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Zimbabwe's Crisis – Local and Global Contexts

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This special edition of the *Australasian Review of African Studies* on Zimbabwe comes at a time when we see a new coalition government forging ahead in an attempt to resolve Zimbabwe's ailing economy and failing state, and it will be well into the 100 day plan attempting to re-engage with the west and create renewal for the country. With Morgan Tsvangirai as Prime Minister and Robert Mugabe remaining as President the 'bonding' required to bring government together seems near impossible, let alone bringing the country back from the brink of disaster. They simply cannot fail if they can agree upon the task. This edition of ARAS has brought together a range of authors, perspectives and analyses on the history and politics of Zimbabwe in both local and global contexts.

Geoffrey Hawker in "Zimbabwe: Retrospect and Prospect" begins the task of unfolding the causes of the current crisis in Zimbabwe through a retrospective examination of the early colonial years and the Shona and Ndebele rivalries still evident today. He asks the question – if Mugabe was gone, would we see an end to the crisis? The country, he argues has always been in 'struggle', before, during and after colonisation, therefore, the chances of a reconciliation are few. Hawker notes the extent to which black Zimbabweans reconciled with their former white colonisers, at the same time that the west was largely ignoring the increasing tensions between Shona and Ndebele, culminating in the *Gukurahundi* in the mid-1980s, where up to 20,000 people were killed. Mugabe was once praised as a leader against apartheid, and was an ally of Reagan's USA, but when the 1990s brought the implementation and failure of structural adjustment programs, things began to 'fall apart'. When in 1999 the rise of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) signalled 'electoral rejection' for Mugabe, disastrous land redistribution policies that resulted in the invasion and occupation of white-owned farms around the country, destroyed the remnants of the economy. Hawker brings us up to date with the current crisis as played out during the 2008 parliamentary and presidential elections. He takes us through the historiography of Zimbabwe to look for possible causes of ongoing violence. While he poses the question about a solution without Mugabe in the equation, it becomes clear that popular support for ZANU(PF) remains, despite the MDC encroaching upon their traditional electoral comfort zones. Mugabe remains part of the equation, and has yet to be 'eliminated' from the race. Hawker argues that the major issue in Zimbabwe is still land. He rules out a foreign intervention force to alleviate the crisis – briefly popular rhetoric during the outbreak of cholera in 2008. He also rules out a reconciliation. Hawker instead advocates for a "period of normal politics" unpolluted by "patrimony and repression".

Stephen O'Brien in "From Comrade to His Excellency: Mugabe's Rise to Power," takes us through the nationalist periods in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s and examines the reasons and ramifications of these rivalries and tensions, despite the 'common enemy' of a white minority regime. He does this in an analysis of the rise and fall of the lesser known Zimbabwe People's Army (ZIPA) during the Second Chimurenga. O'Brien examines Mugabe's rise to power in the fission created by ZANU's suppression of this group of young radicals in ZIPA. ZIPA's agenda during the nationalist liberation struggle was for "total transformation of the Zimbabwean society." When Mugabe was released from prison in 1974 he took charge of the struggle, and in hindsight was far more conciliatory than these revolutionaries. They were jailed and only released to participate in the 1976 Geneva Conference under pressure from the USA. After that they were repressed again, with some leaders in exile. While ZANU and ZAPU made a temporary alliance in 1979 for the Lancaster House Agreement, they soon split after independence with ZAPU members losing on out government and army posts, while ZANU shored up its support of the army. O'Brien argues that *Gukurahundi*, ensured the completion of Mugabe's rise to power.

Kate Law in "Episodes of Ambiguity: Steps towards Socialism in Zimbabwe, 1980-1985" offers an examination of the early 1980s in post-independent Zimbabwe and argues that this was a period filled with "episodes of ambiguity." The potential for a socialist future while not guaranteed or indeed likely, was nonetheless ambiguous, with the implementation of some policies designed to give this impression, such as in education, health and labour reform. Law argues that Mugabe's leadership of Zimbabwe, while ultimately authoritarian, as Hawker and O'Brien both argue in this edition, did offer an initial hope of a socialist potential in the early days of independence. She argues that it is futile to blame all of Zimbabwe's troubles on the day Mugabe won political office. However, Law also notes that "Zimbabwe's commitment to socialism was tempered by the ... continuation of capitalist production and markets," in part due to the details of the Lancaster agreement, which effectively disabled radical land redistribution for the first decade of independence, hindering Zimbabwe's "socialist credentials". Law argues that the advent of *Gukurahundi* rapidly degenerated the socialist future into an authoritarian nightmare. While "episodes of ambiguity" initially appeared democracy was ultimately surrendered to the rule of authoritarianism.

Virginia Mapedzahama in "Weaving Paid Work, Informal Sector Work and Motherhood in Harare (Zimbabwe): A New Arena For Research?" provides a timely feminist critique of the conditions in Zimbabwe in her research on how women support their households in the climate of an authoritarian and failing state that has little regard for the plight of its people suffering in poverty and violence. Mapedzahama has researched the lives and roles of women as

mothers and workers in the formal and informal economies of Zimbabwe and examines their struggles in terms of “Multiple Economic Activities for Subsistence” (MEAS), which takes into account their shift work as mothers and workers for income. This article forms part of her wider research project which compares women in Zimbabwe with women in Australia. She concludes that the burden for women as the primary care-givers within the household is immense, as they are dependent on the informal sector for income-generation, which significantly adds to their stresses in dealing with day-to-day survival – to alleviate their own poverty in a country where the government is incapable or unwilling to assist.

Kudzai Matereke in “‘Discipline and Punish’: Inscribing the Body and its Metaphors in Zimbabwe’s Postcolonial Crisis,” provides a postmodern analysis of the current crisis in Zimbabwe using metaphors of the body to describe the politics and power shaping the country’s future prospects. In particular he examines the ‘suffering of the body’ as represented through the media, and the violence meted out by the state against its own people, and the resistance to such violence. Matereke analyses the ‘clenched fist’ used as a symbol of the ruling party denoting strength and power in Zimbabwe, but more recently also coming to represent ‘repression and violence by the state’. Drawing upon this interpretation, the Movement for Democratic Change and in particular its leader Morgan Tsvangirai, chose consciously to use the symbol of the open palm, to denote “openness, transparency and fairness”, and in this action, Matereke argues “deploy[ed] the idea of the ‘violent other’”. Matereke acknowledges the recent and tragic death of Susan Tsvangirai. Her last open palm wave to her husband before her death, signalling that the ‘struggle for democracy’ must continue. She is considered to have been the ‘mother of this struggle’, perhaps tragically following in the footsteps of the former First Lady and ‘mother of the liberated nation’ Sally Mugabe who died in 1992. No-one could not have foreseen the subsequent and tragic death of Tsvangirai’s grandson one month after his wife’s death. Perhaps this will be the last and ultimate sacrifice that democracy will require for unity and peace to be achieved in Zimbabwe.

Dianne Schwerdt in “Caught in the Crossfire: Writing Conflict in Two African Novels” shifts the analysis from political history to literature in her comparative essay on two African novels which examine both anti-colonial and post-colonial violence. Schwerdt draws upon Ngũgĩ wa Thiongo’s Kenyan novel, *A Grain of Wheat*, and Yvonne Vera’s Zimbabwean novel, *The Stone Virgins*, with the former examining pre-independence conflict and violence, the latter, post-independence violence. Schwerdt’s analysis provides an opportunity to re-examine the official discourse on history through fictional interpretation. Pertinent to this particular edition of ARAS is Schwerdt’s discussion of Vera’s exploration of *Gukurahundi* in Matebeleland. The violence and horror of the

massacres in the mid-1980s becomes a reality, despite the processes of ‘forgetting’ that have been attempted in Zimbabwe.

Russell McDougall’s in “Things Fall Apart: Culture, Anthropology, Literature” on the anthropological progression of Nigerian author Chinua Achebe’s 1958 novel *Things Fall Apart*, while not a specific contribution to the current theme on Zimbabwe, does remind us that things have fallen apart in Zimbabwe. Indeed, Achebe’s title has been invoked by hundreds of writers on Zimbabwe’s recent crises, (including myself above) evidenced merely by a quick Google search. Using examples from Australian high school and university curricula, McDougall demonstrates that Achebe’s novel has been re-interpreted into the global context, and is now widely used to denote a certain state of affairs, from the personal to the corporate, and indeed at the state level. However, in that process the novel and its title has been “de-Africanised.” For example, the phrase “Things Fall Apart” has been “hijacked” by musicians and authors all over the world. Greg McCarthy for example used this term in the title of his book on the history of the State Bank of South Australia and its financial collapse. McDougall argues that despite the appearance of this African novel in the curricula, there is little focus on African studies, and even less on furthering our understanding of Australia’s relationship with Africa. This article reminds us what happens in Africa should not be ignored.

In the article “‘Embracing the Aussie Identity’: Theoretical Reflections on Challenges and Prospects for African-Australian Youths”, Kudzai Matereke’s second contribution to this edition brings Zimbabwe back into the picture, but this time within Australia. Matereke provides an analysis of ‘Australianness’ as it confronts the identities of African migrants. He juxtaposes two images of African migrants in the Australian media in a fascinating exposé of the Australian identity. The portrayal of Sudanese youth in the Australian media, tarnished with violence and fear, is juxtaposed with the troubling portrayal of one Zimbabwean woman, Tarisai Vushe who appeared on the television program *Australian Idol*. In exposing some racist tendencies, Matereke clearly reinforces the need for Australia and Australians to engage in more analysis and understanding of Africa’s past, present and future.

Finally in this edition, Graeme Counsel describes his research in Guinea completed just prior to the recent military coup in that country. His article on “Digitising and Archiving Syliphone Recordings in Guinea” provides an example of dedicated and persistent researching that has enabled “the world’s first complete catalogue of Syliphone recordings, and [the] digitis[ation] [of] the reel-to-reel recordings of Guinean orchestras held at the sound archive of Radiodiffusion Télévision Guinée”. Counsel’s research was supported by a grant from the British Library’s Endangered Archives Programme, and from the Guinean government he was awarded the prestigious ‘Palme Académique en Or’ for his work on these music archives. Counsel’s research also reminds us

that there are dedicated scholars in Australia who are researching Africa, and providing important analysis, knowledge, information and indeed preservation of culture.

In this 29th year of Zimbabwe's independence, the Zimbabwean dollar is near worthless, with one hundred trillion buying only AUD\$4. There is evidence that state sanctioned violence and killings continue in the country despite the progress of the new government of national unity, and Mugabe's calls for 'national healing.' Australia has only slightly downgraded its travel warning to the country while 254 Zimbabweans remain subjected to 'travel and financial sanctions' in Australia. The Australian government website on Zimbabwe has yet to update its list of Heads of Government for Zimbabwe to include Morgan Tsvangirai as Prime Minister (www.dfat.gov.au/geo/zimbabwe/index.html), while Mugabe is still saluted as "Your Excellency". When he was Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs, Kevin Rudd once criticised the Howard government for achieving no gains in the Zimbabwean crisis. Now as Prime Minister, will Rudd be able to put Africa and indeed Zimbabwe onto Australia's agenda. This edition of ARAS will I hope inspire discussion and debate about Zimbabwe's future both locally and globally.

NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

*David Lucas, President AFSAAP
Australian National University*

In Wales the Welsh Rugby Union is sometimes known as the Welsh Rugby Onion: because it makes you want to cry. Occasionally, over the last two years, as a Conference Co-Organiser, and, since November, 2008, as President, I have thought of AFSAAP as an onion. Yet it has the potential, to borrow Jacob Zuma's metaphor, to be as strong as an elephant. However, most of the time, my view, as expressed in my AFSAAP Renaissance paper, (see www.afsaap.org.au/Conferences/2008/Monash/Lucas.pdf), is that AFSAAP needs to re-build, identify what needs to be done, and who will do it. AFSAAP has a very broad mandate, covering the 50 or so African countries and all academic disciplines, as well as the diverse groups of African Australians. I am also President of a community organization in Canberra which not only has a much narrower agenda and geographical focus than AFSAAP but has more people doing the work, including many who are not Committee members.

In the past the work of running AFSAAP has not been equally distributed. This year, so that the talents of everyone on the Executive could be utilized, sub-committees were created to look at the AFSAAP Constitution, the Conference Kit, and its Futures (to include AFSAAP's aims, membership, financial viability and communications). The work of these sub-Committees will be revealed at the next General Meeting. And of course there is the crucial Conference sub-committee, consisting of Fernanda Claudio, Temesgen Kifle and Eric Louw, who are planning our next event, to be held at the University of Queensland from September 30th to October, 2nd with the theme of 'Africa in a restructuring world'. I hope that the call for topics for panels has received a good response.

