitly the English language and literature (1995: 21).³

[In Homi Bhabha's words he] "produces hybrid realities by yoking together unlikely traditions of thought." Bhabha's basic view is that we cannot speak anymore of any originary, "authentic" culture, that all cultural expressions are "translations" and all forms of culture hybrid. Yet this state of hybridity has for him an immensely creative and subversive potential, it is, what he calls, "the third space" from where old structures are questioned and something new arises;...the act of cultural translation ...denies the essentialism of a prior given original or originary culture, then we see that all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity ...[H]ybridity to me is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge" (Veit-Wild 1993b: 4).

[F]igures like Dambudzo Marechera ...have used the 'third space' at the margin of society, of sanity, to denounce the mechanism of power structures and hegemonic discourses. It is in this sense that their syncretic and prophetic voices should be heard (1993b: 7).

Veit-Wild comments that: "Hybridity ...implies a general post-modern scepticism towards any positions of identifiable truth", and I would tend to agree with her that "[i]t challenges all notions of cultural purity and essence" (1995: 21). However, Homi Bhabha's theories of hybridity have been criticized for their tendency to 'cosmopolitanize', 'globalize', and therefore to decontextualize certain experiences from their specific socio-historical circumstances.

Recent critiques of 'post-colonial' theory, moreover, have shown that the term 'post-colonial' is loose, vague and contentious. The term 'post-coloniality' is in desperate need of

³ See also Veit-Wild (1996: 27-40).

a more precise definition than most critics are willing to give it.⁴ Gerald Gaylard's thesis which "examines the relationship of Marechera to the emerging field of 'post-colonial' cultural theory" (1993: iii), is a useful reference in view of the above. Regarding the non-specificity of the term 'post-colonial', Gaylard observes that:

There is no 'post colonial' world as such, and we need new terms that are more particular and incisive and do not have the same imperialist connotations as 'post-colonialism', which as a term disguises neo-coloniality....[A] continual self-reflexive re-evaluation of categories is generally important so as not to merely drag a writer into this or that neat little box, but is particularly important when considering Marechera for he confounds the attempt to fit his writing neatly into the 'post-colonial' paradigm as he problematises fiction and criticism....He would no doubt have been scathing about anybody who tried to lump him into the 'post-colonial' category (1993: 109).

Although Gaylard differs significantly from Veit-Wild in his reservations about postcolonial theory and its applicability to Marechera's work, both critics tend to agree that Marechera's approach represents a shift away from cultural nationalism and its attendant monolithic view of identity and progress.⁵

Gaylard argues "against prescriptive theoretical frameworks both of the nationalist and the 'post-colonial' kind" (221). He argues that Dambudzo Marechera "wrote in both pre- and post-colonial situations and in both nationalist and 'post-colonial' styles, dramatising the tension between the two and opening up the field for creative possibilities" (222).⁶

⁴ See especially Ahmad (1995).

⁵ In some of his work on Marechera, Gaylard does nevertheless draw on post-colonial theory substantially, particularly Homi Bhabha's interstitial theories (i.e. the notion of a 'third space'). He also quotes Gayatri Spivak to explain the phenomenon of the 'lost generation', stating that: "The subject-position of the citizen of a recently decolonized 'nation' is epistemically fractured" (Spivak 1993: 47). See "Menippean Marechera: Africa's new antirealism" (Gaylard 1995: 183-192). In my own view, Bhabha and Spivak are two of the foremost leaders in the field of 'post-colonial' theory, and I would not exempt them, as Gaylard appears to do in some instances, from some of the same, valid, criticisms he has of postcolonial theory in general.

⁶ To gain a fuller understanding of what Gaylard means by nationalist and 'post-colonial' styles, and what these entail, it is necessary to read his entire thesis (1993). I am not sure

As to the relevance of Marechera's writing, Gaylard states that:

Marechera is a highly political writer despite his seemingly reactionary individualism. He is a political writer whether he admits it or not because he attempted to create a new aesthetics within and outside of his historical, social and political context. Even the most seemingly individual revolt, in Marechera's case establishing a selfhood as anarchic writer as there is no other space left in such a society and then challenging that, has an iconic and symbolic value for the wider society (111).

Thus Gaylard also appears to acknowledge the highly-politicized, provocative, proactive, essentially 'avant-garde' thrust of Marechera's writing. He comments that the author is significant to Southern African writing because:

in the post-independence situation in African countries such as Zimbabwe, and possibly South Africa, his role of disruption and iconoclasm is politically essential. He confronts us with all that we take for granted and in both his and our consequent suffering exposes inadequacies as only suffering truly can. It is from this point that we may begin to recreate without selfish power strategies (223).

Gaylard, like a number of other critics, points to Marechera's disruptive, anti-authoritarian stance. His observations of Marechera's vis-à-vis nationalism are especially valuable and will be a reference point in this thesis, as will Veit-Wild's thorough investigations of Marechera and Zimbabwean literature.

Mark Stein studies parody and intertextuality in Black Sunlight and The House of Hunger and examines what he terms the "logic of ambivalence" in the "subversive" and "counter-discursive" poses adopted by Marechera. He states that:

It has been argued that some major postcolonial criticism, and nationalist criticism have both tended to foreground the binary of Colonizer/Colonized, or Europe/Other, thereby prolonging that which they seek to overcome. Both schools, however, are correct in claiming that much postcolonial writing generally, and Marechera's texts specifically, hark back to European cultural artefacts, so that my charge is not that the binary is unjustly imposed on Marechera's work. This binary is, in fact, of some importance to Black Sunlight and The House of Hunger, as has been seen. Yet in view of the pose with which Marechera borrows, alludes to, steals and incorporates 'western' and 'African' texts it can be said that his texts concurrently claim and reject both their European and their African heritage. Both texts self-consciously criss-cross

that I agree with him entirely on this point.

the borders between these discursive battalions, thereby honouring the border in the act of transgressing it, while at once -- given the demonstrative ease of trespassing -- disparaging the symbolic divide. Marechera's writing is a transgressive practice, one that defies univocity. As he ironically performs the rites to his African and Western literary precursors, mimicking (in Bhabha's sense) western universalist self-aggrandizement, Marechera's pose can legitimately be described as that of a 'bastard heir' (1995: 15).

As in the case of Veit-Wild and Gaylard, Stein applies the theories of Homi Bhabha in his analysis of the global 'post-colonial' significance of the author's texts. Marechera's transgressive narrative strategies are also a focus in this thesis -- but in the more particular context of Zimbabwe. What emerges from the above overview is the fact that Marechera was involved in deliberate, intricate and highly subversive narrative strategies to destabilize hierarchies and conventional perceptions.

David Pattison's critical work on Marechera concerns psychoanalysis and allegory.

In his study of The Black Insider, Pattison states that:

In a way unique among Zimbabwean writers Marechera, via The Black Insider, confronts the tragedy of the false self and through this confrontation questions the values of the false realities imposed by colonialism and neo-colonialism. To Marechera, the metanarrative that supported the political structures of late twentieth century Africa had to be destroyed in order to 'strip naked' the African image and to expose the often unpalatable truth hidden by a distorted and distorting belief system (1994a: 239).

Marechera's exposure of "false realities" and his destruction of "the metanarrative which supported the political structures of late twentieth century Africa" are evident throughout his work. The denuding of façades and pretences, referred to by Pattison, is linked to the 'X-ray' theme (stated in the epigraph to this introduction) which I also emphasize in this thesis. A point of disagreement between myself and Pattison, however, is his contention that "[t]hose critics who call [Marechera] an experimental writer are mistaken" (1995: 2). Although I think our difference is essentially one of definition, my own view is that Marechera was most certainly an experimental writer.

Grant Lilford examines the history of allegory in Southern African writing and analyzes Marechera's work within this context. In his Phd-thesis entitled "Allegories of Drought and of Gardens in the novels of J.M. Coetzee and Dambudzo Marechera", Lilford observes that the image of drought usually symbolizes barrenness and deprivation, while gardens often symbolize moments of paradise:

The image of paradise is a recurring one in the Southern African mythos. A paradise is a naturally occurring fertile spot in the midst of drought and deprivation. A garden occurs when artificial technology produces something resembling paradise (1996: 1).

Lilford argues that:

The image of paradise among indigenous Africans in Southern Africa offered a religious or political refuge from the ruins of societies shattered by colonial invasions. Paradise could take the form of nostalgia for the pre-colonial period, faith in a religious redemption or the hope of political liberation. African economic and political systems were destroyed by forced removals from traditional land. African cultural systems were undermined by missionary, then 'Bantu', education. When African traditional narratives are published for a school readership they are sanitised and made into the kind of hollow, moral fable that Marechera attacks so vehemently. The colonial written word attempts to displace the African spoken word. Of particular concern to Marechera is the manner in which the ruins of the old African systems of discourse are occupied and rebuilt by those in authority, the black neo-colonialists as well as the white colonisers.⁷ The ruin is thus an abiding image for both white and black southern Africans. Both occupy the ruins of civilisation, the whites because their actions in defense of civilisation have killed its spirit; the blacks because their civilisations have been destroyed. Benjamin's allegory of the ruins of history has an unusual resonance here (Lilford 1996: 19-20).

As Lilford indicates, Marechera's writing persistently presents a challenge to "those in authority".

Lilford rightly notes that 'drought' and 'hunger' are pervasive motifs in Zimbabwean literature: in fact this is confirmed by the nationalist critic, Zimunya (1982). However, the motifs are often interpreted in African nationalist discourse as the yearning for a bygone age of 'paradise' or the promise of a 'paradise' yet to come (through liberation struggle). Lilford

⁷ This is a theme in The Black Insider, as David Pattison points out (1994a).

argues that while drought and paradise are recurrent tropes in Marechera's allegories, "Marechera problematizes paradise, exploring the lies behind romantic, Christian, African-Nationalist, liberal and consumer paradises" (1996: 191). Lilford's study also shows how Marechera mobilizes traditional Shona myths for the purposes of allegory -- a point which has some bearing on this study and will be elaborated on in the second chapter.

Robert Muponde, who examines "social banditry" in the children's stories of Dambudzo Marechera, contributes a fresh perspective to one of the author's least known genres. Muponde also appears to note the avant-garde quality of Marechera's writing, stating that:

It was with shock that I first encountered Dambudzo Marechera's unusual capacity for dissent. He has that devilish capacity to annoy and undress people and their pretensions. His is an art that undermines the age, that engages in a critical struggle with the demands of conformity. Creation, for Marechera, is always a gesture of refusal, a riposte that slides the blade between the ribs of social structures. By reloading the word with new meanings he blasts open the passages of thought and increases the space for saying and doing. By so doing, he creates a narrative of continuous definitions of the thing inside the thing -- the word inside the word (Muponde 1996: 3).

This links to the 'X-ray' theme stated in my title. Muponde's comments on Marechera's transgression of traditional narrative form corroborate many of my own observations in this thesis. In discussing Marechera's "Fuzzy Goo's Guide (to the Earth)", Muponde notes that:

The writer seems to be more comfortable with the initiation and apprehension of beginnings than ends and arrivals. It is the Odyssey, the Road to Damascus, that is more appealing to him than the certainty of physical destinations. The initiation of unfinished journeys allows the writer to constantly shred form, assault our sense of certainty, refuse anchorage, flatten out the contours of custom and kick away all totems....[The narrative] begins anywhere, proceeds everywhere and ends anyhow, sending chills along the viewer's spine with each turn or footfall. In that way, Marechera forestalls that tendency of form to arrest -- an ultimate rejection of rigidity (1996: 5).

Abdulrazak Gurnah (1995) also perceives Marechera's work, specifically The House of Hunger, as the "ultimate rejection of rigidity" -- a point which I will return to, along with

Gurnah's other comments, in the following chapters.

Huma Ibrahim, who addresses issues of gender and sexuality in Marechera's writing, is uncomfortable with the fact that "Marechera, who for the most part views male politics and sexuality as violent, includes women in the larger picture determined only by male sexuality". Ibrahim questions "the extent of female collaboration in this patriarchal sexo-political world-view" (1990: 79-90) -- which is a valid point. However, Marechera's treatment of gender issues is extremely complex. Ibrahim further states that:

Marechera points out the vast areas of unresolved, silent resistance that lie between men and women, but he does not envision a way out of the impasse. He seems to believe that men and women cannot work together dialogically (84-85).

Part of the problem that Ibrahim draws attention to is Marechera's reluctance to propose 'solutions'. Unfortunately, points such as Ibrahim's cannot be discussed in detail, but issues of gender will nevertheless be raised in the course of my analysis.

What is clear from the body of critical work that has begun to develop on Marechera is the author's resistance to being read exclusively on any one level or within the parameters of any one critical discourse. His perspectives on human experience are multiple and complex; his work is inherently transgressive; and he demands to be read on several different levels -- often simultaneously. I do not attempt an encyclopedic analysis of his work here. By the above outline of various critical approaches, I wish only to point out the type of criticism which currently exists on Marechera and how my own work might relate to it.

Specific Focus

This thesis avoids the removal of Marechera from his biographical, historical and socio-political context and instead emphasizes these factors in its analysis of the author's

work. It does not attempt to examine Marechera's significance for 'post-colonial' literature as a whole, but chooses to focus specifically on the implications of his writing for Zimbabwean literary and cultural studies, where I think his importance has been greatly overlooked.

In order to narrow the scope of this study for reasons of space, I have limited it to a selection of Marechera's prose narratives, dramatic sketches and comments in essays, lectures, articles and interviews. Marechera's poetry -- a vast area of his creative output -- is unfortunately excluded. Since "House of Hunger" and Mindblast are the texts which, in my view, deal most directly with the Zimbabwean experience, I have highlighted material from them in my discussions. However, I also discuss avant-garde techniques and characteristics in some of his other works as well. I have isolated Marechera's assault on the ideology of cultural nationalism and his attack on traditional realism as two of the most relevant features of his avant-gardism in Zimbabwe.

Summary of the Thesis

A biographical and historical contextualization of the author follows this summary and it serves to ground many of my arguments in the subsequent chapters. Chapter One situates Marechera in the context of black Zimbabwean literature, and discusses the traditions and circumstances against which he reacted. I have narrowed the focus of this study, for the most part, to black Zimbabwean literature written in English (mostly before his death in 1987). A broader analysis would have been interesting, but this remains a task for the future.⁸

⁸ I have not attempted a thorough analysis of Zimbabwean literature after Marechera's death (although such a project would have been interesting). It would also be interesting to compare Marechera's writing with that of white writers (for example, Doris Lessing, Gertrude

The chapter examines how early anti-colonial texts promoted a form of cultural nationalism, which later became official policy in post-independence Zimbabwe. Cultural nationalism can be defined as an ideology which asserts the notion of one, unified, national, homogeneous culture. I question the premises of this ideology and demonstrate why Marechera, and others, turned their backs on it. The anti-nationalist trend is illustrated in my analysis of three seminal works in Zimbabwean literature: Stanley Nyamfukudza's The Non-Believer's Journey, Charles Mungoshi's Waiting for the Rain, and Dambudzo Marechera's "House of Hunger". I demonstrate the unconventional 'plot' of the latter text in some detail because this illustrates many of my points in the subsequent chapter.

In Chapter Two I discuss Marechera's transgression of traditional narrative form. Critics such as Musa Zimunya, Emmanuel Ngara, George Kahari, Mbulelo Mzamane, Ranga Zinyemba, Dan Wylie, and Juliet Okonkwo have implied in their critical work that conventional forms of realism are necessarily appropriate and progressive for the Zimbabwean writer. I problematize this assumption. In exploring the connections between nationalism and realism, I argue that Marechera's avant-gardism is the transgression of an authoritative ideology, which he disagreed with -- for good reason.

In Chapter Three I focus on Mindblast, the only post-independence book published by the author before his death, and a landmark in Zimbabwean literature. The current paucity of indepth criticism on Mindblast, and the vital importance of the book to current debates, justifies a detailed analysis of it. In conclusion, I summarize the salient features of Marechera's avant-gardism and their significance to Zimbabwean literature and culture.

Biography⁹

Marechera's writing is to a great extent a fictionalization of his own biography. Fact is fused with fiction throughout his writing to such an extent that eventually a familiarity with his biography becomes essential. His life-story also paints a vivid picture of the conditions which shaped his sensibilities in colonial Rhodesia, England, and then newly independent Zimbabwe.

The author was born at Rusape Hospital on 4th June, 1952, the third of nine children. At birth, his parents called him Dambudzo, a Shona name which means a curse, a hardship, or an affliction. Mrs Marechera explains that "I called him Dambudzo since we were poor people, we had nothing....I was eleven months pregnant with him. It was very painful" (Veit-Wild 1992: 49). He chose the Christian names Charles William when he was baptized by the Anglican Church at St Matthews in Vengere Township in 1965.

Isaac and Masvotwa Venezia Marechera, Dambudzo's father and mother, settled in Vengere Township, which is about 170 kilometres east of Harare, after being rejected as outcasts by the rest of the Marechera family who lived in the Nyanga area and believed Mrs Marechera to be afflicted by a curse. Isaac Marechera became a truck-driver, and later a mortuary attendant; while Masvotwa became a domestic worker for white families and a nanny at a creche for white children. When Dambudzo was still a child, his father - who was an alcoholic -- got hit by a car and was killed under mysterious circumstances. Dambudzo recalls his mother resorting to prostitution in order to keep the family going and the combination of these events affected him profoundly:

⁹ I am indebted to Flora Veit-Wild's Dambudzo Marechera: A Source Book on his Life and Work for most of the details of Marechera's biography.

I felt it keenly and I was all of eleven years old and death and prostitution were bludgeoning my mind. It was then that I hated all notion of family, of extended family, of tribe, of nation, of the human race (Marechera 1984: 130).¹⁰

Conditions in Vengere Township were harsh and Marechera was exposed to violence when he was very young. His father used to beat him regularly. However, the violence involved the wider society around him as well as his family. Commenting in an interview, he says,

Like in The House of Hunger, a man beat up his wife and raped her in front of the crowd in the township -- and that actually happened when I was about 7 or 8 years old and I was one of the crowd, watching. Even the police were around, watching, and everyone was happy (Veit-Wild 1988: 132).

Marechera found a means of solace and escape from this environment in literature.

In Mindblast he says,

I was mesmerized by books at a very early age. I obtained my first one -- Arthur Mee's Children's Encyclopedia -- at the local rubbish dump where the garbage from the white side of town was dumped everyday except Sundays (Marechera 1984: 135).

What began as a means of escape soon turned into a voracious appetite for any book he could lay his hands on.

Marechera's mother worked hard to send all of her children to school. In 1966 Dambudzo was sent to St. Augustine's Mission School in Penhalonga. At that time, state-funded secondary school education was not generally available to black children. It was considered a privilege to be sent to this particular mission school because it was noted for its high calibre of students as well as its non-racial and egalitarian outlook.¹¹ However, as Flora Veit-Wild comments, "The pupils [here] also underwent the usual process of acculturation through colonial and Christian education which alienated them from their traditional background" (1992: 61).

¹⁰ Veit-Wild notes that he was 13, not 11, when this happened.

¹¹ Many leading politicians and academics attended St. Augustine's. Other writers who attended the school include Shimmer Chinodya, Charles Mungoshi and Geoffrey Ndhlala.

Marechera's subversive allegorizations of Judaeo-Christian myths were no-doubt a reaction (at least in part) to his rigorous missionary school upbringing. At St. Augustine's, Marechera quickly earned the reputation of a precocious student. Some of his former teachers remark on an early awareness of his immense potential.¹² However, he was eccentric, lonely and sensitive and as he progressed through the school system he became increasingly defiant of figures in authority. He also developed a severe stammer and, during his last two years at the school, he suffered a nervous breakdown. This episode is evoked vividly in The House of Hunger.

His personality became quite changeable at this time. As the Headmaster of St. Augustine's School, Father Pearce, states:

I found him charming and ingratiating one day - and a real demon the next! He showed a number of signs of clinical mental sickness, including hearing voices threatening him, etc. Also, repeated hypochondria, requiring us to motor him into the hospital of Umtali for treatment of supposed 'heart attacks' which were shown not to have happened (Veit-Wild 1992: 68).

In 1972, Marechera enrolled at the University of Rhodesia (now the University of Zimbabwe) in Salisbury (now Harare), where he further developed his reputation as an eccentric. To the amazement of his colleagues and the bewilderment of the general public, he marched down Salisbury's Second Street on one occasion on a one-man picket against the Smith government. In 1973, he was amongst those participating in a massive protest against racial discrimination at the University in the famous 'pots and pans demonstration' and he was expelled, along with about a hundred and fifty other students who were also involved. Thereafter, he was continually harassed by the Rhodesian authorities until, in 1974, he left the country to take up a scholarship which he was awarded by New College in Oxford.

Oxford was widely considered to be a gateway to success for aspiring African

¹² See Veit-Wild (1992: 91-93).

intellectuals. In Marechera's case, however, it proved to be a recipe for disaster. He developed a serious drinking problem and proceeded to break nearly every rule in the book. Eventually, he was given the option to undergo psychological treatment for a year, but rejected this and was 'sent down' for disorderly behaviour after he allegedly threatened to burn down New College.¹³

In 1977, while living in Oxford as a writer-tramp figure, he submitted a collection of stories entitled At the Head of the Stream to Heinemann. These were later published in 1978 as The House of Hunger. When Marechera began to publish he re-named himself Dambudzo, which -- given its meaning in Shona -- fitted his iconoclastic image more appropriately than Charles. He moved to a squat in London later in 1977, where he wrote three novels. These were rejected by Heinemann because they were considered too unorthodox for the African Writers Series. One of them, The Black Insider, has since been published posthumously by Baobab and Hans Zell, but the other two manuscripts have been lost.

In 1979, Marechera submitted Black Sunlight to Heinemann's James Currey, who was apparently not pleased with the book because he was expecting something more conventional. However, he decided to publish it anyway, believing that Marechera was working on a 'Zimbabwean novel' and that this would encourage him to finish it.¹⁴

At the end of 1979, Marechera stunned the critics by winning the Guardian Fiction Prize for The House of Hunger (jointly with the Irish writer Neil Jordan). This was

¹³ In a short story entitled "Oxford, Black Oxford", Marechera recreates some of the above events in a piece of fiction which is subtle, yet highly subversive and quite devastating in its indictment of Oxford's double-standards, élitism and pretentiousness. See The Black Insider (1990).

¹⁴ It is not clear exactly what Currey was expecting but he had apparently decided to keep Marechera on because James Wyllie, the Irish reader for Heinemann, had expressed the opinion that he was too talented to lose to another publisher (Veit-Wild 1990: 10).

considered a remarkable accomplishment for a young black writer from Zimbabwe. However, Dambudzo turned the prize-giving ceremony into something even more spectacular by using the opportunity to rail against white liberal British society. In the grand setting of the Café Royal, where distinguished guests and prize-givers were gathered, he arrived in a poncho (which looked somewhat like a Basotho blanket), got very drunk and began throwing expensive crockery at the chandeliers. At the same time, he accused his prize-givers of patronizing him and of being hypocrites.

Marechera's exile in Britain was marked by many other spectacular and notorious incidents. However, in October 1981, he decided to return to newly independent Zimbabwe to make a television film of The House of Hunger with a BBC crew. When he arrived there, he was furious to discover that his book Black Sunlight had been banned.¹⁵ He is quoted as saying:

I thought that I was coming to a new and vigorous Zimbabwe and yet the first thing I hear on arrival is that my book has been declared undesirable. It was a bombshell and you do not understand the crisis of expectation of people in exile unless you have been one of them... I have always refused to allow the concept of a readership to influence what I write. My total commitment is to writing and a writer cannot afford to compromise because once he does so he may as well give up (Veit-Wild 1992: 290).

Marechera fiercely defended his right to freedom of expression and a collision course with the Zimbabwean authorities ensued. Ignoring all political taboos, he spoke out against the new government, drawing attention to corruption, nepotism, the neglect of the homeless and the plight of unemployed ex-combatants. On one occasion he delivered a lecture at the University of Zimbabwe, where several high-ranking dignitaries were present, and is reported

¹⁵ A statement from the Board of Censors states blasphemy, obscenity, and the fact that the book "is deliberately designed to shock and offend" as the main reasons for its banning. Upon the appeal launched by Musa Zimunya (which was supported by Anthony Chennells and Aaron Hodza), the banning was later overturned on 23 February, 1982 (Veit-Wild 1992: 290-2).

to have said:

I wanted to talk to the 'boys' -- but no one is interested in the freedom fighters anymore, no one cares about the squatters either: not the Government, not the shefs [new black elite] here today. We have this shit and hideous monument, Heroes' Acre, but half the Heroes have been buried alive! (Caute 1986: 13).

The response was one of indignation from an audience that was hostile to such stinging criticism at this early stage of independence and majority rule. Marechera was reported to have stormed off saying, "Oh God oh fuck, it's impossible to work here, impossible!" (Caute 1986: 13).

He tried to board the next flight back to London but the airport authorities refused to issue him with an exit visa and he therefore found himself stranded in his own country. After outstaying his welcome with friends and refusing to undergo a cleansing ritual in order to reunite with his family in Rusape, he resorted to living on the streets of Harare like a tramp. This abasing 'double exile' was the setting for Mindblast, his only post-independence book to be published before his death, which he typed up on a park-bench in Harare's Cecil Square (now Africa Unity Square).

Mindblast was loaded with more stinging criticism of the Mugabe government. Corruption, hypocrisy and double-standards were pervasive themes of the book and the author's collision course with figures of authority continued. He was severely beaten up by a colonel in the army on one occasion, temporarily removed from the International Book Fair in 1983 and detained for six days during the International Book Fair in 1984. Marechera was talking to foreign journalists when this arrest occurred and it was rumoured that he was planning to disrupt the Premier's opening speech with stinging criticism.

In his final years, Marechera lived in a bachelor flat in The Avenues of Harare. He gave lectures at the Zimbabwe-German Society, wrote four novels, five plays, several short stories and a large amount of poetry. Nearly all of this work was rejected by local publishers,

mostly on the grounds that it was 'inaccessible' or 'irrelevant' or 'offensive' to most Zimbabwean readers.¹⁶

By 1987 Marechera had reached a low point in his health. He was struck by pneumonia and later diagnosed with AIDS. On 18th August he died at the age of thirty-five. Since his death, the Dambudzo Marechera Trust has collected his surviving works and they have subsequently been published in three major volumes: The Black Insider, Cemetery of Mind, and Scrapiron Blues.

Historical Context¹⁷

Zimbabwe's turbulent history of colonialism and racial conflict is at the core of much of its literature. The following outline of events over the past century and a half aims to place Zimbabwean writing in an historical context.

Terence Ranger's classic revisionist history of liberation movements, entitled Revolt in Southern Rhodesia (1969), played a pivotal role in the rise of African nationalism in Zimbabwe. It has had an immense impact on the manner in which Zimbabweans conceive of themselves, their history, and their culture. Revolt had the effect of instilling the notion of a homogeneous black culture, both in African nationalist politics and in early black Zimbabwean writing and literary criticism. This can be seen in Musa Zimunya's Those Years

¹⁶ For example, Chenjerai Hove, an editor for Zimbabwe Publishing House, rejected a collection of Marechera's poems on the grounds that they "reinforce his proclaimed anarchic vision without any commitment to the improvement of any aspect of society" and contain "derogatory references to women" (Veit-Wild 1992: 350). This view has now been hotly contested.

¹⁷ The chronology of this outline comes mostly from Julian Cobbing (1973: 39-56) and David Martin and Phyllis Johnson (1981: xiii-xvii).

of Drought and Hunger: the birth of black Zimbabwean literature in English (1982) and the historical novels of, for example, Stanlake Samkange and Solomon Mutswairo.

Recent writing, however, supports the view that contemporary Zimbabwean society is more diverse and complex than official nationalist accounts have previously contended. I argue that the culture of Zimbabwe is multi-faceted and mobile rather than homogeneous and static and that this derives from a long history of heterogeneity. The plateau south of the Zambezi River -- now known as Zimbabwe -- has been home to a wide variety of people over the centuries. Before the arrival of the Europeans, however, the plateau was largely under the control of the Ndebele. In the 1840s, the Ndebele, who had split with the Zulu Kingdom in South Africa, migrated north of the Limpopo River. They proceeded to rule over most of the Shona (and other) dynasties in the region through a campaign of raids, slave-taking and the extraction of tributes for their kings -- Mzilikazi and then Lobengula.¹⁸

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Cecil John Rhodes's British South Africa Company (BSAC) set its sights on the mining prospects north of the Limpopo. In 1888 and 1889 representatives of the BSAC (Rudd and Jameson) were sent by Rhodes to negotiate with Lobengula for prospecting rights in the region. Jameson returned with a document signed by Lobengula called the 'Rudd Concession'. This document later became the pretext for the invasion and settlement of most of the plateau by the Rhodesians.

Lobengula meanwhile furiously claimed that the terms of the agreement had been

¹⁸ David Beach notes that the word "Shona" originated as an Ndebele term for the Rosvi. It was only later that it was adopted by Shona-speakers themselves. (The Rosvi had ruled over the Changamire State until they were overrun by Ngoni and Sotho groups after 1831.) According to Beach, before the arrival of the Nguni-speakers, the Karanga, Kalanga and Zezuru peoples in the region did not have a universal name for themselves (1984: 52). Beach also notes, however, that "in the 1880s the Shona were ...beginning to turn the tide of Ndebele power" (1986: 34). It should be noted that the extent of the Ndebele hegemony has often been exaggerated.

misrepresented to him and that he had been tricked. However, the first pioneer column arrived at the site of Harare in August 1890 and set up what became known as the fort of Salisbury, with the intention of occupying what is now Mashonaland. The Ndebele tried to halt the occupation and in 1893 war broke out between them and the settlers. The Rhodesians, who had brought with them the powerful new Maxim machine gun and enlisted the support of a large number of Shona allies, defeated the Ndebele and extended their authority over most of the plateau. Lobengula fled and died and the Ndebele retreated. They were not yet completely destroyed as a force however.

In March 1896, the Ndebele rose up again in a bid to remove the Rhodesians but they were defeated a second time. One of the reasons for the Ndebele defeat, as historians David Beach and Julian Cobbing note, was the alliance of several Shona dynasties with the settlers:

On the edges of the southeastern lowveld and across the southern Shona territory the Matibi, Chivi, Chirimuhanzu, Gutu and Zimuto dynasties blocked the spread of the rising...as they did in 1893 (Beach 1978: 6).

Julian Cobbing states that these Shona dynasties saw alliance with the settlers as a chance of safeguarding their independence from the Ndebele, whom they considered a greater enemy than the Rhodesians (1973: 459).

In the same year, but as part of a separate initiative, some of the central Shona tribes revolted against the hut-tax collections and forced labour imposed on them by the settlers. These uprisings, now known as the First Chimurenga (a Shona word meaning war of resistance or liberation) were also crushed though and the Rhodesians consolidated their power in the region. A Royal Charter was obtained and the region was renamed Rhodesia after the BSAC entrepreneur Cecil John Rhodes.

In 1900, Maondera, who has acquired somewhat of a legendary status in Zimbabwe and has been described as 'social bandit' or 'vigilante soldier', led a rebellion at Mazoe.

Mapondera's were the final acts of organized armed resistance to the settlers before 1966. He surrendered himself in 1904 and died in prison after a hunger strike. (The writer Solomon Mutsaers celebrates Mapondera's life in his historical novel, Mapondera: Soldier of Zimbabwe, which will later be dealt with.)

When the British South Africa Company realized that Rhodesia was not the gold-rich country they had imagined they turned their attention instead to the agricultural potential of the country. As Colin Stoneman and Lionel Cliffe state:

This however required the wresting of land and labour from the indigenous people and the eventual destruction of their competition. They [the indigenous people] had in fact already proved efficient at supplying the food needs of the miners, with the result that white farmers had not been viable before 1908 (1989: 12).

Africans were shifted onto less fertile areas designated by the settler government as 'Native Reserves', while the most fertile land was made readily available to white settlers willing to try their hand at commercial farming. As Stoneman and Cliffe note: "Destruction of the viability of peasant agriculture both removed competition from the white farmers and provided them and industry with cheap labour" (1989: 12-13). In 1930 the Land Apportionment Act institutionalised the racial division of land in the country and the policy of moving Africans to reserves accelerated with 50,000 people being moved in the next decade and 85,000 moved between 1945 and 1959 (Martin and Johnson 1981: 53).

These upheavals accompanied a profound impact on African society. George Kahari states that:

The British South Africa Company's occupation of the Zimbabwean plateau had a colossal impact on all spheres of social and spiritual life in the country... Traditionalism with its enthusiasm for the strict 'civic' virtues of village people and its agricultural routines, was on the way out, its place being taken by the newly arrived missionary teacher, the village store and its Western wares, and the system of administration (Kahari 1982: 87).

After the Second World War, an economic boom led to rapid industrial growth which created

the need for much more black labour in the cities. This period saw an unprecedented drift away from rural areas into urban centres, a factor which contributed to a further disintegration of traditional agrarian life-styles and rural society.

With the urban influx, black trade-unions emerged whose leaders became instrumental in the formation of the first major African nationalist political party -- the African National Council (later the African National Congress -- ANC).¹⁹ Strikes occurred sporadically in the late 1940s and urban unrest continued into the 1950s. In 1956 the City Youth League (later the African National Youth League) organized a successful African bus boycott in Salisbury. The result was that more than two hundred nationalists were detained under the Public Order Act of 1955. In 1957 the Youth League and the ANC merged under the name of the latter and Joshua Nkomo became its President. Political protests escalated in the late 1950s in reaction to bad social conditions, segregation and rural discontent (Stoneman and Cliffe 1988:21). When the State of Emergency was introduced in 1959, the ANC was banned and five hundred of its members were arrested.

Richard Hodder-Williams notes that:

The early years of Zimbabwean nationalism were noted for the degree of unity within the movement. The African National Congress before its banning in 1959, its successor the National Democratic Party until its banning in December 1961, and its successor the Zimbabwe People's Union (ZAPU) until the middle of 1963 were the only nationalist parties of any consequence at all and included members from every region, tribal grouping, and class. In August 1963 the Nkomo-led ZAPU split because of personality and policy differences and the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) was formed under Sithole's leadership (1988: 1).

In 1963 ZAPU members dissatisfied with Nkomo's leadership formed the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and created the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) which began sending recruits to China to be trained for guerrilla warfare. In 1964

¹⁹ This party was to change its name several times in response to numerous bannings.

both ZANU and ZAPU were banned and a number of nationalist leaders, including Nkomo and Mugabe, were detained for a decade.

In the 1960s riots in the townships spread to African schools, a large number of which were closed following clashes between NDP Youth League activists and the police. The 1963 ZANU/ZAPU rift precipitated further conflict. As the writer Christopher Magadza comments in an interview:

Rivalries between the nationalist groups started, petrol bombs were thrown in the townships etc. School life was influenced by this too. A severe incident at Fletcher [Government Secondary School] was when one boy had written a letter to an African newspaper; others accused him of this; he tried to defend himself with a knife and killed another boy. The whole school got into a state of shock (Veit-Wild 1993: 195-6).

Disturbances continued at black schools and at the University throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

From 1953 to 1963 Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) had merged with Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) and Nyasaland (now Malawi) to form the Central African Federation (CAF). Garfield Todd's Prime Ministership of Southern Rhodesia with the inception of the Federation in 1953 created a slight possibility of political partnership between blacks and whites (Martin and Johnson 1981: 66). However, Todd was ousted in a cabinet reshuffle in 1958 and a State of Emergency was declared in 1959. The comparatively liberal Federal Party which ruled Southern Rhodesia until 1962 was suddenly swept from power in the December election of that year by the Rhodesian Front, a new party which promised to hold back the tide of African nationalism and resist majority rule. When the federation finally disintegrated in 1963 there was a feeling of betrayal and anger on the part of many black liberals, who now felt dismayed by the apparent intransigence of the white community. This was articulated in the protest literature of writers such as Lawrence Vambe and Stanlake Samkange (Veit-Wild 1993: 115).

While Zambia and Malawi achieved independence and majority rule, racial oppression intensified south of the Zambezi. Threatened by the prospect of imminent majority rule, the Rhodesian Front government declared unilateral independence from Britain in 1965 and introduced repressive legislation, such as the Emergency Powers Act, which provided for the indefinite detention without trial of anyone who was deemed to be an enemy of the State.

On 28 April, 1966 seven ZANLA guerrillas died in a battle with Rhodesian security forces at Sinoia (now Chinhoyi) and this was commemorated by ZANU as the start of the armed struggle, which became known in Shona as the Second Chimurenga. The Second Chimurenga was perceived and promoted by ZANU and ZANLA especially, as a continuation of the 1896-7 uprisings -- the First Chimurenga.

In 1968 the United Nations imposed comprehensive mandatory sanctions on Rhodesia, intensifying the selective sanctions which had already been imposed in 1966. The effect was to isolate Rhodesia culturally and economically from the international community. However, in Those Years of Drought and Hunger, Zimunya remarks that:

one of the most ironic consequences of that international sympathy for the plight of the people of Zimbabwe was to isolate Africans from the rest of the world even more than before. Contact with the rest of Africa itself became almost negligible, unless one went into exile... The point is that from the '60's onwards, there were cultural developments on the rest of the African continent which left Zimbabwe lagging behind. Hence we found ourselves in a cultural 'drought' (1982: 3).

Another effect of the sanctions was to strengthen the Rhodesian Front's nationalistic fervour in defiance of the international community. Policies of protectionism and self-reliance in commerce, industry and agriculture resulted.

However, protracted guerrilla warfare as well as pressure from South Africa eventually forced the Smith government into a series of negotiations with African leaders. In 1974 detained nationalist leaders were released for preliminary talks and a Declaration of Unity (amongst nationalist groups) was signed in Lusaka by Muzorewa, Nkomo, Sithole and

Chikerema. However, divisions and infighting quickly destroyed hopes of a lasting unity and tensions mounted when Herbert Chitepo, a leader of ZANU, was assassinated in Lusaka in 1975. Controversy grew as the Zambian authorities detained other ZANU leaders and personnel on suspicion of involvement in the murder.²⁰

Meanwhile, a dispute took place within ZANU itself which resulted in Ndabaningi Sithole being ousted and Robert Mugabe taking over as leader. Mugabe subsequently became embroiled in another bitter dispute with the Zambian Premier Kenneth Kaunda over the detention of ZANU officials. Another significant event to occur in 1975 was the FRELIMO revolution in Mozambique: ZANLA was able to establish a new front for the Second Chimurenga in the east and north-east.

In the meantime, Ian Smith was pressured into accepting the principle of majority rule by the American Foreign Secretary Henry Kissinger and South African Prime Minister John Vorster. Negotiations began in Geneva, but little progress was made and they were finally adjourned. The dispute between ZANU and ZAPU, who were fighting under separate chains of command on separate fronts, was temporarily resolved with the formation of the Patriotic Front (PF). However, the PF was more the result of intense pressure from other Frontline States (Zambia, Mozambique and Tanzania in particular) than a genuine settling of differences between the two parties. Deep divisions remained.

Nevertheless, the guerrilla war continued and more pressure was brought to bear on the Smith government. In an attempt to subvert the intentions of Mugabe's ZANU and Nkomo's ZAPU, Smith signed an agreement with Muzorewa, Sithole and Chirau in 1978 which paved the way to the formation of a transitional government. This was ostensibly meant to culminate in majority rule. However, the exclusion of Mugabe's ZANU and

²⁰ They were later released in 1976 without being charged.

Nkomo's ZAPU from the agreement proved problematic. In 1979 Bishop Muzorewa's United African National Congress (UANC) won the general election with a large majority. The transitional government renamed the country Zimbabwe-Rhodesia and Muzorewa invited several key leaders from Smith's former government to join his new cabinet. Muzorewa failed, however, to achieve international recognition for Zimbabwe-Rhodesia. Despite his large majority at the polls, he was widely considered to be a 'puppet'.²¹ Nkomo's ZAPU and Mugabe's ZANU condemned the UANC government and intensified their armed struggle against the new regime. Bishop Muzorewa meanwhile authorised air raids on Zambia and Mozambique with the intent of destroying ZANLA and ZIPRA bases, a decision for which he was later condemned as a traitor to African nationalism and a collaborator with the forces of Ian Smith.²²

Later in 1979, after a Commonwealth Summit in Lusaka, the newly elected British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, convened a constitutional conference at Lancaster House to which all the key parties in the Rhodesian-Zimbabwean conflict were invited. This finally paved the way for multi-party democratic elections in April 1980.

Robert Mugabe's ZANU-PF came to power with a large majority, winning almost all the seats allocated to predominantly Shona-speaking areas.²³ Nkomo's ZAPU won almost all the seats allocated to predominantly Ndebele-speaking areas. The country was renamed Zimbabwe and Mugabe declared his intention to restructure it on a 'scientific socialist',

²¹ Marechera makes scathing references to the Muzorewa government in a satirical play contained in The Black Insider.

²² ZIPRA (the Zimbabwe People's Republic Army) was the armed wing of ZAPU (Nkomo's party).

²³ Mugabe's party was referred to as ZANU-PF (Patriotic Front) because Sithole's party was officially registered as ZANU and he competed against Mugabe in the 1980 election.

Marxist-Leninist model.

After the euphoria of independence, however, it became increasingly evident that the spirit of democracy was being violated by the new government. The broadcast media remained entirely under state control and severe restrictions were kept in place to curtail speech and press freedoms. In an article written in 1983 Richard Hodder-Williams notes that:

The sweeping emergency powers upon which Ian Smith had in earlier days depended have been regularly renewed... The government has regularly used these powers to arrest, detain, and restrict large numbers of individuals (even when acquitted of specific charges in some instances), to withhold passports, to limit public meetings, and generally to establish in some parts of the country a climate where the public articulation of criticism is constrained...(1983: 16).

The State of Emergency was retained throughout the 1980s and the detention of Marechera, under its provisions, during the 1984 Book Fair serves as just one example of how it was abused.

Other evidence of human rights violations and abuses of power continues to emerge in Zimbabwe. It is known that following anti-government tensions in Matabeleland in the early 1980s, thousands of people went missing. Richard Hodder-Williams states that in 1983 "the Fifth Brigade -- exclusively composed of ex-ZANLA guerrillas and trained for internal security by North Koreans - was moved in to destroy once and for all the dissidents at their roots" (1983: 17). Gerald Gaylard comments that:

The discovery in October 1992 of mass graves in Matabeleland, some in abandoned salt mines, forensically linked to the Fifth Brigade, Mugabe's 'crack' unit and the backbone of the Zimbabwe National Army, has embarrassed his government considerably" (1993: 92).

The failures and inconsistencies of the Mugabe government have, at times, been patently obvious.²⁴ However, state control of the media and the repressive Emergency

²⁴ The Willowgate corruption scandal of 1988, for example, involved several key cabinet ministers and highlighted the hypocrisy of the government's anti-capitalist rhetoric.

Powers Act legislation served to reinforce autocratic power and stifle dissent in the 1980s.

Gerald Gaylard notes that:

The establishment of a Shona bourgeoisie, entailing nepotism and corruption, and ZANU's desire and increasing pressure for a one-party state meant that opposition had to be silenced. As a result censorship was strictly enforced and the pervasive atmosphere in Zimbabwe was one of 'political correctness' to the party line and a corresponding paranoia of being 'informed upon' as a 'dissident' (1993: 36).

Critical journalists and dissenting writers have had great difficulty operating in this environment. As Marechera stated in a 1986 interview:

Officially there is no policy for literature. There is no law which says you can't write about this or about that. But there is a heavy political atmosphere whereby every writer is aware of the national programme which unofficially does not allow certain things. So you have a situation where writers are censoring themselves very heavily (Veit-Wild 1992: 39).

1. REJECTING NATIONALISM: MARECHERA'S LOCATION IN BLACK ZIMBABWEAN LITERATURE (WRITTEN IN ENGLISH)

Dambudzo Marechera belongs to an anti-nationalist movement in Zimbabwean literature. He shares common concerns with the group of writers, who have been variously described as 'angry young men', 'the lost generation', and 'the non-believers'. They began their writing in the 1970s and were controversial because they challenged the premises of African nationalism at a time when it was not considered appropriate to do so. The writing of Charles Mungoshi, Stanley Nyamfukudza, and Dambudzo Marechera, stands in stark contrast to most other black Zimbabwean literature written in English at the time, which was characterized by an overwhelming emphasis on race and ethnicity.²⁵

In his article "War of Words", written before independence, Marechera commented that:

The country's educational system has for so long been fuelled by the political need (of the whites) to create a black population deranged to passivity by self-disgust and an acquiescent acceptance of western cultural and racial superiority. The result has been that much of Zimbabwean literature is a direct response to the obsessive and all-pervading theories about race, about racial conflict, and the historical determinants of these. There is therefore a visceral unwillingness to define the individual by reference to that individual's self (Veit-Wild 1992: 232).

Dambudzo Marechera's writing, later denounced by African nationalist critics for its 'individualism', transgresses this trend: it is deeply introspective and it severely problematizes representations of the Zimbabwean experience in terms of racial binaries.

²⁵ Black literature in Shona and Ndebele (which was published locally) followed a completely different course to that written in English. Black literature in English was very often banned in the then Rhodesia on the grounds that it was 'subversive': it therefore generally had to be published overseas. Vernacular literature, on the other hand, had to comply with the strict guidelines of the Rhodesia Literature Bureau, which effectively emasculated it of its 'political' content. See Pattison (1994b) and Veit-Wild (1993a: 340).

At this point it is appropriate for me to outline the salient characteristics of nationalist writing, against which Marechera (and others) reacted. Nationalist writing and criticism are characterized by their belief in a bygone 'golden age' of unity and homogeneity. In The Theory of African Literature Chidi Amuta has described this idea of "some primordial age of unspoilt innocence" as mythical (1982: 2). Nevertheless, the belief in this myth validates the present-day nationalist ideal of establishing a united, homogeneous, 'pure' African culture.

In the aftermath of the struggle against colonialism, nationalist writers and critics assume a moral imperative and a degree of authority in their efforts to 'restore' and rejuvenate a 'lost' African culture. In most instances the nationalist writer assumes that his voice is equal to that of the whole 'national community' or race of people. In structure and style, the nationalist novel generally follows the criteria of the grand master realist narrative of the nineteenth century (which is a point for further detailed discussion in the subsequent chapter).

Nationalist definitions of culture are, of course, extremely contentious; and writers such as Marechera were justified in questioning what gives the nationalist writer or critic the right to speak authoritatively on behalf of so many other people. However, nationalism is generally intolerant of divergent or transgressive voices. In Zimbabwe, Marechera is a case in point -- an issue for discussion in the next chapter.

An overview of black Zimbabwean literature (in English) serves to contextualize Marechera's divergence from the usual and the expected (nationalist) approach. For the purpose of convenience and practicality, I will be using Flora Veit-Wild's generational mode of differentiation for the major groups of Zimbabwean writers. In her social-history of black Zimbabwean literature Teachers, Preachers and Non-Believers (the most extensive of its kind), Veit-Wild "classifies writers by historical generations to facilitate an explanation of the

disparity between certain distinct tendencies in Zimbabwean writing" (1993a: 6-7). Veit-Wild expresses her disagreement with George Kahari's thematic classification of novels published between 1966 and 1978 under the heading of "literature of alienation and protest" (Kahari 1980: 31). She states that:

[Kahari's] classification is misleading and does not help to determine novels' major tendencies and forces. The terms 'alienation' and 'protest' are revealingly contradictory: Kahari tries to put under one roof what does not, in fact, have much in common at all. It is a phenomenon of Zimbabwean literature that literary works published concurrently present extremely different outlooks (1993a: 6-7).

Veit-Wild argues that "it is not the publication date of a work and the immediate political background that is decisive but the life-experience of the writer" (7). She therefore considers a literary text "in connection with a specific generation of writers, or a group within a generation" (7). Veit-Wild outlines her schematics in the following manner:

- Generation 1: 1917 to 1939 (year of birth)
- Generation 2: 1940 to 1959
- Generation 3: 1960 and later.

The term 'generation' is applied to a group defined by a common back ground of social, political and educational experience which may find a specific expression in the literary works of this group.

Generation 1 were mainly shaped by their upbringing and basic schooling before and during World War II, when it was very hard for Africans in Southern Rhodesia to obtain any education. When they started their careers in the 1950s, they were pioneers in this field. For many, their writing was closely linked to an emerging African nationalism which they actively supported.

Generation 2 were moulded by their upbringing and education after World War II, in the years of rapid industrialisation and social change in Southern Rhodesia, a situation in which a much larger number of Africans grasped education as a unique chance for social advancement. Their experiences at school were marked by the growing political conflicts in the country from the early 1960s on. This generation's literary careers began in the 1970s under circumstances of cultural isolation and the political repression of intellectuals and writers.

The youngest writers in the study (Generation 3) were children and adolescents during the war of liberation. This early experience of war has been a major preoccupation in their writing -- which most of them only started after independence in 1980. At the same time, as they are not veterans of the nationalist cause, they are

open-minded and critical about society and politics in post-independence Zimbabwe (7-8).

A number of critics have expressed disagreement with Veit-Wild's delineations.

Anthony Chennells, for example, states that:

She has helped us to create a national literature which acknowledges our complex past and present reality and which is not rendered shallow by racist simplifications of what Amuta calls 'Pan-Negro consciousness'. Having done that she does not know how to deal with the material her writers produce....One problem in this book is that there is only one politically correct attitude for each generation. But a more fundamental problem is that Veit-Wild has problems in reading the texts -- translating form into ideas. At the beginning of the book she criticizes Kahari for not recognizing that literatures of protest and alienation are contradictory. There is, of course, absolutely no reason why the alienated individual -- Marechera comes to mind -- should not protest his or her marginalization...(1993: 128-129).

In a review of Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers, Rino Zhuwarara states that:

Veit-Wild's bold categorisation of writers according to historical periods is too rigid. Such a periodisation does little justice to the complex position of each writer.... [Her] sense of judgement was ...more influenced by what was readily accessible to her than what was necessary for more in-depth analysis (Zhuwarara 1994: 10-11).

Zhuwarara argues that Solomon Mutswairo, who is classified as a first generation writer, defies Veit-Wild's categorization of him because he has lived through and evolved with all phases of Zimbabwean writing and his vision has therefore been an unfolding one (10). I disagree with Zhuwarara in this instance because even Mutswairo's most recently published post-independence work still echoes the nationalistic mindset typical of Generation 1, as defined by Veit-Wild. Zhuwarara does not furnish evidence an 'unfolding vision' in Mutswairo's work. While it is true that Veit-Wild's book does not analyze in detail Mutswairo's post-independence book Chaminuka: Prophet of Zimbabwe, she does indicate that there is very little new in this book in terms of subject matter or style: I think she is correct in stating that, to a large extent, it merely reiterates the old nationalistic sentiments of the author's pre-independence novel, Maondera: Soldier of Zimbabwe (Veit-Wild 1993a: 145).

Zhuwarara, Chennells and other critics have, however, made the point that Veit-Wild's schematics may eventually prove too prescriptive and rigid for authors whose work does not correlate with the boldly demarcated generational categories. Implicit in Veit-Wild's schematics is the view that mindsets and writing styles are necessarily determined by the socio-economic conditions of a certain time and place. This, a classical Marxist view, appears to hold true in the case of much Zimbabwean writing. However, one or two writers have already tested the validity of this rather precarious connection and even Veit-Wild herself has had to address the issue of writers who prove exceptions to the rule.

Chenjerai Hove, who cannot be categorised as a 'non-believer' along with his peers in Generation 2, is perhaps the most notable example. A significant difference between him and the 'non-believers', however, is that unlike Nyamfukudza, Mungoshi and Marechera, Hove did not begin his writing career until after independence. "From a compassionate literary observer," states Veit-Wild, "Hove developed in the 1980s into a cultural politician". He advocated the need for a "positive vision" and "followed a distinct cultural and literary programme" (1993a: 313). She suggests that his writing, particularly Bones, is a product of cultural nationalism. Chennells, again, disagrees with Veit-Wild's assessment of Hove, for various reasons which will be discussed later.

Although Veit-Wild's generational chart is controversial and somewhat problematic, at this point it remains sufficiently intact to provide useful insight into the development of Zimbabwean literature. Veit-Wild's social-history is also currently the most substantial and comprehensive study of its kind, which makes it an appropriate starting point. Her terms 'first generation' and 'second generation' will thus be used to classify some of the writers I deal with.

The Nationalist Trend of Generation 1

Zimbabwe's first generation of black writers who wrote in English (i.e. those born before the Second World War) were either teachers, preachers or politicians and their consciousness was moulded to a great extent by their Christian missionary education (Veit-Wild 1993a: 17). They wrote to inform the international community of their plight as well as to educate and often moralize about traditional Africans values.

In his assessment of Zimbabwean literature and its origins, Zimunya notes that:

The history of serious fiction in English in Zimbabwe begins, most significantly, with the historical novel. In this genre, the individual artist is preoccupied in bringing a people's past into sharp focus in order the more to mirror, interpret and comprehend the prevailing national, racial, or, for that matter, human situation. Inherent [in] this is also a quest for heroic human values, human faith, pride and dignity, and reassertion of identity with the living past (1982: 9).

Zimunya's enthusiastic assessment of the historical novel also relates to the present ideal of fostering a 'national literature' which reflects a national heritage and instills pride and patriotism.

First generation writers contended that a homogeneous indigenous culture was shattered by the arrival of colonialism. By re-evaluating the history of Zimbabwe in their novels, they sought to re-capture a proud past and promote a unified national identity. Of Stanlake Samkange and Solomon Mutsaers, who feature as prominent novelists in this category, the critic Rino Zhuwarara states: "Inspiring these two writers is their desire to refute the White man's fraudulent claims that the Black man had no history and no culture to speak of" (1987: 132). These writers took it upon themselves to challenge negative images of black Zimbabweans.

Despite their noble intentions, however, they nevertheless assisted in the construction of a false historicity and a mistaken national identity (Pattison 1994: 1). For example,

Samkange's Year of the Uprising (1978) and Mutswairo's Mapondera: A Soldier for Zimbabwe (1978) are based on the events of the 'First Chimurenga' of 1896. These narratives attempt to recreate a mythical 'golden age' of unity and harmony, prior to arrival of the white settlers, and they all draw heavily on the controversial account of the uprisings by Terence Ranger in Revolt in Southern Rhodesia 1896-1897, which was published in 1967 (at the outset of the 'Second Chimurenga'). As Veit-Wild states:

Revolt offered the nationalist movement a history of the Zimbabwean people's rich and proud past ...The risings were perceived as well-organised, pre-planned and simultaneous military movements with central co-ordination between the Ndebele and the Shona and with the spirit mediums as the most important spiritual and military leaders ...Ranger's book established a firm continuity between the 1896 revolt and the nationalist struggle of the 1960s (1993a: 108).

Ranger's claims were later shown to be seriously inaccurate by the historians David Beach and Julian Cobbing. These historians found that the uprisings were neither simultaneous, nor centrally co-ordinated, and that they had been traditionalist rather than proto-nationalist in nature.²⁶

Ranger had argued that the Ndebele and Shona risings against the BSAC were co-ordinated by an organization of priests and their followers operating from the Matopos and Mambo Hills. The organization, known as the Mwari Cult, supposedly drew on the supra-tribal mystique of the Rosvi 'empire' -- which had long since been destroyed by the Nguni in the 1830s (Cobbing 1973: 61). What Ranger overlooked, quite significantly, was that the priests were Venda by lineage and not Rosvi. There are a number of other major inconsistencies in the myth which render it extremely problematic. As Cobbing states:

Not only have the co-ordinating roles of Mkwati and Kaguvi [the High Priests] been exaggerated, but their places respectively in Ndebele and Shona society have been misunderstood. They were local figures subordinate to local political structures rather than purveyors of forward-looking millenarianism. Both the Ndebele and Shona

²⁶ See Beach (1978 and 1986) and Cobbing (1976 and 1977).

fought to preserve existing institutions and alliance structures. It is above all fallacious to seek in the events of those years a surge of Zimbabwean nationalism or proto-nationalism, which was only to develop this century (1977: 84).

In fact, Ranger later "conceded that Revolt had worked as a myth-maker, on which not only the nationalist movement but also the poets and novelists had relied" (Veit-Wild 1993a: 109).

There can be little doubt that the historical novels of Mutswairo and Samkange used Ranger's version of Shona and Ndebele history to promote the idea of a unified pre-colonial community. Given the politics of the time, this was considered a significant contribution to African nationalism and the struggle for Zimbabwe; and nationalist critics, such as Zimunya, have praised their endeavours. The books can be read as a rallying call for unity in the fight against the white settlers.

Mutswairo's writing makes a useful case study because in many ways it epitomizes the nationalist ideal. Mutswairo stated in a questionnaire that he gave verbal, moral and ideological support for the struggle "through the influence of my novel -- Feso -- whose theme was a highly potent political theme[;]...protesting against the Rhodesian Regime and Apartheid Government in South Africa....Also speaking on TV and giving lectures against the Rhodesian Government" (Veit-Wild 1992b: 131).

Of his book Maondera: Soldier of Zimbabwe (which was written while he was in exile in North America) Mutswairo states:

I chose to celebrate Maondera's life in the novel form because I believed it would make more provocative reading than if cast as 'plain history.' The scenes are as truthfully imagined as possible (as are the dialogues) with the intention to bring to life the actual scenes of a brave and tragic past ...Of course, verisimilitude was impossible to achieve in every detail, but the narrative is intended to recapture the bold spirit of that time in as realistic a manner as possible (1978: 4).

Mutswairo's book was clearly intended to capture the bold spirit of the armed struggle of the 1970s as much as the heroic life-story of Maondera. Although the book aims at traditional realism, it also incorporates elements of folklore and mythology, and thus deviates

significantly from the ideal of verisimilitude. In the legend of Mapondera and in Mutswairo's book, the central character is an invincible hero with the power to levitate and fly around like a bird. He serves as a symbol of resistance whom Mutswairo uses to promote a rich cultural legacy. The book, moreover, establishes a link between the two Chimurengas (although Mapondera misses the main uprising because he is away fighting the Portuguese in Mozambique at the time). Mutswairo stresses the proud heritage of the Rosvi 'empire', describing Mapondera as "the greatest soldier among the Rosvi, the mighty descendants of the Mbire" (12). The spirit of Chaminuka informs him through Nehanda -- the High Priestess of the Mwari cult -- that his job is "to liberate his country from his enemies" (8).²⁷

Mutswairo's emphasis on the role of the Mwari priests clearly draws on the Terence Ranger myths. The narrator states that the attacks were systematic and that: "The Chimurenga blew like a tornado. Supported by all the spirit-mediums, the chimurenga battle cries shook Mazoe" (81). When Mkwati, the supremo High Priest, is killed word comes quickly from Nehanda that: "The Chimurenga will continue... Mkwati has gone to join his ancestors, and his blood will water the seedlings for a new growth" (84). This gives rise to the idea of a continuum between the first and second Chimurengas. According to Mutswairo, the First Chimurenga was defeated because the people disobeyed Nehanda's precepts, which appealed for unity and co-operation. He stresses that infighting and disunity were the main cause of defeat for the Shona (which was also implicit in Ranger's argument).

While infighting certainly did not help the cause of those fighting the Chimurenga, historically it cannot be substantiated that this was the main cause of their defeat. A variety of other reasons for the defeat have been given by David Beach: firstly, the fact that so many

²⁷ Chaminuka is the spirit associated with the Mwari cult, said to inspire strength in resisting the settlers.

other Shona dynasties fought alongside the Rhodesians; secondly, the fact that the Rhodesian military outnumbered the insurgents at several key battles; and thirdly, the necessity for everyone to abandon the Chimurenga by 1897 in order to start planting the summer crop for the 1897-98 season (1978: 9). Mutswairo's intention in Maondera: Soldier of Zimbabwe can be seen as an appeal to the nationalist forces of the 1970s to abandon their differences and unite against a common enemy (Veit-Wild 1993a: 144-145).

The common enemy is perceived as the white man and to this end Mutswairo casts his hero as anti-white. The reader is told that Maondera "was known far and wide to distrust [white men] as much as he hated them" (28). This is pure speculation on Mutswairo's part. Other historians argue that it is unlikely that Maondera was consumed with hatred for the Europeans any more so than he might have been for other enemies that he encountered during his long career as a professional fighter. David Beach notes that:

[Maondera] saw the Rhodesians and the Portuguese as being rather like the ...Ndebele that he had fought....[A]part from the great Matitima campaign and to a lesser extent the raid on Newman Smith's mining camp, he never tried to attack the whites. It was they who attacked him. Instead, most of the people he fought were fellow-Africans, either in the dynastic politics of the pre-1894 period or in his raids on the villages after that (1989: 60-61).

Maondera's heroic last stand against the Rhodesian authorities in the Matitima campaign of 1901 and his subsequent arrest and imprisonment are dramatized for their relevance to the nationalist struggle of the 1970s. Rising up at a victory celebration the main character says:

Let me praise the valour and courage of our fighting forces for the unquestionable victory they scored against their enemies. This is just the beginning. Greater days are still ahead of us (Mutswairo 1983: 99).

Parallels to the 'Second Chimurenga' are clear. When the hero is finally captured, he becomes a martyr for Zimbabwean nationalism:

Maondera's charisma and ebullience, the popularity he had generated over the years

as being the one and only undisputed soldier of his time, the victories, now seemed to flicker and fade like a lamp that has run out of oil. The end had come and, with it, the end to white settler resistance by any of his people. As the British led him out, popular legend has it that he flew about for awhile, to the amazement of his captors. However, as he was now disarmed, he could cause no harm or injury to anyone, and he lumbered to earth....His charms vanished, and he lay on the ground, powerless, a victim to the sceptical and scornful white barbarians from the northern hemisphere (105).

The historian David Beach's Maondera 1840-1904 presents a significantly different account of Maondera. Beach states that he was not captured but surrendered himself. Whereas Mutswairo emphasises Maondera's Rosvi lineage, Beach states that there is no certainty of this connection. Commenting on Mutswairo's book Maondera Beach says, "Mutswairo is a poet and novelist, not a trained historian, and his novel is an interesting piece of fiction but not historically accurate" (Veit-Wild 1993a: 143). The shortcoming of Maondera: Soldier of Zimbabwe -- ostensibly an 'historical novel' documenting Maondera's life -- is that the author misrepresents historical facts in the interest of promoting nationalist sentiments.

Despite the anti-colonial stance of his writings, Mutswairo's theories of race and ethnicity are imbued with the same flawed assumptions that characterize imperialist writing - for example, that of Thomas Carlyle. As Edward Said observes:

Carlyle speaks a language of total generality, anchored in unshakable certainties about the essence of races, peoples, cultures, all of which need little elucidation because they are familiar to his audience. He speaks the 'lingua franca' for metropolitan Britain: global, comprehensive, and with so vast a social authority as to be accessible to anyone speaking to and about the nation (Said 1993: 123).

It is quite likely that Mutswairo, who was schooled at Adams College, where "essayists such as ...Carlyle were revered examples of excellence" (Smith 1988: 8), reacted to the notion of white supremacism expressed in imperialistic writing. However, Maondera accepts the idea that there are, as Said summarizes it, "unshakable certainties about the essence of races, peoples [and] cultures" (*ibid.*). This outlook informs Mutswairo's nativism. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), nativism is "the doctrine of innate ideas":

Mutswairo's nativism can be explained as the attributing of innate qualities to specific races of people.

Edward Said argues that:

to accept nativism is to accept the consequences of imperialism, the racial, religious, and political divisions imposed by imperialism itself. To leave the historical world for the metaphysics of essences like negritude, Irishness, Islam, or Catholicism is to abandon history for essentializations that have the power to turn human beings against each other; often this abandonment of the secular world has led to a sort of millenarianism if the movement has a mass base, or it has degenerated into small-scale private craziness, or into an unthinking acceptance of stereotypes, myths, animosities, and traditions encouraged by imperialism (1993: 276).

Mutswairo was certainly not alone in making some of the flawed assumptions above.

In her social-history, Veit-Wild argues that most other early Zimbabwean writers accepted the imperialistic concepts and definitions of 'progress' and 'enlightenment' unquestioningly (1993a: 339). The work of other first generation authors shows some of the same characteristics as Mutswairo's novel.

Stanlake Samkange, in one of his historical novels, Year of the Uprising, also mythologizes the events of 1896-7 as he tries to establish a continuum between the First and Second Chimurengas.²⁸ At one point, Shona and Ndebele chiefs and leaders meet in a joint procession to Great Zimbabwe and a religious shrine at Mwari. In her analysis of the book, Flora Veit-Wild states that there is no historical evidence for this at all but that the link-up is presented as though it might be factual (1993a: 126). The Oracle of Zimbabwe appears through a possessed spirit-medium and appeals to the people to take up arms against the white settlers. This scene recalls a similar one in Maondera where the spirit of Chaminuka appears to Maondera through the spirit-medium Nehanda with the same appeal.

Chennells argues that Veit-Wild has missed the point here:

²⁸ Stanlake Samkange was a trained Professor of History, surprisingly.

Anyone with the slightest knowledge of the country's past knows that such a meeting [between Shona and Ndebele chiefs] could not have taken place: the reader encountering this episode in the novel knows that it must be serving purposes other than purely historical (1993: 126).

I take Chennells's point but Samkange must have known that his readership was mostly an international one at this time (given the fact that he had to publish his books overseas because they were likely to be banned in the then Rhodesia). Also, it is not entirely clear what purpose the piece does serve. If it is meant to be allegorical, it is strangely out of kilter with the rest of the novel (which is -- ostensibly -- a re-enactment of real historical events).

I agree with Veit-Wild that Samkange seems to have fabricated this myth with a nationalist agenda in mind. Other first generation nationalist writers also drew on the spirit-medium myths expounded by Ranger to emphasize a proud heritage of national unity and patriotism. The 1896-7 rebellions did not have these dimensions at all. Cobbing states that Ranger was mistaken in stressing "the rising as the opening bars of the symphony of African nationalism" (1976: 459). So too were Mutswairo, Samkange, Vambe and other 'historical' writers.

More than a decade after the 'Second Chimurenga', however, the idea of a homogeneous pre-colonial community still permeates Zimbabwean politics and informs much literary criticism. Kahari in The Search for Zimbabwean Identity (1980) and Zimunya in his Those Years of Drought and Hunger: the birth of Zimbabwean literature in English (1982) were also still drawing on the Ranger myths - despite contradicting historical evidence which was emerging in the 1970s, and Ranger's own retraction in 1979.

Such an emphasis is strange given that Ranger had already retracted much of what he had written in his preface to the second edition of Revolt:

It is now ten years since Revolt in Southern Rhodesia was published and ten years is a long time in Africa and in African historiography....If I were writing about the risings today, I would certainly do so very differently (1979: XI).

In The Search for Zimbabwean Identity Kahari refers to Samkange's Year of the Uprising as "another historical novel which shows how the African spirit media influenced the people in resisting the Charter Company Administration" (1980: 19), although he comments that:

The role of the spirit mediums in the wars, which both Mutswairo in Mapondera and Samkange in Year of the Uprising emphasize is difficult to determine. In my opinion this role is being over-emphasized and I feel this is due to the influence of Ranger's Revolt in Southern Africa and the African Voice which have strongly influenced both Samkange and Mutswairo. Recent historians have shown this to be exaggerated" (74).

Zimunya, in Those Years of Drought and Hunger, published in 1982, notes the "documental-historical significance" of Samkange's work and the central role of the spirit mediums (Pattison 1994: 5-6). He states that:

all nationalists at any time after 1896 knew that fighting the settlers with divided ranks was the surest course to disaster. Perhaps what might bear some credence is the re-emergence of Chaminuka, the Shona spiritual overlord associated with national uprising. We have already stated that his name is associated with historical crisis in Zimbabwe and is a vital archetypal element in our art and literature (Zimunya 1982: 37).

Zimunya's continued emphasis on the role of the spirits and the spirit mediums forms an integral part of his nationalist reading of Zimbabwean literature.

The Ranger myths, despite being discredited, have endured well into Zimbabwe's post-independence phase, and the reason is clear. The imagining of a strong, united people without internal divisions and differences was a source of strength and inspiration for those fighting against the Rhodesians during the Second Chimurenga. It is obvious therefore why Revolt would have struck a chord and become popular before independence. The myths still hold currency with nationalist critics today because they link the past with the present and promote the idea of a homogeneous black Zimbabwean culture.

Such an outlook is in keeping with the intentions of the present leadership in Zimbabwe. After independence, cultural homogeneity and unity were stressed by the Mugabe

government in its drive to establish a one-party state and to pursue its programme of cultural nationalism. This may help to explain why a writer such as Solomon Mutswairo still retains a surprising amount of influence in official circles. In 1990 he wrote the lyrics that were accepted for the new national anthem of Zimbabwe and, as Veit-Wild comments, he "has endeavoured to promote cultural nationalism, through his literary works as well as through his research and public activities" (1993a: 139).

Myth and literature have long played a role in the construction of 'national identity' - -- a point which will be elaborated on in Chapter Two. In his incisive essay "The National Longing for Form", Timothy Brennan, quoting Malinowski, states that:

myth acts as a charter for the present-day social order; it supplies a retrospective pattern of moral values, sociological order, and magical belief, the function of which is to strengthen tradition and endow it with a greater value and prestige by tracing it back to a higher, better, more supernatural reality of initial events (Brennan 1990: 45).

Brennan remarks that "nationalists [often] seek to place their own country in an 'immemorial past' where its arbitrariness cannot be questioned" (45). As he states, "literary ...myth has been complicit in the creation of nations," and this has occurred because "[n]ations ...are imaginary constructs that depend for their existence on an apparatus of cultural fictions in which imaginative literature plays a decisive role" (49).

Zimbabwe's first generation of black writers (Samkange, Mutswairo, and others) were all African nationalists and all engaged, to some extent, in the construction of a Zimbabwean 'nationality' through "literary myth" and "cultural fictions".

Second Generation Nationalists

At least two second generation pre-independence writers continued the first generation's nationalist trend: they were Geoffrey Ndhlala and Wilson Katiyo. Zimunya

expresses appreciation for the proud heritage emphasized in Ndhlala's Jikinya, yet draws attention to several historical inaccuracies and grammatical errors (1981: 43-57). Comparing Katiyo's A Son of the Soil to Mungoshi's Waiting for the Rain, Zimunya heralds the "less complicated and perhaps more socially and historically fulfilling vision," in A Son of the Soil, which, he states, "provides a healthier alternative" (93).²⁹ Again though, he concedes that "Unfortunately the book is less well-written" (94).

Of Geoffrey Ndhlala, Flora Veit-Wild states:

Geoffrey Ndhlala's Jikinya is an idyllic depiction of the beauty and harmony of pre-colonial African life, and a symbolic fictionalisation of racial reconciliation -- in short, the novel naively circumvents the problems of the day (1993a: 252).

With regard to Wilson Katiyo, Flora Veit-Wild:

proposes that A Son of the Soil is an exception; that it is not typical and representative of the Generation 2 writings of this period; that it is a less genuine and less authentic literary exploration of the experiences and feelings of this generation than the works of Mungoshi, Nyamfukudza and Marechera; that it mythologizes Zimbabwean history for propagandist reasons.

There is no exploration of [the hero's] inner life, of the fears and anxieties his childhood must have caused. Unlike other contemporary writings, A Son of the Soil does not reflect the fierce conflicts that the process of urbanisation and education provoked in the adolescent African (253-4).

It is not entirely clear what Veit-Wild means by "less genuine and less authentic". She implies that 'authenticity' is a concept we can all agree on, but it is not. Chennells (1993) correctly points out that she too can be accused of imposing her own politically correct orthodoxy on the writings which comprise the 'second generation' group. Nevertheless I do agree with Veit-Wild, in this instance, that A Son of the Soil is a nationalist text with propagandist intentions.

Chenjerai Hove is the other major second generation writer who could be considered

²⁹ Zimunya's use of language reveals a nationalistic mindset in that it appears to link the concept of homogeneity in black Zimbabwean culture to a general 'health' and 'wholesomeness'.

a part of this group. Veit-Wild, at least, certainly considers Hove to have lent his voice to the cause of cultural nationalism. His award-winning novel, Bones, which incorporates Shona proverbs and idioms and imitates oral styles of narration has been hailed by Emmanuel Ngara and other critics as a national classic. Veit-Wild argues, however, that Bones is fundamentally flawed. She states that:

Although Hove belongs to the second generation of Zimbabwean writers, he does not reflect in his writing the experiences of his generation, the process of deracination which they underwent as children. He ignores the fundamental crisis of the 1970s to which writers like Mungoshi and Dambudzo Marechera have given expression. His collective voice links him back to the public voice of the first generation, the attempts of the early generation to recreate a national history, a national identity. His celebratory solemn tone, especially in the chapters in which "The Spirits Speak", recalls Samkange's mythologisation of the spirit mediums in Year of the Uprising and feels disturbing in the late 1980s (1993a: 318).

Anthony Chennells (1993) and other critics have vehemently disagreed with Veit-Wild's criticisms of Hove. My own view is that the underlying ideology in Bones is ambiguous: on the one hand, the author seems to invoke a univocal, communal voice, characteristic of first generation writing. On the other hand, though, he shows rural society to be fractured and heterogenous in its composition.

Although Hove takes the view that the African writer has a moral imperative to "be publicists for ...our people" and "awaken the consciences of the world" (Veit-Wild 1993a: 314), there is no overt moralizing (a trademark of nationalist writing) in his fiction. If Bones is a nationalist text, then it is infinitely more subtle and complex than Mutswairo's, Samkange's or Katiyo's novels. Unfortunately, a more indepth analysis of Bones lies outside of the parameters of this thesis. Whatever Hove's politics, however, it can be stated with certainty that he does not belong to the anti-nationalist group of writers, outlined below.

'The Non-Believers'

Dambudzo Marechera, Charles Mungoshi and Stanley Nyamfukudza (who have been described as the 'non-believers') began an anti-nationalist trend in Zimbabwean literature in the 1970s. Before independence and during the Chimurenga War these writers contested the premises of nationalism and disputed the notion of a united homogenous pre-colonial African community, hence earning themselves the reputation of angry young men or 'non-believers' (a term taken from the title of Nyamfukudza's novel The Non-Believer's Journey). Whereas most other writers appealed for a return to the lost purity of African tradition, Nyamfukudza, Marechera and Mungoshi (to varying extents) challenged the nationalist notion of a pre-colonial paradise.

There is, strikingly, no "primordial stage of unspoilt innocence" (Amuta 1989: 2) in Nyamfukudza's or Marechera's novels. With Mungoshi the issue is more ambiguous. However, all three authors are notable for their razor-sharp dissection of the tensions, conflicts and contradictions of pre-independent Zimbabwe. By demythologizing the past, they therefore set themselves in stark contrast against the nationalist writing of Generation 1. They do not see the current 'Second' Chimurenga War as a simple continuation of the 'First' Chimurenga; and, instead of stressing cultural homogeneity, they explore the complex and heterogeneous nature of Zimbabwean society.

In short, they overturn the nationalist view contended by their predecessors and the new political establishment. Consequently, they have frequently been denounced as 'unpatriotic'. In his article "Zimbabwe's 'lost' novelists in search of direction," Ranga Zinyemba states:

One only needs to be reminded of the outcry from African critics that greeted Armah's anti-hero in The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born to know that on the eve

of Independence Africa does not tolerate cynics like Armah's 'man' and Nyamfukudza's Sam and 'tourists' like Mungoshi's Lucifer...Zimbabwe needs a literature that reflects its people's heroic efforts to re-discover themselves, literature that is imbued with local colour and perspective. This is the sacred duty for Zimbabwe's writers (1983: 9-10).

Zinyemba's criticism indicates the rigidity of the nationalist position and the pressure on writers to fulfil their "sacred duty" and be a part of this programme. To a great extent, this view is one which still persists in Zimbabwe today. The idea of a writer's "duty" to his nation or continent was stated in a more subtle and poetic manner by Chenjerai Hove when he won the Noma Award for Bones in 1989 and declared in his acceptance speech that:

Writers have this immense responsibility of persuading the world to listen to the many cries of Africa. As writers, we have as well to turn around and be publicists for the sake of the survival of our people....African writers have to perform the task of helping to awaken the consciences of the world to the plight of the powerless in a world where the muscle of arms rather than morality seems to determine the fate of life (Veit-Wild 1993: 314).

In 1986 Marechera had meanwhile stated the counterpoint to this position:

African literature as far as it has developed up to 1986 has been a very pale version of what it could be. One-handedly it promotes those very, very political ideals which are to do with the authentication of the African image and decolonisation and all that.

I think I am the doppelgänger whom, until I appeared, African literature had not yet met. And in this sense I would question anyone calling me an African writer. Either you are a writer or you are not. If you are a writer for a specific nation or a specific race, then fuck you. In other words, the direct international experience of every single living entity is, for me, the inspiration to write (Veit-Wild 1992: 221).

Marechera refused to be "a writer for a specific nation or a specific race" and he was thus condemned on many occasions for being 'Europeanized' or 'irrelevant'. While Marechera may have been irreverent, he was certainly not irrelevant. As Gerald Gaylard states:

the nationalist or ethnocentric political agenda in [this kind of] criticism ...is not adequate to the task of a fuller analysis of him. It is overly prescriptive to the extent that it can only produce a negative critique and cannot find value in that which does not fit neatly into it. This prescriptiveness runs the danger of being as deterministic as imperial thinking (1993: 74).

The following analysis of three texts, The Non-Believer's Journey, Waiting for the

Rain, and The House of Hunger, by Nyamfukudza, Mungoshi and Marechera respectively, serves to illustrate their problematization of the nationalist perspective, their scepticism of the notion of heroes, and their rejection of a number of myths. This troika constitutes an important movement in Zimbabwean literature; and it is useful to compare the three authors so as to contextualize Marechera's own assault on the nationalist tradition in Zimbabwean writing.

Zinyemba contends that:

To move from Nyamfukudza to Marechera is to move from cynicism to oblivion, from sickness to death, to nothingness ...If Nyamfukuda is a descendant of the British and European Decadence, Marechera is his cousin (1983: 10).

It is my contention that these authors did not break ranks with tradition for no apparent reason, as Zinyemba implies. By establishing some of the common threads in their writing, the analysis below outlines some of the reasons for their controversial abandonment of the nationalist perspective. A comparison of the 'non-believers' is useful in a study of Marechera because it serves to contextualize his own virulent attack on the ideology of nationalism.

The Non-Believer's Journey

Sam (the protagonist of Nyamfukudza's novel) is an anti-hero in contrast to the hero protagonists of many nationalist novels. Ironically he is a teacher, which is usually a respected position in Zimbabwean society, and one which often entails expectations of social responsibility. As the title suggests, however, Sam is a 'non-believer', a free-thinking individual who does not consider himself accountable to any particular group or community.

In this regard the protagonist echoes Nyamfukudza's own view, as stated in an interview:

The only responsibility I have is that of any other citizen. Books are not as influential as people want to think. My responsibility is to be as honest to myself and therefore

to society as I can. I think it is presumptuous for an author to say he is a teacher, but in Africa writers are seen as people who have something significant to say (Maveneka 1983: 5).

Nyamfukudza's view of the writer's role echoes that of Marechera's. (Both, interestingly, are in diametric opposition to that of Hove.)