From past conferences we have made some solid gains. One is the Postgraduate Workshop which precedes the main conference and which has become an important regular event. For the 31st Conference we had the benefit of a report by organizer Sam Balaton-Chrimes. Building on the attendance list for the 30th conference, thirty postgraduates attended, as well as seven professionals who constituted the panels of experts. Sam's conclusion was that the Workshop was 'a great success'. A second gain is the increased recognition of studies of African Australians. The 30th 2008 conference, held at the ANU, had two themes, one being 'Africans in Australia' which attracted 21 out of total of 45 papers. In addition, members of African community organizations in Canberra had received a special invitation to the Saturday programme and members of the Eritrean, Sudanese, Ghanaian and Sierra Leonean communities attended and made informal contributions at the closing session. Innovations for the 31st

conference, organized by Monash University, included a Business Forum and the refereeing of papers. It seems a long time since we had a guest speaker from Africa at the conference dinner and this and the opening session were enlivened by guest speaker Mac Maharaj.

Another gain is in the field of communications. AFSAAP has been steadily developing its webpages. One example is the clickable map <http://www.afsaap.org.au/Map/Map.html> which can be used to find AFSAAP members with expertise on particular African countries. Our journal, *The Australasian Review of African Studies* is now online through Informit library databases, and on our own web pages with a two-year window. However, even though googling for 'African Studies Association' will soon find you the AFSAAP homepage, many people interested in Africa are unaware that AFSAAP exists. Perhaps we need an entry in Wikipedia.

To bridge the gap between ARAS and emails circulated to members by the Secretary, we now have a newsletter, *Habari kwa Upfu* (News in Brief) for members. This has reported on the increased interest by the Australian Government in Africa. In February of this year I had a productive meeting with Bob McMullan, Parliamentary Secretary for International Development, his advisor Sabina Curatolo, and Suzanne Dagseven from AusAID's Africa section. This should result in AusAID's participation in our 2009 and 2010 Conferences.

At the 2006 AFSAAP General Meeting I received support for the idea of an African Update, similar in format to the Indonesia Update and the Papua New Guinea Update regularly presented by The Australian National University in different cities. Bob McMullan was also encouraging, but suggested testing the waters this year. At first it seemed that this would take the form of an address at the ANU by the Minister on Africa Day in May but logistics now make this unlikely.

When nominated for the post of President in November last year, I said I would do it for one term only. So this will be my first and last President's Message in the pages of ARAS. I hope that my successor will benefit from the gains made in 2008 and early 2009 and from the considerable efforts currently being made by the Executive. For all of us members there are several suitable African exhortations, in particular the Swahili *Harambee* or 'All pull together'.

**Africa in a Restructuring World
September 30 to October 2
2009**

Call for Papers

The conference will be held at the University of Queensland, St Lucia, in Brisbane from September 30 to October 2 2009. The theme for the conference is "Africa in a Restructuring world".

Papers on a wide variety of themes are welcomed, and can encompass economics, politics, population, health, education, conflict, identity, or any other theme relevant to "Africa in a restructuring world".

Abstracts should be sent by the deadline of July 30th to:

Fernanda Claudio - <mailto:f.claudio@uq.edu.au>

All submitted papers will be peer reviewed and acceptable papers will be published on the AFSAAP organisational website www.afsaap.org.au as conference papers (E1 classification).

Please note: Authors are invited to submit their papers to the Editor of the Australasian Review of African Studies, to be included in a special edition of ARAS in 2010 on the theme of *Africa in a Restructuring World*. The Deadline for this would be December 31st 2009. Please see guidelines for authors at the rear of this journal or at www.afsaap.org.au/ARAS/ARAS.htm Contact the Editor of ARAS, Tanya.lyons@flinders.edu.au for further information.

ARTICLES

Zimbabwe: Retrospect and Prospect

Geoffrey Hawker
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Abstract

The current crisis in Zimbabwe is centred, in most Western reports, on the figure of President Robert Mugabe, in office since independence in 1980. If the crisis were indeed due largely or wholly to him, his leaving the scene in one way or another might seem likely to bring an end to the impasse. That may be a necessary but it is certainly not a sufficient condition for peace in Zimbabwe, however. The complex political and economic history of the country explains the rise and longevity in office of Mugabe and his party, ZANU-PF, and the legacies of that history have to be grappled with in determining how Zimbabwe can come to peace under any successor. Unless the issues are resolved within Zimbabwe, primarily by its own people, no long-term solution will be found.

Introduction

The territory now named Zimbabwe has been in a state of war and actual or incipient civil war for well over a century. The Shona people who occupied the northern and central parts of the territory from about the twelfth century onwards resisted strongly the movement into the south and west of the Ndebele people, displaced by the Zulu uprisings of the 1830s onwards from South Africa; we are reminded of this today in the ancient name of the Ndebele capital Bulawayo, now Zimbabwe's second city – it is 'the killing fields' or 'place of slaughter' in the Ndebele language, for good historical reasons. The arrival of Cecil Rhodes and his adventurers in the 1890s then brought a period of warfare between the black population and the incursive whites, known in contemporary ZANU-PF hagiography as the 'First Chimurenga' (liberation war). Resistance to land grabs continued throughout the twentieth century in what one historian has termed "silent violence".¹ The Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) of 1965 brought outright civil war (the 'Second Chimurenga') as black guerrillas fought to overthrow a regime that Britain had disowned but not dismantled; and it was of ongoing significance that the black struggle was united tactically but not at a deeper level, with Shona and Ndebele identities persisting in separate political parties and armies - respectively ZANU and its army ZANLA, Chinese-backed, and ZAPU and its army ZIPRA, Soviet-backed.²

¹ Tapera Knox Chitiyo, "Land Violence and Compensation Reconceptualising Zimbabwe's Land and War Veterans' Debate," *Track Two* 9 no. 1 (2000).

² See Norma J. Kriger, *Guerrilla Veterans in Post-War Zimbabwe Symbolic and Violent Politics* (Cambridge UP, 2003) for a detailed account.

In the early years of independence (post 1980) that struggle continued, taking shape especially fiercely in the Matabeleland massacres of 1983-87, when the Korean trained ZANU army killed many inhabitants of the Ndebele lands. A period of reconciliation between the parties ensued for about a decade until the mid 1990s, that period coinciding broadly with the West's approbation of Mugabe's rule, but broke down again in the late 1990s, contributing to the current situation. The history of Rhodesia/Zimbabwe over the last forty years has thus seen a dual struggle between the black majority and the white minority, and within the black majority itself. Conflict between the three main groupings has taken an uneven course, at times involving white-black violence and at other times black on black violence; in the most recent period there have been suggestions that the black minority, represented by the main opposition party the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), is in alliance with the dwindling white minority and linked to external white interests in the West. No longer is it true to say those white-black relations or Shona-Ndebele rivalries alone fuel the conflict that must be resolved but those relations of race and history must be part of any reconciliation that endures.

This article first outlines the intertwined paths of economic and political development in Zimbabwe in the years since independence that have patterned this conflict, beginning with the early violence in Matabeleland that set Shona against Ndebele in the early 1980s. We seek then to explain the actions of Mugabe and his party in shifting economic policies across the last twenty years, involving a return to a statist form of government, and finally outline some options that might move the present situation in a peaceful direction. The essence of the narrative is summarised in the following table:

Table 1 Patterns of economics, politics and ethnicity in Zimbabwe 1980 – 2008

Period	Economic sphere	Political sphere	Relations of identity		Western attitudes
			Black-White	Black-Black	
1980-90	State corporatism	Multi-party democracy	Reconciliation	Oppression	Positive
1990-2000	Market liberalism	Presidentialism	Tolerance	Reconciliation	Positive
2000 -	Return to statism	Emerging military regime?	Oppression	Oppression	Negative

These are highly generalised labels to be sure, and the dating especially is uneven across the categories. Western government and donor organisations took a benign view of Zimbabwe until about the turn of the century, overlooking the oppression of the Ndebele people in the early years of independence and waxing especially enthusiastic about the government's

acceptance of structural adjustment plans (SAPs) in the 1990s. The turn to an oppressive state apparatus over the last decade has cooled enthusiasm markedly, but the little acknowledged fact of the government's return to a statist management of the economy has also contributed to shaping Western attitudes. In adopting the term 'western' we are referring to the dominant attitudes of liberal and conservative forces, and socialist and generally left analyses of Mugabe's regime have a different flavour, a fact given some space below. Violence is indeed a 'fact' in current Zimbabwe, but it exists within an ideological framework of conflicting interpretations.

The Matabeleland Massacres

Reconciliation with the white minority at the time of independence was pronounced and took many observers by surprise. Mugabe was "suited, moderate, [and] conciliatory" at the post-election inauguration ceremony according to an Australian observer.³ He promised to "put the bitterness of the past behind us, and to work together regardless of the past to forge a national unity of all Zimbabweans".⁴ Though resenting some of the terms of the Lancaster Agreement, especially the reservation of parliamentary seats for white members, much less was said about the key issue in Zimbabwean politics at that time and since – the land issue, which required a willing seller and a willing buyer, supported by British funding. The emphasis was that the new Zimbabwe would be "a non-racial society".⁵ We can now see that such statements were directed at a white audience, and largely honoured for some years. Relations between the Shona and Ndebele peoples were quite different.

It is important for the argument here that the events of 1983-85 in Matabeleland were well known in the West but largely ignored. Whether the historic rivalries of Shona and Ndebele were exaggerated in colonial times to serve imperial interests⁶ is less important than the reality of such conflict during the civil war from 1965. The demobilisation of the rival armies that followed independence was said to have left some ex ZIPRA fighters dissatisfied with ZANU control to the extent that they became "dissidents", amassing arms caches in Matabeleland, sabotaging aircraft, murdering civilians and assassinating the ANC representative in Harare. Whether South Africa had a substantial hand in these incidents is still debated. It is however certain that the new government, relying in part on the repressive apparatus of the old regime of the UDI period, turned loose the new national army, trained and assisted by the North Korean Fifth brigade, to undertake a systematic purge (the

³ Neal Blewett, "1980: The Springtime of Robert Mugabe," *The Australasian Review of African Studies* XXIV no. 2 (December 2002): 25.

⁴ Robert G. Mugabe, "The Parliament of Zimbabwe and Some Aspects of the Constitution," *The Parliamentarian* LXV no. 3 (1984): 2.

⁵ Mugabe, 5.

⁶ Brendan Stone, "Zimbabwe's different path and penalty incurred," *Global Research*, <http://www.raceandhistory.com/Zimbabwe/2007/2205.htm> (accessed 9 July 2008).

Gukurahundi) of the remnants of the old ZIPRA army. Beatings, deaths and rapes followed, of many villagers who had played little if any part in the political manoeuvrings of the opposed black forces during the civil war. Estimates of deaths reached some 20,000 across the period.⁷

As early as January 1983⁸ the emerging terror was reported by journalists, international humanitarian organisations like Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists and within Zimbabwe itself by representatives of the churches, especially the Catholic Church. The annual reports of Amnesty International were especially detailed across the whole period of the unfolding conflict.⁹ Scholarly research was also reported in mainstream journals.¹⁰ From the political left came initially a cautious response, some seeing the hand of South Africa in stoking the fires.¹¹

Though the events in Matabeleland were extensively reported, few Western governments said anything and in the scholarly literature a similar silence was observed. Documenting silence is more difficult than the reverse and a couple of examples must suffice. A well-regarded writer on Sub-Saharan Africa and on Zimbabwe in particular, Jeffrey Herbst, thus celebrated in 1990 the success of Mugabe's government in coming to terms with the white minority. Racial reconciliation in Zimbabwe, he wrote, "is one of the few signs of hope for stability in the bleak landscape of southern Africa".¹² Writing at a time when the situation in South Africa was indeed 'bleak', it is understandable that Herbst should be preoccupied with white-black relations but still the absence of any comment on events barely three or five years before is remarkable. His larger work the following year barely mentioned the *Gukurahundi* in a discussion of ethnicity in Zimbabwe.¹³ We may imagine that the black-white

⁷ Pierre M. Atlas, and Roy Licklider, "Conflict among Former Allies after Civil War Settlement: Sudan, Zimbabwe, Chad, and Lebanon," *Journal of Peace Research* 36 no. 1 (1999): 41-43; Stephen Chan, *Robert Mugabe A Life of Power and Violence* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2003), 25-33.

⁸ Nick Worrall, "Gukurahundi revisited," <http://gukurahundi.blogspot.com/2007/08/more-on-gukurahundi-from-nick-worrall.html> (accessed 9 July 2008).

⁹ Amnesty International, *Annual Report* (London: Amnesty International, 1983-87), *passim*; Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, "Breaking the Silence, Building True Peace: A report on the disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands 1980 - 1989, Summary report" http://www.hrforumzim.com/members_reports/matrep/matrepsumm.htm (accessed 3 July 2008).

¹⁰ For example, Ronald Weitzer, "In Search of Regime Security: Zimbabwe since Independence," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 22 no 4 (1984): 537, 543-547.

¹¹ Manning Marable, "Zimbabwe and the Problematic of African Socialism," *Contemporary Marxism* 7 (1983): 93.

¹² Jeffrey Herbst, "Racial Reconciliation in Southern Africa," *International Affairs* 65 no. 1 (1989): 43.

¹³ Jeffrey Herbst, *State Politics in Zimbabwe Perspectives on Southern Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 169.

reconciliation overshadowed the visibility of what had happened to the Ndebele but that seems hardly enough to explain such myopia.

In recent years, however, the events in Matabeleland have been carefully revisited and a number of detailed and often moving accounts have appeared.¹⁴ The refusal of the Zimbabwean state to recognise the deaths and cries for internment has been documented especially by Ranger and Alexander, the latter pointing to the “failures to address the silences of this period and the mismatch that remained between ZANU-PF’s nation and that envisioned by its Matabeleland constituency”.¹⁵ To the present day the events in Matabeleland remain on the political agenda of Zimbabwe. There is unfinished business here and an important element in any longer term settlement of issues of identity.

Reconciliation took place eventually at the political level as ZANU and ZAPU merged into a single party in 1987. At that time the country adopted a presidential system with Mugabe moving from the prime ministership to the presidential post, and a vice-presidency of the party was reserved for an Ndebele representative, a provision that still holds. As to the human level of loss and bereavement, it seems clear that reconciliation was neither attempted nor achieved. There are some who now suggest that a body akin to a Truth and Reconciliation Commission should be attempted¹⁶ but any such move must await the resolution of the broader tensions that now convulse the polity.

The developing state of the 1980s

In the political sphere, the period of the eighties seemed reasonably open and democratic. Mugabe in 1984 had gestured at a move to a one-party state - there were “many arguments in favour” of such a development, and the “overwhelming majority of our people” would like to see it brought about, he had claimed.¹⁷ The settlement of 1987 seemed possibly to presage such a move, but the elections of 1985 (parliamentary), 1990 (parliamentary) and perhaps 1996 (presidential) seemed reasonably free and fair. Notably from the Western perspective the land issue was scarcely addressed. The “urgent need” was to restore an economy “ravaged by war and sanctions” and the government was forced “to prioritise the needs of commercial farmers at the expense of peasant expectations” even though “huge inequities in lands distribution

¹⁴ For a recent summary covering both literary and historical works, see, in this edition of ARAS, Dianne Schwerdt, “Caught in the Crossfire: Writing Conflict in Two African Novels.”

¹⁵ Terence Ranger, “Historiography, Patriotic History and the History of the Nation: The Struggle over the Past in Zimbabwe”, Idoga Annual Distinguished Lecture on Africa 2003, <http://cas1.elis.rug.ac.be/avrug/ranger.htm> (accessed 30 December 2008). Jocelyn Alexander, “Legacies of Violence in Matabeleland, Zimbabwe,” in Preben Kaarsholm, ed., *Violence, Political Culture and Development in Africa* (Oxford: James Currey, 2006), 119.

¹⁶ Nkululeko Sibanda, “Massacres Queru,” *New Zimbabwe*, <http://www.newzimbabwe.com/pages/gukgenocide2.1181.html> (accessed 7 July 2008).

¹⁷ Mugabe, 6.

remained”.¹⁸ White commercial farmers were important to the economy and their representatives were prominent in interest group peak bodies and even in the cabinet. At the same time, the government resisted demands from former liberation fighters dissatisfied with the pace of land redistribution who called for “pensions to be paid and land redistributed”.¹⁹

Just as some aspects of the old security apparatus of the UDI regime were carried forward into the Matabeleland episode (the state of emergency proclaimed originally by Smith, for example, was not lifted until July 1990), economic policies built up under the adverse circumstances of sanctions remained. Import substitution ran on into the 1980s and the “sophisticated import control system built up under sanctions” was continued.²⁰ Western observers seem generally to have accepted the government’s orientation, partly expected given the socialism espoused by ZANU during the years of the civil war, and there was relief that the results seemed positive. Spending on health and education especially seemed to be bringing results even if the budget deficit was growing. Within the region, Mugabe’s immense popularity as the leader of a front line state in the struggle against apartheid South Africa and more generally as a leader of the Non Aligned Movement brought praise for his government as a success story with few equals. When Western attitudes to South Africa hardened, Mugabe seemed about the best ally available and pragmatism prevailed – including in Reagan’s administration.²¹

Reversal in the Market

Zimbabwe’s turn to the market in its acceptance of SAPs in the 1990s, and most importantly in the Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP) of 1991, was relatively sudden and has been analysed at length elsewhere. The country was under “increased pressure to join the international trend of liberal economic reform”; internally the Confederation of Zimbabwean Industries changed its opposition, and “concerns about the growth effects of regulation” were expressed within ZANU-PF.²² But the reforms were also quite short-lived and notably unsuccessful in a continent littered with the failed outcomes of SAPs. It has been argued that the “design (and implementation) of ESAP was

¹⁸ Electoral Institute of South Africa, “Zimbabwe: Reconciliation, Unity and Conflict (1980-1989),” <http://www.eisa.org.za/WEP/zimoverview4.htm> (accessed 7 July 2008).

¹⁹ Mahmood Mamdani, “Lessons of Zimbabwe,” *London Review of Books* 30, no. 23 (4 December 2008), <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v30/n23/mamd01.html> (accessed 10 December 2008). See also Norma J. Kriger, *Guerrilla Veterans in Post-War Zimbabwe Symbolic and Violent Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), 209-14.

²⁰ Rob Davies and Jorn Rattso, “Zimbabwe: Economic Adjustment, Income Distribution and Trade Liberalization,” CEPA Working Papers Series 1, Working Paper no. 21 (New York: Centre for Economic Policy Analysis, New School University, February 2000), 4.

²¹ Richard N. Haas and Meghan L. O’Sullivan, *Honey and Vinegar Incentives Sanctions and Foreign Policy* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2000), 101.

²² Tor Skalsnes, *The Politics of Economic Reform in Zimbabwe* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1995), cited Davies and Rattso, 5.

botched... [with] inappropriate sequencing of fiscal and financial reform”, which must be laid at the door of the IMF according to the IMF’s own independent evaluation.²³ In October 2001 the abandonment of ESAP was officially announced, with the government proclaiming its “termination”, thus bringing

to an end the era of control of our economy by the IMF and the World bank. While we must continue to work with these organisations on agreed projects, they will no longer dictate the direction of policy and the country.²⁴

From the mid 1990s the government faced growing unrest, especially in a series of public sector strikes and in a wave of land occupations unsanctioned by the government. Political instability saw the rise first of the National Constitutional Assembly, a non-government organization (NGO) of wide remit, and then in 1999 of a new opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change, both headed by Morgan Tsvangirai who had been the secretary of the Zimbabwean Council of Trade Unions.²⁵ Pluralism seemed to be working, to the extent that an African author felt able to write a scholarly article in 1997 with a title that now seems well falsified – “Zimbabwe’s eroding authoritarianism”.²⁶ In 2000 the MDC ran ZANU-PF close in the Assembly elections (ZANU-PF 62 seats, MDC 57) and in that year also the government suffered the shock of the electorate’s rejection of constitutional amendments that would have given further powers to the president.²⁷ Tsvangirai also performed well in the presidential poll in 2002, though falling well short of Mugabe (Tsvangirai 42.1%, Mugabe 56.2%). By that time, however, the government had taken steps to shore up its position, notably by ceding the demands of the so-called war veterans, a move that “destroyed the fiscus”.²⁸ The veterans then proceeded to the first of the large-scale incursions of white farms. It is a matter of ongoing dispute as to whether the government led the war veterans or was manipulated by them – whether indeed local committees dominated by the veterans constituted “new centres of power” independent of

²³ Tony Addison and Liisa Laakso, “The Political Economy of Zimbabwe’s Descent into Conflict,” *Journal of International Development* 15 (2003): 460-461.

²⁴ ZANU-PF Press Release cited by Gregory Elich, “Zimbabwe under Siege,” *Swans Commentary*, <http://www.swans.com/library/art8/elich004.html> (accessed 21 October 2002).

²⁵ See generally David Blair, *Degrees in Violence Robert Mugabe and the Struggle for Power in Zimbabwe* (London: Continuum, 2003); Geoff Hill, *The Battle for Zimbabwe The Final Countdown* (Cape Town: Zebra, 2003); and Norma J. Kriger, “ZANU(PF) Strategies in General Elections, 1980-2000: Discourse and Coercion,” *African Affairs* 104 no. 414 (2005).

²⁶ Masipula Sithole, “Zimbabwe’s Eroding Authoritarianism,” *Journal of Democracy* 8 no. 1 (1997): 127-41.

²⁷ Daniel Compagnon, “Briefing: Zimbabwe: Life after ZANU-PF,” *African Affairs* 99 (2000): 449-453.

²⁸ David Moore, “Commentary Democracy is Coming to Zimbabwe,” *Australian Journal of Political Science* 36 no. 1 (2001): 167.

the state.²⁹ In any event, the failures of the UK government to fund buy outs was increasingly used as justification for the take-overs.

Since then the government has taken an increasingly authoritarian turn. Successive elections (for the Assembly and revived Senate in 2005, and for parliament, presidency and local government in 2008) have been marred by intimidation and violence, though local and regional African observers have notably returned less severe judgements than those from the West, including the European Union. Here was a 'Third Chimurenga', according to Mugabe.

The repressive role of the government was seen by many observers to be manifested especially in 'Operation Murambatsvina', when city fringe dwellers occupying shanties were forcibly relocated to the bush.³⁰ A renewed statism has emerged, with the government legislating, for example, for 51% government ownership of mining ventures. The attempt to encourage xenophobia by linking the MDC to Western interests that supposedly fund the party continues. Yet, remnants of civil society, in churches, NGOs, the media and judiciary, remain precariously in place and perhaps, as one well-informed observer has claimed, "the ingrained tradition and legal framework of pluralism persists in people's experiences and expectations".³¹

The View of Mugabe's Supporters

The account above has followed mainstream opinion by and large, and it remains to note that defenders of the Mugabe regime have consistently expressed opposing views. Three main points are usually made. First, the Western media especially misrepresent and exaggerate what is happening in Zimbabwe; for example, Operation Murambatsvina was said to be typical of the "demolition of illegal housing [that] is common in other African countries", and indeed in "China, India and Jakarta" evictions "to make room for construction projects" have not drawn "similar protests from the West".³² Second, the motive for this is hostility to the challenge that Mugabe represents to Western hegemony in Zimbabwe, especially as expressed through the international financial institutions. The MDC is usually singled out as a stooge of Western interests, as the recipient of "direct, artificial, foreign support".³³ But third, such defenders all concede to varying degrees that the regime has engaged in unnecessary if sometimes understandable violence against its

²⁹ Mamdani, 7; see also Sam Moyo and Paris Yeros, eds., *Reclaiming the Land: The Resurgence of Rural Movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America* (London: Zed Books, 2005).

³⁰ Michael Bratton and Eldred Masunungure, "Popular Reactions to State Repression: Operation Murambatsvina in Zimbabwe," *African Affairs* 106 no. 422 (2007).

³¹ Sara Rich Dorman, "Post-liberation Politics in Africa: Examining the Political Legacy of Struggle," *Third World Quarterly* 27 no. 6 (2006): 1096.

³² Brendan Stone, "Zimbabwe's Different Path and Penalty Incurred," *Global Research*, <http://www.raceandhistory.com/Zimbabwe/2007/2205.htm> (accessed 9 July 2008).

³³ Stone.

opponents; at the same time, the MDC is said to have engaged in violent acts too. A further point is made by Moyo and Yeros, who argue that ZANU's policies over the last five years or so have been designed to entrench the party's control over the more radical elements of a civil society – especially the war veterans – that threatened something akin to a “peasants’ revolt”.³⁴ The common theme to emerge is that ZANU-PF and its leader are responding to challenges to their authority that are in varying degrees illegitimate and that strong measures in response are understandable if regrettable.