The Non-Believer's Journey is the story of Sam's journey from Highfield township near (the then) Salisbury to his relatives in the rural area of Mtoko for the funeral of his Uncle Mahachi who has been killed by guerrillas because he was a police informer. The narrative moves from scenes of poverty, violence, prostitutes, beer-halls and night-clubs in the township to a contrasting, yet also chaotic rural setting.

A third person omniscient narrator frames the narrative. In Part Two the family history of Sam is traced and we are given the picture of a society fragmented even at the time of the arrival of the colonizers. In The Non-Believer's Journey there is no golden age for Sam to look back to because, as the narrator illustrates, his family history is bleak. We are told that Mtoko was not the original home of the Mapfekas but that:

They had come there from the Honde Valley, which had been spared the intertribal warfare endemic between the two main tribes in the years before the white man moved in and named the country after his own kind (Nyamfukudza 1980: 63).

Mapfeka himself is certainly not an ancestor to be proud of. He is described as a tyrant who fled the Honde Valley with his family because he was responsible for the brutal murder of a girl as a sick joke in retribution for a prank played on him. He also:

played a prominent role in the suppression of the Chimurenga rebellion of 1896 and 1897 and acted as the vigorous leader of the detested African blacklegs in the revenge massacres with which the white man swept the country when he was defeated (65).

We are told that Mapfeka became the Chief African policeman in the Mtoko area and acquired considerable wealth but when he died, his seven widows plotted, planned and incited their sons to pillage his estate selfishly: "It was as if the unruly demon which reigned over

his father's spirit had splintered into a multitude of squabbling, self-destructive little devils" (66).

The numerous squabbles and divisions within the Mapfeka family cannot be directly attributed to the arrival of colonialism. The evils of colonialism are shown as happening alongside the internal conflicts of the Mapfekas rather than as the root cause of them. In stark contrast to Mutswairo's Maondera: A Soldier of Zimbabwe, therefore, Nyamfukudza's narrative departs from the notion of a simple causal link between the arrival of colonialism and the loss of 'purity'. It even questions the idea of 'purity' having ever existed.

The Chimurenga War is seen by the Mapfekas as a chance to settle old scores amongst themselves more than an opportunity for liberation from white settler rule. Sell-outs to the Rhodesian police or betrayals to 'the Boys' become the new ways in which old scores are settled.³⁰

The guerrilla fighters who attempt to impose a political unity and co-operation in effect only contribute to the erosion of old values and the further disintegration of the community. For example, two young men are ordered by 'the Boys' to batter their own father to death, because he is perceived to be a police informer. This is a tragic and brutal reversal of the traditional value system which ordinarily emphasizes respect for elders. It is also symbolic of the breaking of family bonds. Like the boys who kill their own father, the guerrillas destroy the traditional structures of authority in the village. The co-operation of the community is shown to be more the result of fear and intimidation than of dialogue and consensus.³¹

³⁰ 'The Boys' was a colloquial expression for guerrilla fighters, who were usually very young men.

³¹ cf. Norma Kriger's "The Zimbabwean War of Liberation: Struggles within the Struggle", which refers to the same region and corroborates Nyamfukudza's perspective (p.

At the end of the novel the whole community is woken up in the dead of night by 'the Boys' and marched off to a secluded spot. There they are made to form a circle, chant revolutionary slogans and sing songs in support of the struggle. The guerrilla leader shouts: "Chaminuka! Nehanda! Kagubi! Monomotapa! ...They started it, and they are still with us now as we carry it on. Forward with the struggle" (105).

Sam finds himself in this circle against his will. In an earlier conversation with Mudomini, he has already declared his contempt for precisely this type of politics:

I have no time for these ghosts and spirits and mediums dabbling with the past!...It's the worst nonsense of all! I don't know what's wrong with you people, spirit mediums, moving about with guerrillas, what are they for? And they call themselves socialists! Is it any wonder there's tribalism in the armies, two tribal armies in fact. How are you going to talk of your ancestral religion, and maybe perform the odd ritual now and again in the bush, when the chap fighting next to you is a Matabele and you are a Mushona? It's a sure recipe for division and it makes me sick! (91).

Instead of accepting the unifying potential of the spirit-medium myths, Sam feels disgusted that religion is being used to promote ethnocentrism and further division between the two warring factions (ZANLA and ZIPRA).

Despite Sam's assertion that "Everyone must choose for himself, we can't all join up, you know!" he is nevertheless put under immense pressure to lend material support to 'the Boys' by smuggling medicines and supplies to them. Sam refuses to comply with Chikwepa's request and attacks his interrogator in defiance. Chikwepa shoots him and he ironically dies at the hands of those who are 'liberating' him.

The Non-Believer's Journey demythologizes both the 'First' and 'Second' Chimurengas. It also deflates the nationalist idea of a simple black versus white conflict and asks what the true meaning of liberation is. "A worthwhile death - to use Sam's words - was what he wanted" (113). Yet so often, as Sam had previously stated, the liberation war

entailed:

stupid deaths, our own people fighting among themselves in the training camps because this or that commander comes from this or that part of the country and they incite the fighters in their petty, tribal power struggles. Chitepo is dead and who knows how many others? No, I'll choose my own way of going, let them sort out their problems first, before they call on me to die for their rivalries (56).

One of Nyamfukudza's projects was to refute myths and deflate grand notions of heroism and

The Non-Believer's Journey undoubtedly achieves this. In a 1985 interview with Flora Veit-Wild, Nyamfukudza stated that:

Heroes are so unique, they don't really interest me; I am interested, by inclination, in ordinary people; they may end up in exceptional situations. I am much more interested in how a particular, fairly average individual will respond to certain testing issues rather than a hero (Veit-Wild 1993: 255).

Waiting for the Rain

Charles Mungoshi's Waiting for the Rain is also critical of the nationalist movement in pre-independence Zimbabwe. According to Flora Veit-Wild:

Mungoshi's work exemplifies the detachment of Generation 2 writing before 1980 from an ethnic and nationalist perspective....The complexity of the modern world makes a return to a pure state of pre-colonial Africa impossible, and leads to a retreat to "the inner self" of the individual ...Where the African people no longer appear as a homogeneous entity opposed to the white rulers but are seen in their own multi-faceted inner, social and economic contradictions, the extension of such contradictions into a post-colonial society is anticipated (1993a: 296-7).

Like The Non-Believer's Journey, Waiting for the Rain centres on an anti-hero rather than a hero. Lucifer, as the name suggests, can be considered a 'fallen angel'. The story details his unenthusiastic home-coming after two years; it occurs over a three day period, and it ends with him finally turning his back on his family to go overseas for further education

(Veit-Wild 1993: 289). True to his name, at the end of the book Lucifer remains a fallen angel rather than a prodigal son.

As in The Non-Believer's Journey, 'traditional culture' is placed under the microscope in Waiting for the Rain. Both Nyamfukudza and Mungoshi show traditional society in a state of crisis. Sam's and Lucifer's extended families seem to be on the point of self-destruction and disintegration. In the case of Waiting for the Rain disputes and petty jealousies have cursed the Lucifer's family for generations.

Traditional Religion is shown as a force which perpetuates divisions instead of restoring harmony. Resentment and family conflict result partly from of a belief in angry spirits and a never-ending cycle of revenge. Tongoona explains to his son Lucifer:

Some ancestor in the family of Kandengwa killed -- in cold blood -- a man of another family. That was way way back before your mother's father was even born. For generation after generation the victim's family had been asking for compensation. But no one paid any attention to them. Then they started killing off anyone with the blood of Kandengwa in him. To stop them the family of Kandengwa has now to give a young girl -- a virgin -- to the wronged family. This girl would be given to any close descendant of the victim -- for nothing. [Usually there would be a substantial bride-price.] Since nothing was done, this has now caught up with us. Because your grandmother is a Kandengwa, she has lost all her children -- eleven of them, all except your mother -- through the mistakes of her ancestors. And it is because your mother has the blood of the family of Kandengwa in her that the curse includes us today (159-160).

To prevent catastrophe, Betty (Tongoona and Raina's daughter) may have to be offered as a sacrifice to the offended ancestors. In this event, she will be turned out of the community and told never to come back. (We can predict that the ripple effect of such an action would result in even more tension between Tongoona and Raina and a further disintegration of family bonds.)

Betty has in the mean time further complicated matters by falling pregnant. She keeps this a secret until the spirit-medium Mantandangoma exposes her misfortune to the whole community as evidence that the angry ancestors are waiting to avenge themselves on the

family again. Mantandangoma prophecies that the baby "will never breathe" (145). Like Old Mandisa, who has suffered a string of miscarriages, Betty is now believed to be afflicted by the ancestral curse of barrenness. One gets the impression that the prophecy will become self-fulfilling because if the angry spirits do not induce a miscarriage in Betty, then a thorough beating of the poor girl by her family, as is planned, probably will.

The traditional belief system only seems to complicate personal relationships. Tongoona has already stated that he is reluctant even to talk to Raina because "a wife ...still belongs to her own parents and family even after she is married or dead, and if you wrong her, it is her whole family that you have wronged" (159). Tongoona's fear of upsetting Raina's ancestors constrains his communication with her and leads to an uneasy tension in their marriage. By trying to appease the spirits, Tongoona, in effect, only exacerbates the divisions within his family.

Tongoona tries to play the part of the stabilizing patriarch but fails miserably. He takes on the duties of leading the Mandengu family when his older brother Kuruku backs out of this responsibility by converting to Christianity. In the belief that the Earth is angry with Kuruku, he tells Lucifer that:

it is up to us, the living, to appease the Earth. And to preserve the order of the family, to avoid dissensions, hatred and bloodshed and the total destruction of the family, it has always been and still is the duty of the eldest son of the family to call upon his young brothers and sisters and relatives and tell them what must be done (159).

Ironically, Tongoona chooses his second son Lucifer -- who is perhaps even more contemptuous of family tradition than Kuruku -- to take on this duty. Tongoona thereby alienates his first son, Garabha.

Like The Non-Believer's Journey, Waiting for the Rain ends bleakly and without resolution. The climax to Lucifer's three-day visit occurs when he deliberately and

consciously chooses to alienate himself from his family and his community by refusing to take the medicine bottles and charms with him which have been carefully prepared by the spirit-medium Matandangoma (to ward off any danger to himself and the family). His mother Raina "kneels down to him ...down in the gritty and biting sand, as tradition demands women should whenever addressing their menfolk," (173) and she begs him to take the medicines but he says they are "just too much useless baggage to carry" (174). As a show of contempt for the rituals and traditions he is leaving behind, he smashes them into tiny pieces. The community put on a show of solidarity when Lucifer finally departs with his white benefactor but they all know that he is abandoning a deeply divided and very unhappy family.

Apart from the white (Christian) Father who makes a brief appearance right at the end of the novel, all of the characters in Waiting for the Rain are Africans. Consequently, the book is an examination of the divisions and conflicts within an African society (overdetermined, of course, by colonialism) more than it is an exploration of the black versus white conflict per se. In this respect, it is similar to The Non-Believer's Journey. However, whereas The Non-Believer's Journey focuses on the consciousness of one central character, Waiting for the Rain explores the inner world of thoughts and dreams of a variety of individuals. Like Nyamfukudza's novel, however, and unlike most nationalist writing, it does not attempt to speak with one voice for a community or nation. Instead Mungoshi allows the voices of several characters to express a rather complex pattern of thoughts and attitudes. As Veit-Wild states, "[t]he complexity of the modern world makes a return to a pure state of pre-colonial Africa impossible, and leads to a retreat to 'the inner self' of the individual" (1993: 296-297).

Mungoshi's detailing of a cultural malaise has been read by many as a negative view of black Zimbabwean society. This was not the author's stated intention however. Mungoshi

contends that "What I had to say is universal. There is no English fire or African fire, human experience is human experience" (Veit-Wild 1993: 297).³²

Waiting for the Rain, first published in 1975 during a bleak period in Zimbabwe's history, is more than just a rejection to the nationalist movement. The themes of deracination, alienation, and "man's destiny [as] a nightmare", as Zimunya points out (1982: 62), give the novel an existential dimension which links it with the work of Dambudzo Marechera.

The House of Hunger

The House of Hunger is a collection which consists of ten short stories, each dealing with similar themes. In Doris Lessing's view, the themes of the stories are so interrelated that the collection as a whole could pass for a novel (1979: 62-3). The stories can thus be read either separately or collectively. The following is a study of the longest of the stories, the title-piece, which can be considered a small novella. I have chosen to discuss "House of Hunger" because of its direct bearing on issues which pertain to the Zimbabwean experience. The text will be analyzed in considerable detail since it forms a basis of the discussion Chapter Two.

The novella begins with the first person narrator, who is an anti-hero/picaro-figure, declaring that "I couldn't have stayed on in that House of Hunger where every morsel of sanity was snatched from you the way some kinds of bird snatch food away from the mouths of babes" (Marechera 1978: 1). Through flashbacks, memories, anecdotes and conversations

³² It seems from this statement that Mungoshi believes in the concepts of neutrality and transparency, and does not admit that his work is the product of any particular ideological outlook. I beg to differ with Mungoshi on this point, and I will problematize assertions such as the one above in the subsequent chapter.

with friends in a beerhall on the day of his departure, the narrator paints a harrowing picture of his life, and those of others, in the Rhodesia of the 1960s and '70s, which he calls the House of Hunger.

In his thorough and illuminating essay which deals with The House of Hunger, Abdulrazak Gurnah observes that The House:

represents the squalid and dilapidated African township in segregated Rhodesia, what Marechera refers to elsewhere as a 'seething cesspit'. But the house images also represent other things: the fragmented community living in the township, the oppressing family, and the frenzy of the individual mind (1995: 100).

There are several parallels to be drawn between The House of Hunger, Waiting for the Rain and The Non-Believer's Journey. An exploration of dreams and the disturbed inner-world of the mind links Marechera to Mungoshi³³, while the background of social upheaval and political turmoil in "House of Hunger" is reminiscent of the township scenes at the beginning of Nyamfukudza's The Non-Believer's Journey. The narrator states that:

It was at this time when my sixth form like other sixths rushed out into the streets to protest about the discriminatory wage-structure and I got arrested like everybody else for a few hours ...There were arrests en masse at the university and when workers came out on strike there were more arrests. Arrests became so much a part of one's food that no one even turned a hair when two guerrillas were executed one morning and their bodies later displayed to a group of schoolchildren (2-3).

Like Nyamfukudza, Marechera depicts violence and brutality as every-day occurrences and like both other authors he deals extensively with deracination, alienation and social malaise. Senseless cruelty happens on almost every page, and it is all the more disturbing when the reader considers how closely the story matches the author's own biography.

The narrator describes how Peter, his eldest brother, flogged his new wife, Immaculate, until she fled for her life; and how, when she returned, he beat her again "until she was just

³³ Interestingly, this mode of expression can also be seen in the writing of new Zimbabwean authors, such as Shimmer Chinodya and Batisai Parwada.

a red stain" (4). Stains become an important leitmotif in the novella, often (though not always) symbolic of the pain of existence. One day the narrator's mother tells her children, quite calmly, that their father "was hit by the train at the rail-crossing ...There was nothing left but stains" (9).

Another leitmotif is the narrator's ongoing, but futile, quest for black heroes. There are none in his family (this echoes a theme also addressed by Nyamfukudza and Mungoshi): the father is an alcoholic and a womanizer who beats his children, yet is humiliated, on several occasions, by his wife who does not bow to him as a patriarchal figure. The father's death is futile rather than heroic. The mother also drinks to excess, and cuckolds her husband by sleeping with strange men -- sometimes quite openly, in the same room as her children. Peter, the eldest son is an angry, macho, violent thug who picks fights, batters his younger brother, and abuses his wife. He is forced to marry Immaculate because she is pregnant, but the narrator speculates that the child might be his own.

Whereas Zimunya, in his study of Zimbabwean literature, regards "the African family ...with its complex and unifying extensions," as uniting the community and society, both "physically and spiritually ...for good or for worse" (1982: 6), Marechera shows 'the family' in "House of Hunger" to be at the very core of the disintegration process. As Gurnah states:

In Marechera's story, the patriarchal figure is 'de-centred', and the home and the family represent chaos and oppression....Rather than being a metaphor for social unity (even in its oppression), here the family is figured as bizarre and sadistic, and every relationship and role reveals the individual's capacity for despair (1995: 106-7).

When the narrator goes to the beerhall, he meets Harry, Immaculate's brother, who is known to work for Special Branch as a police spy. Harry buys the beers, shows off his smart clothes and brags about his "white chick" whom he is about to meet for a date (11). At this point, Julia, who works as a prostitute in the beerhall, bumps into the narrator and they renew acquaintances. They heckle Harry until he eventually leaves, fed up with their

snide remarks. This leaves the narrator alone in the beerhall with Julia and they settle down to a long conversation, which is interspersed with a myriad thoughts and reminiscences of the narrator's experiences within the 'House of Hunger'.

He remembers giving an impassioned political speech to a group of vagrants, and "trying to rouse their minds by giving them examples of heroism on the part of our nationalist guerrillas" (26). The speech falls flat, however; he alienates himself from the crowd and is assaulted by one of the boys, whose anger quickly turns to hatred and violence. The narrator is punched and kicked senselessly until the crowd gradually switches its sympathies and turns violently on the attacker:

The boy was instantly lost to sight in a mass of fist-flying, boot-kicking, head-butting ...[and] is now a permanent invalid; as if that was not enough, his mind from that day refused to budge in any direction (26).

Marechera's sardonic picture of such rabble-rousing and mass action, as in Nyamfukudza's Non-Believer's Journey, is not flattering to the cause of nationalism.

In another episode, Peter gives his brother money to celebrate his excellent school report by getting drunk. When he returns with a parcel of books by Robert Graves instead, Peter is so furious that he threatens the narrator with violent 'punishment'. The narrator flees and Immaculate finally tracks him down, "raving blind drunk", in a bar. Thereafter, they end up in bed together; hence his speculation that he may be the father of the child she is now expecting.

If the narrator sees anyone in the House of Hunger as heroic and inspiring, then it is Immaculate. He states that:

It was not possible that a being like her could have been conceived in the grim squalor of our history. She made me want to dream, made me believe in vision, in hope. But the rock and grit of the earth denied this (12).

It is to Immaculate that he confides the details of his nervous breakdown, an event which

happens at the mission school, just before he is due to write his A-levels. This is a lengthy flashback, but one which helps to explain the disjointed style of the text.

He describes to Immaculate how voices inside his head simply refused to go away: "The absurd, the grotesque, it seemed, had come home to stay[,]...the demons, finding the House unattended, had calmly strutted in through the open door" (29). There is thus a connection between the narrator's current state of madness, and the society which gives rise to it. (This is a very important point for our discussion in the next chapter.) He states that: "The House has now become my mind; and I do not like the way the roof is rattling" (13).

We see that the rattling edifice of 'the House' is a metaphor for the narrator's mind, his family, the township community, and wider Rhodesian society as a whole; and it is a mosaic of contradictions. When, as a nine year old boy, the narrator inadvertently speaks English to his mother, she feels insulted and slaps him. However, when he tears up his English books his father knocks his teeth out. During his nervous breakdown he suffers from apoplexy -- which he attributes to incidents such as these: "I felt gagged," he states, "by this absurd contest between Shona and English" (30).

Cultural conflict is not seen as the exclusive cause of this madness in the House of Hunger, however. A malign cosmos is also to blame: the narrator recounts an episode from his school days:

[O]ne afternoon the sun had rings around it....At once massive rocks of rain hurled themselves down upon the sleeping earth....Such a madness of the elements did not seem possible. Rude buckets of water poured over the school. It rained as though it would flood us out of our minds. It drummed on the asbestos roofs. It drummed on the window-panes. It dinned into our minds. It drummed down upon us until we could not stand it. It poured darkly; plashed; gutted; broke down upon our heads like the smack of a fist. It roared, splashed, soaked, stuttered stertorously down from the black spaces of the huge mindless universe (31).

An existential and metaphysical dimension is thus introduced to the narrative. The narrator feels as if his psyche is at the epicentre of a chaotic cosmos. He is tormented until, as he

says: "Something seemed to split my mind open. The floor rushed rapidly upwards to meet me ...I opened my mouth to say something. There was this dark pit. I was falling gently into it" (37). Immaculate, who is exhausted from all her beatings, falls asleep next to the narrator during this harrowing story. Ironically, this is further proof that he is still just talking to himself.

Eventually we return to Julia and the beerhall, where, we are told, "The barman impressed by her massive breasts, was thoughtfully reducing her to a stain on a sheet. A true hero of our time. Reducing everything to shit" (41). Again the notion of heroism is dealt with sarcastically and the leitmotif of the stain is used as an image of degradation. The point of existence in this 'House of Hunger' seems to boil down to 'stains', which are, variously: blood, sweat, tears, semen, and shit. It is an outlook detached from any hint of romanticism.

Julia, affected by the drink, reaches under the table to see if the narrator's fly is open. He rejects her advances, however, and turns the topic of conversation to the poetry and prose magazine which he was which he was going to work for, along with Philip, his best friend, and two white youngsters, Doug and Citre.

At this point, the narrator's thoughts shift from one topic to another in an apparently random manner. He suddenly asks Julia: "Do you remember Lobengula's letter to the Queen?"(42), and begins to parody the calamity of the Ndebele King's signing of the 'Rudd Concession':

Poor chap. I don't like to blame him though, for making us all like this. Of course he was rather silly. Poking his head into Pandora's box. Deserved what he got. Like a baboon poking his hand into a gourd-trap. Of course you and I would be amahole, slaves, if the poor chap had survived....We did not I suppose want to be slaves of either the heroic Ndebele or the Lendy-Jameson gang....Of course the understatement of the year came from Lobengula, who said of white men: "You people must want something from me" (42).

This is no-doubt a parody of Samkange's On Trial for My Country, a classic nationalist

'historical novel', which recreated a painstaking defense of the Ndebele king. The narrator debunks the notion of an idyllic pre-colonial past, and recalls the violence and brutality which heralded in the present era of repression and colonial rule:

The Maxim and other guns began to speak and within a quarter of an hour the surrounding country was strewn with dead and wounded....Lobengula fled Bulawayo....The one thing that bugs me about the man is that he even loved white men. That he killed my people like cattle, the way Germans killed Jews. And he loved white men. Even trusted them. And then he wanted to know if Queen Victoria really existed. Wives and all that. What I mean is: is this all there is to our history? There is a stinking deceit at the heart of it. Petty intrigues. White hoboos. Bloody missionaries singing Onward Christian Soldiers. Where are the bloody heroes? (42-43).

Like Nyamfukudza's The Non-Believer's Journey, parts of "House of Hunger" deliberately contradict the historicity that was constructed by first generation writers. It challenges the notion of a simple black-white contest and a golden age of peace, prosperity and unity preceding the advent of colonialism. No-one from the past or present, black or white (except possibly Immaculate), is seen as a hero or role-model. The whole concept of heroism is parodied again as the narrator states:

Do you remember the words of that dying warrior at Mbembezi: "Wau: To think the Imbezu regiments were defeated by a lot of beardless boys!" After all, even the goddamn Rudd concession almost got lost in the Kalahari desert when that chap got lost in it and all he had was gold and champagne and brandy and stout: and when he couldn't hope any more he buried the blasted concession in, of all places, an ant-bear hole and the stupid bushmen helped him, and so here we are all sticky with the stinking stains of history. Smouldering and farting...(43).

Again, in his ironic style, the narrator suggests that almost everything can be reduced to 'stains'.

The narrator does not seem to know whether Julia is intrigued by or indifferent to his ramblings; and at this point he comments now that his own "mind was now just a cloud of alcohol". Nevertheless, he continues to tell her about how "some bastard beat up Philip's sister." Anne was "beaten black and blue. Raped out of her mind too". The culprit was

Nestar's son, Leslie. Nestar is a woman of mixed race and a notorious prostitute, who herself has been the victim of astonishing cruelty. The narrator informs Julia that Philip "crunched into [Leslie] the way a pickaxe smacks into a wedding cake" (43).

Julia does not seem interested in this story, however. She is more interested in the semantic question of "How can a black person be beaten black and blue?" and she tells him that he is "awfully mixed up" (44). We then re-enter the narrator's head, as he reflects on this latest comment:

Most educated Africans like the word 'awfully', the word 'actually', the phrase 'Is it not'? They are the open-sesame to success. Actually, class-consciousness and the conservative snobbery that goes with it are deeply rooted in the African elite, who are in the same breath able to shout LIBERATION, POLYGAMY without feeling that something is unhinged. It's awfully trying. I have, of course, my own pet words and allusions which reveal to the eager listener just what kind of a bastard I am (44).

This passage, in many respects, is a first for black Zimbabwean literature in that it scrutinizes classism, sexism, and racism all under the same microscope and suggests that they are all part of the same cycle of oppression. Marechera stated in an interview that he thought that women were "the ultimate victims of racism in this country ...because at that time black men were used to being the slaves of the whites and the only slaves they had were their women" (Veit-Wild 1992: 13). Certainly, his writing shows an awareness of class and gender issues that is almost non-existent in other texts up until this time.

His sharp analysis of gender issues was not entirely free from misogyny, however. The narrator -- who appears to represent the author -- catches VD from a prostitute the first time he has sex, and complains that "The experience left me marked by and irreverent disgust for women which has never left me" (Marechera 1978: 107). This can be taken as indicative of the author's own attitudes towards women: complex and highly problematic, yet extremely

aware.³⁴

We return to Julia in the beerhall, who says "You hate being black." The narrator thinks her summation is simplistic and that she has misunderstood him (45). As he considers his father, who was never the ideal role-model, he thinks:

--The old man died beneath the wheels of the twentieth century. There was nothing left but stains, bloodstains and fragments of flesh, when the whole length of it was through with eating him. And the same thing is happening to my generation. No, I don't hate being black. I'm just tired of saying it's beautiful....A cruel sarcasm rules our lives....The bulldozers have been and gone and where once our heroes danced there is nothing but a hideous stain (45).

The narrator does not "hate being black." He just refuses to romanticize the condition of being black in Rhodesia.

The novella examines the subversion of racial segregation and sexual mores in Rhodesia with a frank discussion of what goes on behind closed doors: Julia begins to talk about possibly making another pornographic movie with the narrator's white friend, Citre, whom, she says, "screwed very well, as though he was drawing circles with his loins." We have already heard Harry talk about his "white chick" and Julia questions the narrator about his white girlfriend -- Patricia, wanting to know if "white girls are any better in bed?" (46). Sexuality thus facilitates the transgression of racial barriers -- though it is unclear whether this is necessarily liberating.

After this discussion, Julia's hand again reaches under the table and closes around the narrator's privates. He has had enough and shouts, "Julia, take your hand off my penis!" (48). His thoughts then leave the beerhall again, as he again explores the significance of sexuality in the 'House of Hunger'.

He remembers, in his childhood, witnessing his own mother's sexual activities, and

³⁴ cf. Huma Ibrahim's comments (1990), as outlined in the Introduction.

then he remembers his own brother's 'proof of manhood' demonstration:

[O]ne thick summer night the boys came from all over the township and gathered round to watch a demonstration Peter had promised. He was going to prove to us infants that he had actually become capable of making girls -- any girls -- pregnant....Peter stripped. He had bathed and oiled himself all over. He was lean and strong and handsome. The size of his organ astonished us. It was stiff and huge and its mouth was tense. He quite casually cradled it and began to masturbate (49).

The boys watch this homoerotic spectacle, absolutely mesmerized, until Peter reaches orgasm. Significantly, the display of phallic power is calculated, primarily, to impress other males, rather than females. Later, Peter goes on to 'conquer' numerous women with this great physical and sexual prowess: however, the display of his 'manhood' is always meant to impress other men. This is an interesting comment on how masculinity is constructed in what Marechera terms the 'House of Hunger'.

Another part of the narrator's sex education as a young boy comes through spying on the township prostitutes while they work with their clients. He remembers the image of one woman, whom he later uses a symbol of Rhodesia in one of his short stories: "There was nothing special about her," he states, "It's just that we could see on the gravel road splotches and stains of semen that were dripping down her as she walked" (49). The representation of Rhodesia as a semen-stained prostitute is both degrading and subversive. In a manner unlike most other black writers, Marechera explores the phenomenon of sexuality -- in all its manifestations -- as an essential component of the old Rhodesian and new Zimbabwean experience.

The character of Nestar, the prostitute, is a fascinating one, whom the narrator seems to admire. He states that she fell pregnant at age twelve, was "cast out of school and home and church" (49), and beaten up by the father of the child when she went to ask him for help. In desperation, she eventually gave birth to her son, Leslie, in the bush, "At the head of the stream" (50). Soon afterwards she seemed to realize that only professional prostitution would

afford her some measure of independence and control over her own life and body. The accounts of her sex-acts with clients, mostly white men, are fascinating in what they reveal about racism and repression in this strange society.

Sexuality takes many forms and functions in the novella but it is generally associated more with power and violence than with tenderness and compassion. The older generation, we are told, "still believed that if one did not beat up one's wife it meant that one did not love her at all" (50). One man therefore rapes his wife in the thick of a crowd, "cursing all women to hell as he did so" (50). No-one lifts a finger to help her.

Although one woman retaliates against her husband's attempt at wife-battering, by instead managing to "[smash him] into the Africans Only hospital", the narrator observes that women, for the most part, bear the brunt of the oppression in this society. Compounding the problem are the forces of modern capitalism and a broadcast and print media that are patently racist and sexist:

[T]he young woman's life is not at all an easy one; the black young woman's. She is bombarded daily by a TV network that assumes that black women are not only ugly but also they do not exist unless they take in laundry, scrub lavatories, polish staircases, and drudge around in a nanny's uniform. She is mugged every day by magazines that pressure her into buying European beauty; and the advice columns have such nuggets like 'Understanding is the best thing in the world, therefore be more cheerful when he comes home looking like thunder.' And the only time the Herald mentions her is when she has -- as in 1896/7 -- led an uprising against the State and been safely cheered by the firing squad or when she is caught for the umpteenth time soliciting in Vice Mile (50).

This is perhaps Marechera's strongest feminist statement; coming in 1978 (when the book was published) it certainly ruffled some of the patriarchal 'certainties' of both the colonial and the anti-colonial paradigms, which traditionally marginalize female perspectives.

Following his recollections of Nestar, the narrator again remembers the rape of Anne and the beating of Nestar's son. When he entered Nestar's house, Leslie called him a "munt" and a "fucking stinking nigger" (53). Leslie, who is of mixed race, clearly uses the offending

terms in a power ploy, which backfires, as it turns out. We see from episodes such as this, however, that racism in Rhodesia is not only a case of black versus white. In a manner untypical of nationalist writers, Marechera represents racism as complex, nuanced, and often in its most disturbing form when it is internalized.

The narrator recalls how Philip smashes "the boy into a stain," and then -- finally -- offers the reader a explanation of the stain leitmotif: "Stains! Love or even hate or the desire for revenge are just so many stains on a sheet, on a wall, on a page even. This page. Growing up involves this. And Philip was crunching it into him" (55). In a stunning reversal of the power play, Nestar, not to be outdone, thrashes both Philip and the narrator in her house. In narrating the anecdote, the latter remarks that "[w]e could not get out fast enough," and ridicules his own futile attempt to become a "black hero". Again, this is an illustration of the ironic, self-critical tone of the narrative.

They run into more racism when they enter a coffee shop and an old white man says "Kaffirs at the back. Kaffirs." Philip spits at him and the next recollection we are presented with is one of the narrator being hauled off in handcuffs for interrogation -- on the suspicion of being a "Communist" or a "Terrorist". In this episode we discover that the white perpetrators of oppression have co-opted blacks into oppressing other blacks. A black plain clothes policeman says: "Leave me alone with the fucking cunt for five minutes and he'll talk like never-never" (57). He then tries to beat names (of political activists) out of the narrator. "An eternity later, when he could no longer find any spot on my body to hurt," we are told "the door opened and the white officers came in. They took one look at me and dragged him off" (57). In this episode (and the episode with Leslie), Marechera suggests that the enemy in Rhodesia is not always and necessarily white; black people can also be conduits in the oppression of other blacks.

After this anecdote, we find ourselves with the narrator in Philip's office, perusing Philip's poetry of "discontent, disillusionment and outrage" (58). The two friends examine a newspaper photo of dead and captured guerrillas and they recognize one of them as Edmund, an old school-friend. The narrator recalls how Edmund, whose mother prostituted herself in order to send him to school, was beaten almost to death by Stephen, whom he describes as "a typical African bully in an ordinary African school" (63). After the fight, Edmund just lay in a pool of blood, with his face unrecognizable. The narrator remembers staying away from the bloodbath but later carrying his friend (or what remained of him) in his arms to the clinic. The narrator and Philip find it interesting that it is Edmund, a fan of Gogol, Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Turgenev, Pushkin and Gorky at the mission school and a most unlikely soldier, who has the tenacity in the end to become a guerrilla fighter -- despite his apparent weakness. After the fight, we are told, "Yards of stitches" were used on Edmund. Looking at the picture, the narrator comments that "His scarred face had become more pronounced in its moroseness; its particular features seemed to have been stitched together by a fatalistic self-disgust" (66). The image of the captured Edmund is therefore not one of a romanticized hero.

After the narrator finishes looking at the picture in the newspaper, he returns it to Philip. At this point, their university friends, Doug and Citre, enter, and they go together to Citre's house to smoke dagga and watch a film which Doug has compiled himself. (This is a montage, of the many disparate images of life in the Rhodesia of the 1970s, which will be discussed in the next chapter.) Other University friends, such as Patricia, John, Richter and Ada (Nestar's daughter) join the party.

The narrator remembers then remembers the incident which turned his girlfriend, Patricia, into a mute. Together, they were watching a right-wing demonstration where white

students were calling for racial segregation in the halls of residence. Because they are an interracial couple who have openly transgressed the colour bar, they are attacked: "no one would intervene to try to help us," the narrator comments, "because she and I had dared to flaunt our horns and hooves to our respective racial groups" (72). Patricia has a club-foot and they do not manage to get away. They try to fight back but it is not enough to prevent them from "Becoming a stain. Stains!" after a ruthless assault (73).

The beatings have not yet ended, however. We are exposed to still more senseless violence before the narrative draws to an end. After the narrator parts with Philip, Doug, Citre, Richter, Patricia and Ada, he is stalked and beaten by friends of Nestar's son, Leslie. His screams for help go completely unattended. In trying to escape, he desperately smashes his way into an empty house, which has absolutely nothing in it at all. The experience is so surreal and frightening that he wonders if he is really in there or whether he is "a mere creation of the rooms themselves" (76). This is another element of the existential dimension of the novella. He runs from the empty house like a madman and is haunted forever by the experience.

Fortunately, he is picked up by an ambulance, which drives him to an African hospital. The doctor allows him to view the X-rays on a screen, and the experience is a revelation. He comments that:

There was nothing to my mind, to my head, but a skull that had some of its grinning teeth missing. That broken grin, I have never been able to erase it out of my mind. And the picture of my skull has since blended into the memory of that empty but strangely terrifying house which -- when called -- merely maintained an indistinct silence (77).

The haunted house thus becomes an image which links the narrator's present state of mind to the strange conditions he experiences in the troubled Rhodesia of the 1960s and 1970s:

It was that House of Hunger that first made me discontented with things. I knew my father only as the character who occasionally screwed mother and who paid rent, beat

me up, and was cuckolded on the sly by various persons (77).

Finally, the narrator says, "But the old man was my friend. He simply wandered into the House one day out of the rain, dragging himself on his knobby walking stick. And he stayed." Juxtaposed with the preceding passage about the narrator's father -- who is also referred to earlier on in the novella as "the old man" -- there is some ambiguity as to who this person is, whether he is real or imagined, the inversion of a patriarchal figure or just a homeless tramp. It is odd that we are only introduced to this enigmatic, yet important, character right at the end of the novella; and it is even more odd that his strange parables should be the 'conclusion'.

Thus "House of Hunger" does not have a conventional ending. The old man's series of riddles are more mysterious and ambiguous than anything that has preceded them in the text. However, he ends them with an intelligible warning. Having picked up a package, dropped by someone matching the description of Harry (the police informer), the old man says, "There are photographs of you and your friends and little notes about what you do. Take them ...I think Trouble is knocking impatiently on our door" (82).

As the above summary of the novella indicates, there is an almost complete absence a linear plot, a point which will be elaborated on in my discussion of its formal aspects in the next chapter. On the level of representation, however, "House of Hunger" severely problematizes conflict in the then Rhodesia in terms of the racial binary.

Like Waiting for the Rain and The Non-Believer's Journey, it is extremely sceptical of a golden age and a proud past. Instead the narrator states that:

what was once our parents now rotted and stank beneath the line of the twentieth century. An iron net had been cast over the skies, quietly. Now it, tightening, bit sharply into the tenderer meat of our brains....The underwear of our souls was full of holes and the crotch it hid was infested with lice. We were whores; eaten to the core by the syphilis of the white man's coming. Masturbating onto a Playboy centrefold; screaming abuse at a solitary but defiant racist; baring our arse to the yawning pit-

latrine; writing angry 'black' poetry; screwing pussy as though out to prove that white men do not in reality exist -- this was all contained within the circumvention of our gut-rot (74-5).

Colonialism is pictured here as a venereal disease which has gone untreated and turned into a kind of madness. In the narrator's case, it has destroyed the family unit and the local community so thoroughly that he feels he can only deal with this madness alone. The novella can thus be seen as an indictment of the violence and depravity of an abnormal society, suffering during a particularly bleak phase of Zimbabwe's history. Like the doctor's X-ray, Marechera's self-examination and social commentary penetrate inwardly to the 'skull and bones' of himself and his society.

Nyamfukudza, Mungoshi and Marechera all break with the nationalist tradition by subverting myths, problematizing the notion of a golden age, and examining society in far more complex terms than their 'first generation' predecessors. Nyamfukudza and Marechera both explicitly reject the notion of heroism. Their narrators demonstrate an ironic, self-critical detachment, while Mungoshi's narrator attempts to fuse his perspective with that of the characters in an ostensibly 'impersonal', 'neutral' style. Unlike the nationalist texts that preceded them, all three narratives give voice to the diverse and heterogeneous nature of the Zimbabwean experience. For this reason, they have had a profound impact on the direction of black Zimbabwean literature in English.

2. MARECHERA'S TRANSGRESSION OF TRADITIONAL NARRATIVE FORM³⁵

"I don't think of modernism as some kind of device. It is no more so than realism which is itself a convention, an artificial form. Realism pretends to be able to say the truth about life. I'm not against truth, but it can be sought by different routes. In the nineteenth century realism was very productive as a form, but in this century -- it's impossible."

-- DAMBUDZO MARECHERA, QUOTING ANDREI SINYAVSKY
(1987a: 104).

Whereas the previous chapter addressed Marechera's rejection of nationalism, this chapter discusses his transgression of traditional narrative form, hence suggesting a linkage between the two. While most Zimbabwean literature aspires to realism, Dambudzo Marechera stands almost alone in his emphatic rejection of this tradition. For this he has been roundly condemned by nationalist and realist critics.

This chapter will examine the motivation behind Marechera's rejection of realism. My intention here is to problematize some of the assumptions of realism, not to dismiss realism per se because I recognize that some forms of realism remain progressive, effective and useful. Rather I mean to question the privileged status of traditional realism in dialogues about Zimbabwean literature and the prescriptions that nationalist and realist critics come to offer in dialogues about Zimbabwean writing.

I do not wish to offer a definitive new reading of Marechera but rather to re-open lines of discussion which I believe have been blocked, over the years, by an accumulation of debilitating nationalist criticisms. Thus, while examining Marechera's avant-gardism and -

³⁵ By traditional narrative form I mean that of the conventional realist novel (which displays verisimilitude, linearity, closure, a 'plain' style, etc.). Conventional realism, classic realism, traditional realism, nineteenth-century realism, and 'grand master narratives' are other terms that I use in reference to traditional narrative form.

suggesting possible in-roads for a critical analysis of his narrative strategies, my primary intention is not so much to impose my own particular view of the author as to facilitate dialogue on his significance to Zimbabwean literature and criticism.