Both conventional and radical critiques take for granted that ZANU-PF is a united entity, but that is an assumption it is important to question. Indeed, both major parties are to some degree internally divided. ZANU's divisions relate to the succession to Mugabe where there is no shortage of ambitious candidates, though the ranks have closed in recent months. There is at least some evidence that leadership has now moved to security, military and police officials rather than to the old guard of ZANU-PF as such. Within the MDC, division has been manifest for at least the past three years, shown publicly in divisions around electoral strategy, first in the boycott of the 2005 senate election and recently, in 2008, in arguments about whether to contest the presidential runoff in June 2008. The smaller of the two MDC factions won ten seats in the parliamentary contest in March 2008 and now can restore an MDC majority in the parliament if a coalition was negotiated. Beneath this public division lies at least a shadow of the old Ndebele-Shona rivalries; Tsvangirai is a Shona, but his senior opponents within his party are largely Ndebele.³⁵ The possibility that some of the fragments of each party might break away to form a new party that would provide a basis for a new start has been advanced by many commentators, including by the International Crisis Group in its proposal of 2007 for a government of national unity.³⁶ The events since the abortive presidential runoff of June 2008 suggest that this is a faint hope, but a version of this proposal is not quite impossible to imagine. In early 2009 a coalition government between ZANU-PF and the MDC was negotiated. We consider in conclusion the mechanisms that might be required to make that work, and the key issues that would then need to be addressed by the new government.

Resolutions

Making and then keeping the peace is clearly a fraught issue with no easy resolution in sight. The issues that confront any Zimbabwean government are, in terms of public policy, very severe. A need to resolve the ongoing tensions

³⁴ Moyo and Yeros, 180-190.

³⁵ Brian Raftopoulos, “Reflections on Opposition Politics in Zimbabwe: the Politics of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC),” in Brian Raftopoulos and Karin Alexander, eds., *Reflections on Democratic Politics in Zimbabwe* (Cape Town: Institute of Justice and Reconciliation, 2006).

³⁶ International Crisis Group, “Zimbabwe: an End to the Stalemate?” *Africa Report* 122 (5 March 2007): 13.

of the *Gukurahundi* of 1983-85 remains alive in the consciousness of many Zimbabweans, as we have noted, and a process of reconciliation cannot begin in current circumstances. In the mainstream of economic policy, much external attention has been given to unemployment, emigration and inflation, but the major issue to be resolved is the land question, and in particular the future of the white farms taken over in the last few years. The MDC has promised

an autonomous, professional land Commission to acquire land and allocate it in a non-partisan fashion to settlers. These settlers to hold secure tenure and [to be] provided with adequate inputs and technical assistance to make a success of their farming ventures.³⁷

The issue of international financial support for such a process is clearly implied, though understandably not stated by the MDC because mention of international aid is in itself ‘proof’ of the disloyalty of the party as alleged by the regime.

Considering remedies is ahead of the story, to be sure, as the conditions do not yet exist for policy changes to be agreed and implemented. Putting aside for the moment the possibility of fractures within ZANU-PF that might lead to leadership changes and new policy directions (something entertained from time to time by both external and internal observers but now, it must seem, of diminishing though not zero likelihood), change at the political level might imaginably be enforced from without. Reconciling the antagonists through military intervention is a measure that has some appeal in the West at a popular level at least.³⁸ For good reasons, however, that is not a ‘remedy’ supported by any Western government and it is not imaginable that it could come about. Unilateral action has not been suggested, and multilateral action is scarcely more likely. In practical terms, which in fact reflect to some extent the position of Mugabe’s defenders, two permanent members of the United Nations Security Council will not be persuaded to support such action; and as the UN vote on sanctions in July 2008 showed, neither will such other states as South Africa, Libya and Vietnam (opposed) or Indonesia (abstained). The African Union could find a mandate for intervention if Zimbabwe were to be in a state of civil war, but that is a matter of definition that does not fit the ambiguous and complex situation we have outlined above. Mugabe’s defenders are no doubt right to say that a civil war would be triggered by external intervention of an overt kind, and thus intervention in any direct way will make matters worse. African states are well aware of this and though a number have castigated Mugabe none is likely to precipitate action through the African Union.

³⁷ Movement for Democratic Change, “Economic Stabilisation and Recovery Programme for incoming MDC Government covering Period April 2002 to December 2004,” mimeo (Harare: MDC, 2001).

³⁸ For an attempt to argue the case, see R.W. Johnson, “Zimbabwe: The Case for Intervention,” *Current History*, 106 no. 700 (May 2007): 233-234.

This is not to deny the possibility that external pressure, intervention of a sort, can be mounted effectively by Zimbabwe's neighbours, by South Africa above all. That is precisely what South Africa under former president Thabo Mbeki claimed to have been engaged during 2006-09, with negligible results according to most Western observers. But some of those observers want rapid and decisive action as they see it, such as cutting off energy and especially electricity supplies to Zimbabwe. South Africa's rejection of such measures is of a piece with its vote in the Security Council against UN sanctions in 2008. Mbeki's protracted efforts at 'quiet diplomacy', at working behind the scenes to bring the warring parties together, could, in early 2009, still be portrayed as a work in progress, even if that judgment becomes more difficult to sustain with each passing day. Some signs of movement are however evident, though they are no more than markers of necessary but insufficient progress: the chief is the gradual movement of African leadership across a range of countries towards opposition to the *methods* of Mugabe's government. Outright condemnation of him as an individual is still restricted to a few, including the Kenyan prime minister, Raila Odinga, who urged in late 2008 that international peacekeepers should be deployed in Zimbabwe.³⁹ Others – Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal, Ian Khama of Botswana, the late Levy Mwanawasa of Zambia, and to a lesser degree Armando Guebuza of Mozambique - have been careful to focus their criticisms and remedies on issues of process.⁴⁰ This is indeed important. African leaders (and as far as it is possible to tell Africans generally) are little inclined to punish Mugabe or to make him a scapegoat, as they see it, for the litany of historical injustices that any Zimbabwean leader must necessarily live with.

Conclusion

We must engage the fact that Mugabe and ZANU-PF do retain considerable popular support at the electoral level. Whilst the presidential election of March 2008 was opaque and likely rigged, in contrast the parliamentary elections for the lower house held on the same day were celebrated as delivering a narrow MDC victory because the ballots were counted locally, scrutinised by Southern

³⁹ "Send the troops into Zimbabwe, says Kenya's Raila Odinga", *The Times*, 24 November 2008, 24, 2008, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/africa/article5219044.ece> (accessed 30 December 2008).

⁴⁰ For recent examples, see "Zambia Seeks to Block Arms for Zimbabwe", *Reuters*, 22 April 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/22/world/africa/22zimbabwe.html> (accessed 5 February 2009); "S. Africa, Mozambique Push to End Zimbabwe Crisis," *World Bulletin*, 9 January 2009, http://www.worldbulletin.net/news_detail.php?id=35203 (accessed 5 February 2009); "Kenya, Senegal Leaders say Zimbabwe's Mugabe Must Go", *Reuters*, 30 January 2009, <http://www.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUSTRE50T35220090130> (accessed 4 February 2009); "Botswana Still Critical on Zimbabwe", *Daily Nation*, 6 February 2009, <http://www.nation.co.ke/News/africa/-/1066/525018/-/13rtvjz/-/> (accessed 6 February 2009); "Zambia Seeks to Block Arms for Zimbabwe", *Reuters*, 22 April 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/22/world/africa/22zimbabwe.html> (accessed 5 February 2009).

African Development Community (SADC) and local NGO observers, and immediately posted; in contrast the presidential ballots were taken to Harare and counted in secret. Acceptance of the parliamentary vote as reasonably free and fair entails acceptance of ZANU to something like the level of support recorded, that is 46% of primary votes. It is insufficient to declare Zimbabwe to be in an “undeclared civil war”⁴¹; as Kriger argues, the polity rather exhibits “organized regime violence against an unarmed political party”.⁴²

What Zimbabwe needs at this time is not a special mechanism of reconciliation or the intervention of peacekeepers or peacemakers but a period of ‘normal politics’ that could allow the differences of identity and interest among the population to be resolved through elections, policy-making and bargaining within an institutional framework uncorrupted by patrimony and repression. Those procedural requirements are formally in place, as they were in 1980, but their substantive content has been filleted out. Restoring content to elections and institutional roles to make them meaningful is the challenge. The governments of the region, especially South Africa acting through SADC, still do have the capacity to enforce the relevant processes, especially if given support from non-African governments and agencies that understand the need not to force their own prescriptions on what is by and large an unwilling continent. The outbreak of cholera in late 2008 provides one avenue through which international humanitarian and medical aid can come, but only if mediated through the governments of the region. At the time of writing, the consultative processes enforced on ZANU-PF have brought a halting measure of dialogue with the MDC. However, it is very uncertain that the formal memorandum of understanding signed between the parties in July 2008 will lead to procedural changes that hold, even though in early 2009 the SADC-sponsored talks designed to achieve a government of national unity were implemented. To that extent the final proposal of the International Crisis Group’s list of 2007 remains relevant – to support a

dissolution of parliament and the beginning of campaigns, monitored by local, regional and international observers, including from the UN, for presidential and parliamentary elections to be held by March 2010.⁴³

Carrying this through will not, however, necessarily produce comfortable outcomes for those observers who now regard Mugabe and his party with deep suspicion.

⁴¹ Hill, 3.

⁴² Norma J. Kriger, “Review of *The Battle for Zimbabwe* by Geoff Hill,” *African Studies Review*, 50 no. 2 (September 2007), 255.

⁴³ International Crisis Group, 13.

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From Comrade to His Excellency: Mugabe's Rise to Power

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Abstract

Towards the end of 1975, young radicals organised in the Zimbabwe People's Army (ZIPA) took charge of Zimbabwe's liberation war after bloody faction fighting involving the old guard leaderships of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) had stalled the liberation struggle. For some 14 months between 1975 and 1977 ZIPA filled the power vacuum by working with the military wings of ZAPU and ZANU to create a political military movement based on inclusive politics, a transformational vision and more effective military tactics. This new strategy forced the white supremacist regime of Ian Smith to resume talks about majority rule. These negotiations ironically gave the old guard of ZANU the opportunity to suppress the young radicals, resume control of the nationalist movement and revert to their traditional politics of factionalism and intolerance, practices which were to carry over into independent Zimbabwe.

Introduction

Towards the end of 1975, a movement of young radicals organised in the Zimbabwe People's Army (ZIPA) took charge of Zimbabwe's liberation war. ZIPA's fusion of inclusive politics, transformational vision and military aggression dealt crippling blows to the white supremacist regime of Ian Smith. However, its success also created the opportunity for a faction of conservative nationalists led by Robert Mugabe to wrest control of the liberation movement for themselves. The fact that Mugabe, a former rural school teacher, and his cronies would become the ruling elite of Zimbabwe by crushing a movement of young revolutionaries doesn't sit well with the official discourse of the state which they came to dominate.¹

¹ The history of ZIPA can be gleaned from David Moore's research, see for example "The Zimbabwe People's Army: Strategic Innovation or More of the Same", in *Soldiers in Zimbabwe's Liberation War*, Ngwabi Bhebe and T. O. Ranger, eds., (Harare; London; Portsmouth, N.H.: University of Zimbabwe Publications; James Currey; Heinemann, 1995a). Further ZIPA history can be found in liberation movement documents, as well references in general histories and biographies about Zimbabwe in the 1970s. The subaltern voices of the ZIPA protagonist's experiences are largely unheard and hardly figure in Zimbabwe's semi official nationalist history. The most substantial, David Martin and Phyllis Johnson, *The struggle for Zimbabwe*. (Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1981) either downplay or distort ZIPA's history or, like works such as Ngwabi Bhebe, *Simon Vengai Muzenda and the Struggle for and Liberation of Zimbabwe* (Gweru, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, 2004) largely avoid any mention of ZIPA. It is as if a true understanding of this experience is "out of step with the primary need of the 'nation,'" as constituted by Mugabe and his clique on their way to power. For a discussion how subaltern voices are reflected in official nationalist history see

The ZIPA cadre emerged from the wave of young people in the 1970s who, experiencing oppression and discrimination in Rhodesia, decided to become liberation fighters and volunteer to join one of the military wings of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU). The fact that they volunteered to fight indicated that the nature of the liberation struggle was changing because the 1960s nationalists had resorted to forced recruitment of Zimbabwean youth into their armed organisations.²

In 1975, key nationalist leaders such as Mugabe, Joshua Nkomo, Ndabiginini Sithole, Jason Moyo, Herbert Chitepo, Abel Muzorewa, James Chikerema and Josiah Tongogara had become entangled in factional rivalry that had been exacerbated by fruitless peace talks with the Smith regime. As the old leaders became marginalised and the war stalled, the young soldiers who would shortly form ZIPA sought to reinvigorate the struggle.