An outline of the origins of realism proves necessary as a starting point to this discussion. Holman's Handbook to Literature defines realism as "the movement which arose in the nineteenth century, at least partially in reaction against romanticism[:]...realism can be thought of as the ultimate of middle-class art, and it finds its subjects in bourgeois life and manners" (1972: 433). The realist movement's geographical origin was Europe and classic examples of nineteenth-century realism are the novels of Balzac, Tolstoy and George Eliot. George Eliot makes a classic statement of the intention of the realist writer in Chapter 17 of Adam Bede, which is to provide a "faithful account of men and things." In this novel she also writes that "I am content to tell my simple story without trying to make things seem better than they were; dreading nothing, indeed, but falsity" (1960: 172-3). Thus we see that, from its outset, realism was concerned with telling 'the truth' -- plainly and simply.³⁶

John Hartley defines realism as:

The use of representational devices (signs, conventions, narrative strategies, and so on) to depict or portray a physical, social or moral universe which is held to exist objectively beyond its representation by such means, and which is thus the arbiter of the truth of the representation (1994: 257).

As Hartley's definition indicates, in traditional realism it is assumed that there is a direct connection between the fictional world and the phenomenological world; it is implied that the

³⁶ In Western civilization 'the truth' has been variously defined throughout the ages. In classical times, it was conceived by Plato as something universal and eternal; in the Renaissance, it was conceived by Descartes within the framework of reason and rationality (linked with the principle of cogito ergo sum -- I think therefore I am); in the nineteenth century the perception of 'the truth' shifted with the rise of empiricism (and the verification of fact by observation, experimentation and experience); finally, in the modernist age, 'truth' has been conceived as relative, multiple, and entirely subjective. This is a crude overview. See, for example, Stumpf's Socrates to Sartre: A History of Philosophy (1966).

world of the text is equal to the world outside the text.

Although it originated as a bourgeois art form in the nineteenth century, realism was transformed in the twentieth century so as to accommodate proletarian expressions and agendas. The emergence of socialist realism in the former USSR as a reaction to bourgeois realism after the First Soviet Writer's Congress on Socialist Realism in 1934, serves perhaps as the supreme example of such a transformation. Soviet socialist realism, according to Régine Robin, aims at "the typical depiction of typical characters in typical circumstances"; however, it is "not naturalism, not fragments, not a copy or photograph of reality" (Robin 1992: 58).³⁷ Socialist realism means "to depict reality in its revolutionary development [Zhdanov]" (*ibid.* 59). It "cannot accept antirealist lyricism [or] individualism" and it "places at the heart of its preoccupations the struggle of the proletariat, the new man" and "all the complex relations and mediations of the historical process" (*ibid.*: 59-60).

Socialist realism was promoted as the official literary aesthetic in Zimbabwe, shortly after independence (by exponents such as Emmanuel Ngara and Fay Chung who drew substantially on Soviet socialist realist theory). I will return to this point in the following chapter.

In Africa, traditional realism was transformed into a vehicle for anti-colonial protest writing and can claim many esteemed writers to its fold: Chinua Achebe, for example, is a classic realist, and is regarded by many as one of the progenitors of African literature; Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Alex la Guma, for example, are socialist realists, and are well-known for the anti-colonial and proletarian-based visions and agendas of their writings. Given the

³⁷ Naturalism, which is condemned by socialist realists, and which differs from traditional realism in its focus on the ineluctable forces of nature and its "selection and organization of ...materials accordingly" (Holman 1972:337), is a tradition which can be detected in Mungoshi and Nyamfukudza for example.

historical weight of realism on the continent of Africa and its proven usefulness to nationalist struggles, it is perhaps not surprising that realism still informs so many discussions of African literature.

Realism and Zimbabwean Literature

According to Kahari, the history of realism in black Zimbabwean fiction dates back to 1956 when Solomon Mutswairo first published Feso. Kahari sees Feso as a milestone for indigenous Zimbabwean literature in its:

transformation of the traditional folktales, myths and legends, which have an element of fantasy in them, into the Western-type novel form which aims at realism. The oral art was transformed into the written form -- a process which recognizes written art as somehow being an improvement upon the old spoken narratives. The traditional storyteller, the 'sarungano', told his tales well but Mutswairo, in taking advantage of the latter's techniques and incorporating them into English nineteenth-century narrative styles, did better. Since then Bernard Chidzero, Patrick Chakaipa and Paul Chidyausiku have improved upon Mutswairo, and Charles Mungoshi and Thompson Tsodzo have excelled all their predecessors (Kahari 1982: 85).

Although Kahari refers primarily to the development of the Shona novel, his observations apply similarly to black writing in English. Some of the above-mentioned writers wrote in both languages while others, such as Samkange, Vambe, Katiyo, and Chinodya, have to a great extent used the traditional western-type realistic novel as a model for their writings in English.

Nineteenth-century English literary styles have had a strong impact on most black Zimbabwean writers, as Kahari states. This is corroborated by Veit-Wild in her research. She states that from its inception in the 1950s:

The Literature Bureau ...organised writers' workshops to teach writing skills. Here, just as in the written authors' guides, European mentors instructed aspiring African writers in the art of writing a novel, a short story or poetry following conventional British models of writing from 19th century Europe. These models have since served

critics such as George Kahari in their assessment of vernacular writings. (Veit-Wild 1993: 73).

As Veit-Wild suggests, the grand master narrative (of nineteenth-century Britain) was imparted by the colonial 'masters' to their African students in an pedagogically authoritative manner; and the master narrative itself retains this didactic quality in Zimbabwean literature and criticism today.

In discussions of Zimbabwean literature, traditional realism serves as the predominant model of assessment for contemporary writing. Some of its features are outlined by Mbulelo Mzamane in his article, "Realism and the African Novel", which in fact reproduces a realist 'checklist' for the evaluation of Shimmer Chinodya's Harvest of Thorns. He states that:

The occurrences realists tend to describe are the common, average, and everyday or contemporary experiences. However, realists also tend to be selective in their choice of material, focusing upon what seems real to their largely middle class readers.

...

Characters have to be ordinary, average, contemporary people rather than remote, exceptional extremists who form the central subjects of much earlier literature.

...

Finally, like the plot, the language of realism is equally natural or at least gives the impression of being so. Not only are characters made to speak in the intonation of everyday life but the authors strive to make themselves as invisible as possible, through merging their point of view with that of the characters, thus becoming neutral reflectors of impersonal reality (Mzamane 1992: 94).³⁸

Mzamane uses the above checklist as a measurement of a novel's success or failure.

Chinodya's writing is deficient, argues Mzamane, in that he "departs from the norm" with disruptive "authorial intrusion[s]"; also his "dialogue ...is stiff, formal, and in some parts unnatural" (94); in a number of instances, says Mzamane, it "simply does not ring true to life" (95).

³⁸ Mungoshi's Waiting for the Rain is an excellent example of many of the above features (but it is a peasant/working class perspective).

Transgressing the Realist Checklist

Ngara, Zimunya, Kahari, Zinyemba, and other Zimbabwean critics, have also privileged traditional realist criteria as a standard for assessing literary works. The result, unfortunately, has been to marginalize and debilitate the work of writers working outside the framework of realism -- writers such as Marechera. In Teaching Literature in Africa, Ngara emphasizes the importance of mimesis, which he defines as the "imitation of life [which] reflects social reality" (1984: 36). He does not advocate the teaching of non-realist fiction in schools at all, other than to state that:

Fantasy fiction ...is not based on real life. Thus, while Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart is a realistic novel, Tutuola's The Palm-Wine Drunkard [sic.] is a romance which belongs to fantasy fiction (ibid.).

The notion that Tutuola's text is "not based on real life" and therefore not relevant to "social reality" is one which I oppose. Unfortunately, a debate about Tutuola's fiction is not possible here. However, the point I raise is that non-realist fiction (such as that of Marechera and Tutuola) has been marginalized and denigrated by the likes of Ngara because it does not fit 'the canon' of Zimbabwean literature. A dominant view in the literary establishment is that these writers are not worthy of serious discussion. This is a view which I will contest when I discuss Marechera's Mindblast (which might also be described, in parts, as "fantasy fiction") in the next chapter.

In arguing the case for critical and socialist realism, Ngara gives the criteria (in the same manner as Frederick Engels) as follows:

first, telling the story truthfully and plainly, without "artificial complications and adornments"; secondly, presenting typical characters; and thirdly, representing these characters under typical circumstances (Ngara 1985a: 14).

Dambudzo Marechera is conspicuously absent from Ngara's assessment of African literature

in Art and Ideology in the African Novel (1985) and the reason is quite obvious: he renounces all three of these criteria. He is also absent from Ngara's new book, published in 1996, a collection of critical essays entitled New Writing From Southern Africa: Authors Who Have Become Prominent Since 1980.³⁹

Whereas, according to Ngara, "The plots of realist and socialist novels which are modelled on the classical conception of realism are linear and chronological" (1985: 109), Marechera's "plots" are neither linear nor chronological. His main character in "House of Hunger", for example, is an eccentric and atypical anti-hero, who is struggling to retain his sanity amidst extra-ordinary circumstances. Marechera's transgression of the critical and socialist realist criteria, as outlined by Ngara, could not be more complete. Yet the harrowing stories in The House of Hunger have struck a chord with many readers and therefore certainly cannot be considered "irrelevant" or untrue to a certain -- concrete and social -- experience, especially given the fact that the material is strongly autobiographical and deeply rooted in a specific historic context.

As the former Minister of Education in Zimbabwe, Dzingai Mutumbuka, once stated:

It is very clear that Marechera's work has contributed in no small measure to a wider appreciation of aspects of Zimbabwean history and to a greater understanding of the psychological pressures experienced by Zimbabweans during the ruthlessly oppressive colonial period.

His work gives illuminating insights into the struggle for sanity in a situation full of contradictions, where there was a severe dislocation of moral and social norms which, for the young academic, resulted in the fragmentation of family and community life and of ideals and visions, or to quote T.S. Eliot in The Wasteland, "A heap of broken images" (quoted in Veit-Wild 1992: 341).

³⁹ Whereas other Zimbabwean writers such as Tsitsi Dangarembga, Shimmer Chinodya, Chenjerai Hove and Musaemura Zimunya are included in the book, again there is no mention of Dambudzo Marechera whatsoever: this despite the landmark publication of Mindblast in 1984; Marechera's near cult status in Zimbabwe itself; an international conference held on the author in Harare in 1995; and a surge of critical interest in the author both in Africa and abroad following the posthumous publication of most of his work and Dambudzo Marechera: A Sourcebook on his Life and Work (edited by Flora Veit-Wild).

It is significant that Marechera is compared with the great modernist T.S. Eliot; and that Mutumbuka sees the "heap of broken images" in Marechera's work as matching a certain experience that arises out of real, material concrete conditions (which find their origins in colonialism). In this respect he differs markedly from Zimunya (1982), who appears to see the fragmentation in The House of Hunger as some sort of cultural import which is to be regarded with suspicion.

The absence of a chronological sequence in Marechera's narratives is explained, in his own words, by the fact that for him:

history is not a well-ordered path leading from cause to effect[:]...it is rather a psychological condition in which our senses are constantly bombarded by unresolved or provisional images (1987b: 111).

This represents a sharp break with conventional realist concepts of time and history; and it echoes the modernist notion of "historical discontinuity, a sense of alienation, of loss, and of despair," and the belief "that we create the world in the act of perceiving it" (Holman 1972: 325). In a manner typical of modernism, Marechera foregrounds the subconscious, and the inner world of the mind. The mind and the world he depicts are in chaos: hence a neat, chronological presentation of events proves impossible for Marechera.

As my summary of the novella in the previous chapter indicates, there is no logical sequentiality or unity of plot in "House of Hunger". Rather, it is written in the stream of consciousness mode. For the most part, the 'plot' happens inside the narrator's head: in the strange setting which he terms 'the House of Hunger', we follow the mental and emotional processes of a dislocated individual. Typically, in stream of consciousness writing, as in "House of Hunger", "a pattern of free psychological association rather than of logical relationship determines the shifting sequence of thought and feeling" (Holman 1972: 512).

While time shifts back and forth almost randomly in the novella, the psychological

condition of the narrator becomes central to the text. Spaciality therefore relocates from the outer physical world to the inner psychological world; the narrator in fact says that "[t]he House has now become my mind, and I do not like the way it is rattling" (Marechera 1978: 13).

This is of the essence of the style of expressionism, which Marechera experiments with as an element of his avant-gardism. The expressionist movement is defined by Holman as a "revolt against realism, [a] distortion of the objects of the outer world, and [a] violent dislocation of time sequence and spatial logic in an effort accurately but not representationally to show the world as it appears to a troubled mind" (1972: 215). A poetic classic of this is T.S. Eliot's The Wasteland, which Mutumbuka correctly associates with much of Marechera's work.

Expressionism is of course a dramatic departure from the Aristotelian concept of mimesis (important to traditional realism) which stresses imitation and emphasizes "the accurate portrayal of the palpable actual" (*ibid.* 268). It is not true, however, to assert that expressionism is merely 'art for art's sake', without any basis in a tangible social context. When expressionism emerged in German theatre in the 1920s, it was in direct response to "the growing size and mechanism of society," as well as the Marxist concept "that the individual was being lost in a mass society" (*ibid.* 215). Similarly, in Zimbabwe (or the then Rhodesia), Marechera's expressionism was in response to an extra-ordinary set of social, historical and political circumstances.

Nationalist Criticisms of Marechera's Avant-Gardism

It was for his departure from traditional realism, and his avant-garde style, that

Marechera was sharply censured by many African-Nationalist critics. As stated in the introduction, Zimunya declares that:

[In Marechera] ...masochistic artistic engagement overwhelms the social and moral intent. Pleading for admission into the neurotic twentieth century is the worst way to go about revitalizing a culture depleted by the self-same Europe....The "eclectic babble" does not, as a rule, enrich one's own culture, and it certainly chokes the artist himself! (1982: 128).

Zimunya gives the 'diagnosis' of Marechera's "neurotic" sensibility and "eclectic babble" as an affliction which is uniquely European. Suffice it to say, this 'diagnosis' is problematic, as it implies that trauma and madness have no place, presence, or truth on the continent of Africa, but belong only to the "neurotic twentieth century" and to "Europe". Zimunya thus remarks that "[t]he artist curries favours and succumbs to the European temptation in a most slatternly exhibition" and he expresses his hope that with time "the naïveté and narcissism will wither and the African will become less European" (1982: 126).⁴⁰

A hard-hitting moralistic tone and an African-Nationalist agenda are blatantly obvious in Zimunya's language: the effect is to brand Marechera's avant-gardism as a 'prohibited zone' for the serious Zimbabwean writer. Zimunya's comments suggest that by turning his back on conventional (realist) African forms, Marechera also turns his back on Africa. The interpretation of Marechera's break with convention as aberrant and "unAfrican" is problematic, to say the least, but it is echoed in numerous other critiques of The House of Hunger, endemic particularly in the late 1970s and early 1980s. These criticisms, although now somewhat dated, remain significant in a study of Marechera in that they constitute the

⁴⁰ A significant recent development is that Musa Zimunya has himself been chastised by a fellow cultural nationalist, Solomon Mutswairo. Although, in his review, Mutswairo commends Zimunya's poetry very highly, he nevertheless states that "his very craftsmanship alienates him from the ordinary Zimbabwean. His use of free verse is very different from Shona poetry," and that it is "too Anglo-centred" for the "average Zimbabwean to understand" (1996: 119).

restrictive and prescriptive discourse, against which he reacted.

Juliet Okonkwo, for example, also condemns Marechera's unorthodox style as "alien to Africa", and states that:

Marechera has in these stories grafted a decadent avant-garde European attitude and style to experiences that emanate from Africa and Africans....Africa, in which years of expectation are beginning to flower into full promise, cannot afford the luxury of such distorted and self-destructive "sophistication" from her writers (1981: 91).

Okonkwo's blueprint for the African writer clearly does not include writing styles other than realism.

Mbulelo Mzamane likewise reprimands Marechera for his deviance from traditional narrative form, stating that:

[H]is literary analogies owe very little to the African tradition, and rob his work of a Zimbabwean authenticity. Indeed there is a sense in which Marechera could try to write within the "African tradition" -- and that does not necessarily imply churning out conformist or imitational work (1983: 213).

Although Mzamane is not averse to some innovation in narrative style (so long as it remains a transformation of traditional realism), he nevertheless maintains that there is a set of principles and creative guidelines for the Zimbabwean writer to adhere to.

Many African nationalist critics appear to view the transgression of these guidelines as tantamount to a 'betrayal'. Ranga Zinyemba (who also strongly disapproves of Nyamfukudza's deviations) states that:

If Nyamfukudza is a descendant of the British and European Decadence, Marechera is his cousin, for indeed, as in the case of Conrad's Kurtz, all Europe contributed to the making of Marechera (1983: 10).⁴¹

Marechera's 'aberrance' is thus attributed to 'European' influences. This criticism is

⁴¹ In a more recent piece of criticism, Zinyemba (1995) has modified his stance substantially. However, he remains disappointed with Marechera's 'individualism' and expresses a general apprehensiveness about modernist trends in contemporary African writing. Significantly, Marechera's anti-realist, anti-establishment "Skin of Time: Plays by Buddy" (1984) are excluded from Zinyemba's analysis of Zimbabwean drama (1986).

particularly unfair, given the fact that Marechera actively challenged Conrad's assumptions and stereotypes in Heart of Darkness.⁴²

Dan Wylie's more recent critique of The House of Hunger is also disparaging. Wylie states that "Dambudzo Marechera can project himself as almost entirely 'Westernized'" (1991: 41); that he "pays almost no homage to his native orature" (49); and that he is "open to Chinweizu's charge of 'devotion to artificial complexity and gratuitous obscurity' derived from 'euromodernists'" (51). In Wylie's view, "Marechera's story seems to resonate amongst the attitudes and idioms of the European literati, to insist on its own contemporaneity" (60). Marechera is also criticized for his "self-absorbed angst and Freudian intensity" which Wylie thinks faces "determinedly West-wards" (48). The implication of Wylie's criticisms is that Marechera wrote outside 'the African tradition'. While Wylie daubs Marechera with the 'unAfrican' label, he does not state how he arrives at his criteria for 'authentic', 'traditional' Zimbabwean writing.⁴³

"[The] African tradition" and "a Zimbabwean authenticity", as expressed by Mzamane, and implied by all of the aforementioned, are problematic terms. The problem is primarily one of definition. Who has the right to define what "the African tradition" and "a Zimbabwean authenticity" are? -- and on what basis do the above critics claim their right to exclude other persons and other view-points from their own holistic concept of an 'authentic' Zimbabwean culture? What is 'authentic' and what is not? As Gaylard (1993b) asks, do Wylie and Mzamane have the right to pick

⁴² Chunya Achebe's condemnations of Joseph Conrad as "a bloody racist," and Heart of Darkness as "an offensive and totally deplorable book" (Joffe 1987: 7) are well-known in discussions of African literature.

⁴³ Gaylard rebuts both Mzamane's and Wylie's arguments brilliantly in "Dambudzo Marechera and Nationalist Criticism" (1993), which informs my own analysis here.

and choose what belongs to Zimbabwean culture and what does not? Does anyone for that matter? How do the commissars of culture go about their selection process and who do they consult before doing it? The African nationalist notion of a 'pure', static, homogeneous, indigenous culture (untainted by 'foreign' influences) is one that is contentious, especially in regard to Zimbabwe.

Firstly, it is not strictly true, at all, to say that Marechera wrote outside "the 'African tradition'" -- as Mzamane argues. A growing body of evidence shows precisely the opposite. Grant Lilford's research identifies "Marechera's unconscious reliance upon African traditional narrative, particularly the Shona rungano" (1996: Phd dissertation abstract).⁴⁴ Lilford goes on to demonstrate how "Marechera uses Shona orature as a mythic pre-text for the more explicitly allegorical sections of his House of Hunger" (in the short story "Protista" for example) (*ibid.*).

Gaylard argues that "a close analysis of [Marechera's] writing reveals his inability and unwillingness to 'transcend' Zimbabwean realities entirely" (1993: iv). Rather than present this as negative, Gaylard's thesis argues for:

the social and political rootedness of even his most seemingly abstract and surreal writing and shows how [Marechera] attempted to deconstruct the theoretical dichotomy between abstraction and socially committed writing (*ibid.*).

Moreover, his work always addressed a specific, concrete reality.

Another point in regard to African nationalist criticisms is that it is a fallacy to assume that Marechera's writing is 'Europeanized' while nationalist-realist writing is not. African nationalist critics often fail to realize the irony that their own discourse is itself implicated in the "European influences" which it claims to disavow. Partha Chatterjee, quoting

⁴⁴ The rungano is a traditional Shona oral tale. See translation of Jane Chifamba's rungano in Lilford (1996).

Kedourie, states that:

"Nationalism is a doctrine invented in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century." Every part of the nationalist doctrine ...can be taken apart and shown to have been derived from some species of European thought. It is totally alien to the non-European world: "it is neither something indigenous to these areas nor an irresistible tendency of the human spirit everywhere, but rather an importation from Europe clearly branded with the mark of its origin." For the non-European world, in short, nationalist thought does not constitute an autonomous discourse (Chatterjee 1986: 8).

The failure of nationalist critics to acknowledge this point constitutes a major blindspot.

Hence, the notion of a 'pure' and homogeneous African culture is seen more and more to be a fallacy, and so too is the concept of a 'pure' African aesthetic of literature. Certainly, this is true in the case of Zimbabwe, where there has always been an interchange of African and European forms and themes in the development of a literature. Veit-Wild's social-history of Zimbabwean writing (1993) draws attention to a process of "acculturation" which she claims has affected most, if not all, of Zimbabwe's black authors.⁴⁵

As demonstrated already in the example of Mutswairo's transformation of orature into realistic writing, we can conclude the fact that syncretism of literary themes and styles in pre-independence Zimbabwe was common and unavoidable.

In a comprehensive survey conducted by Veit-Wild, Charles Dickens is ranked by Zimbabwean writers as the third most favourite author during school years. William

⁴⁵ The word "acculturation", which means the adoption or adaption of another culture, implies a one-way process. This is quite controversial and probably not altogether accurate because it does not sufficiently take into account questions of agency and the interaction of cultures. Veit-Wild's observation that there was a very significant appropriation of western cultural values by blacks in Rhodesia is valid and relevant. However, there is a danger, as Ania Loomba states, in forgetting that "English literature, like British education in general, was not inserted upon a colonial vacuum but entered into a lively interaction with indigenous educational practices and subjects, which both implicates them in the legitimization of the English text, and registers the subversive potential of the encounter" (Loomba 1993: 311). (Loomba's reference is to India, but her comments, I think, apply to other former colonies as well.)

Shakespeare ties for first place with Patrick Chakaipa⁴⁶, and Rider Haggard is listed as ninth favourite (1993: 348). John Buchan was also mentioned as a favourite by a few of those canvassed and Veit-Wild notes that Prester John was a prescribed text at most primary schools.

The extent to which the grand master narrative apparently took root in the Zimbabwean literary canon is striking. As Veit-Wild notes:

Echoes of Haggard's heroic, archaic style can be discerned in the historical novels by Mutswairo and Stanlake Samkange... and Buchan's perception of the African as a passive 'native' have been a literary legacy in the adventure and romance stories of Zimbabwean writers in the vernaculars (63).

While Rider Haggard and John Buchan may have left their mark on two of Zimbabwe's early writers:

The 'Survey' indicates that the [average] Zimbabwean student, impressed by the stylistic and dramatic strength of the most widely read authors, Shakespeare and Dickens, tended to adopt the value systems conveyed in their texts (221).

Some writers attempted to compensate for the colonial bias in their curriculum by exposing themselves to African authors such as Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiong'o, but this had to be done as an extra-curricular activity (Veit-Wild 1993: 221).

The European classical canon had a profound impact on African writing and an assimilation of 'European' culture was inevitable. No-one was 'immune' to it and it cannot be erased. My point here is to problematize the concept of a 'pure African' aesthetic of literature, supposedly untainted by the 'modern' and 'corrupting' influences of Europe. The notion of a 'pure', 'untainted', 'African' set of influences in literature is completely mythical. Certainly, in the case of Zimbabwe, it is not plausible. Yet this seems to be an underlying

⁴⁶ Chakaipa wrote in Shona and combined moralistic Christian messages with traditional African fables. His overwhelming popularity with surveyed writers shows the degree to which Judaeo-Christian (missionary) values impacted on early black Zimbabwean writing (and vice-versa, of course).

premise in the criticisms of Zimunya, Okonkwo, Mzamane, Wylie, Zinyemba and other nationalist critics.

After commenting on what he perceives to be the 'decadent' writing of Marechera and Nyamfukudza, Zinyemba states that: "The question that should be asked at this point is: with such a neurosis and so much foreign matter at its base, in what direction is Zimbabwean literature developing? (1983: 10; emphasis added). My reply is that there has always been "foreign matter" in Zimbabwean literature, just as there has always been "foreign matter" in most world literatures. Why must this be seen as a necessarily a negative attribute? Also, why is this criticism only applied in selective circumstances? Nationalist/realist writing is also 'Europeanized'. In Zimbabwe, where there has always been a mixture of cultures, and there has always been an ongoing process of cultural syncretism; all Zimbabwean literature has always been implicated in this. It would be next to impossible to completely extricate oneself from global influences and suddenly write 'pure' indigenous literature -- especially in view of the colonial legacy.

Critics who prescribe "a Zimbabwean authenticity", in the manner of Mzamane, have not defined what they mean by these terms. Moreover, they seem strangely oblivious to the particular social and historical context which has shaped the sensibilities, and therefore the writing, of most Zimbabwean authors. Almost all black Zimbabwean writers have been educated in a system steeped in colonial and Eurocentric values. Those were just the circumstances. It seems therefore ridiculous to single Marechera out as 'aberrant' for imbibing European influences.

Open-endedness Versus Closure

In examining the criticisms against Marechera, it is interesting to note that the

'unfinished' quality of his work has been highlighted as a flaw by nationalist critics. Zimunya criticizes Marechera for the ending of "House of Hunger", where the mysterious old man wanders in from nowhere to tell "stories that were oblique, rambling and fragmentary" (Marechera 1978: 79). He points out that:

[E]verything suggests that he ought to return to Julia after the X-Ray paragraph (p.77). Instead we have an interminable ramble which manages to derail the story. There is no technical link between the last fragment of the novella beginning "It was the House of Hunger.." (p.77) and the rest of the story (Zimunya 1982: 118).

It is true that the narrator does not return to Julia with whom he has been engaged in conversation for a good part of the narrative; and it does seem, as Zimunya points out, that the novella is therefore technically 'unfinished' -- but not for the negative reasons that Zimunya suggests. Rather, this is a typical feature of Marechera's work and one which is so pervasive that it can be viewed as quite intentional. The intention can also be seen as positive in that open-endedness tends to produce an active, critical reader -- a point which I will return to shortly.

Once again, Zimunya's reference to a realist checklist in this instance, with regard to closure, is noted. Closure is a hallmark of the classic realist novel. Typically, the classic realist novel is a linear one, with a clear beginning, a middle and a neat ending. As Catherine Belsey states:

the movement of classic realist narrative towards closure ensures the reinstatement of order, sometimes a new order, sometimes the old restored, but always intelligible because familiar. Decisive choices are made, identity is established, the murderer is exposed, or marriage generates a new set of subject-positions. The epilogue common in nineteenth-century novels describes the new order, now understood to be static, and thus isolates and emphasizes a structural feature which is left implicit in other realist texts (1980: 75).

Belsey points to the writer's intention in relation to readership: the reader is assured that no chaos or danger lie ahead in the reading of the narrative.

With its deliberate open-endedness, "House of Hunger" explodes the whole notion of

closure: the 'ending' is disruptive rather than conclusive because the eccentric old man's stories raise more questions than they provide answers. One of his parables, in fact, can be seen as drawing the reader's attention to the futility of attempting closure:

"A writer drew a circle in the sand and stepping into it said 'This is my novel,' but the circle, leaping, cut him clean through," he said (Marechera 1978: 81).

One might infer from this that Marechera viewed any attempt to present a novel as 'complete' as destined to failure -- and as creative suicide for the writer.

The House of Hunger thus flies in the face of a nationalist aesthetic because, as Abdulrazak Gurnah states:

The desire for a unified narrative, which is a yearning for lost wholeness in historical and cultural experience, is also a desire for order. It imposes and expresses an imperative which is simultaneously self-defining and self-validating (1995: 110).

With open-endedness and deliberate discontinuity, Marechera ruptures the unified narrative and destabilizes that nationalist "desire for order." For Marechera, both the colonial and the nationalist imperatives were repressive, in that they both imposed a form of authority that he found unacceptable and incompatible with his own world view. For the nationalist and the realist, the unity of traditional narrative form is a means of imposing a certain order. For Marechera transgressing the grand master narrative was a means of dismantling its prescriptive and hegemonic world view. It is hardly surprisingly, therefore, why he has been sharply censured by nationalist critics, mostly on the grounds of his aesthetic. The nationalist critic, like the realist critic, desires closure -- and (thereby) agreement with the prevailing rulers of the day.

Closure is a means of sealing off and validating the social and moral universe that the grand master narrative purports to represent. Conventionally, the device signals to the reader that the story is now at an end and he or she is to accept the conclusions and 'truth' of the text without further questioning. Conversely, in the absence of closure, questions remain

unanswered and the reader is not presented with any absolute or authoritative 'truth' -- and is sometimes actually invited to doubt the validity of what he or she is presented with. We see this very clearly in "House of Hunger", where in fact the old man specifically states: "Don't take these things too seriously. They are just the ramblings of a tramp" (1978: 82). (The tramp-figure, an outsider in society, symbolizes transgression.) A sceptical and critical reader is produced by such a text; and the strategy is a deliberate one. It subverts the notion of one universal and rational truth and it suggests (as much modernist writing does) that 'the truth' is subjective, relative, and multiple.

Zimunya's praise for the structure of Wilson Katiyo's nationalist text, A Son of the Soil, exemplifies the nationalist desire for linearity, closure, and a singular, objective notion of 'the truth'. Katiyo's novel consists of three books: "In the Beginning", "Discovering Time", and "Closing the Circle". The origin of the struggle for liberation is pinpointed in "In the Beginning". "Discovering the Time" deals with Alexio, the protagonist's journey of discovery. In Book Three, "Closing the Circle", a resolution occurs. Alexio resolves to join the armed struggle; he participates in a new offensive against the Rhodesians at the same time that his lover, Joyce, gives birth to their first child. As Zimunya says, approvingly, "it's as if we are back to The Year of the Uprising, Chindunduma" (1982: 95). Zimunya indicates a cycle of continuity which instills a sense of restored unity emphasized by this closure. He states that "This is the climax of Katiyo's achievement" (95).

The desire for closure and order, as indicated by Zimunya's critiques and Katiyo's novel, highlights another incongruity and irony in African nationalist thought, conveniently not raised by its adherents. This is the point that closure and linearity are not concepts which are indigenous to Africa, but cultural imports that arrived with colonialism. In traditional pre-colonial African societies time and space were conceived as spiral and fluid concepts: they

were not considered to be rigid and linear that modern western (capitalist) culture now defines them as.⁴⁷

Fixed lines, borders and boundaries arrived with the colonizer whose project, ostensibly, was to bring 'Enlightenment'⁴⁸ to the 'dark continent'. With reason and logic (the tools of nineteenth-century imperialism), Europeans condemned and subordinated Africans, seeing them as 'savages' in need of 'civilization'. The Enlightenment, through its project of colonization, precipitated in a violent re-ordering of the continent. Violence was performed on the minds as well as the bodies of Africans. It was 'justified' by the philosophy of the Enlightenment, the explorers and the missionaries; and it frequently took the form of the Bible and the bullet.

Hence, an important rationale for Marechera's rejection of the nineteenth-century realist novel was his desire to completely dissociate himself from the ideology of the Enlightenment -- which is integral to master realist narratives. As he comments in his anti-realist novel, The Black Insider, 'reason' and 'logic' were used by European missionaries and teachers to colonize the minds of Africans in a destructive manner:

Thoughts that think in straight lines cannot see round corners; the missionaries and teachers saw to that. We were taught to want to go where a straight line goes and to look back over the shoulder to where the straight lines come from.

Logic is an attitude. It freezes us forever in the icy tumult of all the cursed attitudes they stuffed into us.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ See Kagame (1976), especially p. 99. The linear concept of time developed in Europe at roughly the same time that there was a shift from feudalism to capitalism, at the beginning of the modern age.

⁴⁸ The Enlightenment was characterized by "a trust in man's reason ...[and] the belief that the application of reason was rapidly dissipating the darkness and superstition, prejudice and barbarity (Abrams 1988: 50). This belief was very significant in the colonial project.

⁴⁹ V.Y. Mudimbe notes that "the missionary's objectives had to be co-extensive with his country's political and cultural perspectives on colonization, as well as with the Christian view of his mission." Quoting A.J. Christopher, he states that "missionaries, possibly more

To emphasize his point, he continues that:

Straightforward things leave no room for the imagination; they allow no other perspectives. The tyranny of straightforward things is more oppressive and more degrading than such idle monstrosities as life and death, apartheid and beerdrinking, a stamp album and Jew-baiting (1990: 37).

"Straightforward things" (meaning the oppressive, authoritative concepts of the Enlightenment, such as logic, linearity, and closure), which justified the violation of Africa and Africans, are essential elements in nineteenth-century realism. Marechera's abandonment of linearity and "rationality" in his narratives does not demonstrate a "naïveté" as some have suggested, but rather an acute awareness of the enduring colonial legacy in some of its more subtle, insidious, and long-lasting manifestations. The implication is that Marechera objects to and rejects the internalized oppression fostered by colonialism in the black mind -- one that allowed the authority of the Enlightenment to define and identify the African as inferior.

In view of the above, what Kahari has described as a "progressive development towards realism," in Zimbabwean fiction is not necessarily "progressive" in my opinion at all. The "strong link with the English type of realism," (1982: 108) which Kahari observes, raises issues for concern rather than cause for celebration and complacency. Kahari's remark that "With such sure foundations the Shona novel will become a vital part of the new Zimbabwean nation" (110) is problematic because it reveals an unquestioning faith in a form which has frequently marginalized and disadvantaged non-European perspectives. Nineteenth-century English realism is a model that is particularly fraught with problematic constructs and assumptions.

Although most critics of Zimbabwean literature continue to privilege realism in their

than members of other branches of the colonial establishment, aimed at the radical transformation of indigenous society....They therefore sought, whether consciously or unconsciously, the destruction of pre-colonial societies and their replacement by new Christian societies in the image of Europe" (Mudimbe 1988: 47).

dialogues (thereby marginalizing Marechera), one is entirely justified in feeling sceptical about a form and a method of thinking that presented knowledge in an authoritative and centralized manner. Master narratives claim an ownership of the truth, and in this sense they assert a certain power. Marechera was sceptical of all claims to absolute authority because all too often they result in some form of oppression; and they frequently conceal, rather than reveal, the truth.⁵⁰

A tacit assumption, evident in many discussions of Zimbabwean literature, is that traditional realism is an ideologically neutral and transparent form. It is not. As Catherine Belsey argues:

the form of the classic realist text acts in conjunction with the expressive theory and with ideology by interpellating the reader as subject. The reader is invited to perceive and judge the 'truth' of the text, the coherent, non-contradictory interpretation of the world as it is perceived by an author whose autonomy is the source and evidence of the truth of the interpretation. This model of intersubjective communication, of shared understanding of a text which re-presents the world, is the guarantee not only of the truth of the text but of the reader's existence as an autonomous and knowing subject in a world of knowing subjects. In this way classic realism constitutes an ideological practice in addressing itself to readers as subjects, interpellating them in order that they freely accept their subjectivity and their subjection (1980: 68-9).

This is, at least, how texts are conventionally read, not how they must always necessarily be read, as Belsey points out. The writing or reading of classic realism is indeed an ideological practice which reinforces or rejects the status quo of the ruling order in the subjects it produces at the end of reading.

The form of the traditional realist narrative is anything but neutral and transparent. As Hayden White (1984) argues, both the form and content of a narrative are always

⁵⁰ The implication is that he therefore rejects that form of Eurocentric cultural imperialism which, ironically, nationalists in 'post-colonial' Zimbabwe embrace. One wonders then if nationalism equates to post-colonialism -- or if indeed the whole concept of post-colonialism is a fallacy in light of Marechera views. The ironies are striking.

complicit in an ideological project. White states that narrative is an "apparatus for the production of meaning." It is not simply a "vehicle for the transmission of information about an extrinsic referent.'" The form of a text does not merely convey meaning: it is part and parcel of the meaning and the "'content' of the discourse consists as much of its form as it does of whatever information might be extracted from a reading of it" (White 1984: 19).

The nationalist critic's use of classic realism as a model and a checklist is also an indication of the writer's or critic's ideological agenda. Similarly, Marechera's revolt against conventional realism parallels his rejection of a particular ideology, which he found to be oppressive and too co-operative with the ruling hegemony.

The Novel and the Nation-State

Nationalist criticisms of Marechera highlight some of the connections between the conventional novel form and the ideology of the nation-state, which it is necessary to pursue in order to uncover some of the intentions behind the author's transgressive narrative strategies. Literature has, historically, played a significant role in defining the nation. As Timothy Brennan argues:

The rise of the modern nation-state in Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is inseparable from the forms and subjects of imaginative literature ...[L]iterature participated in the formation of nations through the creation of 'national print media' -- the newspaper and the novel[;]...it was especially the novel that was crucial in defining the nation as an 'imagined community' (1990: 48).

Brennan argues that the novel "allowed people to imagine the special community that was the nation" (49). His reference is to Benedict Anderson's definition of the nation which is:

an imagined political community -- and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.

It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the

minds of each lives the image of their communion (Anderson 1991: 6).

Anderson also states that:

[The nation-state] is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may be prevailing each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as to die for such limited imaginings (7).

Marechera chose to remain an outsider to the 'national community' because he saw it as an illusion which concealed inequalities, allowed for the existence of arbitrary forms of power and authority, and diminished personal freedom.

The idea of a "deep horizontal comradeship" was instilled by the nationalist novels of pre-independence Zimbabwe which were written against white Rhodesian settler rule (Feso and Maondera: A Soldier for Zimbabwe by Mutswairo, for example). This literature allowed a certain social stratum in Zimbabwe, in Brennan's words, "to imagine the special community that was the nation" (1990: 49) -- even prior to the actual birth of the new nation of Zimbabwe. After independence this literature legitimated the new nation-state by continuing to validate the notion of a broad "horizontal comradeship". Mutswairo, for example, wrote another nationalist text, Chaminuka: Prophet of Zimbabwe (1983), was active in promoting the 'national culture', and wrote the lyrics for the new national anthem (Veit-Wild 1993a: 139).

At the same time, critical and irreverent literature could be banned by the draconian Censorship Board -- a legacy of the old Rhodesian era (this was the fate of Black Sunlight, for example) or the government itself could proscribe certain forms of art. For example, consent was withdrawn for the staging of Musengezi's anti-neocolonial satire, The Honourable M.P., at the International Book Fair in 1983. Also, Mhlanga's play, Workshop Negative

(1986), with a similar theme, was prevented from touring neighbouring countries.⁵¹ The new establishment tried to justify censorship as part of its programme of 'constructive' nation-building. Politicians and cultural commissars paid lip service to the idea of free speech, yet were adamant that this should always be consonant with the ideals of nation-making.

Thus, Ngara and Chung, both leading establishment figures⁵², for example, discourage what they describe as:

destructive and misdirected criticism, for that sort of freedom of speech can wreck what policy-makers are trying to achieve. But genuine and constructive criticism based on a patriotic desire to see Zimbabwe succeed and on a true understanding of the socialist path to development which the Government has chosen, should be accommodated (1985b: 124; emphasis added).

Ngara and Chung, like leading political figures in Zimbabwe, encourage 'free speech' as long as it is "constructive", "patriotic" and validates the goals which "the Government has chosen" (*ibid.*). This is quite clearly just another form of censorship. Surely speech is either free or it is not: such conditions make a mockery of the very concept. 'Conditional' free speech is a very strange notion indeed!

Marechera of course detested the idea of 'constructive', 'patriotic', 'nation-building' - - and for very good reasons. These concepts are rooted in the problematic nineteenth-century ideals of 'the grand civil society', national pride, and patriotic duty. This comes along with the price of accepting some form of censorship. In The Black Insider he commented that

⁵¹ See Veit-Wild (1993a: 307-8).

⁵² Ngara and Chung's comments can be considered representative of official thinking in Zimbabwe in that their book, Socialism, Education and Development: A Challenge to Zimbabwe, was heartily appraised and officially endorsed by Dr the Hon. Cde. H.S.M. Ushewokunze, M.P., Secretary for the Commissariat and Culture -- ZANU (PF). See foreword. Moreover, Professor Ngara was the Deputy Ambassador to Ethiopia and the Ambassador to the Organization of African Unity in 1980, Chair of the English Department and then Pro-Vice-Chancellor at the University of Zimbabwe; while Chung was a deputy in the Ministry of Education and then, later, the Minister of Education for Zimbabwe.

"It's a pity nation-making moves only through a single groove like a one-track brain that is obsessed with the one thing" (1990: 37).

Marechera hated the illusions of unity, homogeneity and progress which often belied exploitation, corruption and horror. Appalled by Idi Amin's reign of terror in Uganda in the 1970s and the tyrant's support (at first) from the Organization of African Unity (OAU), he stated that:

we raise the African image to fly in the face of the wind and cannot see the actually living blacks having their heads smashed open with hammers in Kampala. We have done such a good advertising and public relations stunt with our African image that all the horrors committed under its lips merely reinforce our admiration for the new clothes we acquired with independence (1990: 84).

In the early 1980s he suspected that a similar campaign of horror was continuing in Matabeleland under the very same pretences (i.e. those of maintaining order, unity, 'stability', and 'progress'), and criticized the government "for the killing of hundreds of 'dissidents'" (Veit-Wild 1992a: 326). His suspicions have now been proven well-founded, although the government has yet to explain itself on this issue.⁵³

Not surprisingly, he fell foul of the 'patriots' and 'nation-builders' in the new Zimbabwe, which is one of the reasons he found it difficult to publish his work. In Mindblast, he comments that "Here there is all this nationalism, this glorification of the state, this 'respect' for education, this bowed attitude towards the notion of society." These were attitudes which prompted Marechera to comment sardonically that "We are in the nineteenth century and know and like it" (1984: 157). Of course, Marechera did not like it. The parallels with nineteenth-century European nationalism were uncanny; and this did not mean liberation to Marechera; it meant another form of enslavement to another form of authority. It meant relinquishing personal freedom and submitting oneself to an arbitrary form of power

⁵³ See Hodder-Williams (1983: 17), Gaylard (1993b: 92) and my Historical Note.

in the guise of the 'horizontal comradeship' of a grand national society.

As was the case in the old Rhodesia, the state-controlled broadcast and print media in the new Zimbabwe served to uphold and legitimize the sovereignty and the authority of the nation-state, and to provide a mouth-piece for the ruling party's ideology. Marechera clearly felt that literature was in danger of being co-opted into the 'national programme'. The state at the time was attempting to redefine and reorder Zimbabwean society -- supposedly along socialist lines.

The policy towards literature was both prescriptive and proscriptive. Ngaru and Chung insisted that:

writers cannot play a truly positive and constructive role in the building of socialism in Zimbabwe unless they take it upon themselves to be informed about the forms and functions of literature in socialist society. The Zimbabwe Writers' Union could make a major contribution in this regard by effectively mobilizing writers to adopt a progressive outlook and to promote socialist ideas....This is consonant with the constitution of the Union, one of whose objectives is "to promote the use of literature for developmental purposes"⁵⁴....By providing ideological guidance, making funds available and creating an atmosphere conducive to genuine artistic production, the Party and Government can encourage progressive creative work (1985b: 116-117).

Thus, the funding of cultural projects was to be linked with the promotion of the government's ideology and writers were to be 'persuaded' to take part in the programme of nation-building.

Marechera bemoaned the fact that he was told to "write socialist realism, write about things that will build our people" (Veit-Wild 1992a: 34). The prescriptive genre of socialist realism (advocated by Ngaru, Chung, and others in the new establishment) was obviously anathema to a writer such as Marechera, who refused to accept art as serving a purely

⁵⁴ In 1984 Marechera fought for the insertion of a specific freedom of expression clause into the Zimbabwe Writer's Union's founding constitution. He forced the issue to a vote and stood for Secretary-General. However, he lost by four votes to Musa Zimunya, and subsequently fell out with the union (Veit-Wild 1992a: 37).

functional and utilitarian role, as defined, quite narrowly, by the élites in the new establishment. He commented that:

Literature is now seen merely as another instrument of official policy and therefore the writer should not practise art for art's sake or write like Franz Kafka or like James Joyce or explore the subconscious of our new society. All that is for European bourgeois literature. And that's why for instance my work is condemned. One of the reasons given by the censorship board when they banned Black Sunlight on August 7th, 1981, before I had come back, was that Dambudzo Marechera is trying to be European, that his book has got no relevance to the development of the Zimbabwean nation (Veit-Wild 1992a: 39; emphasis added).

Literature was not regarded seriously by the new official culture unless it was 'politically correct' and "relevant to the development of the Zimbabwean nation" -- according to the specifications of the newly-empowered élite.

A paradox attributed to the novel in the Third World context, which Zimbabwe is a part of, is that, although it addresses the nation as a whole, it remains -- to an overwhelming extent -- oriented towards a comparatively few. Brennan argues that:

Under conditions of illiteracy and shortages, and given simply the leisure-time necessary for reading one, the novel has been an elitist and minority form in developing countries when compared to poem, song television, and film. Almost inevitably it has been the form through which a thin, foreign-educated stratum (however sensitive or committed to domestic political interests) has communicated to metropolitan reading publics, often in translation. It has been, in short, a naturally cosmopolitan form that empire has allowed to play a national role, as it were, only in an international arena (56).

Zimbabwe is perhaps more fortunate than many Third World countries in that literacy levels are comparatively high and steadily improving. Also, the local publishing industry is relatively well-established. However, books remain luxury items to the vast majority -- for whom they are either completely unaffordable or not a priority (especially in view of the rising cost of living in the country following the government's Economic and Structural Adjustment Programme of the 1990s).

Even Ngara and Chung's apparently noble gesture at proletarianizing Zimbabwean

literature is fraught with élitist authoritarianism. They state that:

In developing a new literature we must create not just for the people but with the people. We must make them realize [my emphasis] that literature is not for the chosen few, but for all sections of society (1985b: 126).

These top-down prescriptions are self-contradictory: "We [i.e. the educated, empowered, élite and privileged few] must make them [i.e. the illiterate, uneducated, disempowered majority] realize that literature is not for the chosen few". The irony in these words is almost excruciating. Ngara and Chung's statements reveal the non-consultative, non-democratic, and sometimes outright authoritarian approach of the establishment towards 'development' and nation-building.

Despite the allegations of nationalist and 'socialist' critics, Marechera's own particular type of writing was neither bourgeois, nor élitist in its outlook. On the contrary, if one examines more closely how it has been received in Zimbabwe, one could argue that quite the opposite is true. Marechera's anti-establishment writing has been hailed as a voice for the marginalized, dispossessed and the downtrodden in society. Indeed, especially with Mindblast, it seems to find a significant space in popular culture.

Marechera was most certainly attempting to move away from what Brennan describes as "the novel's obsessive nation-centredness and its imperial (that is, universalizing) origins" (1990: 64). For him, writing was not about patriotism and nation-making. Rather, as an author, he sought to disrupt centralized forms of authority and illusions of homogeneity and unity -- which inhibit personal freedom. This, he undertook in the various writing experiments which constitute his avant-gardism.

Menippeanism in Mindblast

In reply to the persistent allegations that his transgression of traditional writing forms was 'bourgeois', 'decadent', 'Europeanized' and 'irrelevant', Marechera presented his critics in post-independence Zimbabwe with the explosive text of Mindblast, a collection of plays, poetry, narratives, and extracts from a journal. Mindblast can be considered an anti-realist, anti-nationalist 'novel'. "This category of novel is called the menippean," explained Marechera, in a public lecture delivered at the Zimbabwe-German Society in Harare:

The critic and lecturer Neil McEwan, in his book Africa and Novel, argues that, far from imitating the practice of past generations of European writers, [many] African novelists have extended the possibilities and uses of fiction. He notes that the Soviet critic Mikhail Bakhtin has offered a category of narrative whose unifying factor is a 'carnival' attitude to the world. This category includes writers from different backgrounds. They range from Aristophanes, Lucian and Apuleius (the first African novelist, perhaps) to Dostoevsky by way of Rabelais and Dean Swift. I add John Fowles and Gunter Grass, and the Nigerian, Wole Soyinka, in The Interpreters. Don Quixote is quite at home. The world of such novels, says McEwan, is complex, unstable, comic, satirical, fantastic, poetical and committed to the pursuit of truth. The hero can travel anywhere in this world and beyond. Fantasy and symbolism are combined with low-life naturalism. Odd vantage points offer changes of scale. Heaven and hell are close and may be visited. Madness, dreams and day-dreams, abnormal states of mind and all kinds of erratic inclinations are explored. Scandalous and eccentric behaviour disrupts 'the seemly course of human affairs' and provides a new view of 'the integrity of the world'. Society is unpredictable; roles can quickly change. Current affairs are treated with a satirical, journalistic interest. Genres are mixed. Stories, speeches, dramatic, sketches, poetry and parody exist side by side. This category of novel is the menippean. It is no longer necessary to speak of the African novel or the European novel: there is only the menippean novel (1987a: 101).

Since the Menippean novel can take on any number of forms, it possesses a metamorphic quality which enables it to transgress a host of barriers and boundaries, including that of nationality. It is non-conformist, critical and irreverent by nature, and therefore readily amenable to parody and satire.

In Mindblast, Marechera attempted to expose corruption and hypocrisy in an official culture which he recognized as both repressive and absurd. To this end, he used the

carnavalesque aesthetic of Mikhail Bakhtin (from which he derives the idea of the Menippean novel, a point for further discussion in Chapter Three). Simon Dentith observes that Bakhtin's aesthetic "celebrates the anarchic, body-based and grotesque elements of popular culture, and seeks to mobilize them against the humourless seriousness of official culture" (1995: 66).

Marechera was able to use the carnivalesque aesthetic as a vehicle for potent political satire and stinging social criticism. "The Skin of Time: plays by Buddy" are a prime example. In "Blitzkrieg", a drama of bed-hopping and bribery, which is set in the near vicinity of an over-used toilet, one of the characters, the disaffected Alfie, laments that:

there are many shades of black but the only true one is that of the have-nots. Don't mean to sound bitter -- yes, I do mean to sound bitter, but it seems to me for all the ideals our independence is supposed to represent, it's still the same old ox-wagon of the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer. There's even an attempt to make poverty a holy and acceptable condition. You say you're hungry, and the shef⁵⁵ peers over his three chins down at you and says Comrade, you're the backbone of the revolution as if your life's ambition is to be as thin and lean as a mosquito's backbone. And you try to say "Shef, I don't want to be the backbone, I want to be the big belly of the struggle against neocolonialism like the one you got there underneath that Castro beard". And before you even finish what you are saying he's got the CIO and the police and you are being marched at gunpoint to the interrogation barracks (1984: 37-38).

Alfie's soliloquy illustrates that Marechera's writing in post-independence Zimbabwe was neither 'bourgeois' nor 'elitist' in its outlook. On the contrary, it was very often a voice for the marginalized, dispossessed and downtrodden in society.

In Mindblast, Marechera also employed a magical realist mode in an effort to resist what he considered to be a repressive and ridiculous official culture. Amaryll Beatrice Chanady states some of the traits of magical realism as follows:

⁵⁵ Shef is a colloquial word in Zimbabwe for a member of the ruling élite. Povo, its antonym, means the proletariat.

One of these is the occurrence of the supernatural or anything that is contrary to our conventional view of reality ...[M]agical realism gives us a world view that does not depend on natural laws, and is not based on objective reality. However the fictitious world is not entirely divorced from reality either (1985: 18-19).

Magical realism of course violates the realist checklist, previously outlined, in that it focuses its lens on the bizarre and extraordinary, rather than the "natural" and the "ordinary". Its interest is not in "common, average and everyday or contemporary experiences" (Mzamane 1992: 94).

In the Prologue to "Grimknife Jr's Story", Rix, a giant fat, purring cat is conducting an interrogation of Grimknife Jr:

Rix was the Reorientation Officer. Rix was the head of this establishment. Grimknife Jr was the mental delinquent who had been dragged here to be reorientated. Grimknife Jr was angry; he could not quite grasp what his crime was. Rix chuckled, an odd purring sound that matched the slow approach of darkness (Marechera 1984: 45).

The allegorical dimensions of this narrative soon become apparent to the reader: Rix represents the repressive new Zimbabwean state and Grimknife Jr represents a 'dissident' writer (i.e. Dambudzo Marechera). The "Jr" in Grimknife Jr's name also denotes youth, and the new generation of Zimbabweans whom he possibly symbolizes.

Rix explains to Grimknife Jr that he is here to "Help you become a useful citizen." He wants to turn him into "Someone who is the spitting image of Duty, Responsibility and Patriotism," and he announces that "We are all expected to contribute to the P.E. [the Progressive Effort]" (45).

Grimknife says "Aw fuck it all". This is not the prescribed response!:

Rix looked gravely at the boy. "That's your other crime. Using obscene language. What would your father, the Classicist and Philologist, say if he heard you speaking like this?"

"He'd curse like a sailor, sir."

....

"What have you got against decent language?"

"It's obscenely unnatural," the youth countered.

"Decency is unnatural?"

"It is - to unnatural people."

"Those are dissidents."

"Look. Officer Rix, earlier on you called me a mental delinquent. What's that?"

"You do not think the way everyone else thinks."

The youth, amazed, looked hard at Rix.

"But all my life I have never thought!" he shouted (46).

The anti-realist satire of Rix and Grimknife Jr is obviously an attack on the oppressiveness and absurdity of prescribed "rational" thought, as well as the dogmatic and totalitarian attitude of the new establishment in Zimbabwe. The boy refuses, on principle, to agree that "one plus one is two," and instead states that "I prefer it to be anything I choose" (47). The story thus symbolizes Marechera's own defiance of prescribed and conventional patterns of thought, his refusal to accept the new social and political status quo, and his determination to seek alternative forms of expression to standard realism.

Marechera was homeless and living on the streets of Harare at the time of writing Mindblast and he felt the circumstances which faced him in newly independent Zimbabwe to be strange indeed. Hence, he commented that, "[f]or me the only way to express this Harare is to experiment with all available literary styles and perhaps come to a successful combination" (Veit-Wild 1992a: 311). It can be argued that Marechera's experimentation with non-realist forms in Mindblast produces an effect more devastating than standard forms of realism could ever achieve. Mindblast irritated the new establishment in Zimbabwe and set Marechera on a collision course with the authorities, not because it was 'irrelevant' but perhaps because it was too relevant. As mentioned previously, the author was arrested and detained by the CIO during the Zimbabwe International Book Fair of 1984, ironically where Mindblast was launched.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ See Veit-Wild (1992a: 333-334).

Marechera did not claim to speak on behalf of anyone and yet inevitably he did. The characters in the dramatic sketches and prose narratives of Mindblast are not 'realistic' (in the conventional sense of the word) and the narratives are frequently bizarre. Of course Mindblast fails by realist standards, but this is not the point. A less prescriptive set of principles than that proposed by the realist checklist enables the critic to acknowledge that Marechera's literary experiments succeed to a greater extent because, as he stated in an interview: "For me the point is if one is living in an abnormal society then only abnormal expression can express that society. Documentary cannot" (Veit-Wild 1988: 134).⁵⁷

Other Paradigms of Marechera's Avant-Gardism

Since expressionism is a predominant style in Marechera's avant-gardism, it is useful to examine his connections to the expressionist movement in further detail. Marechera's rejection of conventional realist forms can be viewed in a similar manner to Walter Benjamin's and Bertolt Brecht's rejection of bourgeois theatre.⁵⁸ Some elements of Brecht's 'epic theatre' also illustrate how Dambudzo Marechera transgressed the traditional realist novel form. Brecht stated that: "The essential point of the epic theatre is perhaps that it appeals less to the feelings than to the spectator's reason. Instead of sharing an experience

⁵⁷ The Menippean novel, and the Bakhtinian carnival are important components of Marechera's avant-gardism and their full implications within the Zimbabwean context will be discussed in relation to Mindblast in the next chapter. Since it encompasses so many forms and genres, the Menippean novel is a paradigm through which to view most of Marechera's work. For the purposes of this thesis, however, I am viewing it as an illustration of Marechera's avant-gardism.

⁵⁸ Bourgeois theatre is the drama which concerns itself with middle class subject matter, and usually presents itself in the form of the 'well-made play' -- i.e. with a "tight and logical construction", a plot, rising suspense, a climax, and a dénouement (Holman 1972: 554).

the spectator must come to grips with things" (Willet 1964: 23). "There were ...three threads that went to make up Brecht's own epic theory,...the playing in quotation marks, the portrayal of new and complex processes and the detached, unemotional style" (*ibid.* 17).

Although there are, of course, some differences between the traditional realist novel and (early twentieth-century) bourgeois theatre there are also striking parallels between the two forms. In a famous Marxist debate on the issue of realism versus expressionism, Georg Lukács castigated Brecht's avant-gardism as "bourgeois". This is obviously relevant to similar critiques of Marechera, who employed strikingly parallel and similar techniques.⁵⁹ Brecht and Benjamin, in turn, accused Lukács of naïvely fetishizing the form of the nineteenth-century bourgeois realist novel (a point which has some bearing on the debates regarding Zimbabwean literature, and which will be addressed shortly).

Walter Benjamin, a left-wing ally of Brecht, theorized an aesthetics of epic theatre.

As Terry Eagleton observes:

'Shock' ...is a central category in Benjamin's aesthetics. Modern urban life is characterized by the collision of fragmentary, discontinuous sensations; but whereas a 'classical' Marxist critic like Lukács would see this fact as a gloomy index of the fragmenting of human 'wholeness' under capitalism, Benjamin typically discovers in it positive possibilities, the basis of progressive artistic forms. Watching a film, moving in a city crowd, working at a machine are all 'shock' experiences which strip objects and experience of their 'aura'; and the artistic equivalent of this is the technique of 'montage'. Montage -- the connecting of dissimilars to shock an audience into insight -- becomes for Benjamin a major principle of artistic production in a technological age (Eagleton 1976: 63).

Similarly, although he does not always deal with modern urban life per se, Marechera nevertheless illustrates the modern experience as a series of fragmentary, discontinuous sensations, and employs the technique of montage -- a device borrowed from motion pictures, where brief impressions follow one another without any apparent logical order (Holman 1972:

⁵⁹ In fact, Ngara and Zimunya are Lukácsian critics.

327) -- to do so.

"House of Hunger", for example, comprises a seemingly haphazard selection of fragments and anecdotes that forms the narrator's interior monologue. This interior monologue "records the internal experience of [the narrator] ...reaching down to the nonverbalized level where IMAGES must be used to represent non-verbalized sensations or emotions" (*ibid.* 273-4). Doug, a character in the novella, shows a montage of images which helps to illustrate the composition of the novella: an old black man riding a bicycle, a black woman nursing a white baby, nasty road accidents, lists of births, marriages and deaths, violent rugby scenes, a firing squad execution of women leading the 1896/7 uprising, public figures making private speeches, Ian Smith announcing UDI interposed onto graphic inter-racial sex-scenes, and a ballpoint pen drawing question marks. Immediately afterwards, Doug says, "And that, gentlemen, is my novel" (Marechera 1978: 68).

Similarly, Marechera's novel is a mosaic of fragments, in which diversity and multiplicity replace the homogeneous view of reality implied by the conventional linear novel. With the question marks at the end of the film, Doug's art-piece questions itself and likewise Marechera's novel questions itself with the old man's series of riddles which come at the end of the novella. This epitomizes the detached, ironic, self-reflexive quality of Marechera's work (a feature which sets it apart from much other avant-garde art -- which generally takes itself, at least, very seriously). Questions are raised rather than answers provided, and there is no attempt at closure: unlike the traditional realist novel, Marechera's narrative does not present itself as a seamless whole.

Doug's montage of film strips in "House of Hunger" also serves as an example of the connecting of dissimilars in order to shock an audience into insight. In the film, the graphic scenes of inter-racial sex, for instance, are superimposed onto a clip of Ian Smith announcing

UDI. The juxtaposition of these images serves to shock, destabilize, subvert and degrade Ian Smith's claims to authority.

As with Brecht, 'shock' is a device which holds much interest for Marechera. He stated that:

I try to write in such a way that I short-circuit, like in electricity, people's traditions and morals. Because only then can they start having original thoughts of their own. I would like people to stop thinking in an institutionalized way....For me that slow brain death ...can only be cured by this kind of literary shock treatment (Veit-Wild 1992: 40).

Brecht saw a close connection between ideology and form and sought to problematize bourgeois theatre's claims to transparency (Eagleton 1976: 64). Similarly, Marechera sought to problematize some of the conventional realist novel's claims to transparency. Of course, the two authors differed very significantly in their political agendas (Brecht being a left-wing Marxist and Marechera being an intellectual anarchist). Nonetheless, parallels remain clear regarding their use of shock tactics, and other innovative avant-garde techniques.

Marechera extended the shock principle, which disrupts illusions of neutrality and transparency, into his experimentations with language, particularly in Black Sunlight. He stated that when writing in English, his aim was to:

brutali[z]e [the language] into a more malleable shape for my own purposes. For a black writer the language is very racist; you have to have harrowing fights and hair-raising panga duels with the language before you can make it do all that you want it to do. It is so for the feminists. English is very male. Hence feminist writers also adopt the same tactics. This may mean discarding grammar, throwing syntax out, subverting images from within, beating the drum and cymbals of rhythm, developing torture chambers of irony and sarcasm, gas ovens of limitless black resonance (Veit-Wild 1988: 7-8).

One can detect this project in Marechera's poetry, but also in much of his prose -- especially Black Sunlight, large parts of which can be seen as an experiment in surrealism. When it emerged as a movement in France in 1924, surrealism's "expressed aim was a rebellion against all restraints on free artistic creativity" (Abrams 1988: 183). Automatic writing, that

which is "delivered over entirely to the promptings of the unconscious mind" (*ibid.* 183) is evident in some of the prose-work of Marechera.

The randomness and excess of Black Sunlight, for example, can be seen, in the surrealist tradition, as a deliberate strategy of language and form. The long stream of consciousness passages and automatic writing bombard the reader with more meaning than can be assimilated in the conventional manner. Words flow randomly and a wedge is driven between cause and effect so that the reader is required to look for meaning without logic.

As Flora Veit-Wild states:

In Black Sunlight, different planes of consciousness, recognizable stories and dreamlike visions, memories and reflections continually blend, flowing into images which are no longer recognizable to the intellect, but which the reader must feel and imagine (1987: 117).

Nick⁶⁰, who can be considered a persona for Marechera, is of the opinion that:

Syntax, the adverb, and punctuation marks were to be abolished. Poetry had to be a continuous succession of images. New images. There were no such things as elegant and vulgar images. Intuition, which assimilates images, knew no privilege, or distinction. The principle of maximum disorder was the sole function of order in a poem (Marechera 1980: 111).

Because Nick chooses to write in English, instead of in his own language, he is ridiculed and misunderstood by his detractors. His poetry is condemned as unintelligible, irrelevant to the proletariat, vulgar and inappropriately modernistic. (Ironically, Black Sunlight was banned in Zimbabwe for some of these very same reasons.) Marechera emulates Nick's technique by mixing the sacred with the profane and the elegant with the vulgar in an attempt to erode the privilege of the one over the other.

Black Sunlight also explores the underbelly of humanity that language ordinarily conceals. Polite language gives way to violent, obscene colloquial expression; and the author

⁶⁰ Nick is the name given to the devil, a subversive character in much old English literature. This is probably significant.

attempts to explore the subconscious. The first lines of the book read as follows:

Through the open window. The fucking window, a slashing wind blows....Within this pale womb with its beard, a brutal story writhes....A thin mould of history covers the walls. Covers the darkness in the room....From once upon a time, that fucking window of fiction, astonishment comes (1980: 1).

With this irreverent beginning, the book thus introduces itself as an attack on the conventional novel.

Nicola, perhaps another engendered version of the narrator, reads a book called Unhinging the Mind. The title of the book suggests what Marechera aims to do in Black Sunlight: to unhinge the mind from fixed notions of reality. Nicola says that:

in order to arrive one must give up intelligibility for it is not necessary to be understood. Words liberated from punctuation radiate one upon another and cross their various magnetisms, following their own continuous dynamism (1980: 111).

'Correct' sentence structure arranges thoughts into a linear pattern that does not express the complexity of human experience. As the narrator states, "[t]houghts perhaps do not think in straightlines" (1980: 115). It is for this reason that Marechera subverts the linearity in language by breaking the rules of grammar and syntax in the following manner, for example:

The thousand separate perspectives from which to view the point of a needle. The making of a story. That limitless impossible photographic essay. Tired. Tied down. The whole systematically corroding the metal of my existence. By matchlight.
I went out.
Walking.
BLANCHEBLANCHE. (1980: 101).

Instead of linking words into a unitary and linear perspective, Marechera creates a "photographic essay" of a "thousand separate perspectives" (*idem.*). Like the plot in Black Sunlight, the sentences are often disconnected. However, in their fragmentary form, they facilitate a free flow of associational -- as opposed to linear -- thought. Associational thought connects a miscellany of desires and emotions and ideas. Stream-of-consciousness prose,

which works on this principle, depicts reality as a matrix of inter-related human experiences, rather than a linear construction (which necessitates observing a form of order and authority).

In the anarchistic setting of Black Sunlight, all notions of system and order are abandoned. This forces a rethinking of reality and that is what Marechera is interested in. He is not content to "retain the illusion of a linear and easily deciphered life" (1980: 67). Marechera considered it his responsibility as an artist to disrupt this illusion and engage in a continuous exposure of façades.

Marechera's Relationship to the Reader

Despite the allegations of esotericism and self-absorption (accusations also levelled at Nick in Black Sunlight and Owen in The Black Insider), a striking feature of Marechera's work is that very often it invites active dialogue and participation from the reader. There is too much self-ironizing in the texts for the reader to simply accept them as mimetic representations of an objective reality. The style is however deliberate and can be viewed as a positive attribute.

The 'alienation effect', for which Brecht is famous, can be detected in Marechera's work. The 'alienation effect' is deliberately calculated to prevent the viewer (or reader) from a mindless absorption into the play (or the text). Marechera was not interested in the passive receptive reader.

Much of Marechera's writing, like Brecht's epic theatre, according to Eagleton:

presents itself as discontinuous, open-ended, internally contradictory, encouraging in the audience a 'complex seeing' which is alert to several conflicting possibilities at any particular point. The [characters], instead of 'identifying' with their roles, [often] distance themselves from them, to make it clear that they are [constructed] rather than individuals in real life (1976: 65).

Hence, several of Marechera's characters, in addition to the narrator himself, distance themselves from their roles so as to make it clear that they are fictionally constructed as opposed to 'real'.⁶¹ The doppelgänger episode in Black Sunlight, for example, erodes the distinction between Self and Other, between fact and fiction, and between reality and illusion.

Chris, Christian's identical twin, says:

I have been in this room for as long as I can remember inventing you from the first page of that manuscript. Or is it the other way round? You have been out there for as long as you can remember inventing me up to this point (1980: 62).

Christian (a fictive version of Marechera himself) cannot answer the question.

The following conversation in The Black Insider between the first person narrator and his young girlfriend, Helen, also illustrates the technique. Marechera, as author/narrator, writes himself into the text as a character and comments that:

She had heard the teeth of my typewriter chattering throughout the freezing morning. When she knocked on the door I shouted,

"Who is it?"

"Me," she said.

"What do you want?"

"I just want to look." ...

I released the three locks and unbolted the seven chains to find a freckled oval face with green eyes chewing on a Freudian bubblegum suddenly smile inquisitively up at me....She blew a bubble at the mural and suddenly sucked it in inside her. She made a movement toward the desk.

"What are you writing?"

This book in which you and I are.

But that would have sounded too clever and too contrived for a real book, so I said,

"A story" (1990: 25-26).

These are examples of the use of a Brechtian 'alienation effect' but they also exemplify the strategy and style of 'metafiction', which, according to Linda Hutcheon: "fiction about fiction -- that is fiction that includes within itself a commentary on its own

⁶¹ See Marechera's comments on "Pirandello whose plays torture out of us the shadowline between illusion and reality, in particular Henry IV and Six Characters in Search of an Author" (1987a: 99).

narrative and/or linguistic identity" (1980: 5). Whereas, Hutcheon argues, "the realism of the nineteenth century ...is based on ...mimesis of product,...[modern] metafiction is largely ...a mimesis of process" (*ibid.* 5). Hutcheon counteracts "[t]he implied reduction of 'life' to a mere product level that ignores process" (*ibid.*). Marechera is doing the same thing here (and also in the aforementioned doppelgänger quote): he is disrupting the unified conventional narrative by drawing attention to the act of story-telling as a process -- not merely a product.

In another narrative in the posthumously published Scrapiron Blues collection, entitled "What Available Reality?", Marechera once again writes himself into the text. This time he is trying to sleep with Jane, one of his characters, when suddenly her boyfriend Tony intrudes. With self-conscious irony and a subversive disruptiveness, the author comments:

I could hear Tony banging on the door, fist after fist, screaming: "YOU LYING TRAITOR! YOU CRAP ARTIST! CALL YOURSELF MY CREATOR AND FRIEND! I'LL KILL YOU WITH MY BARE HANDS!"

Fist after fist banging on my door.

I woke up sweating. Someone was at the door, knocking, shouting....Shit, what kind of a writer was I? Was I seducing Jane? Or was she seducing me? Can a writer, a male writer, create a female character without arousing obscure daemonic forces within his own sexuality? I unlocked the door. There was Fred. There was Jill. Who was the reality? Fred and Jill? Or Tony and Jane? Was I myself a character in someone's head? I resolved to get sickeningly drunk (1994: 17).

In the process of writing a story, Marechera is questioning his subconscious motivations as an author, and presenting this to the reader, as opposed to concealing it.

This is going much further than Brecht with the 'alienation effect'. The aim of this technique (which can be considered a 'post-modernist'⁶² gesture) is to expose conventions

⁶² According to Abrams, "Postmodernism involves not only a continuation, carried to an extreme, of the countertraditional experiments of modernism, but also diverse attempts to break away from modernist forms which had, inevitably, become in their turn conventional. A familiar undertaking in postmodernist writings is to subvert the foundations of our accepted modes of thought and experience" (1988: 10). A detailed discussion of the controversial subject of postmodernism is beyond the reach of this thesis. What I am considering here, is that 'postmodernist' gestures are a characteristic of his avant-gardism.

in the act of using them, like Kurt Vonnegut, for example, who brings "the real historical author onto the same plane as his own fictitious characters" (Lodge 1981: 15). As David Lodge points out, this questions the whole business of reading and writing literary fictions (15). It can also be a means of exposing the political agendas which motivate the reading and writing of fictions.

The above examples show that Marechera's experiments with literary form were often aimed at problematizing notions of neutrality and transparency in grand master narratives, as well as the myth of the invisible, infallible author. As Chanady comments:

Every text reveals the presence of its author. There is no such thing as a completely impersonal narrative. As Wayne Booth points out: "We must never forget that though the author can to some extent choose his disguises, he can never choose to disappear." (1985: 121).

Marechera, certainly, was aware of this fact and some of its implications. An author, necessarily, brings his or her mindset and a set of assumptions to the text.

Catherine Belsey's comments, here, are instructive. She states that:

Assumptions about literature involve assumptions about language and about meaning, and these in turn involve assumptions about human society. The independent universe of literature and the autonomy of criticism are illusory (1980: 29).

Literature and literary discourse are produced by language; material, social and historical conditions; various ideologies; conscious and unconscious states of mind. They are not independent of these factors, as Belsey states. She moreover argues that "Realism is plausible not because it reflects the world, but because it is constructed out of what is (discursively) familiar" (47), and "post-Saussurean linguistics undermines the possibility of expressive realism" (52).

Marechera's unorthodox narrative strategies, such as the shock tactics, montage, the alienation effect, and metafiction were cognizant of wide-reaching, complex literary, cultural

and ideological issues. Engaging with Marechera outside the strictures of realism and African nationalism reveals his narrative as not a 'decadent' and 'naïve' attempt to be 'European' -- as has been alleged by numerous critics -- but, on the contrary, an incisive commentary on writing and methods of representation. These are issues which are surely relevant to the writer, the reader and the critic anywhere.

With regard to metafiction, Hutcheon states that it has "very serious implications for the theory of the novel as a mimetic genre" (1980: 6). It requires a rethinking and a redefinition of novelistic mimesis. Metafiction may seem narcissistic and self-indulgent but it is not at all entirely self-centred. As Hutcheon observes:

while he reads, the reader lives in a world which he is forced to acknowledge as fictional. However, paradoxically the text also demands that he participate, that he engage himself intellectually, imaginatively, and affectively in its co-creation. This two-way pull is the paradox of the reader. The text is both narcissistically self-reflexive and yet focused outward, oriented toward the reader (7).

While Marechera's texts often appear on first sight to be entirely self-centred, in effect they are not.

Thus Zimunya's remark that: "Unfortunately [Marechera's] vision is preponderantly private and indulgent[:] [t]he social and moral undertaking is cynically dismissed at the expense of the aesthetic motive" (126), is misleading. Moralistic condemnations of Marechera's individualism tend to miss the point of his writing, which was to question 'objective' accounts of reality. By foregrounding his subjectivity, Marechera was very consciously showing the reader that his perspective was a particular one, not an objective one. He never presented it as the final word on anything. Thus it can be argued that he shows respect, rather than contempt for the reader.

He stated that:

I believe very strongly that the only way to have access to the hearts and minds of all those people out there is to first of all know my own humanity, my own failings of

emotion, my own sense of what I mean when I say, I am Dambudzo Marechera (Veit-Wild 1992: 311).

Hence the deep introspection (but also the self-reflexive irony) that characterizes his work. Ironically enough, as a testament to his philosophy, this 'narcissistic' technique has produced some of the most forthright social commentary to emerge from Zimbabwe (an issue which will be the subject of discussion in the next chapter).

To be an individualist and to foreground one's subjective viewpoint in African literature, however, is to turn one's back on a long tradition of 'socially-conscious' realistic writing. As Marechera explained in an interview with Alle Lansu in 1986:

There are two traditions in African literature: one I will call the traditionalist outlook, whose leader is Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiong'o also belongs to it; then there is the other, I would call it the modernist group, represented by Wole Soyinka and Ayi Kwei Armah and myself. The three of us are always described as individualists, and this word is used in a very insulting way. If people accuse you of individualism, then they are actually saying you are a reactionary, you are a capitalist in your approach to art, you are not a writer of the people. The traditionalist group is the one which is very strongly approved of here in Zimbabwe, because their writing is very moral, it's easily used in schools as textbooks, and, especially in terms of Ngugi, it is very socialist. I like his works but he disturbs me in one respect: he believes that writing is not a profession but an instrument for the masses to come to power, and that therefore a writer should write about their struggles (Veit-Wild 1992: 44).

Although Marechera could admire the works of an astute socialist realist such as Ngugi, he nevertheless rejected the imposition of any prescriptions for writing. Unfortunately, writing in Zimbabwe in the 1980s entailed a battle against numerous prescriptions and proscriptions.

The prescriptions of nationalist and socialist critics derive in large part from the theories of Georg Lukács, whose influence on African literature and criticism has been immense -- as Lilford argues:

Lukácsian theory is transformed from an attack on 'bourgeois' modernism, to an attack on 'western' modernism. African writers are expected to write liberating texts in the language of the people, rather than to experiment with form and structure....The label 'individualist' in African literary circles corresponds directly to the Lukácsian 'subjective'. It denigrates those who refuse to produce socially-approved texts (1996: 15).

An example of Lilford's point can be seen in the didactic of Ngara and Chung (who were leading figures in academic and political establishment). They state that:

In modern capitalist society, literature is estranged from the common people. It becomes a very private affair and the writer uses difficult language, making literature inaccessible to the masses (1985b: 114).

This is a very sweeping statement. Surely not all literature in capitalist society is estranged from common people; and how do Ngara and Chung define "common people"? If the theory is derived from Lukács, then it is a very crude reading of the critic indeed. They further state that:

Socialism rejects the notion of art for art's sake in favour of the literature of commitment. [In the words of Plekhanov] ..."[t]he function of art is to improve the social system" (ibid. 114-5).

Marechera's modernist writing was thus condemned as "art for art's sake". In yet another of their prescriptions, Ngara and Chung state that:

Socialist literature expresses the hopes and problems of the masses, but it cannot fulfil this mission if it does not come from the people, if the writer does not integrate himself into the society (127).⁶³

The implications of Ngara and Chung's didactic for Marechera -- an outsider and someone who valued his individuality -- were dire. Because he "did not integrate himself into the society", Marechera was perceived by the new establishment as an 'individualist' and therefore not a serious writer.

In ascertaining where Ngara and Chung derive much of their theory, it is useful to go back to one of the most influential exponents of socialist realism. Lukács regarded modernist writing as a form of "psychopathology" and described it as "a desire to escape the reality of

⁶³ Ngara and Chung's book, from which these statements are taken, Socialism, Education and Development: A Challenge to Zimbabwe, followed the official adoption of Marxist-Leninism and 'scientific socialism' as the 'guiding ideologies' of Zimbabwe after the Second Annual ZANU (PF) Party Congress in 1984.

capitalism" (1964: 36). In claiming that modernist writing (such as that of Joyce and Kafka) is 'ahistorical'. Lukács states that:

The negation of history takes two different forms in modernist literature. First, the hero is strictly confined within the limits of his own experience. There is not for him -- and apparently not for his creator -- any pre-existent reality beyond his own self, acting upon him or being acted upon by him. Secondly, the hero himself is without personal history. He is 'thrown-into-the-world': meaninglessly, unfathomably. He does not develop through contact with the world; he neither forms nor is formed by it (1964: 101).

Lukácsian theory appears to inform many nationalist and realist critics' condemnations of Marechera. Ngara and Chung's critique of Marechera is indirect (but fairly obvious). Zimunya's critique, that Marechera's "vision is preponderantly private and indulgent" and his condemnation of the author for "[p]leading for admission into the neurotic twentieth century" (1982: 126), echo Lukács's disapproval of Joyce and Kafka. Okonkwo's descriptions of Marechera's avant-gardism as "distorted and self-destructive 'sophistication'" (1981: 91) also echo the Lukácsian critique of modernist writing, as does Wylie's critique of Marechera's "self absorbed angst" (1991: 48).