A group of ZANU officers based at training camps in Tanzania consulted widely among the liberation forces about the way forward. They approached President Nyerere of Tanzania and Samora Machel, soon to be president of newly independent Mozambique, for support to restart the war against Smith. Both Machel and Nyerere had initially supported the peace negotiations and ceasefire, known as *détente*, which had started with discussions between the nationalist organisations and Smith's regime in Lusaka at the end of 1974. However, by October 1975 leaders of the Front Line States (FLS) were losing patience with Rhodesian intransigence, and listened with sympathy to the ideas of the young officers.

Their proposal was to restart the war together with the forces of ZAPU, ZANU's long-standing rival organisation from which it had split in 1963. The FLS leaders had long advocated unity between the opposing factions and lent their support. ZAPU also agreed to the proposal and on 25 November 1975 a combined High Command composed of equal numbers from both ZAPU and ZANU came together to constitute the Zimbabwe People's Army. While the alliance with ZAPU disintegrated after a few months the new army was an important step which defied the prevailing trend of division. An underlying factor behind their formal withdrawal was that ZAPU's commitment to the armed struggle was compromised by the talks that their leader, Joshua Nkomo, was still conducting with Smith.

Gyan Pandey, "Peasant Revolt and Indian Nationalism: The Peasant Movement in Awadh, 1919-22", in Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, eds., *Selected Subaltern Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 241.

² Fay Chung, *Re-Living the Second Chimurenga. Memories from Zimbabwe's Liberation Struggle*. (Stockholm: The Nordic Africa Institute in cooperation with Weaver Press, 2006), 77; Martin and Johnson, 23.

ZIPA's nominal head was Rex Nhongo (later known as Solomon Mujuru he would become Mugabe's Army chief), but strategic and tactical leadership came to be held by his young deputy, Wilfred Mhanda. Mhanda had been typical of the new recruits to ZANU. At high school he had organised protests as part of a ZANU support group and in 1971, with the special branch in pursuit, his group skipped the border into Botswana. Mhanda joined ZANU's Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army and took the war name of Dzinashé Machingura. Like a number of recruits who were to form ZIPA, he was later sent for training in China. He rapidly progressed through the ranks to become a military instructor, political commissar, commander of the Mgagao camp in Tanzania and then member of the High Command.³ Such high level training was to have an influence on the tactics later adopted when the young leaders took over the direction of the military struggle. Their strategic conception went beyond the aims of the old-guard which tended to be limited to ending minority rule through an agreement to hold elections in Zimbabwe based on the principle of one person one vote.

ZIPA stood for no less than bringing about a revolutionary change in the country's social and economic relations and achieving the "total transformation of the Zimbabwean society".⁴ This conception regarded the nationalist struggle as a combined political military movement with close connections between the soldiers and the people's aspirations for social and economic justice. As a consequence their military strategy emphasised securing lines of retreat and supply, anticipating counter-offensives, creating strategic reserves and preparing to establish liberated zones. Military commanders and political officers based themselves in, or visited, the war front.

According to Saul the ZIPA officers had the "political clarity necessary to underwrite effective guerrilla struggle" which both ZANU and ZAPU lacked.⁵ The old guard had turned away from non violent methods when attempts to persuade the white minority to reform had failed in the late 1950s and early 1960s. They tended to perceive military action as a way of applying pressure to achieve reform. The combatants were regarded as subservient to their own political aims and ambitions, and therefore expendable. ZIPA did not see itself or its troops as expendable.

ZIPA mobilised rapidly after its formation. In December 1975, troops started to relocate from Tanzania to Mozambique and in January 1976, one thousand guerrillas crossed the border. The entire eastern border of Rhodesia now

³ Wilfred Mhanda (Dzinashé Machingura), interview by Stephen O'Brien, Harare, 26 August 2007

⁴ David B. Moore, *The Contradictory Construction of Hegemony in Zimbabwe: Politics, Ideology and Class in the Formation of a New African State*. (Toronto, Canada: York University PhD Thesis, 1990), 309.

⁵ John S. Saul, *The State and Revolution in Eastern Africa: Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979), 112.

became a war zone as the highly motivated combatants launched coordinated and well-planned attacks on mines, farms, and communication routes. Bridges, roads and the new railway line to South Africa were targeted. In one attack on 18 April 1976, the main highway to South Africa was temporarily cut. As a consequence of such actions it was no longer safe for Rhodesians to travel alone at night and road travel between rural centres had to be organised in convoys. Casualties on both sides rose. In May 1976 the 'kill rate' by which security forces measured their success in killing freedom fighters changed from 10:1 to 6:1, a ratio which was crippling and demoralising for the small white minority. Almost as many Rhodesians forces were killed in action in the six months to September 1976 as were lost in the preceding three years.⁶

To increase the effectiveness of its soldiers and to help institute its vision, ZIPA established a cadre school at its base in Mozambique at Chimoio about 100 kilometres from the Rhodesian border. Named after the Chinese nationalist's Wampoa College from the 1920s, the college provided training in both military instruction and mass mobilisation techniques. Run on democratic and egalitarian lines the "students made their political education directly relevant to the struggle, so that Marxism could better direct the war of liberation."⁷ The curriculum emphasised the need to win the support of the Zimbabwean peasantry through persuasion rather than coercion,⁸ the need to avoid the sexual abuse of women and resulted in discussion of "women's emancipation"⁹ and "social inequality".¹⁰

In an interview with Australian journalist Wilfred Burchett in 1976, Mhanda explained that ZIPA was increasing its ability to deploy larger and more heavily armed units. This gave them the confidence to plan for an offensive and begin to further transform ZIPA into a political movement with deeper ties and support from "the masses".¹¹ This overall approach led to ZIPA becoming known as the *Vashandi*, a word which means worker in the Shona language, but which, according to Mhanda, took on a broader notion of the revolutionary front of workers, students and peasants.

⁶ Peter Godwin and Ian Hancock, *'Rhodesians Never Die': The Impact of War and Political Change on White Rhodesia, c. 1970-1980* (Harare, Zimbabwe: Baobab Books, 1999), 156.

⁷ Moore 1990, 335.

⁸ David B. Moore, "Democracy, Violence and Identity in the Zimbabwean War of National Liberation: Reflections from the World of Dissent," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 29, (1995b): 3, 388-389.

⁹ Tanya Lyons, *Guns and Guerilla Girls: Women in the Zimbabwean National Liberation Struggle* (Trenton, NJ. Asmara, Ethiopia: Africa World Press, 2004), 179.

¹⁰ Josephine Nhongo-Simbanegavi, *For Better or Worse: Women and Zanla in Zimbabwe's Liberation Struggle* (Harare. Weaver Press, 2000), 39.

¹¹ Wilfred Burchett, *Southern Africa Stands up the Revolutions in Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa* (Melbourne: Outback Press, 1978), 212-213.

As it reeled under the offensive, Smith's regime intensified repression and unleashed counter-insurgency troops. One such unit, the Selous Scouts, was notorious for recruiting Rhodesians and mercenaries variously described as "demented... perverse"¹² and "psychopathic killers".¹³ The construction of so called 'protected villages' was stepped up by Rhodesia so as to intensify control over the population and external troop raids and aerial bombardments were launched against refugee camps in Mozambique and Zambia. Rhodesia was forced to borrow 26 helicopters from apartheid South Africa, and in order to deploy 60% more troops, increased the military call-up for whites. In his memoirs, Ken Flower, head of the Central Intelligence Organisation under Smith (and later under Mugabe), recalls that by July 1976 "Rhodesia was beginning to lose the war".¹⁴

This situation in Zimbabwe, and the presence of Cuban troops in the region, worried United States (US) Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. Already concerned about 'losing' Angola and Mozambique, US intelligence assessments accessible to Kissinger predicted the imminent success of the "rebels" and the victory of "Communism".¹⁵ To counter this, US policy shifted to implementing a double play; support for majority rule, while attempting to "isolate" the radical wing of the nationalists.¹⁶ The ultimate aim was to ensure that moderate nationalists sympathetic to Western interests eventually formed government in Zimbabwe in a process which as Saul refers to as "false decolonisation".¹⁷ After a round of shuttle diplomacy, including talks with Nyerere, President Kuanda of Zambia, and South Africa's John Vorster, Kissinger finally met Smith on September 22, 1976. Faced with Kissinger's intense pressure, Smith had little option but to surrender to his insistence on "immediate negotiations to permit moderate blacks to take power".¹⁸ After obtaining Smith's broad agreement to transfer power within two years, Kissinger left the final details to be hammered out as part of the multi party talks which were to be convened in Geneva on October 28, 1976. The legal basis for talks centred on Rhodesia's technical status as a British colony. Rhodesia had issued its Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) from Britain in 1965, partly to quell the nascent nationalist movement and to

¹² Gerald Horne, *From the Barrel of a Gun the United States against Zimbabwe, 1965-1980* (Harare: Sapes Books, 2001), 116.

¹³ Ken Flower, *Serving Secretly. An Intelligence Chief on Record Rhodesia into Zimbabwe 1964-1981* (London: John Murray, 1987), 124.

¹⁴ Flower, 131.

¹⁵ Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger: A Biography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 690. Henry Kissinger, *Years of Renewal* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 999; Paul Moorcraft, *A Short Thousand Years: The End of Rhodesia's Rebellion* (Salisbury: Galaxie Press, 1980), 49 and Moore 1990, 351-352 also indicate that Kissinger was concerned about Rhodesia's grave military situation.

¹⁶ Martin and Johnson, 235-236.

¹⁷ Saul, 121.

¹⁸ Isaacson, 690.

forestall any British demand that 'legal' independence include guarantees for equal rights for the black majority.¹⁹

ZIPA was aware of the danger that the talks would provide an opportunity for the sidelining or eliminating of radicals as Kissinger envisaged. They initially opposed entering into such negotiations.²⁰ They had seen the results of previous talks. Smith had used discussions held in Lusaka (November 1974), Victoria Falls (August 1975) and with Nkomo (late 1975 to April 1976)²¹ to portray himself as reasonable, while exploiting divisions and ideological confusion in the nationalists' ranks.²²

Disunity had long plagued the nationalist movement. Differences which originated from Nkomo's initial support for a limited constitutional settlement in 1961, eventually deepened and led to a section of the more educated leaders splitting from ZAPU in August 1963 to form ZANU.²³ The acrimony generated by the division soon turned violent. The police looked on, or fuelled antagonism, while battles raged between ZANU and ZAPU supporters in the townships.²⁴ Only in April 1964, after significant damage had been done to the cause of unity did Ian Smith, the new Prime Minister, step in. His response was to ban both parties, and despatch central leaders such as Mugabe and Nkomo to jail for the next ten years.²⁵

By the time ZIPA ascended to the leadership there had been many years of disunity. The new leaders were also aware of the way in which rebellions, against those perceived to be corrupt and incompetent leaders, had been brutally suppressed. Such was the fate of ZAPU's *March 11 Movement*

¹⁹ Shephard Nzombe, "Negotiations with the British", in Canaan Banana, ed., *Turmoil and Tenacity: Zimbabwe, 1890-1990*, (Harare, Zimbabwe: College Press, 1989), 166-172; Martin and Johnson, 71-72, 130-131; Ian Hancock, *White Liberals, Moderates, and Radicals in Rhodesia, 1953-1980* (London; New York: Croom Helm; St. Martin's Press, 1984), 105-106; Michael O. West, *The Rise of an African Middle Class: Colonial Zimbabwe, 1898-1965* (Bloomington Indiana University Press, 2002), 5-6. Moorcraft, 14-15.

²⁰ Moore 1995a, 80.

²¹ Julie Brittain and Brian Raftopoulos, "The Labour Movement in Zimbabwe: 1965-1980", in Brian Raftopoulos and I. R. Phimister, eds., *Keep on Knocking a History of the Labour Movement in Zimbabwe, 1900-1997* (Harare, Zimbabwe: Baobab Books. 1997), 91.

²² Moore 1990, Chapter 5; Godwin and Hancock, 122-123.

²³ West, 229-233. Maurice Nyagumbo, *With the People* (Salisbury The Graham Company, 1980), 176-189. Timothy Scarnecchia, *The Urban Roots of Democracy and Political Violence in Zimbabwe: Harare and Highfield, 1940-1964* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2008), 127-133; Munyaridzi Gwisai, *Revolutionaries Resistance and Crisis in Zimbabwe: Anti-Neo Liberal Struggles in Periphery Capitalism*. (Harare: ISO, 2007), 8; Bhebe 2004, 131-135; Martin and Johnson, 70-71. For a pro ZAPU view of the split see Eliakim M. Sibanda, *The Zimbabwe African People's Union 1961-1987. A Political History of Insurgency in Southern Rhodesia* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2005), 90-95 and Joshua Nkomo, *The Story of My Life* (Harare: SAPES Books, 2001), 113-122.