I question the capacity of Lukácsian theory, which I suggest is evident in these critiques to explain a writer such as Marechera. There are serious inconsistencies with the wholesale application of Lukácsian theory to Dambudzo Marechera. As Lilford argues, Marechera is not an "ahistorical" writer at all. Neither is he a hero who is simply "thrown-into-the-world" without a personal history or a reality outside himself (1996: 15). These sorts of readings are untenable in "House of Hunger", for example, which shows itself to be acutely conscious of its precise social and historical context. Moreover, there is also a strong autobiographical component which effectively removes it from the realm of abstract imaginative fiction. The same can be argued of Black Sunlight and The Black Insider, and this is very clear in Mindblast (to be discussed in more detail shortly).

The distaste for the avant-garde, which characterizes much Zimbabwean literary criticism might also be attributed, in part, to Lukácsian theory. Lukács opposed expressionism, surrealism and other avant-garde movements, and instead venerated the form of the nineteenth-century bourgeois realist novel as a model for 'committed' art. He stated that "There can be no doubt that traditional bourgeois realism is a useful ally for the socialist writer" (1964: 104); and argued that bourgeois realism could effectively be transformed into socialist realism (which he was instrumental in developing in the Soviet Union).

The insistence on certain realist criteria by the literary establishment in Zimbabwe, and the censoring of non-realist writers such as Marechera is strikingly reminiscent of the clash between Lukács and Brecht over the issue of realism versus expressionism. Brecht's avant-gardism was condemned as 'formalistic', 'decadent', 'naïve' and 'bourgeois' by Lukács, who represented political orthodoxy at the time. However, as Eagleton notes:

[In response] to Lukács's criticism of his art as decadently formalistic, Brecht accuses Lukács himself of producing a purely formalistic definition of realism. He makes a fetish of one historically relative literary form (nineteenth-century realist fiction) and then dogmatically demands that all other art should conform to this paradigm. In demanding this he ignores the historical basis of form: how, asks Brecht, can forms appropriate to an earlier phase of the class-struggle simply be taken over or even recreated at a later time? (1976: 70-71).

This is a question that needs to be put to critics of Zimbabwean literature who valorize the traditional nineteenth-century, European realist form, yet allege that Marechera's avant-gardism is in some sense 'alien'. In Brecht and Benjamin's view, Lukács "is a utopian idealist who wants to return to the 'good old days', whereas Brecht, like Benjamin, believed that one must start from the 'bad new days' and make something of them" (*ibid.* 71-72). Marechera's avant-gardism can be perceived in this light.

It is possible to argue, as Mutumbuka's observes, that the fragmentation and dislocation (i.e. the expressionist style) -- in Marechera's writing matches a certain socio-

economic and historical phase in Zimbabwe's history quite accurately. As quoted earlier, Mutumbuka states "that Marechera's work has contributed in no small measure to a wider appreciation of aspects of Zimbabwean history ...during the ruthlessly colonial period" (Veit-Wild 1992a: 341; emphasis added). Marechera's writing thus confronts what Eagleton terms the "bad new days" -- as opposed to harking after the "good old days" -- and in this sense it is very significant to contemporary Zimbabwean writing.

It is true that the meaning of the realism versus modernism debate is somewhat different in the Zimbabwean context because, for one thing, not all the contestants are Marxists. Also, the socio-historical context is somewhat different in the case of Zimbabwe. Nevertheless, Brecht's sentiments resonate, to a great extent, in Marechera. As Eugene Lunn comments, "Brecht strenuously opposed the prohibitive narrowness of Lukács's view of realism" (1982: 86). Brecht stated that: "Realism is not a matter of form... Literary forms have to be checked against reality, not against aesthetics -- even realist aesthetics. There are many ways of suppressing truth and many ways of stating it" (*idem.* 86).

Marechera's concept of truth (subjective, relative, and multiple) was clearly different to that of his ideological adversaries (who were mostly nationalists). Nevertheless, his work demonstrates, in Sinyavsky's words that "[the truth] can be sought by different routes" (Marechera 1987a: 104), and it yields important insights into the Zimbabwean experience. It deserves to be considered, not against the prescriptive checklist of traditional realism, but on its own merits and in view of the new horizons that it exposes for the writer and reader engaged in literature.

In conclusion, I return to the allegations that Marechera's writing is "alien to Africa" (Okonkwo 1981: 91), and lacking "a Zimbabwean authenticity" (Mzamane 1983: 213). These sorts of criticisms, as I have already indicated, are erroneous in their assumptions and unfairly

debilitating in their effect, which has been to dismiss Marechera's value as a Zimbabwean writer. Moreover, moralistic and censorious attitudes almost invariably prove counter-productive to literary dialogues; and, in the case of Zimbabwe, they have often been founded on mistaken assumptions. The concept of a 'pure' and 'authentic' African aesthetic of literature is a mythical one; and it is therefore a fallacy to assume that Marechera's writing is 'Europeanized' while conventional realist and nationalist writing is not. For his part, Marechera insisted that European or any other influences were not necessarily pernicious, but that "African literature will be the poorer if we ignore the influences from other countries" (Veit-Wild 1988; 133).

In summary, Marechera's main deviations from traditional realism are as follows: he rejects the realist concept of 'typicality' (i.e. what Ngara describes as the 'plain' style, typical characters, acting under typical circumstances etc.), in favour of expressionism, which emphasizes the subjective perspective of an individual, who nevertheless offers insightful social commentary.

He rejects the chronological, linear presentation of events (based on the notion of a unified and objective recollection of reality), in favour of fragmentation, stream of consciousness, and surrealism. He is averse to closure, and his writing is thus characterized by deliberate open-endedness and discontinuity.

He rejects the Enlightenment, 'rationality', the utilitarian ideals of nation-building; and, hence, the use of the novel to uphold these concepts. As a possible alternative to restrictive forms, he advocates the Menippean novel, which is a subversive and transgressive mix of genres and forms, realism and anti-realism, the carnival, documentary, parody and satire.

He disrupts the notion of logic and seamless wholes through surrealism, montage and automatic writing. He employs Brechtian shock tactics and alienation effects, mixing sacred

and profane images, and exposing the hidden underbelly of society which language often conceals.

He does not write for the passive, receptive reader but for the active, critical reader. A critical reading is necessitated by Marechera's aversion to closure, and his exposure of the myth of the invisible, infallible author. His 'self-absorbtion', self-reflexivity, self-consciousness, and ironic detachment are, paradoxically, a means of engaging with the reader; they are also a means of questioning the problematic assumptions of grand master narratives of ruling hegemonies.

All of these (and other) techniques, modes and gestures constitute Marechera's avant-gardism. None are employed arbitrarily. Most are the result of a clear and calculated strategy, which was, in the avant-garde tradition, to launch an assault on the limitations imposed by the conventional novel, and all forms of centralized authority, and to expose illusions and pretences.

3. "MINDBLAST": AVANT-GARDISM IN THE POST-INDEPENDENCE

ZIMBABWE CONTEXT

Mindblast, a carnivalesque collection of plays, poetry, narratives, and extracts from a journal, is the only post-independence work that Dambudzo Marechera managed to have published before his death in 1987. Published in 1984, it deals with the specific conditions facing Marechera upon his return to Zimbabwe from exile in 1981, when he found himself homeless and destitute on the streets of Harare. He wrote most of the text which now comprises Mindblast on a park-bench in Cecil Square (now Africa Unity Square).

The social, political, and biographical background to Mindblast are documented in some detail by "the Journal", which is appended to the collection. This personal chronicle of day-to-day events is significant in that it offers the reader a commentary and a context in which to read the anti-realist sections of the compilation.⁶⁴

In an interview about Mindblast, he comments that "my own personal life was frankly one of rather sordid conditions: day after day trying to survive" (Veit-Wild 1992: 310). Extracts from "the Journal" document this experience in some detail. Marechera comments that:

I did not know where I was going. I did not care. I was carrying in a plastic bag all my possessions in the world. A typewriter, typing paper, a pen, an extra ribbon and seven copies of my last novel which I was trying to sell in the streets and in the whorehouse bars. I was dying for a cigarette - but that too could go to hell (Marechera 1984a: 119).

Considering the highly subversive nature of Mindblast, it is something of a miracle that it was published at all. Stanley Nyamfukudza, then an editor for College Press, agreed

⁶⁴ Despite the advice of his publishers (and probably as a measure of the importance he afforded to specific contextualizations), Marechera was adamant that this section should be published in the final compilation. See Nyamfukudza's remarks in Veit-Wild (1992: 338).

to publish this unprecedented indictment of post-independence politics in Zimbabwe at a time when the new government was in no mood for criticism. A State of Emergency remained in effect in Zimbabwe throughout the 1980s; and any form of opposition was viewed with suspicion, if it was not suppressed. Marechera refused to be silenced by anyone, however, and continued to embarrass the new government by publicly declaring that:

The rich are getting more powerful and richer, and the poor are getting poorer. Any writer worth his name cannot write about that. The publishers are afraid of the government attitude towards anything they publish which may or may not be considered patriotic (Marechera 1984b: 6).

Significantly, following the publication of Mindblast, Marechera was banned from the 1984 International Book Fair and detained for six days by the CIO authorities.

It is not clear whether the CIO considered Marechera a real threat or merely an embarrassment to the new government. They did, however, monitor his activities, and he was eventually compelled to abandon his writing workshops after continuous harassment from CIO agents who disguised themselves as aspiring young writers and pretended to seek advice.⁶⁵ Marechera explains in "the Journal" that:

They would walk in, introduce themselves as writers-to-be [then ask questions like] "I don't think all this socialism here has been clearly worked out. I think it will fail. What do you think?" (1984a: 134).

The entrapment techniques would invariably fail on Marechera. Nevertheless the intrusions infuriated him because they wasted his time and also kept genuine advice-seekers waiting in long queues. Also, the author was clearly concerned about the totalitarian tendencies of the new government.

In the 1980s, the Zimbabwean State was in many respects extremely repressive. In

⁶⁵ Marechera was forced to close down his Literary Consultancy only a few days after he opened it in September 1982. Veit-Wild notes that "The agency was particularly welcomed by ex-combatants who had written about their war experiences" (1992a: 327). Marechera always suspected that the CIO were behind his eviction (ibid.).

a forthright interview given in 1986, Marechera comments that:

Here we have a deliberate campaign to promote Zimbabwean culture: everyone is talking about it, building it, developing it. When politicians talk about culture, one had better pack one's rucksack and run, because it means the beginning of unofficial censorship. Zimbabwean writers -- my own contemporaries -- will never dare to write something like Mindblast, precisely because there is this heavy emphasis on developing our traditional values (Veit-Wild 1992:39).

Those who did not measure up to ZANU-PF's definitions of what constituted Zimbabwean culture found themselves relegated to the margins of society and Marechera became one such outcast. In "the Journal" he states that: "A lot had been said about how I was alienated from my environment, from my Africanness. A lot had been said about it -- what the hell!" (120).

The state apparatus conducted a covert programme of intolerance against all those whom it considered 'unpatriotic' and a 'disgrace' to the country. Marechera was directly exposed to this attitude because he lived amongst beggars, tramps, drunks, prostitutes and other social outcasts. In "the Journal", while at work at his typewriter in the park, Marechera is asked by an old white beggar if he has a cigarette to spare. He writes that - "It is a grim story being down and out in Harare. Being down and out anywhere. The newspapers here are continually running campaigns against beggars, demanding their summary arrest. Hell!" (145).

Purity campaigns, intended to rid Zimbabwe of its 'undesirable elements', became a regular occurrence. Beggars and vagrants were the most obvious and easy targets, followed by prostitutes. In 1986, for example, hundreds of beggars and single women suspected of prostitution were rounded up off the streets of Harare and taken off to prisons in an effort to 'clean up' the city ahead of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) conference and the arrival

of international dignitaries and heads of state, whom the government wanted to impress.⁶⁶ Countless other examples also show a Zimbabwean obsession with 'cleansing' itself in order to present a certain image to itself as well as to the international community.

The image presented in the state-controlled media was that of a homogeneous socialist country, united in its efforts to develop according to the ideology of the ruling party (which was, ostensibly, Marxism-Leninism and 'scientific socialism'). Criticism of the Mugabe government was never reported on the television, radio or mainstream press and it was severely curtailed in the independent press. The government was also able to filter out criticism and safe-guard its progressive image by imposing severe restrictions on foreign journalists -- often preventing them from travelling to war-torn parts of Matabeleland.⁶⁷

A statement was made by the then Minister of Manpower, Development and Planning, Edgar Tekere, which illustrates the depth of ill-feeling and the lengths to which the government was prepared to go to maintain its iron grip on the country: "Nkomo and his guerillas are germs in the country's wounds and they will have to be cleaned up with iodine. The patient will have to scream a little" (Astrow 1983: 167). The 'cleansing' mindset of the ruling party is illuminated in this rather cavalier quip. Ironically, when he fell from grace himself, and formed the new opposition Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM) to challenge

⁶⁶ Marechera was greatly disturbed by this incident and comments on it in "Confessions of a Rusty Dread (Hammered Yet Again into a Nail)", an unpublished manuscript. See Veit-Wild (1992a: 351-2).

⁶⁷ See Spring (1986: 163). Also, thousands of Ndebele-speaking men, women and children disappeared, only to be discovered in mass graves several years later; and drought relief was suspended to parts of the province and several communities starved as a result (Gaylard 1993a: 37-38). PF-ZAPU, the main opposition party at the time, were believed to be sponsoring the so-called 'dissident war'. As a consequence, their rallies were often banned and ZAPU-supporters, who were mostly Ndebele-speakers, frequently found themselves the victims of harassment by ZANU-PF thugs. Discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity also persisted on a widespread scale (see Spring 1986 and Carver 1989).

Mugabe's ZANU-PF, Tekere fell victim to the same type of political intolerance. ZUM too was soon to accuse the government, with justification, of obstructing their political rallies and misrepresenting them in the state-controlled media as a danger to 'national unity'.⁶⁸

Marechera's social criticism in Mindblast remains relevant because it addresses prevailing attitudes in Zimbabwe that have continued well into the 1990s. Although the ZANU-PF government has abandoned its goal of establishing a one-party state, it has nevertheless continued in its attempts to 'cleanse', 'purify' and homogenize Zimbabwean society. In 1991, for example, squatter camps on the outskirts of Harare were bulldozed and burnt to the ground by the Harare City Council in preparation for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and a visit by the Queen of England. Other incidents also reveal that the political landscape in Zimbabwe is still characterized by façades and pretences.

In his inaugural address to the other Commonwealth leaders at the plush Harare Sheraton Conference Centre, Robert Mugabe stated that:

Time has come for us to take a close look at ourselves. We are members of the Commonwealth in good faith as long as we continue to uphold the principles we have proclaimed. Indeed, when we ourselves, individually and collectively, betray our own principles, we cannot proclaim ourselves as champions of human rights wherever they are violated. The principle of democracy must be a pervading one as much for the Commonwealth as for its every member (Anon., Moto 1991: 4).

Less than twenty four hours later, Mugabe was being accused by University of Zimbabwe students of gross hypocrisy. Riot police, wielding batons and brandishing arms, sealed off the University campus to prevent the students from marching in the streets in front of the foreign guests. No one was allowed to enter or leave the campus as police fought running

⁶⁸ Prior to the 1990 General Election, representatives of the ZANU-PF Youth League attacked (and nearly killed) the ZUM candidate for Gweru, Patrick Kombayi. Despite their conviction for attempted murder, they were immediately given a full presidential pardon from Robert Mugabe. On the other hand, ZUM youths who were involved in scuffles, initiated apparently by the ZANU-PF Youth League, were detained indefinitely without charge under the Emergency Powers Act until some time after the election.

battles with students who were protesting the imposition of the recent University Amendment Act and the National Council of Higher Education Act -- two pieces of repressive legislation which effectively stripped the University of its academic freedom.

Mugabe told the BBC that the protesting students were nothing more than rapists, drunkards and drug addicts who were prone to violence, and a danger to public security, and that they could not therefore be allowed onto the streets of Harare (*ibid.* 4-5). Responding to allegations of heavy-handedness, he said in his stern, paternalistic schoolmaster voice: "They are our children. We will discipline them our way" (*ibid.* 5-6).

Totalitarian tendencies also have been evident in the government's crack-downs on civil disobedience and industrial action by unions.⁶⁹ Socio-economic repression and political repression remain a reality in Zimbabwe. Amidst widespread discontent, following a dramatic fall in living standards for the majority of Zimbabweans under the government's Economic and Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP), unpopular minorities have been targeted as the new 'enemies' of Zimbabwean society.

⁶⁹ I refer to Richard Carver's (1989) report on this issue. The 1985 Labour Relations Act states that workers do not have the right to strike without government approval. Under the Labour Relations Act, workers in the so-called "essential services" have no right to withdraw their labour (Carver 1989: 63).

In May 1989 seventy-seven junior doctors who withheld their labour, for reasons of pay and working conditions, were arrested and charged under the Law and Order (Maintenance) Act (of 1960). As a consequence of this strike, the government introduced new, even more punitive, legislation (Carver 1989: 63). The railway artisans strike of August 1989 was not tolerated by the government and the Posts and Telecommunications Corporation (PTC) workers strike of September 1989 was also dealt with in a heavy-handed manner. One hundred and sixteen PTC employees were arrested under the new regulations. On 4 October 1989, Morgan Tsvangira, leader of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) issued a statement condemning the University of Zimbabwe's Vice-Chancellor for closing the University after campus unrest and two days later he was arrested by the CIO (Carver 1989: 64).

Teachers, nurses, and other civil servant strikes have continued into the 1990s and strikers have continued to be dealt with by the government in a heavy-handed, authoritarian manner, despite legitimate grievances.

In 1995, President Robert Mugabe initiated a vicious anti-gay campaign. GALZ (the Gay and Lesbian Organisation of Zimbabwe) were banned from the Zimbabwe International Book Fair, where Mugabe lambasted them as "the association of sodomists [sic.] and sexual perverts" in his inaugural speech to the fair (Aug 2). He then condemned the tolerance of homosexuals in other countries and told an anti-gay ZANU-PF Women's League rally that "To us [homosexuality] will remain outside our culture....That madness we shall never accept here in Zimbabwe, never ever" (The Herald, 19 Aug). The homophobic frenzy went even further when Mugabe called on the public to "arrest" gays and lesbians, whom he described as "worse than pigs and dogs" and having "no human rights whatsoever".⁷⁰

The above examples (and many others) show a worrying pattern of social and political intolerance in Zimbabwe which is quite obviously linked to cultural nationalism. Politicians continually manipulate this ideology to conceal pressing issues such as the huge economic disparity that prevails in the country, and frequently scapegoat persona non grata, such as beggars, prostitutes, and homosexuals when it is convenient for them to do so.

Marechera was also familiar with the accusation of 'unAfricanness' and warned in 1986 that:

When culture is emphasized in such a nationalistic way, that can lead to fascism. When in Nazi Germany culture started to be defined in a nationalistic way, it meant that all other people, all other nations were stupid; it meant intellectuals, painters, writers, lecturers, being persecuted or being assassinated. In this sense, all nationalism

⁷⁰ Despite offensive and dangerous statements of this type, Mugabe was not directly criticized by anyone at the University of Zimbabwe. In fact he has been given the unequivocal support of many in the academic community at UZ. Professor George Kahari, for example, has actively lent his voice to the anti-gay campaign. When interviewed about GALZ's attempt to participate in the 1996 Book Fair, Kahari (who belongs to the Book Fair Board) told a Herald reporter: "We do not approve of this kind of freedom because that kind is against our culture and we want our people to adhere to the culture which does not allow people to behave the way homosexuals do. They have been banned by Government and if they insist, the law will take its course" (The Herald 25 July, 1996). The High Court subsequently ruled the government's banning null and void.

always frightens me (Veit-Wild 1992: 39).

In the 1980s Marechera, at least, was a voice of dissent against the alarming tide of intolerance in Zimbabwe. However, he felt extremely isolated from mainstream society and could only communicate with other misfits, outcasts, and persona non grata such as himself.

In "the Journal" he comments that:

I wanted to talk to the whole world but as soon as I opened my lips I would know how utterly useless it was....I found my ideal listener and reader in the real drunk, the types who like me, had given up conceding the world was a particularly sane refuge from nightmares, massacres⁷¹,... [and] political party thugs who would wreck your home and smash your body at the drop of the wrong party card⁷² (1984a: 120-1).

While it is true that Marechera's loneliness and sense of isolation derived largely from his own highly individualized sensibility, it must also be acknowledged that he was a casualty of social intolerance and cultural nationalism and that his own trauma was thus reflected in the trauma of his society. In as much as his castigation and alienation were the result of a repressed society, profoundly ill at ease with itself, they provide a poignant social commentary. He also identified, through personal experience, with the marginalized and dispossessed in Zimbabwean society and, to that extent, has become something of a spokesperson for them, which is a significant point for further discussions about the author's relevance to Zimbabwe.

To make his point, Marechera deliberately played the iconoclast and forced mainstream society to engage with him as an outcast. He was aware that his clothing and appearance -- especially his dread-locks -- stigmatized him as 'alien'; but he insisted on confronting people with this 'otherness'.

⁷¹ It is likely that "massacres" is a coded reference to the covert campaign of genocide which was taking place in Matabeleland at that time, as mentioned earlier on in this thesis.

⁷² In the 1980s, people were often coerced into carrying ZANU-PF party cards and attending ZANU-PF political rallies.

In "the Journal", a curious onlooker disturbs the author at his typewriter in the park by staring at his dread-locks. Marechera comments that:

I cannot account for the national paranoia about Rastafarians. They invite a lot of Rasta musicians to the main centres of the country; they listen more than a lot to reggae music; some of them are totally fascinated by the way Rasta's talk. At the same time, in the whorehouse bars and hotels, in the streets of the ghetto and the streets of the suburbs, in the schools and in the churches, in the shebeens and in the Avenues, in the offices and in the factories, in the government corridors and in the squatter settlements -- everywhere it seems -- the Rastaman and anyone who remotely looks like him is abused verbally, physically, historically, socially, psychologically (132).

Bob Marley, perhaps the most well-known Rastafarian musician, sang to hundreds of thousands of jubilant fans at Zimbabwe's first independence celebrations in 1980. Other reggae Rastas such as Bunny Wailer, and King Sounds and the Israelites have since toured Zimbabwe as well, much to the delight of a large following of fans. At the same time, however (as Marechera states) Rastafarians are subjected to astonishing abuse, very often by the same people who enjoy their music. The simultaneous veneration and renunciation of Rastafarian culture in Zimbabwe is indeed bizarre. It is ironic that mainstream Zimbabwean society condemned Dambudzo for being 'schizophrenic' when it shows signs of schizophrenia itself.

Ethnocentric, xenophobic, misogynistic and homophobic attitudes have thrived in Zimbabwe along with a widespread confusion as to what in actuality constitutes 'Zimbabwean culture'. ZANU-PF and the state apparatus have often attempted to define Zimbabwean culture by way of exclusions. The reality, however, is a diverse and heterogeneous society.

As the following article in Moto magazine states:

It is true most black Zimbabweans speak and understand Shona or Ndebele. That is, however, as far as the supposed homogeneity goes. In reality Zimbabwe has a variety of indigenous cultures, languages, dialects, tribes, religions, etc. To this variety should be added the immigrant communities and their descendants, mainly Malawians, Zambians, Mozambicans, Whites and Asians who have made Zimbabwe their permanent home....[S]loganeers tend to ... forget that, if people are Zimbabweans, they

are also Karanga, Manyika, Zezuru, Korekore, Tonga, Ndebele, Ndau, Fingo, Ungwe, Venda, Nambya, Shunga, Nohwe, Shangwe, Kalanga, Budja, Hera, Rozvi, Tawara, Hlengwe, Sotho, Qhosa, European, Asians, etc. etc. (Anon. 1988: 6).

I would add to this that Zimbabwean society is both a rural and urban one, traditional and westernized; it is also stratified into a variety of classes and comprised of women and men, old and young, employed and unemployed, homosexuals and heterosexuals, able-bodied and disabled persons, hearing and deaf persons, sighted and blind persons, HIV positive and HIV negative persons. Mindblast was of monumental significance because at an early stage in Zimbabwe's independence it contested and resisted ZANU-PF's attempt to whitewash diversity and difference in the interests of imposing a 'one-party state'.

In Mindblast Marechera also attempted to deconstruct the oppressive social milieu in Harare. As a woman walks past him in the park, for example, when he is hard at work at his typewriter, she calls out to her friend: "Why is he sitting there typing in the middle of the public? Has he no home? It's people like him who shame us" (133). The assumptions behind such a statement are shown to be extremely problematic: the woman's main concern appears to be that Marechera is giving black people a bad name. She is embarrassed to see him bedraggled, homeless and unemployed and she clearly does not regard writing as a serious full-time vocation - hence the insinuation that he is also idle. Marechera comments that:

The unquieting thing was there was no such tradition in Harare as the one I was living, that of the Bohemian fulltime writer. Everyone expected you to get a job and buy a house, a car, a wife and a mistress, status in society (125).

It was ironic that Marechera found himself being censured for giving black people a 'bad name' because he was not bourgeois, materialistically-minded, and westernized enough. This again exposes the widespread confusion in Zimbabwe in the 1980s as to what exactly constituted the so-called 'national culture'. Proponents of cultural purity promote values that

they see as 'traditionally African', but these could just as well be construed as Calvinistic, puritanical, bourgeois and neo-Victorian values and attitudes.

Marechera clashed again with post-independence Zimbabwean society in his refusal to accept the taboo against interracial romantic relationships. His open liaison with a white woman, therefore, further stigmatized him as an outcast. In "the Journal", he states that: "A black man in arms with a white woman was still something of a miracle in Harare. The acid comments and bitter glances spat at us from both black and white people" (131). Sexual attitudes inherited from the Rhodesian era remained largely intact immediately after independence. Both in his personal life and in his writing, Marechera struggled to overturn racist and puritanical attitudes towards sex which he found very oppressive. This led to his castigation by 'cultural purity' fanatics on both sides of the colour bar.

The conditions which gave rise to Mindblast in the early 1980s were simultaneously repressive and ridiculous. Marechera's goal as a writer was to find a form which would express this reality. He comments in "the Journal" that:

I must find and define myself in this new Zimbabwe. A socialist government does not bother to come to terms with a writer; they have the power to crush him at any time. It is the writer who has to either reject himself and adapt or with a fearful desperation discover by trial and error how to write and survive in the existing conditions (137).

Mindblast stands as an experiment in Marechera's attempt to negotiate a viable space for himself as a writer in the post-independence Zimbabwean context. It contains some of the most forthright social commentary to have emerged from the country since independence.

While being highly individualized in its outlook, Mindblast also has a distinctly democratic appeal: it reflects on a broad range of social issues that affected not just Marechera himself but also thousands of other Zimbabweans who, like him, were struggling to re-negotiate their identity and to come to terms with their continued economic and other

repression under the new dispensation. Of Mindblast, Marechera states:

it has to do with those states of mind now prevailing in the new Zimbabwe, the new Harare, which used to be Salisbury. Those states of mind are contradictory. They tend to be eccentric or tend to be downright shallow. There is no particular Harare psyche or mentality.

That is why the book consists of many voices. I divided it into different sections trying to use at once a fictional more or less Orwellian style mixed with a kind of iconoclastic expressionist technique; and mixing poetry with drama and with the diary form....For me the only way to express this Harare is to experiment with all available literary styles and perhaps come to a successful combination (Veit-Wild 1992a: 311).

With the "many voices" and the various "literary styles" in Mindblast, Marechera sets himself against the singular perspective and the univocity of the traditional nationalist-realist novel.

The quality of the text in Mindblast is uneven. However, as David Pattison observes:

Marechera never revised anything: he was incapable of doing so. He rewrote but never revised. Those critics who call him an experimental writer I suggest are mistaken, he never mastered the craft of writing to the extent that he could develop it by experimentation. As a writer-craftsman he remained a novice, but the lack of revision is not necessarily a disadvantage. The ideas are often raw and unpolished and in that state more closely represent what Marechera was trying to express at the time of writing them than a later, perhaps anodyne revised version produced on the grounds of aesthetic appeal (1995: 2).

The appeal of Mindblast is precisely its rough and raw quality -- it appears to emerge directly from the streets of Harare. While Pattison is correct in describing Marechera as 'undisciplined' (in the conventional sense at least) in his experimentation, I believe he is incorrect in his deduction that Marechera was not an experimental writer at all: on the contrary, Marechera appeared to be acutely conscious of the need for innovative new forms and constantly engaged in, as he states, an "experiment with all available literary styles" in order hopefully to arrive at "a successful combination" (Veit-Wild 1992a: 311). In order to argue this contention of mine, it is necessary to analyze the experimental material contained in Mindblast (excluding the poetry).

Carnival, Grotesque Realism and Menippean Satire in "The Skin of Time: plays by Buddy"

"The Skin of Time: plays by Buddy", a trilogy consisting of "The Coup", "The Gap", and "Blitzkrieg" are a potent indictment of post-independence politics in Zimbabwe. More than a decade after their publication, there has yet to be an open public performance of these plays in Zimbabwe, which is perhaps a testament to the sensitive nature of the material and the climate of 'political correctness' that still prevails. "The Coup", "The Gap" and "Blitzkrieg" deal with corruption and hypocrisy in the new regime; and for their full meaning to be appreciated, they need to be read within their specific context:

The Mugabe regime had promised a dramatic break with white colonial rule and professed a commitment to Marxism-Leninism and 'scientific socialism'. However, it soon became obvious that the slogans and the rhetoric did not match the reality on the ground. At the end of the first decade of independence, Marxist critics such as Colin Stoneman and Lionel Cliffe questioned whether the new regime had ever been committed to Marxism-Leninism. In 1989 they wrote that:

Certainly there has been precious little attempt so far to transform the socio-economic structure or to change the terms of the country's involvement with the world economy, in directions that would suggest a transition to socialism (1989: 192).

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the Mugabe government has abandoned Marxism-Leninism altogether, opting instead for a market economy and an Africanist path towards capitalist development (*ibid.* 192).

In the 1980s, the official policy of 'scientific socialism' in Zimbabwe was seen by many as a complete sham. Marechera comments in "the Journal" that "Some blacks are now filthily rich; the rest are sure enough filthily poor. We are already a Kenya" (148). It seemed to him that despite the socialist rhetoric, Zimbabwe remained sharply divided into 'haves' and

'have nots' and little was being done to rectify this inequality. Marechera's plays, like Mhlanga's and Musengezi's, sought to strip away the socialist pretensions of the ruling élite. Hard evidence now justifies their criticisms. Throughout the 1980s, promises to the povo, on behalf of whom the liberation struggle was supposedly fought, were repeatedly broken and the disparity of wealth between rich and poor increased dramatically.

In Zimbabwe and the New Elite, Ruth Weiss notes that "By the 1990s, wages in real terms had fallen below the 1980 levels" (1994: xiv). Her book also argues that since 1980:

although the politics of white privilege disappeared, white economic power remained. Moreover, the arrival of a new black elite spawned by the new order marked the start of a close alliance established between the two power blocs. In effect, this alliance established a single multi-racial elite based upon a convergence of political and business interests (1994: front cover).

This was a theme that Marechera chose to satirize in "The Skin of Time" plays. Refusing to censor himself, Marechera attempted to expose an official culture which was both hypocritical and absurd. To this end, he used the carnivalesque aesthetic of Mikhail Bakhtin in Rabelais and his World for "the 'unmasking' and disclosing of the unvarnished truth under the veil of false claims and arbitrary ranks" (Pomorska 1968: x).

Krystyna Pomorska notes that:

The official prohibition of certain kinds of laughter, irony and satire was imposed upon the writers of Russia after the revolution....The fate of Mayakovsky, Bugakov, and Zoshchenko ...testifies to the Soviet state's rejection of free satire and concern with national self-irony, a situation similar to that prevailing during the Reformation. In defiance of this prohibition, both Rabelais and Bakhtin cultivated laughter, aware that laughter, like language, is uniquely characteristic of the human species (ibid. xi).

The humourlessness of the 'official culture' in Zimbabwe became brazenly apparent when the government passed a law making it an offence to ridicule the then constitutional (but non-executive) Head of State -- President Canaan Sodindo Banana. As Jan Raath remarks, this "ended in a rash of jokes, like the one about Queen Elizabeth asking him, as he arrived in London, if he was alone or in a bunch" (1997: 14).

State control of the broadcast media and most of the print media, plus a heavy ideological didactic from 'the Party' added to repressive conditions. Government officials and 'cultural commissars' such as Ngara and Chung stated that there was only "room for constructive criticism during the transition to socialism" (1985b: 166). Ngara and Chung's definition of "constructive criticism" is very problematic, as I have already indicated. So too are their prescriptions for a new 'socialist literature'.

In some respects, the conditions facing Marechera in newly-independent Zimbabwe were similar to those facing Bakhtin in Russia in the 1930s. (I stress that this comparison is limited; it would not be fair and accurate to describe the new regime in Zimbabwe as Stalinist in its outlook.) Nevertheless, many writers consider it their obligation to pre-empt the emergence of totalitarianism, as far as it is possible, with their writing. I believe that Marechera was one such writer.

In Rabelais and his World Bakhtin states that:

No dogma, no authoritarianism, no narrow-minded seriousness can coexist with Rabelaisian images; these images are opposed to all that is finished and polished, to all pomposity, to every ready-made solution in the sphere of thought and world outlook (Bakhtin 1968:3).

The unfinished, unpolished, disruptive aesthetic of the carnivalesque knows no authority and tends, therefore, to be democratic and egalitarian in its outlook. Laughter plays a major role in the carnival:

[Carnavalesque laughter] is first of all, a festive laughter, therefore it is not an individual reaction to some isolated 'comic' event. Carnival laughter is the laughter of all the people. Second, it is universal in scope; it is directed at all and everyone, including the carnival's participants. The entire world is seen in its droll aspect, in its gay relativity. Third, this laughter is ambivalent: it is gay, triumphant, and at the same time mocking, deriding. It asserts and denies, it buries and revives. Such is the laughter of carnival (11-12; emphasis added).

Oppressive systems are turned upside down by the laughter of the carnival. As Bakhtin states:

carnival celebrates temporary liberation from the prevailing truth of the established order; it marks the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privilege, norms and prohibitions (109).

In view of Marechera's resistance to hierarchies and "the established order", as discussed in Chapter Two, his affinity with the carnival is obvious.

In "The Skin of Time" trilogy, corporeal images of the body eating, drinking, digesting, copulating, urinating and defecating are interspersed with political satire in a genre which fits into the general aesthetic of the carnivalesque, but can more precisely be defined as grotesque realism.

In his introduction to Bakhtin's Rabelais and his World, Michael Holquist notes that "The 'grotesque realism' of which so much is made in this book is a point-by-point inversion of categories used in the thirties to define Socialist Realism" (1968: xvii). These categories, as discussed earlier, included an emphasis on the proletariat (as being at the heart of the class struggle) and the depiction of 'typical' characters in 'typical' circumstances (Robin: 1992: 58). While focusing on 'the common man', Bakhtin nevertheless inverted the socialist realist criteria of 'typicality' so as to present an aesthetic which was more popular, more democratic and more liberating.

Grotesque realism, according to Bakhtin, centres on the "material bodily principle" (19). He further states that "the bodily element is deeply positive. It is presented not in a private, egotistic form, severed from the other spheres of life, but as something universal, representing all the people" (1968: 19). The bodily element of grotesque realism is thus very democratic.

One of the characteristics of grotesque realism is degradation. With images of copulation, urination, and defecation, it effectively exposes the veneer of social decorum. Thus, the genre appealed to Marechera. He writes that "Ayi Kwei Armah in his The

Beautiful [sic.] Ones Are Not Yet Born not only stripped the African image of its clothes but also forced it to undergo a baptism of shit" (1990: 82). In Mindblast, the post-independence Zimbabwean image is likewise stripped of its clothes and forced to undergo "a baptism of shit".

"The pretence of wearing clothes and therefore denying the body," wrote Marechera in the late 1970s, "always suffers the fate of the emperor" (1990: 52):

A host of men and women of ideas contrary to the game of actually seeing the emperor's clothes have been and are persecuted. News has reached us that Kenya is holding in detention its foremost novelist [Ngugi wa'Thiongo]. Nigeria did the same thing once with Soyinka. South Africa has always done so with its black writers and journalists. Everywhere society demands that the illusion of the clothes be closely observed even though everyone, including the emperor or field marshal, knows this is mere pretence (1990: 52-53).

Fed up with illusions, Marechera attempted to strip away pretences and reveal the 'naked' truth in Mindblast. He did this particularly in "the Skin of Time" satires.

Three major avant-garde traditions are experimented with here: the carnival, grotesque realism, and Menippean satire. All three are closely linked, as I have indicated. "[T]he Menippean satire,...in [Bakhtin's] account is a protean form which directly evinces the influence of carnival" (1994: 51). The Menippean satire, named for its originator, the Greek cynic Menippus, "deals with mental attitudes rather than fully realized characters" and "[i]t uses [plot] freely and loosely" (Holman 1972: 313). These characteristics can be detected in "The Skin of Time" plays.

The first play in the trilogy, "The Coup", takes place in an office. The stage directions state that the place is "Any in the 'Third World'" (8), though it becomes obvious later on in the play that this is Zimbabwe. The plot concerns a business coup staged in military fashion by Norman Drake, who ousts his brother-in-law, Spotty, from the managerial position of a

company with close links to the new government.

Spotty, who is married to Drake's sister, Jane, mistakenly assumes that it is his brother-in-law who is "up for execution" but the tables turn on him dramatically (9). Drake, an unscrupulous entrepreneur, cheats on his expense accounts, wears expensive imported suits and has recently stolen five thousand dollars from the company in order to procure a number of Shona sculptures from the museum -- illegally. Spotty has received some of these sculptures as a New Year gift and is not amused because, as he says, "If discovered in my possession they would get me at least five years in prison" (12).

Drake is unfazed, however. Trying to act slightly surprised he says, "Well the fellow expressly said there was nothing shady about the deal though I did wonder why the exchange had to take place in the lavatory of Miekles Hotel" (10).⁷³ It is here that the scatological motif, which links all three plays, is first introduced. Drake and the corrupt museum official trade off Zimbabwe's heritage -- in the form of the Shona sculptures -- in a public lavatory. The toilet re-emerges as a motif in all three of the plays and it is associated with hypocrisy, depravity and the stench of corruption.

Spotty frets over the possible legal repercussions of Drake's crime but Drake is undaunted: "Justice, Spotty? It doesn't exist. There is only the Law and that's fuck all to do with justice" (11). He appears quite confident that he will be able to bribe his way out of any possible legal difficulties.

Although Drake is shamelessly unscrupulous, he quite gleefully points out that Spotty is no angel himself: "Maybe it's time you scrutinised yourself under a microscope, Spotty," he says maliciously, "You'd be amazed by the extent of your moral measles" (13). Spotty

⁷³ Miekles Hotel is a landmark in Harare. It boasts five stars and is possibly the oldest and most élite hotel in the country. Many distinguished people arrange to meet in its bars, restaurants or foyer.

is having an extra-marital affair and his wife, Jane, has tried to commit suicide as a result.

"The Coup" is finally hatched when Spotty tries to sack Drake for theft and misconduct, and begins dialling the Central Intelligence Department Fraud Squad. Drake suddenly turns the tables, knocks his brother-in-law out, slumps him into the visitor's chair, and assumes the Manager's chair for himself. He calls for the signed and sealed documents from Mr Shogun, a high-profile Japanese client, whom, it appears, has also been involved in the plotting of this 'coup'. Louise, the company secretary, who has also switched her allegiances to Drake, enters with Mr Shogun and a tray full of champagne glasses to celebrate the day's 'business'. They all toast their vanquished enemy derisively and Drake says: "May the spots on earth of spotty silent majorities increase and multiply" (17). Shogun and Louise promptly shout "HEAR! HEAR!"

We discover that the plotting of this 'coup' has involved others in high places as well: Shogun says "The Minister of Industry asked to be remembered to you, Mr Drake," and "The Minister of Finance said he would be happy to officially open the North-West wing, on a day convenient to you" (16).

There is obvious irony in the fact that Spotty, who is seen as representing the silent majority, is white. Although the racial identity of the characters is never stated and is uncertain in the first play, it later becomes obvious in the other plays. It is unlikely that the lack of specificity about race was an error on the author's part. Rather, it seems like a deliberate attempt to blur the reader's perception in terms of racial categories.⁷⁴ If this play

⁷⁴ In a stage production of these plays, an innovative director could exploit this leeway in the script to cast blacks as whites or whites as blacks.

In fact, racial identity is more deliberately blurred in another play by Marechera, entitled "The Alley" (reminiscent of Beckett's *Theatre of the Absurd* and Genet's *Theatre of Cruelty*). Here, there are just two characters, who play multiple roles. Robin is "a white

is to be read as an allegory of the Zimbabwean 'revolution', then it severely problematizes the struggle in terms of race. The transference of power in 'the coup' is not from white to black, as we might have expected, but from white to white. Spotty represents the "spotty silent majorities" while Drake, in spite of his alliance with the new socialist government - clearly has no sympathies for the "silent majority". The coup, therefore, has very little to do with race: it is rather a triumph of the greedy and the unscrupulous over the weak and downtrodden.

Spotty complains that "tyranny flourishes" on the compost heap of the "lean spotty silent majority" (12). If the play is to be read on an allegorical level, this suggests that despite the so-called revolution in Zimbabwe, the masses have yet to escape the shackles of oppression; one form of tyranny has replaced another and the majority are putty in the hands of unscrupulous figures such as Drake.

The second play in the trilogy is entitled "The Gap". 'Taking the gap' was a colloquial expression for emigrating from Zimbabwe in the 1980s.⁷⁵ Thus the play focuses on Spotty's intended emigration to South Africa. Whereas the setting for "The Coup" was the office, the setting for "The Gap" is the sitting room. The sitting room can be seen as another middle

tramp" while Rhodes is "a black tramp" -- with all the obvious irony and punning implied. In the second scene, Rhodes enters the stage in drag and answers to the name of "Cecilia Rhodes". Even more confusingly, Cecilia is cursed by Robin -- suddenly a Rhodesian officer -- as one of the "fucking communist Jews" who thinks they "can rule this country". 'She' is also called a "SLUT", threatened with a metaphorical rape by the "Big White Cock!" and made by Robin to sit on his lap (Marechera 1994: 40-41). In this provocative piece of drama, subject positions (pertaining to race, gender and sexual orientation) are turned upside-down and dissected, quite shockingly, in front of the viewer.

⁷⁵ Roughly 100 000 whites (about half the white population of Zimbabwe) emigrated to South Africa in the late seventies and early eighties. Others emigrated to the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the USA. The mass exodus led to a considerable amount of disruption, a brain-drain and the disappearance of half of Zimbabwe's skilled workforce. This sudden vacuum led to the rapid emergence of a new black middle class, which seemed to step into the shoes of the white emigrants almost overnight.

class emblem of stability and propriety which is about to be shattered, just as the office was turned upside down in "The Coup".

Spotty is by now seriously disillusioned and suffering from chronic constipation for which he is taking copious amounts of castor oil (a well-known purgative) in a desperate attempt to find relief. As he enters with an armload of grenades, making racist remarks, his brother-in-law and now sworn enemy, Norman Drake, rings. Spotty's delinquent son, Dick, picks up the phone and tells his uncle that Spotty and Jane have quarrelled over "some tart called Arabella. And he hit her" (21). In this play, our sympathies for Spotty are soon to be shattered by his racism, adultery and wife-battering; we very quickly see that he is anything but 'spotless'.

He furiously grabs the telephone from Dick and says "Greetings Comrade Normansky Drakovsky. This is Comrade Capitalistikov speaking....I have found the Historical Path. And it leads Down South". His wife Jane, on the other hand, in Spotty's words, has decided "to stay in this pigsty of a country of an Animal Farm" (22).⁷⁶

The scatological motif of the toilet re-emerges as Spotty states, "I thought of settling in the Falkland Islands but I will stop over at Kruger's toilet to check out the air" (22). "Kruger's toilet" is clearly a metaphor for South Africa (at that stage still in the throes of Afrikaner Nationalist Party rule and administering the 'shit' of apartheid). Marechera's scatological metaphors thus deliver powerful, and subversive, political punches.

Toilets, bedpans, constipation and castor oil recur as images of degradation several

⁷⁶ Animal Farm is a reference to George Orwell's political satire of that name. According to Flora Veit-Wild's survey of Zimbabwean writers, "Orwell's work had specific connotations in the Rhodesian context. Questionnaire respondents related the Orwellian vision of totalitarianism to the oppression in Rhodesia in the first place (1984) but also to the perversion of the revolution in general terms (Animal Farm)" (Veit-Wild 1993: 221-222). 'The pigs' who overthrow the old establishment in this case are Norman Drake, along with the new ruling élite.

times in "The Gap". Spotty keeps calling out to Dick for the castor oil under his bed by the bedpan as he speaks to Jane on the phone. Jane wants a divorce and Spotty, distraught, pleads with her to return, saying "Arabella [his mistress] means nothing to me. She was just an Aberration" (24). At this moment Arabella enters the sitting room and begins to cry. (Since Arabella is black, there are clearly racist connotations to Spotty's use of the word aberration.) Spotty is in love with both women, however, and shows signs of stress and dementia as he mixes them up in his mind.

As Spotty loses his mind, barriers begin to blur and hierarchies disintegrate: he is unable to exert any authority over his son and the suburban Kenfield household descends into chaos. Dick crudely propositions Arabella: "How about you and I creep upstairs for a quick one on the double bed while he's still gaga?" (24). Spotty, who is oblivious to this episode, squirms around suffering from constipation on the couch. Finally, however, he re-emerges from his trance to hear Dick ask him quite shamelessly, "How about it, dad? Two is conventional -- and three is exotic. You start with her and I will watch. Then I'll lay her and you will watch. Then I lay you and she watches. Then she sucks - " (24). Dick's comment is highly subversive and transgressive of the norms of the white nuclear 'Rhodesian' family.

Spotty says, "I've had enough of you, you fucking bastard. It's the likes of you and Drake who've fouled it up for whites here." (24). Appalled by his son's remarks which are obviously calculated to insult him, he threatens to pull the pin out of a grenade and blow them all up at this point. Spotty cannot think of himself as anything other than a proud white Rhodesian who is being shamed by the behaviour of other whites such as Dick and Drake -- who also happen to be close relatives. One of the reasons for Spotty's distress and confusion is his inability to realize an identity outside of the colour bar. His pretences of proud

Rhodesian propriety are shown to be quite pathetic against the backdrop of the depravity in the Kenfield household. Dick is merely honest about this; Spotty is not.

We can read Dick as being representative of a new generation of young urban Zimbabweans who are thoroughly disenchanted with their parents' claims to guardianship.

Addressing Spotty and Arabella, he says:

Do you think I enjoy the psychological traumas of being the offspring of divorced white fascists? You people, you just think of yourselves. You have all these psychotic adulteries and paranoid politics and high divorce rates but have you ever THOUGHT about what that's doing to us YOUR CHILDREN? (25).

A parallel comment on the youth's disoriented condition exists in the *Journal*, where Marechera states:

Their lives are a blank; the only model Zimbabwe offers them is that of crude and corrupt capitalism: cars, videos, a suburban house, a telephone, a wife, a mistress, a name in society (154).

Disillusioned with generational hierarchies, Marechera inverts and subverts familial roles in "The Gap": Dick assumes the authority of a parent while Spotty behaves like a child who is reduced to begging his son for castor oil to cure his constipation. Dick, who seems to relish the degradation of his own father, rather unkindly says, "All right, dad, I'll go get the Castor Oil before the constipation explodes your guts and you set off those grenades" (which Spotty has saved from the Rhodesian Light Infantry) (25). Spotty's constipation thus becomes a metaphor for a build up of 'shit' and a pending explosion. Read allegorically, this echoes the apocalyptic sentiments of many who were 'taking the gap' in the early 1980s. As the metaphor implies, though, it was probably their own 'guts' that were about to explode, because the problem was as much an internal one as much as it was an external one.

After the anticipation of an explosion, the ending of "The Gap" ends unpredictably, with an anti-climactic denouement. Dick finally re-enters the sitting room with a "huge bed and mattress", having misunderstood his father's instructions completely. The desperate

Spotty screams out, "I said the Castor Oil [which is under the bed], NOT THE BED!", but Dick is now suddenly completely dazed and confused, just like his father was earlier. He begins to cry like a five year old and mumbles "You said the pan by the castor bed under the mattress -" (26). The roles have switched again.

True to the tradition of the carnival, power relationships are in a constant state of flux. Authority is interrogated, then restored, then interrogated again. At the beginning Spotty feels degraded and humiliated by his son. By the end of the play, however, Dick feels degraded and humiliated by his father. This is a characteristic of the Menippean novel -- where, according to Marechera:

Scandalous and eccentric behaviour disrupts 'the seemly course of human affairs' and provides a new view of 'the integrity of the world'. Society is unpredictable; roles can quickly change (1987a: 101).

Part of Marechera's agenda in these plays was clearly the destabilizing and decentralizing of traditional, repressive forms of authority.

As we trace the stench of corruption and depravity in "The Skin of Time" trilogy, it is interesting to note that we move from the board-room to the sitting room to the toilet. For the setting for "Blitzkrieg" is "the immediate vicinity of the toilet" in Norman Drake's house; simultaneously, it is "Zimbabwean party-time" (28). This is the climax of Marechera's scatological motif. "Blitzkrieg" exposes the ordinarily private and concealed space of the toilet to the public gaze and focuses on the 'shit' which people are trying to flush away.

In the same lecture in which he outlined the aesthetic of the Menippean novel, Marechera stated that:

We are refugees fleeing from the excesses of our parents. I have no respect for those who presume to be parents. Tradition, on closer examination, always reveals secrets we prefer to flush down the toilet. As taxpayers to the imagination, we expect the City Council to quietly get rid of the shit (1987a: 102).

This explains the motivation behind Marechera's toilet analogy.

The stage directions state that:

Throughout the play people of all shades are queuing up to use the loo. Men, women, children. The action and dialogue is therefore periodically punctuated by the flushing of the toilet which, because it is not working properly, gives a weird mind-jamming gaga flush (29).

Thus the toilet is a sordid focal point throughout the play.

The stage is abuzz with bed-hopping, bribery and other scandalous behaviour. Mrs Lydia Nzuzu, wife of the Honourable Comrade Minister Nzuzu gives Mr Shogun (now Drake's Personal Assistant) twenty dollars to inform her about Cde Drake's women friends. Despite being married, she is clearly very interested in having an affair with Drake.

Thematic threads from "The Coup" and "The Gap" continue as familiar characters re-emerge. Arabella arrives, having been abandoned by Spotty in his flight to South Africa. Louise, Spotty's former secretary, it emerges, is "Married to an African" (32). Jane and Norman Drake burst out laughing when they first discover this but then Drake says "Come come Jane. It's the year of transformation. We are all Comrade-In-Laws these days" (32). One sex scandal leads to another as Jane then admits that she also has a "comrade up [her] sleeve[:]...He's something high in the Reserve Bank" (32). Suddenly excited by the prospect of making yet another useful high-profile acquaintance, Drake scurries off to meet him. This echoes Weiss's observation of a single multi-racial elite being established in Zimbabwe shortly after independence: in this play politicians and business entrepreneurs literally go to bed with one another.

Interracial relationships become commonplace and the colour bar erodes into oblivion: Lydia is having an affair with Drake, Dick with Raven, Jane with the Reserve Bank Manager, Arabella with Spotty, Shogun (possibly) with Jane -- and Louise is married to Alfie. In the tradition of the carnival, taboos are overturned and double-standards exposed: Jane and Drake

ridicule Louise's open interracial marriage to Alfie, yet engage in secret interracial affairs of their own.

When Drake and Jane exit, Dick and Raven (the daughter of Cde and Mrs Nzuzu) enter through the toilet window and begin having sex in the toilet. Afraid of being discovered by her mother, Raven insists on the door being locked first. However, Dick wonders "why we can't have our sex without locking doors.... We are not corrupt [*sic.*] businessmen" (32). Unlike those who try to conceal their 'corruption' behind a facade, Dick at least has a desire to be more candid about his actions and intentions. He and Raven cannot be accused of any more depravity than their elders; just more openness and honesty about it. Drake, Jane, Spotty, Lydia and the Comrade Minister Nzuzu -- by way of contrast -- pretend to be righteous and upstanding citizens but this is just a façade.

Blatant bribery shortly follows this incident, as Drake gives a "fat envelope" to the Minister, stating that "this is a small token of my gratitude for the way you handled the Kenfield affair" (33). The Minister replies:

Anything for friend. Especially yourself who have been with us from the beginning of the struggle....Now, it is a magnificent party. Informal yet formal. Dignified yet casual. VIpees and a few representatives of the povo. Marvellous, Mr Drake (33).

"VIpees", a clever combination of the words VIPs and piss, is yet another example of Marechera's degradation of hierarchies through scatological humour. The 'Honourable Comrade Minister' (who has an extremely ironic title) represents a ruling élite that has sold out on the people and is corrupt to the core. In contrast to his healthy appetite for bribes from VIPs, the Minister appears to have little concern for the povo.

We see that the Minister is totally bereft of any moral integrity whatsoever when yet another fat envelope and the keys to a Rolls Royce slip into his greedy hands in exchange for Drake's election to the presidency of the National Congress of Commerce and more favours

in the future. The 'Honourable' Comrade Minister has succumbed to a neo-colonial syndrome which Amilcar Cabral explains as follows:

The experience of colonial domination shows that, in the effort to perpetuate exploitation, the colonizer not only creates a system to repress the cultural life of the colonized people; he also provokes and develops cultural alienation of a part of the population, either by so-called assimilation of indigenous people, or by creating a social gap between the indigenous élites and the popular masses. As a result of this process of dividing or of deepening the divisions in the society, it happens that a considerable part of the population, notably the urban or peasant petite bourgeoisie, assimilates the colonizer's mentality, considers itself culturally superior to its own people and ignores or looks down upon their cultural values (1994 [1973]: 57).

This is an underlying theme in "The Skin of Time" satires.

When the Honourable Comrade Minister Nzuzu exits, Mrs Nzuzu "assaults [Drake's] lips forcefully and lingeringly" just as "Raven and Dick, clothes rumpled and bedraggled, come out of the toilet" (34). In a farcical manner, they all stumble upon one another and it is quite obvious what everyone has been up to. At first Lydia Nzuzu is extremely upset that Raven has been 'seduced' by Drake's nephew; but she suddenly becomes quite enthusiastic about the 'seduction' once Drake mentions arrangements for a possible 'marriage of alliance' between the teenagers. (It is implied that this will involve a generous financial settlement, which will accrue to Lydia.)

Eventually the stage empties and the eccentric Alfie enters to deliver a soliloquy. After lighting a cigarette and staring at the toilet, he says, "If this toilet could talk, what strange conversations it would reveal; what nasty goings on, what stinking truths about everyone, what moral meals constantly defecated within it" (36-37). As Alfie suggests, 'the truth' about this corrupt society is being quietly flushed down the toilet.

Alfie appears to be somewhat of a visionary and a spokesperson for the povo. However, he is dressed as a 'Rastaman' -- complete with dread-locks and an affected West Indian accent. Given Marechera's comments about Rastafarians in "the Journal", this 50-

indicates that Alfie is probably an outsider to the povo as well as the shefs. Alfie is, foremost, a marginal character and an individual.

As a writer who has recently returned from twelve years in exile to the newly independent Zimbabwe, he resembles Dambudzo Marechera himself to an extent. His stinging satire of the disparity of wealth that prevails in Zimbabwe, despite the so-called 'revolution' and the advent of independence (as quoted in the previous chapter) strikes a powerful blow to the pretensions of the new élite.

After his soliloquy, Alfie goes into the toilet, without closing the door, to blow his nose, urinate and sing "Little Jack Horner". He leaves the door open, significantly, because he has nothing to hide. This links with the trope of openness that runs throughout Marechera's work.

The hypocritical Arabella walks in on him and is disgusted to find him giving "black people a bad name" (a theme echoed in "the Journal"). However, Alfie's retort is a brilliant display of repartee: "I like bad names, sister. I am the baddest son of a bitch this side of the colour bar" (38). Not to be outdone, Arabella then tries to reprimand Alfie for being 'unAfrican' because he is married to a white woman (Louise). In this she is a hypocrite, and Alfie comes back at her with: "You're Bibi, the black girl who was going to take the gap with Spotty Down South" (39).

There is a sudden twist in the tale as Alfie reveals his security I.D. and questions Arabella about Spotty's arms cache. Ostensibly an anti-establishment character, Alfie now reveals himself to be a security policeman -- quite clearly, though surprisingly, part of law enforcement in the new establishment. A scuffle ensues: Alfie trips Arabella but "she rolls over expertly onto one shoulder" and points an automatic weapon at him, saying "Don't move Shona bastard" (39), then locks him into the toilet and fires six shots through the door before

hurrying away. Simmering inter-tribal animosities thus explode onto the stage, adding a further twist to the intrigue of alliances, counter-alliances, betrayal and treachery.

Alfie coughs, vomits and finally emerges from the toilet with a bandaged hand, where he is met by Louise. He belittles the event by joking that "Arabella has been reading too many stories by James Hadley Chase" (40). As they leave the stage, however, they are sworn at by racists queuing outside the toilet, the first of whom says, "I always said what these black bastards mean by liberation is just to screw white pussy." The second says:

There's gratitude for you. For seventeen years we fought to protect our women and at the drop of independence the tarts jump into bed with the very bastards we were protecting them from. Tsk Tsk Tsk" (40).

The interracial marriage of Louise and Alfie arouses a visceral reaction amongst the white men, who threaten to "fix that kaffir for good after the party" (40). The remarks are of course highly offensive but they also expose a connection between racism and misogyny in the old Rhodesian mindset which is significant:

Ronald Hyam states in Empire and Sexuality that:

One thing is certain. Sex is at the very heart of racism. Racism is not caused simply by sexual apprehensions, and there are many other factors involved, such as fear of the unfamiliar, fear bred by memory of historic conflicts, fear of demographic swamping by the superior numbers of a culture perceived as alien and inferior, fear of disease, fear of economic competition for limited resources - but the peculiarly emotional hostility towards black men which it has so often engendered requires a sexual explanation. From New Orleans to New Guinea, from Barbados to Bulawayo, from Kimberley to Kuala Lumpur, the quintessential taboo to be explained is the white man's formal objection to intimacy between black men and white women. Granting political equality was perceived as giving freedom for black men to go to bed with white women, and in the American south or in southern Africa that stuck in the gullet (1990: 203).

The attitude described by Hyam can be detected quite clearly in the "1st Man", who declares that "I always said what these black bastards mean by liberation is just to screw white pussy"

(40).⁷⁷ In "The Skin of Time" plays, Marechera places the sexual taboos of the old Rhodesia (and the new Zimbabwe) under a microscope, exposes oppressive attitudes and mocks the rampant hypocrisy that has always surrounded them.

The 'culture' of the colonials is mocked and degraded when one of the men in the queue "bursts into tears and in the sight of God and the whole queue starts to wet his pants". Another man (with reference to the chronic shortages that hit post-independence Zimbabwe) complains that "We are queuing for cooking oil, we're queuing for matches, we're queuing for bread, and NOW WE ARE QUEUING FOR LAVATORIES! And for what?" Yet another man replies "To shit decently, of course" (41).

Keeping up appearances and trying to maintain a semblance of propriety has by now suffered the fate of what Marechera calls 'the emperor's clothes'. The men abandon decorum altogether and become violent thugs waiting to pick a fight. It is Shogun who eventually emerges from the toilet and is attacked by the white men because, as one of them states, "he's made one of us shit himself" (41).

⁷⁷ The interracial sex taboo in Zimbabwe has a long and fascinating history. The country was colonized in the late nineteenth century in the wake of a fanatical Purity Campaign which had occurred in Britain in the 1880s (Hyam 1990: 201). In Empire and Sexuality Ronald Hyam notes that "Almost inevitably, this campaign was extended overseas, not only to the empire ([for example]... Kenya and Rhodesia), but eventually to the wider international arena as well" (201). Hyam also notes that: "[A]ll the southern and central African colonies legislated in the first years of this century to prevent intercourse between white women and African men. Under the Southern Rhodesian Immorality Act (1903) differential treatment was patent. A white prostitute accepting a black customer would get two years' imprisonment, while the African male got five years'. The law was designed to protect white women but not black. Despite the fact that sexual relationships between white men and black women were much more common, there was little public disapproval of them" (106). The Rhodesian settler community in the then Salisbury had a thriving 'red light' district in 1910. There were nine brothels and approximately thirty (white) prostitutes catering to the needs of about 400 unmarried white male settlers. Hyam comments that "Prostitution in colonial Salisbury was defended as a lesser evil than 'going native'" (108). Later, however, when the white population increased significantly, and the settler society started to withdraw its tacit support for the easy access of its men to white prostitutes, a large number of white men consorted, in secret, with black women, often fathering children by them.

Shogun is about to be beaten up as a scapegoat for their frustrations but Drake and Mrs Nzuzu suddenly come to his rescue. Alfie later enters as well, talking into his two-way radio transmitter and carrying an automatic weapon -- now a visible figure of authority in the new establishment. The men are frisked for their weapons by Shogun, then marched off stage by Alfie.

It is curious to see Alfie in the position of law enforcement since he had appeared as a marginal anti-establishment character who is seriously disillusioned with the new regime. The destabilization of hierarchies and the ambivalence of figures such as Alfie and Spotty are characteristic of Marechera's Menippean aesthetic, which he describes as "complex" and "unstable". Positions in society are not necessarily fixed, static and unchangeable. We see from the satires that "[s]ociety is unpredictable and roles can quickly change" (Marechera 1987a: 101).

For instance, Spotty represents on the one hand the downtrodden "spotty silent majority"; on the other hand, however, he represents the old guard racist establishment. He can be seen at the start in "The Coup" as a person of integrity amidst a quagmire of corruption. However, he can also be seen as a bigot, an adulterer and a wife-batterer in "The Gap". Both Spotty and Alfie are victims of oppression yet they also participate, somewhat inevitably, in systems which oppress others. Taken as allegorical figures, they suggest the confusion, contradictions and ambiguities of a complex and multi-faceted post-independence Zimbabwe.

An underlying theme in all the plays is power: the powerless can suddenly become powerful, and yet, once they have it, their abuse of power can be quite astonishing. As the

play draws to a conclusion, Drake asks Shogun whether he has ever read Machiavelli⁷⁸ and Shogun replies "Yes, Mr Drake" (42). We are thus reminded that they are both Machiavellians and not socialists -- whatever their pretensions might be. Drake's insistence that he be called Comrade and not Mr Drake is thus absurd. Like the rest of the élite whom we have encountered, he demonstrates no sympathy for the dispossessed masses, on behalf of whom the 'revolution' was supposedly fought. Shogun, hopelessly confused about the appropriate titles, resorts to "Mr Comrade Drake" and the word comrade is thereby ridiculed as something which is devoid of its original meaning in the Zimbabwean context: Drake is anything but "an equal" or "fellow socialist" (OED); and, likewise, the Honourable 'Comrade' Minister Nzuzu is anything but honourable and equal.

In trying to ascertain what went wrong with the 'party' (no doubt a pun on the official ruling 'Party!'), Drake says it was an error to "let those thugs loose in here", referring to the boisterous white men who were queuing for the toilet. However, Shogun thinks differently and says No, "It was the fault of the toilet, Mr Comrade Drake....It cannot cope alone for big party like this" (42; emphasis added). The double meaning here -- in crude terms -- is that there is so much 'shit' going on in 'the Party' (i.e. corruption, hypocrisy and moral degeneration) that the toilet, on its own, cannot cope with it. Drake's attempt to target the racist white thugs as the cause of the 'party's' problems is scoffed at, significantly, by Shogun -- even though he was the main victim of their abuse. Shogun suggests that they are not the cause of the problem -- just a symptom. Drake eventually thinks that Shogun is trying to make "some inscrutable joke at my expense". Laughing out aloud, Shogun says, "Me make joke on you? Me, no. Toilet yes.. Yes. Yes...Toilet make joke on whole country!" (42).

⁷⁸ Machiavelli's The Prince is, of course, all about obtaining and maintaining political power (without ever succumbing to the scruples of a moral conscience or ethical principles!).

This summarizes Marechera's project of degradation throughout "The Skin of Time" satires.

Marechera did more than merely ridicule an oppressive official culture with degradation, however. As Bakhtin states, "Degradation digs a bodily grave for a new birth; it has not only a destructive, negative aspect, but also a regenerating one" (1968: 26). The plays not only degrade and destroy but they also point to the possibility of liberation and the potential for renewal.

The satires in "The Skin of Time" were meant to subvert taboos, destabilize hierarchies and expose façades, in an effort to promote a more honest and circumspect discussion of the Zimbabwean experience. However, in the early 1980s, as Marechera stated, Zimbabwe was "a country very paranoid about sex and politics" (1984: 138), and in no mood for brutal honesty.

Ironically, a year after his death, public exposure to the now infamous Willowgate scandal of 1988 has lent an uncanny ring of truth and accuracy to "The Skin of Time" plays. Geoffrey Nyarota, a brave editor at The Chronicle newspaper, revealed that massive profits were made illegally through the resale of vehicles by several prominent ministers in Mugabe's government.⁷⁹ The scandal involved the Industry Minister Callistus Ndlovu as well as "two of Mugabe's most senior advisers: Minister of Defence Enos Nkala and Senior Minister for Political Affairs Maurice Nyagumbo" (Carver 1989: 66). By the time the Sandura Commission of Enquiry had given its report on the issue, "five ministers and a provincial governor had been forced to resign and one minister, Maurice Nyagumbo, committed suicide by drinking pesticide" (*ibid.* 70).

⁷⁹ After the Sandura Commission of Enquiry was set up by Mugabe, Nyarota was removed from his post at the state-owned Chronicle newspaper.

Examples such as the above show that Marechera's criticisms were not unfounded or detached from the reality of post-independence Zimbabwe. As to the critiques of Mindblast for its saturation with scatological images, Margaret Atwood's remark that "Bodily functions at least remain democratic. Everybody shits" (1986: 263), may help in putting them into perspective. By generating laughter with grotesque humour, the "Skin of Time" plays hold a liberating, democratic appeal; and they also echo Marechera's contention that "if one is living in an abnormal society then only abnormal expression can express that society" (Veit-Wild 1988: 134).

Magical Realism and Other Avant-Garde Styles in "Grimknife Jr's Story"

The second section in Mindblast, "Grimknife Jr's Story", can be seen as an experiment in magical realism, as well as expressionism, surrealism, and allegory. Unorthodox prose styles had proved an effective vehicle for exploring bizarre, yet tangible realities in The House of Hunger: now Marechera was looking for a new prose form to account for the strange reality that he felt confronted with in the new Harare of post-independence Zimbabwe.

Although Marechera read voraciously whenever he could, he was to a large extent starved of international literature and cut off from global literary developments when he returned to Zimbabwe in the early 1980s. There were severe foreign currency restrictions and book stores were not allocated adequate foreign currency budgets to purchase books from abroad. As a consequence imported new books were not generally available in Zimbabwe - even in libraries. Marechera thus commented (in 1986) that:

The isolation is driving me crazy. I try to keep in touch with what's being published in other countries. But I can only do so through those friends who know about it and try to buy me any new publications in Europe or in the United States. The isolation is terrible; I'm like a rat in a corner, I can only continue respecting myself as a writer

by living in my head, and that can be dangerous sometimes, especially if one has also experienced paranoia (Veit-Wild 1992: 36).

As his introspection intensified in response to this alienation, even expressionism, by itself, failed him as an appropriate style.

According to Marechera; his contacts with other Zimbabwean writers at this time were "on a superficial level" (Veit-Wild 1992 37). He had fallen out with the Zimbabwe Writer's Union (as mentioned earlier) over its failure to include a freedom of expression clause in its founding constitution. Hence isolation is a dominant theme in his post-independence output.

Magical realism is often a means of expression that enables self-empowerment under strange and repressive conditions. Proponents of the magical realist style, who possibly had an impact on Marechera were Salman Rushdie, Ben Okri and Amos Tutuola.⁸⁰ Ben Okri, who has become a well-known magical realist, was well-acquainted with Marechera and used to have lengthy discussions with him at the Africa Centre in King Street, near Covent Garden in London before Marechera returned to Zimbabwe (Veit-Wild 1992: 236).⁸¹ It is possible that there was an interchange of ideas between the two about the question of form in African literature.

In an interview Okri talks widely about the inadequacy of socialist realism, power and powerlessness, the corruption of the world, the unbearability of experience and the need to "deprive it of its terror", and the use of style as a distancing factor (Okri 1989). Many of these concerns are evident in Marechera's Mindblast. The connection between Marechera and other magical realists is, however, somewhat tenuous; and the author's work ultimately warrants consideration in its own right, rather than in any category. Nevertheless, some

⁸⁰ The Palmwine Drinkard is often listed as a source of inspiration by Marechera; Tutuola can be considered a precursor to the magical realist mode in African writing.

⁸¹ See also Veit-Wild's interview with Robert Fraser, regarding this (1992: 244-247).

magical realist theory provides useful insight into Marechera's avant-gardism. In her study of Magical Realism and the Fantastic, Amaryll Beatrice Chanady states that:

Magical realism is ...characterized first of all by two conflicting, but autonomously coherent perspectives, one based on an "enlightened" and rational view of reality, and the other on the acceptance of the supernatural as part of everyday reality (1985: 21-22).

Such a mode would have suited Marechera because it destabilizes the 'enlightened' worldview -- about which, I have argued, he had severe reservations. Chanady further observes that:

In magical realism, the supernatural is not presented as problematic. Although the educated reader considers the rational and the irrational as conflicting world views, he does not react to the supernatural in the text as if it were antinomious with respect to our conventional view of reality, since it is integrated within the norms of perception of the narrator and characters in the fictitious world (23).

Therefore, in the magical realism mode, different plains of reality can be explored.

In "the Journal" in Mindblast Marechera explained his need to confront the irrational world as well as the rational one:

My father's mysterious death when I was eleven taught me - like nothing would ever have done - that everything, including people, is unreal [*sic.*]. That, like Carlos Casteneda's Don Juan, I had to weave my own descriptions into the available fantasy we call the world. I describe and live my descriptions (1984: 123).

Fact and fantasy were never far apart with Marechera; as his biography reveals, fact was often stranger than fiction. Flora Veit-Wild notes that:

The most significant event in the writer's childhood was his father's death in February 1966. He was hit by a car while walking home at night from the neighbouring town of Headlands - some people suspected other reasons for his death related to the family background. [Michael Marechera, Dambudzo's brother, for example, states that "When he died, it was suspected that someone had first killed him and then thrown his body on the road where he was hit by a car." This all relates to a family curse, which supposedly afflicted Dambudzo's mother until she chose to rid herself of it by passing it on to Dambudzo (1992: 54)] Dambudzo's mother forced her son to look at his father's body in the mortuary, which caused the young boy great trauma. He was 13 at the time, not eleven as he seemed to remember (1992: 51).

'The supernatural' component to Marechera's writing (as Chanady defines it for other magical realists) is not the world of the occult, as one might have expected. Marechera

remained quite contemptuous of superstition, despite his family's belief in the ancestral 'curse' outlined above. It would be more precise, therefore, to define 'the supernatural' for him as the space which permits subversive as well as creative possibilities and which destabilizes the 'rational' worldview generally subscribed to by literary orthodoxy.

In most magical realist texts, Chanady observes, "the narrator transforms reality and estranges the reader from it by creating a world which we cannot integrate within our normal codes of perception" (1985: 27). Although readers are deliberately estranged from one 'reality', however, it does not follow that they are necessarily alienated by the magical realist mode. On the contrary, they are often able to read the text as having a more direct bearing on their own particular context. The relevance of Marechera's magical realism to the Zimbabwean reader in an urban context will be examined shortly.

In Dambudzo Marechera's case, magical realism was a vehicle of escape from a peculiarly repressive context, and a means of defining the strange conditions with which he was faced. As he states in "the Journal", his "strength at a time like this was the very fact that I had nothing, nothing in the whole wide world - EXCEPT MY WRITING! That was what kept me going" (137). Writing was an attempt to transcend the isolation and the ostracism that faced him, and to find a description for an experience that was on the one hand very concrete and tangible, yet on the other hand rather muddled, contradictory and bizarre.

It is significant that Marechera's 'vision' of this society was also physically blurred.

He comments in his interview with Alle Lansu that:

When I was in Britain and everything was going wrong, especially after I had been expelled, I threw away my spectacles. I'm very heavily short-sighted. I made a careful decision that I no longer want to see my surroundings in any clear way at all. So I couldn't see the Harare I had come back to, physically (Veit-Wild 1992: 34).

Marechera's fictional re-creations of life in the new Harare were therefore imbued with this blurred, slightly surreal perspective which he had consciously chosen, in favour of precise

visual images. This was in part a renunciation of the outside world with which he was literally 'disillusioned'; but it was also, perhaps, a challenge that he created for himself: to develop sensory perceptions, other than that of sight.

In "the Prologue", which introduces "Grimknife Jr's Story", Marechera uses magical realism quite effectively for the purposes of political satire, as has already been discussed in the preceding chapter. The repressive Zimbabwean State is depicted as a giant fat, purring cat, who is interrogating Rix, a version of Marechera himself.

The anti-realist satire of Rix and Grimknife Jr is obviously an attack on the oppressiveness and absurdity of Western rationalism as well as the totalitarian attitude of the state apparatus in Zimbabwe and the didactic of 'socialist literature', prescribed by, amongst others, Ngora and Chung. Whereas they state that: "From the Western tradition we should be proud to inherit the scientific and rational approach to life" (1985b: 80), Marechera clearly disagreed.

This is a theme addressed in "the Prologue" to "Grimknife Jr's Story". What the State considers to be rational is restrictive, repressive and ridiculous to Grimknife Jr, as the ensuing narrative reveals. Rix tries to 'reorient' Grimknife but to no avail:

"One plus one is two. Correct?"

The boy shook his head. "I prefer it to be anything I choose. Like..."

"Well like what?" Rix asked impatiently. They had been going over this for months. Or was it centuries?

"Like one plus one is a pregnant girl who lived in Moscow at the time of Ivan the Terrible."

Rix sighed. "How do you deduce that?"

"I don't. It's just the way I felt the instant you asked the question."

"I'm telling you one plus one is two."

"That's correct for you alone if you feel like that."

"I don't feel like it. It's pure reason. It's rationality. It's a mathematical FACT!"

"What's reason?"

"What I tell you."

"What's rationality?"

"What I tell you."

"What's mathematical FACT?"

"WHAT I TELL YOU!"

The youth felt like the radio active moon had penetrated the marrow of his fragile bones. He was feeling it. "So everything is what you tell me?"

"No more no less." (47-48)

Grimknife Jr's defiance is driven by the power of the creative imagination which is able to subvert the oppressiveness of predetermined, regimented 'rationality'. They move on to two plus two, and Grimknife Jr further infuriates the Reorientation Officer by stating that:

"Two plus two is being thrown out of a house because you do not have the money for the rent."

Rix the giant cat straightened his tail into a stiff brush. "What else? he asked ominously.

The boy's head started to ache. He said, "Two plus two is a cat and a mouse disguised as a Reorientation Officer and a mental delinquent" (48).

The narrative thus shifts into the realm of cutting social commentary: the boy is now criticizing the state for failing to provide its citizens with shelter. This matches an actual concrete experience in Zimbabwe and a real social problem (i.e. Marechera's own homelessness, but also that of many others). It is here that Marechera begins to draw attention to the constructed nature of the text as he simultaneously shifts this discussion from the fictitious world into that of the factual world with the text: self-reflexively, the narrative comments on "a cat and mouse disguised as a Reorientation Officer and a mental delinquent" (in other words, Rix and Grimknife Jr). In resolving the antinomy between the 'real' and 'unreal', the reader is led to acknowledge the applicability of the allegory to the Zimbabwean context.

An exasperated Rix eventually drops "his voice into a legal monotone," and informs Grimknife that:

If by midnight you have not experienced the transformation we demand of you then you will be taken from this place to a place of execution and there hanged by the neck till you are dead. That is all (49).

Struck by the fear of death, Grimknife also realizes "that death was the driving force of all

his impulses". Despite excruciating pain in his spine, an impulse persuades him to do a number of somersaults and press-ups on the lawn. He then laughs "Heartily. Openly. Uproariously. Like a prolonged seizure of lightning" (50). Settling down to the interrogation again, Grimknife Jr is a transformed character who has reinvented himself and in the process managed to destabilize the power relationship he experiences with Rix:

Officer Rix nodded uneasily. Even the youth's voice had changed. And the youth's eyes were glowing, luminous, brighter even than the blisteringly bright moon. Officer Rix nodded. Still puzzled. This had never happened before.

When Grimknife opened his mouth to speak, a tiny blue flame leapt from his suddenly crimson tongue. It leapt upwards, shimmering like an eerie firefly in the brighter than bright moonlight. It spurted forwards on a sizzling yellow tail. It was heading straight for the heart of the moon.

"Three plus three is a story," Grimknife began. Tiny firepools twinkled in his eyes, following the trail of his tongue. He continued "And I will tell it to you."

Officer Rix sat up straight. What was going on here?

"Once upon a time..."

And the following is Grimknife Jr's story (50).

Although this episode is fantastical, it nevertheless addresses a concrete social reality. Thus, Ngara's contention that "[f]antasy fiction ...is not based on real life" (1984: 36), is one that this narrative challenges. It addresses social reality by challenging state repression and alerting the reader to the dangers of dogmatic and totalitarian attitudes.

"The Prologue" demonstrates the liberating potential of the imagination in the face of oppression. Defying the odds becomes quite possible in the mode of magical realism.

According to Chanady:

[The implied author] abolishes the antinomy between the natural and the supernatural on the level of textual representation, and the reader, who recognizes the two conflicting logical codes on the semantic level, suspends his judgment of what is rational and what is irrational in the fictitious world (1985: 25).

Fearing death and worn down by psychological torture, Grimknife Jr nevertheless finds the inner strength inside his creative mind to blast his way out of this predicament. While Officer Rix, the Giant cat, is visibly ruffled by Grimknife Jr's sudden transformation, the reader --

who identifies with Grimknife Jr and accepts the author's naturalization of unnatural events, feels not so much startled as amused and possibly even liberated.

The anti-realist "Prologue", which foregrounds Rix's recalcitrant 'individualism', is clearly an attack on both the prescriptiveness of the socialist realist aesthetic (proposed by Ngara and Chung amongst others) and those who claim the authority to regiment the lives of other Zimbabweans. This theme is evident in the ensuing narratives as well.

As Eugene Lunn notes in the example of the Soviet Union;

Enforcing a literature of sentimentalized 'positive heroes', 'socialist realism' was part of a broad Stalinist policy which facilitated official denials of continued social contradictions and struggles; justified the return of social hierarchy and privilege tied to an 'heroically' monumentalist culture; and aided in the rise of a new uncritical technical and managerial 'intelligentsia' (1982: 130).

At an early stage in Zimbabwe's independence, when the future was uncertain, and when socialist rhetoric all too often masked unpalatable truths, Marechera was making a similar critique to Lunn's.

The first of Grimknife Jr's narratives is about Buddy -- a poet and returned exile who closely resembles Marechera. Buddy finds the disparity of wealth in Zimbabwe unnerving, yet he refuses to align himself with either the shefs or the povo: "The neatly pressed safari suits of the shefs bludgeoned his senses, gouged his eye. But the povo too were no better. Their wretched ragged respectability made his thoughts ache" (51). Buddy thus feels alienated from both major social classes in Harare.