²⁴ Chung, 59-60; Scarnecchia, 138; 141-142; West, 232-233; Nyagumbo, 181, 193-184.

²⁵ West, 197, 232-233

(1971)²⁶ and ZANU's Nhari Rebellion (1974-1975).²⁷ It was during the fallout from the Nhari rebellion that Herbert Chitepo, the ZANU chair, was assassinated by a car bomb in Zambia's capital Lusaka. In response, Kaunda, who had been allowing the liberation forces to operate in Zambia, banned Zimbabwean nationalist organisations and detained hundred of their leaders and supporters, including the ZANU military commander, Josiah Tongogara.²⁸ These arrests, as well as Chitepo's death, created a leadership vacuum within ZANU which ZIPA was soon to fill.²⁹

Mugabe was also in detention. After his release from Smith's jails in December as part of the 1974 *détente* Mugabe had spent a few months at liberty before fleeing to Mozambique in April 1975. However, Mozambique initially regarded the new arrival's leadership pretensions with suspicion and Mugabe was placed under house detention in Quelimane.³⁰ On 1 November 1974, just before *détente*, the ZANU leadership in jail had voted to oust Ndanbiginini Sithole as party president in favour of Mugabe. When Presidents Kuanda, Machel, Nyerere and Seretse Khama (Botswana) learnt of this they rejected the leadership coup and continued to recognise Sithole.³¹

Manoeuvring for the leadership of ZANU between the respective supporters of Mugabe and Sithole continued for some months. Mugabe's break came in September when the guerrillas, dismayed at Sithole's political vacillation and his clumsy attempts to impose his personal control, issued the Mgagao Declaration. Drafted by the Tanzania based guerrilla commanders, and addressed to the FLS leaders, the declaration lambasted the old leadership, especially Nkomo, Muzorewa³² and Sithole. Mugabe had been careful to identify himself as being a supporter rather than leader of the guerrillas.³³ The

²⁶ Owen M. Tshabangu, *The March 11 Movement in Zapu: Revolution within the Revolution* (Heslington, York; Edinburgh; West Yorkshire; London: Tiger Papers Publications, 1979), 39-63.

²⁷ Luise White, *The Assassination of Herbert Chitepo Texts and Politics in Zimbabwe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 19-31.

²⁸ White, 79

²⁹ Moore 1990, 311.

³⁰ Moore 1995b, 392; Martin and Johnson 1981; 206-209; David Smith, Colin Simpson, and Ian Davies, *Mugabe* (Salisbury: Pioneer Head, 1981), 81.

³¹ Edgar Tekere, *A Lifetime of Struggle* (Harare: SAPES Trust, 2007), 67-69; Nyagumbo, 215-223; Bhebe 2004, 152-156, Martin and Johnson, 147-149; West, 68-69, 72-73; 229-233; Moore 1990, Chapter 5.

³² Muzorewa was the head of the African National Council (ANC) which has been set up as a legal front by ZANU and ZAPU to help scuttle the limited reforms proposed by Britain in the Anglo-Rhodesian settlement proposals of 1969. In 1974 it was reborn as an umbrella body but after Nkomo set up a rival external wing of the ANC in 1975 it dwindled to supporters of Muzorewa, Chikerema and Sithole.

³³ Smith, Simpson and Davies, 81.

declaration gave Mugabe de facto endorsement as it nominated him as someone who the guerrillas could “talk through”.³⁴

By January 1976, Mugabe’s detention was relaxed and he was permitted to visit foreign Embassies and travel to London to visit his wife Sally. He was able to give media interviews, where he expressed support for the armed struggle and which helped build his public profile, soon to be given a major boost at the Geneva talks.³⁵

Zambia finally released nationalist detainees on the eve of the talks so that their key leaders, such as Tongogara, could attend. The ZIPA commanders had initially refused to attend and made public their dissatisfaction in a statement which declared that “none of the Zimbabwe delegations”,³⁶ represented ZIPA. This included Muzorewa, Nkomo, Sithole, Mugabe and the rest of the delegates who flocked to Geneva. Mhanda explains that ZIPA thought that the old nationalist leaders did not fully understand changes in society and politics during their years in jail. On the contrary, the guerrilla fighters had gone through the learning curve of their own experiences as well as their study of the revolutions which had occurred in countries such as Cuba, Vietnam, China and the Soviet Union. The older generation maintained the view that the guerrillas were basically cannon fodder who would help them gain political power.³⁷

Some of the young radicals had experienced, and even sought out, Marxist ideas during their training and this had given them a theoretical grounding for their objectives. In a 2007 interview Mhanda described the delight he and a group of comrades felt when they discovered Marxist classics in the library at their camp in Tanzania.³⁸ Based on these texts they organised study classes on Marxist-Leninist philosophy, polemics and historical materialism.

While a few of the old guard had encountered various leftist groups in South Africa,³⁹ many of them had little direct experience with Marxism. The socialist tradition in Rhodesia was fleeting as the Rhodesian Communist Party had been a tiny white enclave during its brief existence in the 1940s.

In the weeks before the meeting in Geneva, Britain was anxious that the ZIPA commanders attend the conference and thus be away from their troops. Britain offered an interest-free loan of £15 million to Machel’s government to ensure that those who British Minister Ted Rowlands called the “‘young men’

³⁴ “The Mgagao Declaration by Zimbabwe Freedom Fighters” in Chung 2006, 340-346.

³⁵ See Smith, Simpson and Davies, 81; Moore 1995b, 392; and Martin and Johnson, 208-209.

³⁶ Moore 1990, 361.

³⁷ Mhanda, 26 August 2007.

³⁸ Mhanda, 26 August 2007.

³⁹ See Bhebe 2004, 49-68 for a biography of Mugabe’s Vice President, Simon Muzenda; for Maurice Nyagumbo’s leftist contacts see Nyagumbo, 78-86 and for an autobiographical account of Chikerama’s contact with communists see Scarnecchia, 75.

controlling Mugabe” went to Geneva.⁴⁰ Heavily dependent on the support of Mozambique to access their supply lines and infiltration routes, the ZIPA leadership had little choice but to acquiesce to Machel’s insistence that they attend.

At the Geneva Conference, despite their disdain for the politicians, ZIPA had advocated keeping both the radical and moderate wings of the movement under a common political umbrella. Such a united front, had ZIPA’s approach been adopted, could have demanded that Smith unconditionally surrender power and bring the war to an end.

Mugabe had already formed an alliance of convenience with Nkomo and his deputy Jason Moyo. Called the Patriotic Front, this political block helped strengthen Mugabe against the right (Muzorewa and Sithole) and against the left, the increasingly politically independent ZIPA. Moore has suggested Mugabe did not want the Geneva talks to succeed. Mugabe realised that if he was to consolidate his position in ZANU, he needed to gain the acquiescence of the troops before entering into serious negotiations with Smith.⁴¹ Once the Geneva talks ended on 14 December 1976 Mugabe acted swiftly to achieve such control.

Mugabe’s key lieutenants in achieving this were Tongogara, and Solomon Mujuru, the nominal head of ZIPA. Mujuru had never really shared the strategic vision of his deputy political commissar Wilfred Mhanda. They rushed back to Mozambique from Geneva to make sure they were there well before the ZIPA delegation returned. In January 1977, with Machel’s approval, and the support of FRELIMO⁴² troops, they started to impose their control. The radio and print media were taken over. Wampoa, seen as central to ZIPA’s authority, was closed and moves made against the soldiers in the camps. Ironically the first attempt to take over the Chimoio base was unsuccessful as most of the troops were in the process of deploying to fight in Rhodesia.⁴³ By the time Mhanda and the rest of the ZIPA delegation returned from Europe later in January 1977, they were faced with a changed reality. As Simon Muzenda was to unashamedly admit, the “young men” of ZIPA were arrested and sent “to prison”.⁴⁴ Those who refused to be co-opted into Mugabe’s faction joined their comrades in jail.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ David B. Moore, “Today’s Imperialists Were Those Who Nurtured Mugabe,” *Sunday Independent*, (20 January 2008).

⁴¹ Moore 1990, 361.

⁴² FRELIMO refers to Front for the Liberation of Mozambique, the ruling party of Mozambique.

⁴³ Moore 1990, 368.

⁴⁴ Bhebe 2004, 208.

⁴⁵ For accounts of Mhanda’s experiences of arrest and detention see Wilfred Mhanda, “The Voice of Conscience”, in Geoffrey Bould, ed. *Conscience Be My Guide: An Anthology of Prison Writings* (Avondale, Harare; London; New York: Weaver Press; Zed Books, 2005),

Prosecution of the war then took second place while Mugabe imposed control. Mass denunciations and witch hunts, some personally directed by Tongogara, were launched in the camps. In *Pawns*, a novel about the war, Charles Samupindi describes how a young recruit was made to fear any association or sympathy with ZIPA. An old guard loyalist delivers a tirade against the *Vashandi* at a guerrilla parade and declares

The Vashandi, the young kids as he calls them, are now all safely behind bars in Frelimo prisons in Beira. But, he says, some of them are still among us. Some may be with us. He wants to know who they are. Things are never the same again.⁴⁶

Things were not the same. Until at least August 1977, mass denunciations, interrogations, torture and beatings were directed against ZIPA stalwarts, especially its general staff. Some 300 cadre identified as ZIPA stalwarts were executed.⁴⁷

With its most experienced commanders out of action, ZANU/ZANLA failed to act upon the previous lessons of the war, especially the need to prepare for incursions from Rhodesia. Smith launched more devastating attacks on the camps, the most devastating on November 23, 1977 left the Chimoio base razed with over 1200 casualties.

The impact of the internal struggle on the fight against Smith was noticed by FRELIMO. In August 1977 when Machel enquired what had happened to the prosecution of the war, the ZANU leadership was evasive and avoided his suggestion that the jailed ZIPA leaders be allowed rejoin the war and fight.⁴⁸

By August 1977, however, Mugabe felt strong enough to call a special ZANU Congress in Chimoio and have himself formally confirmed as party president. A “brutally tough”⁴⁹ Mugabe issued stern warnings against dissent and instead of ZIPA’s democratic socialism the Congress adopted turgid “Marxism-Leninism-Mao TseTung thought”.⁵⁰

234-236; Geoffrey Nyarota, *Against the Grain: Memoirs of a Zimbabwean Newsmen* (Cape Town; London: Zebra; New Holland, 2006), 106-109, 115-117 and Heidi Holland, *Dinner with Mugabe: The Untold Story of a Freedom Fighter Who Became a Tyrant* (Johannesburg; New York: Penguin Books, 2008), 179.

⁴⁶ Charles Samupindi, *Pawns* (Harare: Baobab Books, 1992), 97.

⁴⁷ Moore, 1990, 369, 386 and André Astrow, *Zimbabwe, a Revolution That Lost Its Way?* (London; Totowa, N.J.: Zed Press; 1983), 107.

⁴⁸ Moore 1990, 369-370.

⁴⁹ Bhebe 2004, 211.

⁵⁰ Moore 1990, 311, 400.

According to Bond ZANU's leftism was essentially "a disguise for classically authoritarian nationalism."⁵¹ Their formalist Marxism had little content and was largely meaningless as the suppression of ZIPA had made it clear that political discussion was, according to Nhongo-Simbanegavi, "the exclusive domain of the political commissars" and far too dangerous for the rank and file to talk about.⁵²

In the early 1970s, ZANU had adopted a socialist discourse in order to attract and retain the support of idealistic young people, especially students,⁵³ and attract the assistance of the socialist countries.⁵⁴ There is little evidence to indicate that there was any depth to the ideology and during their campaign against ZIPA, Mugabe and Tongogara mocked its application of Marxist philosophy.⁵⁵ In his speech to the Chimoio Congress (held from August 31 to September 8, 1977, later published as "Comrade Mugabe Lays the Line"), Mugabe made it clear that henceforth the "given leadership" was in control.⁵⁶

The trappings of a personality cult started to emerge. In his Maputo office, Mugabe's "subalterns ...would click their heels or stamp a foot to attention when they went to see him".⁵⁷ Party documents were now embellished with the slogan "Forward with Comrade President Robert Mugabe"⁵⁸ and party organs lauded Mugabe as the great "Helmsman".⁵⁹

Discipline weakened as the preoccupation with 'dissidents' meant that there was inadequate ideological and military training. In 1979, Mugabe admitted that "there was very little ideological awareness, even among the leadership".⁶⁰ Undisciplined habits among the ZANU politicians, which had been a factor in the Nhari rebellion,⁶¹ re-emerged and Machel felt obliged to complain about

⁵¹ Patrick Bond, *Uneven Zimbabwe a Study of Finance, Development and Underdevelopment*. (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1998), 339.