Despite the surreal setting, real place names locate the narrative quite clearly in Harare in the early 1980s. The historical background is given as such:

The white settlers had created it as a frontier town for gold and lust, lurid adventures and ruthless rule. The black inheritors had not changed that -- just the name. From sin-City Salisbury to hotbed melting pot Harare. And it was making Buddy hungry. The street rumbled with his belly. Fuel-driven. His hunger the only diesel in him (51).

Hunger is set against a background of greed, decadence and despotism. The metonym of the 'rumbling street' suggests a communal hunger, which is -- paradoxically -- turned into a driving force, at least in the case of Buddy, who harnesses deprivation as a source of energy.

Buddy takes his poems to several publishers but they are laughed at and dismissed as "capitalist trash". The publishers state:

"We want poems that will uplift the people" ... "We want simplicity and directness, something the workers and the peasants can understand" ... He was about to protest with Mayakovsky⁸² that the workers and the peasants had to lift themselves up to the level of his poems when he realized that he was talking to the grizzled white bum who was offering him a cigarette stub and offering him the corner of a hunk of dry brown bread which had probably come from the shefs (52).

Buddy's esotericism and his slightly condescending attitude to the peasants and working classes are sharply checked by his acceptance of food from a fellow bum; he is reminded constantly that he is living amongst others who are in the lowest socio-economic stratum of society.

A totalitarian state is imagined (in a manner reminiscent of George Orwell's 1984). The passage is disturbing in its disruption of the line between autobiography and fiction. However, a strong subtext of resistance gives it a driving force:

[Buddy] had been arrested many times and each time they would not tell him the nature of his crime. They would merely mock his poetry and sneer at his "Ambition" and casually - by the seat of his trousers - throw him into a dark stinking cell, telling him (As they slammed the door shut),

"You'll rot in there
We've thrown away the key."

And he would make those two lines a poem of sorts to while away the time, to kill the sudden drenching fear that overcame him whenever a door shut and it was not him who had shut it. The key to him, that was how he saw his poetry. The key that would at will unlock the chambers of his inspiration (53).

This echoes Grimknife Jr's struggle with Rix the Cat (and prophesies Marechera's own arrest

⁸² The Russian writer Mayakovsky, like Marechera, was condemned for his avant-gardism and 'individualism'.

by the CIO during the 1984 Book Fair): Buddy again attempts to unlock the door that has been slammed on him with the resilience of his creative genius. The conditions are appalling however: "There was not even a bucket or a hole for him to shit. So his faeces would mount up, growing, stifling him, stinking him in his own poetry" (54).

Such degradation, which in "The Skin of Time: Plays By Buddy" was seen to mock official culture and have a liberating effect, is here turned against the artist himself. However, even in this instance, regeneration eventually does emerge from degradation.

The stink of his own shit in the cell would engulf him. He would draw it deep into his lungs, surprised to find it sweet and fragrant. Giving him a sudden erection. Et resurrexit (54).

The foul smell is transformed into a fragrant one. The erect phallus is of course an age-old talisman associated with fertility, creativity and power, and Buddy's sudden erection comes to symbolize -- both subversively and creatively -- his innate capacity to 'resurrect' himself. (This echoes what Bakhtin describes as the bodily principle in the grotesque.) Buddy thus remains undefeated both in mind and body which refuse to yield to the oppression of the state.

He firstly imagines his captors as cassocks who exhort him "to savour knowledge for its own sake rather than for worldly ambition." As he contemplates various images of liberation they begin to become refracted and ambiguous, though. He simultaneously hears voices in the wilderness crying out "Workers of the world Unite!" Then he tries to analyze Hamlet's "To be or not to be" soliloquy and he sees "the graven image of Mayakovsky shooting himself in a chilly Moscow room," yet he also hears young and old voices chanting John Lennon's "All we are saying .. Is give peace a chance" (55). This occurs amidst a milieu of poison and apocalypse, of toxic waste and environmental decline. The narrative therefore remains ambivalent: optimism is severely qualified by self-doubt and the potential

for liberation is set against the stark reality of degeneration. This was no doubt a coded comment on what Marechera perceived to be the state of affairs in Zimbabwe at the time.

Magical realism, grotesque realism, expressionism, surrealism and other avant-garde traditions are mixed effectively in the above narrative to explore the possibilities of free thought and self-empowerment under conditions which can be construed as totalitarian. The use of 'shit' as a degrading yet also liberating symbol recalls the scatological images in "The Skin of Time" satires, and their democratic potential in the wake of tyrannical rule. The text fits into the 'Menippean novel genre' in that "[f]antasy and symbolism are combined with low-life naturalism," and also "[m]adness, dreams and day-dreams, abnormal states of mind and all kinds of erratic inclinations are explored" (Marechera 1987a: 101). Again it is clear that Marechera's experimentation with various avant-garde writing styles is a specific response to the particular conditions facing him in a particular socio-political context.

In the second narrative Buddy rushes off to the Parirenyatwa Hospital after being stabbed by Grimknife, whom he thinks is either the jealous husband or the pimp of a woman he has just slept with. In the shebeen afterwards we are told that:

[Buddy] wanted to block out the image of the grimknife. But it came leaping out of his darkened mind, standing before him, smiling in quite a friendly way. The Grimknife was holding out his hand. Buddy shook it. Grimknife sat down (57).

The surreal and threatening image of "the grimknife" gradually becomes benign and real as it extends a hand in friendship towards Buddy instead of a knife to kill him. We discover that Grimknife is in fact a doctor. Buddy's perception seems to be distorted by nightmares and paranoia. The result is, however, that the reader cannot distinguish at first whether Grimknife is just imagined by Buddy or is a real character in the narrative.

It becomes difficult to distinguish between the real and the surreal and this is a

deliberate strategy, no-doubt, on the part of Marechera, but one which manages to throw the reader off balance to the point that he or she eventually feels somewhat disengaged from the text. Whereas until now there has been no real pondering about the validity of the fictitious world (the result of a successful naturalization of the unnatural by the author), there is now a great deal more unresolved (and unresolvable) antinomy in the narrative.

The mode of the second section of *Grimknife Jr's Story* is thus inconsistent with that of the first (and "the Prologue"). According to Chanady's definitions, it is no longer magical realism but rather 'the fantastic'. In 'the fantastic' the simultaneous presence of the natural and the supernatural creates an ambiguous and disturbing fictitious world (1985: 101). In addition to this, "the fantastic requires the reader to react to the apparently supernatural according to his conventional view of reality" (126).

As this narrative becomes increasingly conventional and 'realistic', the supernatural element begins to appear as something noticeably 'abnormal'. The author does not appear to be as concerned with naturalizing the 'unnatural' as he was in the preceding texts and, in fact, draws attention to the strangeness of the supernatural (for example, the eerie image of "the grimknife" hovering over him). Eventually, the surreal and supernatural elements become disruptive features of the text.

In the text there has been a gradual reversion to a conventional worldview as the standard mode of communication, although it is difficult to pinpoint where exactly this happens. Many of the passages narrate similar experiences to those recorded in "the Journal". Real place names, such as the Parirenyatwa Hospital, have accumulated in the text; and there has been a steady movement in the direction of realistic documentary. All this requires the reader to explain the surreal and 'supernatural' elements of the text in terms of a conventional worldview. Of course this is impossible; hence the reader's discomfort. The objective of

such an approach might be to expose the weaknesses and inadequacies of the 'rational' worldview.

The shebeen is the setting for most of the second narrative and a place of refuge for Buddy and the rest of the Bohemian community. It is here that we meet most of the other characters. Grace is a talented composer who writes songs for an unscrupulous manager who has "managed her out of any royalties" (58). Tony is a dedicated sculptor whose work has "been found 'not of the people'". It is "totally cosmopolitan" [and] has nothing to do with any particular tradition" so it is condemned as "incomprehensible" (59). Similarly, Buddy is told "No one understands your poetry. No one wants to publish it" (60).

The narrative contemplates the plight of non-conforming artists, who remain marginalized, exploited or oppressed under the new dispensation because they refuse to reflect the "national historic traditions" (59) in their works of art. The arts and literature are seen as instruments for 'nation-building' (in accordance with the stipulations of the new establishment). 'Scientific socialism' is the official policy -- which dictates that art should be functional, utilitarian and 'developmental'. Buddy is reduced to despair by the radio interviewer for a poetry programme who over and over again talks about the need for "poetry with production" (62).

Seeing Grace hard at work composing a song, Buddy asks:

Why does every revolution result in the alienation of its artists?

"Is it the slogans have become stale?" Grimknife asked "Or is it more change results in no change?" (58).

By "artists", Buddy obviously means non-conforming artists, such as himself -- who have been condemned and marginalized as 'capitalists' and 'individualists'.

There is a stifling sense of *déjà vu* in the tone of the narrative: a feeling that one repressive system has merely been replaced by another. In Buddy's view, this is what the

'revolution' has amounted to: artists such as himself are expendable because they are not prepared to compromise themselves and their art in the spurious (and ironically non-consultative) programme of 'nation-building' defined and dictated by the new hierarchy.

Kicked out of his accommodation because he does not have a 'real' job, Buddy meets a fourteen/fifteen year old prostitute who asks him about his poems. He is thrilled that she seems to understand them: "The awe in her voice terrified him. He had not known it all this time but she was one of those who understood" (61). Prostitutes seem to figure throughout Marechera's work as characters with a sharp perception of unseemly realities; perhaps because their vision of society is also an 'X-ray' one, which strips society of its 'clothes' and cuts through façades.

Grace, the most well-developed character besides Buddy in the narrative, is also presented as the most inspiring. We are told that she aims to console, exhort, lament and soothe with her songs:

For Grace this was the important point about Art; when it was genuine, it was suicidally altruistic. It was altruistic. It was unreserved giving, all the more painful, exacting, when it was rejected, abused, silenced. And there was the futility, the feeling of shame when it was said that the Third World did not want Art, it wanted food; it did not want poetry, it wanted drought relief; it did not want novels, it wanted education for all. She felt keenly the illiteracy and poverty in the country; helpless. They all did (67).

Like Grace, Buddy is acutely aware of the predicament of Third World artists. Despite understanding the merits of this point of view, however, Buddy nevertheless retains a critical distance from it.

In spite of her feelings of helplessness, Grace is presented as a strong, dignified, independently-minded woman, and something of a role-model. She has a lesbian affair with Rita, Tony's American girlfriend, whom we are told used to be a flower child in San Francisco in the 1960s and who tries to start a "Street Theatre" in Harare only to have her

efforts thwarted by the police who close the project down. It is interesting this sexual encounter is presented as a positive and liberating moment amidst all "the hollowness, the sudden attacks of triviality and futility" (68).

Grace is unable to have children and, as a result, is accused by Tony of trying to 'mother' everyone to overcompensate for the 'deficiency'. She almost believes in this 'deficiency' until she has "a passionate, physical enquiry of [her] body" (70) in the form a sexual liaison with Rita:

Grace was 'between men' and very lonely. When she opened the door and it was Rita, their bodies knew. A totally physical terrible ecstasy. A spark of blue leaping from Grace to Rita. And there was nothing to explain, nothing to feel ashamed about. Everything was so right. Rita had cooked a meal and Grace spread the table and they ate facing one another like two people who had been living together for a long time.

When Grace woke up the next morning, she found Rita's side of the bed empty. Violent delicious tears spurted out of her eyes. And she stood naked before the full-length mirror, crying. Crying for the symbolic restoration of her body, which from four years old she had never believed whole (70).

Although this passage is ostensibly an unembarrassed and affirmative representation of homosexuality, it is nevertheless framed by the heterosexual male gaze. Grace, we are told, is "between men" while Rita, we are told, frequently stays with friends for extended periods when her boyfriend Tony has no time for her because of his work. The lesbian liaison is therefore accounted for in terms of the absence of men - and is, in other words, not much more than an experimental deviation in the lives of two otherwise heterosexual women who ordinarily have relationships with men. Nevertheless, it is presented as a liberating moment in the narrative, and it is certainly a liberating event in the context of Zimbabwean literature, where homosexuality remains a taboo subject and the positive representation of any gay or lesbian relationship is extremely rare.

As in the rest of Mindblast the critique of commercialism and materialism in Zimbabwe is relentless. When Buddy is accommodated by a friend in the suburbs, he is

asked whether he ever dreams of middle class possessions and comforts. For Buddy, middle class life in the suburbs is "the TV, the Hi Fi, the Video, the thick, lush carpet, the bemused wife still in her silk dressing gown asking him to help himself to more of the scrambled eggs and roasted fish". We are told that Buddy:

had had enough of "this" for years in Europe. It was a dead end, as far as he was concerned. A horse's laugh. A terrified bat's fart. A cobra's puzzled glance at the bitten life that would not die (64).

To Buddy, the world of materialism is nonsensical and ridiculous, as the strange descriptions above show.

The narrative draws to a conclusion when the shebeen queen introduces Buddy to her daughter Donna, who brings him her "stale, limpid, dull" poems to read. This precipitates an unpleasant revelation: "They stirred within him that great hollowness from which he sought to escape everyday"; but he lies to her by telling her that they are "marvellous" (71). At this moment, the narrative becomes surrealistic again.

According to Holman, surrealism "emphasizes the expression of the [imagination] as realized in dreams and presented without conscious control" (1972: 517). In this episode, Buddy is overwhelmed by subconscious forces:

Like a sudden downpour, hurling down fists of rain on his bare head, he had recognised his own failure. The plangency of his defeat reverberated throughout the room ...The harsh rain burst the drains of the house of his poems. Spouts of it were violently shivering down from the sodden walls. Drops. Of blood, sweat, and tears....[A]ll he wanted was to take it out and urinate....[H]e only had the time to cup his mouth with his hands and flee to vomit in the toilet. Donna stifled a scream, staring at the trail of blood he was leaving in his shattered wake (71).

Bodily fluids such as blood, sweat, tears, urine, and vomit congeal into images of self-destruction. Whereas the first narrative began with a drought and hunger motif, the second narrative concludes with the image of "a sudden downpour" -- a break in the drought, but a bitterly ironic one in that it does not bring the promise of prosperity and renewal -- but

destruction.⁸³

A "ghoulish mixture" of blood and beer streams out of Buddy and he realises that:

Christ, this was the Thing, the daemon of his inspiration, the blood-clotting vomit....His feet slipped in the bloody mess on the floor. His fingers could not retain their hold on the sides of the toilet bowl. With a last insistent shriek of defiance, he tried to rise, with all his strength, to rise, denounce, hurl curses to the sky, but his strength failed. Dr Grimknife, banging the door outside, calling to him, heard the loud sickening thud of the poet's fall (72).

Buddy's sense of failure and defeat is bleak indeed, and echoes the sense of resignation and self-defeat that preceded Marechera's own death in 1987.

Although, as Flora Veit-Wild comments, Mindblast "partially suffers from the limited and egocentric viewpoint of a poet acting out his existence in bars and shebeens" (1992: 309), the collection as a whole undoubtedly struck a chord with an eclectic variety of Zimbabwean readers. It was a landmark in post-independence Zimbabwean writing in that it overturned oppressive taboos and created space for the expression of alternative points of view. To a great extent, therefore, Marechera's sense of despair and futility (about his role as a writer in Zimbabwe), evident in "the sickening thud of the poet's fall", were ill-founded. His efforts to find space for free and critical thought were far from pointless.

Mindblast spoke for the marginalized and oppressed in Zimbabwean society at a time when the state apparatus was trying to sweep their concerns under the carpet. Marechera's penetrating "x-ray" vision enabled him, as Veit-Wild states, to name "the social diseases he observed around him: materialism, political intolerance, corruption, deceptive socialist rhetoric, and growing social inequalities" (1992a: 309).

The collection appealed particularly to young readers and aspiring new writers in Zimbabwe, with whom the book was extremely popular (ibid. 310). This fact is attested to

⁸³ This episode can be read as the discovery of yet another "false paradise" if one is looking at allegories of "drought and gardens" in Marechera. cf. Lilford (1996).

by the numerous tributes that were written to the author after his death. Although Mindblast was probably most popular with Zimbabwe's disaffected urban youth, its readership has not been confined to any one particular class or group of persons. Other Zimbabwean writers, academics and university students, journalists, rastafarians, Bohemians, ex-combatants, the unemployed, prostitutes, housewives, gays and lesbians, and even government ministers have been amongst Mindblast's appreciative readers.⁸⁴

The appeal of Mindblast was that it addressed the gross inequalities in Zimbabwean society, confronted cultural nationalism and voiced grave concern about the totalitarian tendencies of the Mugabe government at a time when such dissent entailed great risks and was extremely rare, if not non-existent. Mindblast was a landmark in that it broke silences and carved out space for criticism, resistance and dissent. It also initiated discussion of the role of the non-conforming artist and writer in the new Zimbabwe, and it experimented -- with considerable success -- in ways of voicing dissent in a repressive or abnormal society.

As a result Mindblast remains relevant to debates concerning literature and culture in Zimbabwe. It charts a viable alternative to realism as a means of dealing with the Zimbabwean experience and is therefore worthy of serious consideration in discussions of Zimbabwean literature. Moreover, its popularity with Zimbabweans proves that avant-garde styles need not necessarily be inaccessible to a wide readership.

Marechera shows that grotesque realism, Menippean satire and the carnivalesque, as in the case of "The Skin of Time" satires, are an effective means of inverting hierarchies and

⁸⁴ A broad array of the author's readers was represented at the Symposium on Dambudzo Marechera in Harare in 1995. See "The Marechera Cult" (Veit-Wild 1992a: 379-392), especially the collection of eulogies, for an indication of who the author appealed to and why.

Marechera claimed that "the Minister of Tourism and Natural Resources, Mrs Victoria Chitepo ...reads all my books and encourages me. In other words, it's not all gloomy. The party, or our government, is not of one mind" (Veit-Wild 1992: 42). Dzingai Mutumbuka was also an appreciative reader.

degrading official culture. In exposing the double standards of tyrants and hypocrites (such as "Comrade' Mr Drake" and the "Honourable' Comrade Minister") at an early stage in Zimbabwe's independence, Marechera rejected the imposition of a new social hierarchy. In this sense, his satires are extremely democratic in their appeal: they expose pretensions, destabilize power structures and perform a powerful levelling effect.

The magical realism, expressionism and surrealism, evident in Mindblast's prose narratives, also explore new routes for challenging repressive systems, and carve out new space for resistance and dissent. Magical realism, especially, is shown to be an effective means of self-empowerment and liberation in the wake of hostile conditions. Furthermore, Mindblast is fully aware of its social and political context. Thus it problematizes the notion, contended by N gara, that "fantasy fiction ...is not based on real life" (1984: 6). In spite of its uneven quality, Mindblast charts new territory in Zimbabwean writing and proves to be a valuable experiment in the search for valid alternatives to conventional realist forms.

CONCLUSION

My intention in this thesis has been to examine Dambudzo Marechera's significance in the context of Zimbabwe. In summary: Marechera's avant-gardism responds to particular socio-political and historic conditions. It is not 'ahistorical' or without 'social relevance', as many critics have implied. Nor is it "alien to Africa" (Okonkwo 1981: 91) or lacking "a Zimbabwean authenticity" (Mzamane 1983: 213), as other critics have problematically stated. Rather, it addresses important issues which pertain directly to the Zimbabwean experience. All Zimbabwean literature is in some sense syncretic, and Marechera's work is just one example of this. Thus, it is a fallacy to assume that Marechera's writing is 'Europeanized' and that nationalist/realist writing is not.

The work of Dambudzo Marechera, which has often been labelled 'unAfrican', presents a strong case for the redefinition of Zimbabwean culture by way of inclusions -- as opposed to exclusions: it argues for an honest and open recognition of all components of Zimbabwean society -- and against façades, denials and pretences. Marechera's writing supports the view that Zimbabwean society is diverse, heterogeneous and complex.

Whereas first generation nationalist writers constructed the image of "a deep, horizontal comradeship" (Anderson 1991: 7) and a homogeneous national community in their literature, Marechera reacted against nationalist myth-making, and monolithic perceptions of Zimbabwean society and culture in terms of a narrow racial binary. His writing, instead, expresses the multi-faceted nature of the Zimbabwean experience, as it examines gender, class, sexuality, and other issues besides those of race and ethnicity.

At an early stage in Zimbabwe's independence, Marechera recognized that the rhetoric of 'nation-building' and the celebration of "a deep, horizontal comradeship" (ibid.) all too

often conceal gross inequalities, corruption, hypocrisy, and the further empowerment of an élite few at the expense of a forsaken majority. As he stated (in 1986):

our revolution has only changed life for the new black middle class, those who got university degrees overseas during the struggle....[F]or the working classes and the peasants, it's still the same hard work, low pay, rough conditions of living (Veit-Wild 1992: 35).

Thus, he remained extremely sceptical of 'development' and 'nation-building'. He justifiably refused to become a functionary in the government's programme of 'scientific socialism' -- which he exposed as a sham. Instead, he remained an iconoclast and a transgressor. In this manner, however, he contributed immensely to the emergence of a new counter-hegemonic, critical discourse in Zimbabwe -- which is of vital importance.

With its incisive 'X-ray' vision, Marechera's writing often reveals unpalatable truths, interrogates oppressive forms of authority, and overturns repressive taboos. In rejecting the master narrative of nineteenth-century realism, it blazes a trail for possible alternatives to conventional realism in the Zimbabwean context; and in this regard, it is enormously significant to the future of Zimbabwean literature and criticism. While Marechera's writing violates the prescriptions of the realist 'checklist', it does so deliberately and with good reason. It is therefore worthy of serious discussion: it does not deserve to be ignored, marginalized, or viewed censoriously in discussions of contemporary Zimbabwean literature (and it is a shame that Mindblast, particularly, has suffered this fate -- in spite of its popular appeal).

Exposure, shock, and continuous disruption epitomize Marechera's avant-garde style. While it foregrounds the subjective perspective, it nevertheless produces a reader who is invited to question and participate, rather than to simply accept; to criticize rather than to remain a compliant and 'obedient' subject. It is therefore paradoxically oriented, not inwards, but outwards; and not condescending but respectful of the reader.

Marechera's writing is democratic and liberating in that it is against tyranny, against the abuse of power, against arbitrary regimentation, against the loss of personal freedom, and uncompromising in its insistence on the right to unconditional freedom of expression. Not surprisingly, therefore, Marechera has become a symbol of freedom and a voice of resistance for many in Zimbabwe who feel betrayed, victimized, marginalized, or disempowered under the current dispensation.

Unfortunately, the ruling party in Zimbabwe has never welcomed free and independent expression, or acknowledged its importance to progress in a democratic civil society. Rather, it has continued to exploit the rhetoric of cultural nationalism and the ideals of 'nation-making' to justify its censorship of opposition voices, and its abuses of power.⁸⁵

Alle Lansu asked Dambudzo Marechera in an interview, "How do you see the future development of Zimbabwean literature?", and he replied:

There isn't really a future for Zimbabwean literature if it's going to be defined; I think it will simply die away. If the government actually prescribes what people should write, people will stop writing. But if the government realizes, like most intelligent governments, that there must always be a healthy tension between the writer and his society, then we have a tremendous future. If criticism is allowed, if argument is allowed, if every writer is helped to not only discover his vision and talent but also

⁸⁵ The corruption and elitism of 'the Party', satirized in Mindblast, are still pertinent today. According to the Zimbabwean journalist, Iden Wetherell: "arbitrary redistribution has guided the party's approach to black empowerment; ...like land acquisition, Zimbabwe's economic indigenisation policy has been characterized by a lack of transparency and is calculated to empower a well-connected elite" (1996: 15).

At the ZANU-PF party conference in December 1996, Wetherell states that there were: "renewed attacks on the independent press. Zanu-PF's deputy information secretary, Chen Chimutengwende, said resources would be allocated to the party's information department to counter what he called the 'completely unacceptable propaganda of the 'opposition press'".

Wetherell also notes that: "The government already controls Zimbabwe's broadcast media and owns 90% of its print media. Observers point out that with a virtual press monopoly and an emasculated civil society, Zanu-PF has been able to dominate national discourse and resist reform of institutions which maintain it in power. This includes allocating itself public funds....

Zanu-PF's secretary for administration, Didymus Mutasa, who describes Mugabe as 'Zimbabwe's king', said ...it was 'unAfrican' to discuss the succession issue" (ibid.).

to fashion it in such a way that he re-evaluates himself and at the same time achieves national and international recognition, then there is a tremendous future (Veit-Wild 1992: 42).

The principles of critical thought and free expression are a valuable legacies. In his tribute to the author, Richard Mhonyera states that: "He opened lines of thought. Perhaps a good deal of what we see in the way of protest writing after ten years of Independence comes from his courage" (Veit-Wild 1992: 383). Since Marechera's death -- perhaps as a testament to the principles for which he fought -- there has been a flowering of new writing from Zimbabwe: much of this is critical, and almost all of it illustrates the diverse and multi-faceted nature of the Zimbabwean experience.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abrams, M. H. 1988. Glossary of Literary Terms. Chicago: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Ahmad, Aijaz. 1995. The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality. Race and Class, January-March 36 (3): 1-20.
- Amuta, Chidi. 1989. The Theory of African Literature. London: ZED.
- Anderson, Benedict. 1991. Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism. New York: Verso.
- Anon. 1988. Minorities in Zimbabwe. Moto, May (65): 6-12.
 ---. 1991. The unnecessary embarrassment. Moto, November-December (106/107): 4-5.
 ---. 1995. The Herald, 19 August.
- Astrow, Andre. 1983. Zimbabwe: A Revolution that Lost its Way. London: ZED.
- Atwood, Margaret. 1986. The Handmaid's Tale. London: Jonathan Cape.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. 1968. Rabelais and his World. (H. Iswolsky, Tran.). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Beach, David. 1978. Chimurenga: the organization of the Shona risings of 1896-7. Unpublished paper. Department of History Seminar. University of Rhodesia.
 ---. 1984. Zimbabwe Before 1900. Gweru: Mambo Press.
 ---. 1986. War and Politics in Zimbabwe, 1840-1900. Gweru: Mambo.
 ---. 1989. Maondera 1840-1904. Gweru: Mambo.
- Belsey, Catherine. 1980. Critical Practice. London: Routledge.
- Bhabha, Homi. 1986. Foreword: Remembering Fanon: Self, Psyche and the Colonial Condition. In Fanon 1967: vii-xxvi.
 ---. 1994. The Location of Culture. London: Routledge.
- Brennan, Timothy. 1990. The national longing for form. In Homi Bhabha (Ed.), Nation and Narration. London: Routledge, 44-70.
- Cabral, Amilcar. 1973 [1994]. National Liberation and Culture. In Williams and Chrisman 1994: 53-65.
- Caute, David. 1986. Espionage and the saints: two essays on silence and the state. London: Hamish Hamilton.

- Carver, Richard. 1989. Zimbabwe: A break with the past?: human rights and political unity. New York: Human Rights Watch.
- Chanady, Amaryll Beatrice. 1985. Magical Realism and the Fantastic: Resolved Versus Unresolved Antinomy. New York: Garland Publishing.
- Chatterjee, Partha. 1986. Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse. London: ZED.
- Chennells, Anthony. 1993. Marxist and Pan-Africanist Literary Theory and a Sociology of Zimbabwean Literature. Zambezia, 20 (2): 109-129.
- Cobbing, Julian. 1973. Lobengula, Jameson and the Occupation of Mashonaland 1890. Rhodesian History, 4: 39-56.
- . 1976. The Ndebele Under the Khumalos, 1820-1896. PhD Dissertation. University of Lancaster.
- . 1977. The Absent Priesthood: Another look at the Rhodesian Risings of 1896-97. Journal of African History, XVIII (1): 61-84.
- Dentith, Simon. 1995. Bakhtinian thought: An introductory reader. London: Routledge.
- Dickens, Charles. 1965. Great Expectations. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Eagleton, Terry. 1976. Marxism and Literary Criticism. London: Methuen.
- Eliot, George. 1960 [1859]. Adam Bede. London: J.M. Dent & Sons.
- Fanon, Franz. 1963 [1961]. The Wretched of the Earth. (C. Farrington, Trans.). Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- . 1967 [1952]. Black Skin White Masks. (C. L. Markmann, Trans.). London: Pluto.
- Gaylard, Gerald. 1993a. The Black Insider in The House of Hunger: Dambudzo Marechera and the Antinomies of 'Post-Colonial' Cultural Theory. MA thesis. University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg.
- . 1993b. Dambudzo Marechera and Nationalist Criticism. English in Africa, 20 (2): 89-105.
- . 1995. Menippean Marechera: Africa's new antirealism. Inter action (Proceedings of Annual Post-Graduate Conference), Issue 3: 183-192.
- Gurnah, Abdulrazak. 1995. "The mid-point of the scream": The Writing of Dambudzo Marechera. In A. Gurnah (Ed.), Essays on African Writing 2: Contemporary Literature. Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers.
- Hartley, John. 1994. Definition of realism. In O'Sullivan, Tim, John Hartley, Danny Saunders, Martin Montgomery and John Fiske (Eds.). Key Concepts in Communication and Cultural Studies. London: Routledge.
- Holquist, Michael. 1968. Prologue. In Bakhtin 1968: xii-xxiii.

- Holman, C. Hugh. 1972. A Handbook to Literature. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Books.
- Hove, Chenjerai. 1988. Bones. Harare: Baobab.
- Hutcheon, Linda. 1980. Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press.
- Hyam, Ronald. 1991. Empire and Sexuality. Manchester: Routledge.
- Jameson, Frederic. (Ed.). 1977. Aesthetics and Politics. (R. Taylor, Trans. Ed.). London: New Left Books.
- Joffe, Phil. 1987. Introduction. In J. Conrad. Heart of Darkness and Typhoon. Craighall: Ad Donker, 7-30.
- Kagame, Alexis. 1976. The Empirical Apperception of Time and the Conception of History in Bantu Thought. Cultures and Time, (UNESCO, Paris): 89-216.
- Kahari, George. 1980. The Search for Zimbabwean Identity: An Introduction to the Black Zimbabwean Novel. Gweru: Mambo.
- . 1982. Realism and the Contemporary Shona Novel. Zambezia 10 (2): 85-110.
- Katiyo, Wilson. 1976. A Son of the Soil. Harlow: Longman.
- Kruger, Norma. 1988. The Zimbabwean War of Liberation: Struggles Within the Struggle. Journal of Southern African Studies, 14 (2): 304-321.
- Lessing, Doris. 1979. A cultural tug-of-war. Books and Bookmen, 25 (10): 62-3.
- Lilford, Grant. 1996. Allegories of Drought and of Gardens in the Novels of J.M. Coetzee and Dambudzo Marechera. Phd Dissertation. University of Cape Town.
- Lodge, David. 1981. Modernism, Antimodernism and Postmodernism. In D. Lodge (Ed.), Working With Structuralism: essays and reviews on nineteenth and twentieth century literature. Boston: Routledge and K. Paul, 3-16.
- Loomba, Ania. 1994. Overworlding the 'Third World'. In Williams and Chrisman 1994: 305-323.
- Lukács, Georg. 1964 [1962]. Realism in Our Time: Literature and the Class Struggle. (J. & N. Mander, Trans.). New York: Harper and Row.
- Lunn, Eugene. 1982. Marxism and Modernism: An Historical Study of Lukács, Brecht, Benjamin and Adorno. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Marechera, Dambudzo. 1978. The House of Hunger. London: Heinemann.
- . 1980. Black Sunlight. London: Heinemann.

- . 1984a. Mindblast. Gweru: College Press.
- . 1984b. Censorship - Does it Clean the Mind? Moto, May (23): 5-6.
- . 1987a. The African Writer's Experience of European literature. Zambezia, 14 (2): 99-105.
- . 1987b. Soyinka, Dostoyevsky: The Writer on Trial for His Time. Zambezia, 14 (2): 106-111.
- . 1990. The Black Insider. Harare: Baobab.
- . 1994. Scapiron Blues. Harare: Baobab.
- Martin, David and Phyllis Johnson. 1981. The Struggle for Zimbabwe: The Chimurenga War. Salisbury: Zimbabwe Publishing House.
- Maveneka, Leonard. 1983. Writers and the revolution. Moto, August: 5-6.
- McEwan, Neil. 1983. Africa and the Novel. London: MacMillan.
- McLoughlin, Tim. 1984. The past and the present in African literature: examples from contemporary Zimbabwean fiction. Presence Africaine, 132: 93-107.
- Mhlanga, Cont Mdladla. 1992. Workshop Negative. Harare: The College Press.
- Mudimbe, V.Y. 1988. The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge. London: James Currey.
- Mungoshi, Charles. 1975. Waiting for the Rain. London: Heinemann.
- Muponde, Robert. 1996. Reconstructing Childhood ('Social Banditry' in Dambudzo Marechera's children's stories). The Zimbabwean Review, 2 (2): 3-5.
- Mutswairo, Solomon. 1978. Mapondera: Soldier of Zimbabwe. Washington D.C.: Three Continents.
- . 1982 [1957]. Feso. Harare: Longman.
- . 1996. The Poetry of Musaemura Zimunya. In E. Ngara 1996: 108-119.
- Mzamane, Mbulelo V. 1983. New Writing from Zimbabwe: Dambudzo Marechera's The House of Hunger. African Literature Today: Recent Trends in the Novel, (13): 201-25.
- . 1992. Realism and the African Novel. Staffrider 10 (1): 93-96.
- Ndhlala, Geoffrey. 1979. Jikinya. Salisbury: College Press.
- Ngara, Emmanuel. 1984. Teaching Literature in Africa: Principles and Techniques. Harare: Zimbabwe Educational Books.
- . 1985a. Art and Ideology in the African Novel: A Study of the Influence of Marxism on African Writing. London: Heinemann.
- . & Chung, Fay. 1985b. Socialism, education, and development: a challenge to Zimbabwe. Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House.

- . (Ed.). 1996. New Writing From Southern Africa: Authors Who Have Become Prominent Since 1980. Cape Town: David Philip.
- Ngugi wa Thiong'o. 1986. Decolonising the Mind: the Politics of Language in African Literature. London: James Curry.
- Nyamfukudza, Stanley. 1980. The Non-Believer's Journey. Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House.
- Okonkwo, Juliet. 1981. A Review of The House of Hunger. Okike June: 87-91.
- Okri, Ben. 1989. Interview. Interviewed by Edward Blishen. In Writers Talk: ideas of our time (video series). London: Institute of Contemporary Art.
- Pattison, David. 1994a. Call No Man Happy: Inside 'The Black Insider', Marechera's Journey to Become a Writer? Journal of Southern African Studies, 20 (2): 221-239.
- . 1994b. Literature...A Unique Universe that has no Internal Divisions. Unpublished paper.
- . 1995. From the Heart and Mind of the Artist. Unpublished paper. Symposium on Dambudzo Marechera. Harare.
- Poggioli, Renato. 1968. The Theory of the Avant-Garde. (Gerald Fitzgerald, Trans.). Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Pomorska, Krystyna. 1968. Foreword. In Bakhtin 1968: vii-xii.
- Raath, Jan. 1997. Zim's presidential rape scandal. Mail and Guardian, 13 (8): 14
- Ranger, Terence. 1979 [1969]. Revolt in Southern Rhodesia 1896-7: A Study in African Resistance. London: Heinemann.
- . 1970. The African Voice in Southern Rhodesia 1898-1930. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Robin, Régine. 1992. Socialist Realism: An Impossible Aesthetic. (Catherine Porter, Trans.). Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Rushdie, Salman. 1989. Interview. Interviewed by W. L. Webb. Writers talk: ideas of our time (video series). London: Institute of Contemporary Art.
- Said, Edward. 1993. Culture and Imperialism. New York: Chatto and Wyndus.
- Samkange, Stanlake. 1966. On Trial for My Country. London: Heinemann.
- . 1978. The Year of the Uprising. London: Heinemann.
- Shaw, Drew. 1991. Dambudzo Marechera: the Constant Quest. Unpublished research essay. University of Toronto.

- Smith, Neville. 1988. History and fiction: a study of the interface between historical record and imaginative reconstruction in novels of Stanlake Samkange. MA thesis. University of Natal, Durban.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1988. Can the Subaltern Speak? In Nelson, Cary and Grossberg, Lawrence (Eds.). Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 271-313.
- . 1993. More on Power/Knowledge. Outside the Teaching Machine. New York: Routledge.
- Stallybrass, Peter and Allon White. 1986. The Politics and Poetics of Transgression. London: Methuen.
- Stein, Mark. 1994. The Logic of Ambivalence. The Early Prose Work of Dambudzo Marechera. MA thesis. University of Warwick.
- . 1995. The Writing of a Bastard Heir: Intertextuality in Dambudzo Marechera's Early Prose Work. Unpublished paper. Annual Association of New English Literatures Conference.
- Stoneman, Colin and Lionel Cliffe. 1989. ZIMBABWE: Politics, Economics and Society. London: Pinter Publishers.
- Stumpf, Samuel Enoch. 1966 [1975]. Socrates to Sartre: A History of Philosophy. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Vambe, Lawrence. 1972. An Ill-Fated People: Zimbabwe Before and After Rhodes. London: Heinemann.
- Veit-Wild, Flora. 1987. Words as Bullets: the Writings of Dambudzo Marechera. Zambezia, 14 (2): 113- 121.
- . 1988a. Patterns of Poetry in Zimbabwe. Gweru: Mambo.
- . (Ed.). 1988b. Dambudzo Marechera 4 June 1952 -18 August 1987. Harare: Baobab.
- . 1990. Introduction. The Black Insider. By D. Marechera. Harare: Baobab, 5-22.
- . 1992a. Dambudzo Marechera: A Sourcebook on His Life and Work. Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publishers.
- . 1992b. Survey of Zimbabwean Writers Educational and Literary Careers. Bayreuth: Bayreuth University.
- . 1993a. Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers: A Social History of Zimbabwean Literature. Harare: Baobab Books.
- . 1993b. FORMS OF SYNCRETISM IN SOUTHERN AFRICA. Dambudzo Marechera and Lesego Rampolokeng: Dissonant Voices Writing Back. Unpublished paper. Annual Association of New English Literatures conference.
- . 1995. The Laughter of Carnival. The Zimbabwean Review, July, 1 (2): 20-21.
- . 1996. Festivals of Laughter: Syncretism in Southern Africa. In Stummer, Peter O. and Balme, Christopher (Eds.), Fusion of Cultures?. Amsterdam: 27-40.

- Weiss, Ruth. 1994. Zimbabwe and the New Elite. London: British Academic Press.
- Wetherell, Iden. 1996. Mugabe's party rules, OK! Mail and Guardian, December 20-23, 12 (51): 15.
- White, Hayden. 1984. The question of narrative in contemporary historical theory. History and Theory. 23 (1): 1-33.
- Williams, Patrick and Chrisman, Laura. (Eds.). 1994. Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Willet, John. (Ed.). 1974 [1964]. Brecht on Theatre: the Development of an Aesthetic. London: Methuen.
- Wylie, Dan. 1991. Language Thieves: English-Language Strategies in Two Zimbabwean Novellas. English in Africa, 18 (2): 39-62.
- Zhuwarara, Rino. 1987. Zimbabwean Fiction in English. Zambezia, 14 (2): 132.
- . 1994. Review of Teachers Preachers, Non-Believers. Southern African Review of Books, July-August (32): 10-11.
- Zimunya, Musaemura. 1982. Those Years of Drought and Hunger: the birth of black Zimbabwean literature in English. Gweru: Mambo.
- Zinyemba, Ranga. 1983. Zimbabwe's 'lost' novelists in search of direction. Moto, August: 7-10.
- . 1986. Zimbabwean drama: a study of Shona and English plays. Gweru: Mambo.
- . 1996. The New Generation (Comments on Essays on African Writing 2: Contemporary Literature). The Zimbabwean Review, 2 (2): 6-7.