⁵² Nhongo-Simbanegavi, 40.

⁵³ Fay Chung, "Education and the Liberation Struggle", in Ngwahi Bhebe and Terence Ranger, eds. *Society in Zimbabwe's Liberation War Volume Two*, (Harare; Portsmouth, NH; London: University of Zimbabwe Publications; Heinemann; J. Curry, 1995), 141.

⁵⁴ Moore 1995a, 84.

⁵⁵ Moore 1990, 368-369; Scarnecchia 2008, 192, reports that in 1962 Mugabe told a US Embassy official that "it would be foolish for African's to sacrifice their freedoms at the altar of Communist ideology" a comment which could be read as ambivalence towards Marxism.

⁵⁶ Moore 1990, 400.

⁵⁷ Smith, Simpson and Davies, 99.

⁵⁸ Nhongo-Simbanegavi, 102

⁵⁹ Terence Ranger, "The Changing of the Old Guard: Robert Mugabe and the Revival of Zanu," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 7, (1980): 1, 86.

⁶⁰ Nhongo-Simbanegavi, 40.

⁶¹ White 2003, 20, 24 writes that grievances aired by the Nhari rebels included allegations that some members of the Lusaka based ZANU High Command were involved in misuse of funds, sexual abuse and high living, while the guerrillas in the field were suffered from inadequate arms and supplies. Chung 2006, 89 and Nhongo-Simbanegavi 2000, 57-58 also make accusations of this nature.

the “heavy drinking and the womanising that some senior ZANU men indulged in at the capital’s nightspots, like the Polana Hotel”.⁶²

As Nhongo-Simbanegavi points out, sexual abuse directed against women is a major consequence of a breakdown in military discipline.⁶³ Even pro-ZANU historians like Bhebe⁶⁴ acknowledged that “rampant raping” was carried out by senior commanders.⁶⁵ In 1978-1979 indiscipline among its troops drew some commentators to observe that ZANU faced the potential of a “collapse of rural support”.⁶⁶ Indiscipline and abuse was in contrast to the ZIPA experience. As well as a more conscious policy towards women, field commanders under ZIPA were instructed “to bring ‘sellouts’ back to the bases in Mozambique”.⁶⁷

When the nationalist movement started to adopt violent tactics in the late 1950s and early 1960s, they saw force as a means to not only apply pressure on the state, but to enforce discipline and settle scores with their opponents within the movement.⁶⁸ Thus, when the guerrilla war in the countryside was launched, it was a logical progression for the liberationists to use physical means to ensure the cooperation of the peasantry. Scholars such as Lan, Ranger and Kriger⁶⁹ have debated the extent and specifics of this coercion. In this context ZIPA’s astute emphasis on education and motivation to win support was novel. Wise counsel was especially needed when the political situation became confused. Smith indeed took advantage of the ongoing disunity and struck a side deal with the conservative nationalists Sithole, Chikerema and Muzorewa in 1978. The Internal Settlement resulted in the establishment of the puppet state of Rhodesia-Zimbabwe under nominal black majority rule.⁷⁰

This experience prolonged white domination by two more years, which were the most brutal period of the war. Smith helped Sithole and Muzorewa establish

⁶² Smith, Simpson and Davies, 106, see also Bhebe 2004, 216.

⁶³ Nhongo-Simbanegavi, 119.

⁶⁴ Bhebe 2004, 224;

⁶⁵ For other reports of sexual abuse see Chung 2006, 125-128 as well as Chiedza Musengezi and Irene McCartney, eds., *Women of Resilience. The Voices of Women Ex-Combatants* (Harare: Zimbabwe Women Writers, 2000); Nhongo-Simbanegavi, Tekere, 94; Irene Staunton, ed. *Mothers of the Revolution* (Harare: Baobab Books, 1990), 49 and Lyons, 259-273.

⁶⁶ Terence Ranger, “Bandits and Guerrillas: The Case of Zimbabwe”, in Donald Crummey, ed., *Banditry, Rebellion, and Social Protest in Africa* (London; Portsmouth, N.H.: J. Currey; Heinemann, 1986), 386.

⁶⁷ Moore 1990, 345.

⁶⁸ Scarnecchia, 162.

⁶⁹ David Lan, *Guns & Rain: Guerrillas & Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe, Perspectives on Southern Africa* (London; Berkeley: J. Currey; University of California Press, 1985; Terence Ranger, *Voices from the Rocks: Nature, Culture & History in the Matopos Hills of Zimbabwe* (Harare; Bloomington, Ind.; Oxford: Baobab; Indiana University Press; James Currey, 1999); Norma J. Kriger, *Zimbabwe’s Guerrilla War Peasant Voices Harare* (Harare, Baobab Books, 2002).

⁷⁰ Astrow, 108-116.

what were in effect private armies or Security Force Auxiliaries. They went by names such as *Pfumo re Vanhu* (Spear of the Nation) and *Ziso re Vanhu* (Eye of the People) and were used to help ‘control’ the black population.⁷¹ Freed up to a limited extent, the Rhodesian security forces were then able to continue the war. This period saw many fatal incidents, at times carried out by the Selous Scouts masquerading as guerrillas. This caused confusion and great suffering as civilians found it difficult to distinguish between the various armed groups.⁷² The weight of popular discontent, international pressure and ZANU and ZAPU’s military pressure, eventually forced Smith’s tiny white minority to accede to the inevitable and return to negotiations.

In December 1979, at the Lancaster House talks in Britain, Smith finally surrendered and agreed to hold British supervised elections. In polls held the following February, ZANU won 57, ZAPU 20 and Muzorewa’s party three seats.⁷³ While the end of white political domination was achieved, the radical transformation as conceived by ZIPA certainly wasn’t. ZANU’s socialist rhetoric about land redistribution and a redistributive economy remained just that, as the old guard nationalists ceded significant control over land and the economy to the whites.

To appreciate how Mugabe’s group, with their declared adherence to ‘Marxism-Leninism-Mao TseTung thought’ could have so easily given ground, it is useful to look briefly at the broad intellectual formation of the 1950s and 1960s generation of nationalists. At this time, while cities were growing, the vast mass of the people were restricted to the rural areas and had little access to education.⁷⁴ A number of the early nationalist leaders managed to get access to education and attended church and colonial schools which were designed to create a small elite who would ‘lead’ the black masses on behalf of the white minority.⁷⁵ Many of this elite later found work in intellectual occupations such as teachers, preachers (Sithole and Muzorewa), journalists, office workers (Chikerema), small business people (Muzenda), social workers and trade union officials (Nkomo and Moyo).⁷⁶

In Mugabe’s case he became a teacher after finishing his schooling at Kutama Mission in 1945. While teaching he met future nationalist leaders such as

⁷¹ For information of the private armies see Astrow 1983, 114; Chung 2006, 234-235; Moorcraft 1980, 177; and Janice McLaughlin, *On the Frontline Catholic Missions in Zimbabwe’s Liberation War* (Harare: Baobab Books, 1998), 36.

⁷² Ron Reid Daly and Peter Stiff, *Selous Scouts Top Secret War* (Alberton, SA.: Galago, 1982), 563-576.

⁷³ Eldred Masunungure, “Travails of Opposition Politics in Zimbabwe since Independence”, in David Harold-Barry, ed., *Zimbabwe: The Past Is the Future: Rethinking Land, State, and Nation in the Context of Crisis*. (Avondale, Harare: Weaver Press, 2004), 154.

⁷⁴ Moore 1990, 96-97

⁷⁵ West, 60-67; Moore 1990, 88, 90-93.

⁷⁶ West, 1-2.

Sithole, Leopold Takawira and James Chikerama. In the late 1940s, Mugabe studied at South Africa's Fort Hare University and from 1955 in Zambia. In these early years Mugabe's involvement in politics included joining the African National Congress in his last year in South Africa, writing to the African newspapers to criticize the formation of the Central African Federation (CAF) in 1953⁷⁷ and attending gatherings of the liberal multi racial Capricorn Society.⁷⁸ He left to teach in Ghana in 1957 and in 1960, when back on holidays, Mugabe joined the predecessor of ZAPU. He was 36 years old.

The early well educated nationalists had contradictory positions regarding their role in white Rhodesia. Some thought that the black middle class should "aid the government in its 'civilizing' programmes of development and industrialisation".⁷⁹ It was generally felt, as Chitepo explained that "by reform, by pressure by argument and discussion that the situation would change that we would get a better and a fairer deal".⁸⁰

The economy boomed during the years of the Federation.⁸¹ Low wages, import substitution industries and sanctions busting during UDI helped further develop railways, mines, light manufacturing and agricultural processing. This further boosted the size of the working class, which by 1950 constituted 469,000 - almost half of whom worked in the industries of Harare and Bulawayo.⁸² Social stratification increased as some city dwellers, especially those with education, access to employment in junior levels of the state or small business, aspired to middle class advancement.⁸³ The vast majority however, were condemned to poor living conditions, and as such were more concerned with practical questions of survival.⁸⁴

Despite the growth of the working class, the development of trade union leaders was limited. The main organising body in Harare from 1945 to 1955

⁷⁷ West, 197.

⁷⁸ Smith, Simpson and Davies, 18. In the early 1960s, according to Hancock, 98, Mugabe also "regularly attended" meetings of the then Prime Minister Sir Edgar Whitehead's United Liberal Front.

⁷⁹ Moore 1990, 124.

⁸⁰ Herbert Chitepo, Interview by Michael Piggott, *National Press Club (Australia)*, 17 July 1973.

⁸¹ The CAF lasted between 1953-1963 and united Rhodesia with what later became Malawi and Zambia. Rhodesia withdrew when it realised that the possibility of independence threatened white domination. See Brian Raftopoulos, "Nationalism and Labour in Salisbury 1953-1965", in Brian Raftopoulos and Tsuneo Yoshikuni, eds., *Sites of Struggle: Essays in Zimbabwe's Urban History* (Avondale, Harare, Zimbabwe: Weaver Press. 1999), 135.

⁸² Gwisai, 7.

⁸³ Scarnecchia, 14, 18, 34, 86

⁸⁴ West, 105, 117-118. Brian Raftopoulos, "The Labour Movement in Zimbabwe 1945-1965", in Brian Raftopoulos and I. R. Phimister, eds. *Keep on Knocking a History of the Labour Movement in Zimbabwe, 1900-1997*. (Harare, Zimbabwe: Baobab Books. 1997), 58-59; Bond 1998, 51.

was the Rhodesian Independent Commercial Union (RICU) lead by Charles Mzingeli. Despite its name, the RICU relied more on community rather than workplace organising and small business people played a significant role in its leadership. By the mid 1950s, it was being supplanted by the shop floor based Southern Rhodesian Trade Union Congress (SRTUC),⁸⁵ which had 30,000 members, and the militant civic association, the City Youth League (CYL). Based in Harare, the CYL was to merge with a Bulawayo based organisation lead by Joshua Nkomo to form the Southern Rhodesian African National Congress (SRANC), one of the forerunners of ZAPU. The SRANC was, according to Bond a “political alliance between black peasants, Purchase Area farmers (many of whom were political leaders in their own right), workers and the petty bourgeoisie”.⁸⁶ By the late 1950s, the tactic of accommodation and negotiation had been supplanted by boycotts and confrontation as people grew impatient with the slow pace of reform and the limited opportunities for advancement, partly escalated by an economic downturn which commenced in the late 1950s.⁸⁷ Increasingly, more educated blacks were drawn away from multi class liberal organisations such as the Capricorn Society to the nationalist movement, which they soon aspired to lead.⁸⁸

Ongoing tensions occurred between the collaborationist and oppositionist tendencies. For example, while many of the black trade union officials were nationalists they also had an interest in preserving the limited legal status of their organisation and played an ambivalent role in such popular struggles as the general strike in 1948,⁸⁹ the bus boycotts of 1956, protests against the introduction of an undemocratic new constitution in 1961⁹⁰ and the mass demonstrations which thwarted the undemocratic Anglo-Rhodesian settlement proposals of 1971.⁹¹

This ambivalence was despite the reality that it was not uncommon for trade union leaders to become political leaders.⁹² Nkomo, for example, initially rose to national prominence as a leader of the SRTUC before becoming president of what was to become ZAPU.⁹³ However, Ruben Jamela, Nkomo’s replacement,

⁸⁵ Raftopoulos 1997, 75.

⁸⁶ Bond 1998, 81.

⁸⁷ Patrick Bond and Masimba Manyanya, *Zimbabwe’s Plunge. Exhausted Nationalism. Neo-Liberalism and Search for Social Justice* (Scottsville. London. Harare: University of Natal Press, The Merlin Press; Weaver Press, 2003), 6; Scarnecchia 2008, 88-89. West 229, Raftopoulos 1999, 135, 137.

⁸⁸ Scarnecchia, 99. Hancock, 86; West 214, 221-223.

⁸⁹ Raftopoulos 1997, 69-71; West, 172-174.

⁹⁰ Scarnecchia, 106-107.

⁹¹ Astrow 1983, 25.

⁹² Hancock, 133, Ngwahi Bhebe, “The nationalist struggle, 1957-1962”, in Canaan Banana, ed. *Turmoil and Tenacity: Zimbabwe, 1890-1990* (Harare, Zimbabwe: College Press, 1989), 51; Raftopoulos 1997, 76-77.

⁹³ Nkomo, 44-46.

despite being an active nationalist kept the SRTUC largely aloof from politics.⁹⁴

According to Scarnecchia, the culture of intolerance which evolved from the late 1950s meant that “the term ‘sellout’ no longer simply applied to those who were seen as working for the settler government...but also to other intellectuals and politicians who tried to forge ahead independently of the leadership clique”.⁹⁵ Given this attitude, political differences quickly escalated into inter factional violence, especially when the competing political elites started to use ethnicity to motivate and mobilise their respective supporters.⁹⁶ Jamela later fell out with Nkomo, and despite being a party member, he was to be vociferously denounced by ZAPU. Scarnecchia explains that “the class and gender tensions in the townships that surfaced in the name of defending the people from ‘sellouts’ provided a convenient cover for the nationalist leadership from criticisms of their own class interests”.⁹⁷

In 1962, the SRTUC split and the two rival bodies were to align themselves with, and later became subservient to, the two main nationalist factions.⁹⁸ Such division made it harder to organise the urban working class, especially when the minority Government started to take an even harder line against the nationalist movement and working class organisations.⁹⁹ Being mainly urban based, although with close links to the rural areas, the working class became less central to the nationalist struggle as the main conflict with the regime shifted to the countryside in the 1970s.¹⁰⁰

One long term consequence of this divided and weakened trade union movement was that no significant social counterweight arose to the educated intellectuals, such as Mugabe, who came to dominate the leadership of the liberation struggle through ZANU and use it for their own interests.¹⁰¹

Another result of hierarchical and sectarian politics was the marginalisation of women. Mzingeli’s RICU had played a progressive role in organising women and females were to play important roles as nationalist organisers and activists.

⁹⁴ Scarnecchia, 102; Astrow, 24; Richard Saunders, *Never the Same Again. Zimbabwe's Growth Towards Democracy 1980-2000* (Harare: Richard Saunders, 2000), 10-11.

⁹⁵ Scarnecchia, 101; Raftopoulos 1997, 85.

⁹⁶ Raftopoulos 1999, 143-144.

⁹⁷ Scarnecchia, 162.

⁹⁸ Raftopoulos 1997, 87

⁹⁹ Astrow, 25; Gwisai, 9.

¹⁰⁰ Raftopoulos 1999, 143-144.

¹⁰¹ According to Bond 1998, 342 the “aspiring black nationalists of the early 1960s ... [were] ... readier to join rather than contest the basic rules of capitalism”. Robert Mugabe admits that a “very powerful bourgeois group which champions the cause of international finance and national private capital” had grown up within ZANU-PF. Robert Mugabe, “The Unity Accord: its promise for the future”, in Canaan Banana, ed., *Turmoil and Tenacity: Zimbabwe, 1890-1990* (Harare, Zimbabwe: College Press, 1989) 358.

However, as elites increasingly dominated the leadership, the articulations of pro feminist demands were sidelined. Toleration of gender based violence, as had occurred during the 1948 general strike and the 1956 bus boycott became more common. As Lyons comments “women were alienated from decision making and were threatened with rape if they did not agree with the decision of the young male nationalists”.¹⁰² This carried over into the war period with complaints of “sexual abuse by senior male guerrillas” not being isolated incidents.¹⁰³

Thus, by the time the young ZIPA radicals arrived at the leadership, disunity, intolerance and rivalry was the norm in the ranks of the old nationalists. Divisions also existed between those who had been in jail, the formally educated and the ‘uneducated’, those who had fled into neighbouring countries to direct the guerrilla war, such as Chitepo and Moyo, younger party members who had studied abroad and the generally more conservative Rhodesia-based nationalists, such as Muzorewa, who had remained ‘legal’ and largely out of jail. Differences were reflected in questions of tactics, such as when and how to apply military pressure and to what extent outside powers were relied on to broker talks. Opposition to white rule was one of the few things that they had in common, and even that was negotiable for some.

When it came to negotiating a transfer to power in 1979, the nationalist leaders lacked a decisive military victory.¹⁰⁴ They were also subject to pressure from their war-weary allies, in particular Mozambique and Zambia.¹⁰⁵ This, as well as their ideological inconsistency, meant that the nationalists made significant, and arguably generous, concessions during the Lancaster House negotiations.¹⁰⁶

One key concession was accepting responsibility to pay Rhodesia’s foreign debt. This had risen to \$US700 million and had been partly racked up by buying arms, hiring mercenaries and paying for illegal trade deals in contravention of UN sanctions. A senior official in the Finance Ministry whom Mugabe inherited from Smith later admitted that a special effort was made to have “people talk to Mugabe to persuade him not to default”.¹⁰⁷

After independence, rather than being dismantled and transformed, as ZIPA had envisaged, the white state was merely taken over. ZANU also demobilised the committees and support groups which had helped it organise the rural population.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, the strike wave which was unleashed by an

¹⁰² Lyons, 87.

¹⁰³ Nhongo-Simbanegavi, 7.

¹⁰⁴ Bond 2003, 9

¹⁰⁵ Moorcraft, 239-240, 251.

¹⁰⁶ Bond 2003, 77, 134.

¹⁰⁷ Bond 1998, 254.

¹⁰⁸ Kriger 2002, 224.

increasingly confident working class was suppressed. Within weeks of independence, as Bond and Saunders explain, “Mugabe conspired with Anglo American Corporation leader Harry Oppenheimer to smash strikes at the company’s Hwange colliery and sugar plantations.”¹⁰⁹ Hundreds of strikers were sacked and at the Empress nickel mine security guards fired on strikers.¹¹⁰

The nominal political alliance between ZANU and ZAPU broke down after the Lancaster House agreement and the two liberation parties went to the polls separately.¹¹¹ The renewal of the historic tensions with ZAPU was to have dire consequences. While honouring its pre-election promise to offer cabinet posts to ZAPU, Mugabe’s government increasingly purged ZAPU members from senior positions in the army and the ministries. The army, having been retrained by British military officers, was moulded in such a way as to embrace “the ideas, training, organisation and forms of force of the Rhodesian settler army”.¹¹² ZANU used its former ZANLA cadre to ensure that it gained and retained control over the remoulded armed forces and secured its loyalty to the party.¹¹³ In return, the top brass gained access to well paid jobs and opportunities for graft and corruption. However, there were duties to be performed, in particular settling scores with ZAPU and its supporters in the Matabeleland and Midlands regions of Zimbabwe. Between 1983 and 1985, the army, specifically its Fifth Division, was unleashed against the Ndebele people, the dominant ethnic group in Matabeleland and the main base of support for ZAPU. In what became known as *Gukurahundi*, at least 20,000 people were killed¹¹⁴ on the pretext that they were ZAPU supporters and therefore dissidents. With ZAPU now effectively squashed, Mugabe’s climb to power was complete.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁹ Patrick Bond and Richard Saunders, “Labor, the State, and the Struggle for a Democratic Zimbabwe,” *Monthly Review* (2005): 44-45. There were “150 formal and wildcat strikes against private firms immediately before and after independence”. See Bond 1998, 112.

¹¹⁰ Richard Saunders, “Striking ahead: industrial action and labour movement development in Zimbabwe”, in Brian Raftopoulos and I. R. Phimister, eds., *Keep on Knocking a History of the Labour Movement in Zimbabwe, 1900-1997* (Harare, Zimbabwe: Baobab Books. 1997), 137.

¹¹¹ This appears to have been a purely ZANU decision, for example see Nkomo, 206, Tekere, 120 and Bhebe 2004, 232.

¹¹² Horace Campbell, *Reclaiming Zimbabwe: The Exhaustion of the Patriarchal Model of Liberation*. (Trenton, NJ. Asmara, Eritrea: Africa World Press, 2003), 273.

¹¹³ Norma J Kriger, *Guerrilla Veterans in Post-War Zimbabwe: Symbolic and Violent Politics, 1980-1987*, (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 198.

¹¹⁴ Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe, and Legal Resources Foundation. *Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe: A Report on the Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands, 1980-1988* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2007), xi.

¹¹⁵ Tongogara had died in an accident on the eve of independence. Mugabe allies in his assumption of the ZANU leadership, Maurice Nyagumbo, Enos Nkala and Edgar Tekere, all fell out with Mugabe. Edgar Tekere, as a key Mugabe henchman, was to later admit that ZIPA had been “absolutely correct”, Tekere 1984. In 1978 a group of ZANU ‘radicals’, lead by Henry Hamadziripi and Rugare Gumbo, appeared to have had second thoughts about

The *Vashandi*, according to Moore had “hoped that full electoral freedom would enable them to mount a radical challenge to Mugabe’s empty nationalism”.¹¹⁶ However, the patterns and tools of political repression and intolerance were further entrenched with the suppression of ZIPA. The detained ZIPA members were only released and allowed to return to Zimbabwe, after independence. When some former ZIPA members publicly advocated unity with ZAPU, they were promptly arrested again, and only freed on the intervention of Nkomo.¹¹⁷ Mhanda himself was warned that his life was in danger and he was obliged to spend several years studying in Europe.

The movement was in effect dispersed. Despite occasional socialist rhetoric and not insubstantial clashes and conflict over specific policies, the new regime led by Mugabe retained a commitment to pro Western values and property relations, and certainly not socialism as envisaged by ZIPA. Kissinger’s aim of sidelining the radicals and effecting political rather than social change in Zimbabwe was ultimately achieved. The young radicals of ZIPA, after having rescued the liberation struggle in its most dire moment, went from guerrilla fighters to expendable war veterans, while Mugabe made the leap from Comrade to His Excellency.

suppressing ZIPA and unsuccessfully tried to challenge the ZANU leadership. After being trialed and sentenced to death by ZANU they were detained by Mozambique.

¹¹⁶ David Moore, “How Mugabe Came to Power”, *London Review of Books* (5 April 2001).

¹¹⁷ In 2000, ex ZIPAs participated in the formation of the Zimbabwe Liberators’ Platform which aimed to organise and fight for the rights of the country’s genuine war veterans.

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Episodes of Ambiguity: Steps towards Socialism in Zimbabwe, 1980-1985¹

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Abstract

With the benefit of hindsight, and in light of the current crisis, a growing number of authors have concluded that Zanu (PF) and Robert Mugabe's relationship with socialism was never more than a cynical slogan employed to mobilise the masses. By contrast, this paper will argue that such interpretations are mistaken. Indeed, an examination of Zanu (PF)'s welfare initiatives in the period 1980-1985 uncovers 'episodes of ambiguity' pointing towards a possible socialist future. Yet as this paper also acknowledges, these moments coexisted with and were soon superseded by authoritarian alternatives. The particular nature of Zimbabwe in this period has been much debated. Both at the time and subsequently, many observers questioned why the country had failed to experience the socialist transformation that Zanu (PF) once promised, given the fact that in the early 1980s the government was implementing a type of socialism that was loosely constructed around welfare provisions. This paper revisits the early 1980s when Zanu (PF) to some extent engaged with socialism on more than a rhetorical level; when a socialist future seemed possible.

Introduction

As the current crisis in Zimbabwe shows few signs of abating, there is a tendency in journalistic and popular accounts to write the country off from the moment Mugabe came to power.² In doing so, there is a danger of losing sight of the brave new dawn heralded by Independence in 1980. This paper revisits a moment, however constrained and fleeting, in the early 1980s when a transition to socialism seemed possible. By 1979, Zanu (PF) led by Robert Mugabe emerged as the dominant liberation movement within the country, and stressed that the 'Second Chimurenga', Zimbabwe's liberation struggle, was ideologically 'based on scientific socialism'.³ Additionally, there was the widely held belief that once independence had been achieved, "lateral communication",⁴ that is, dialogue with the masses, would shape governmental policies. When this commitment was questioned, Ministers were quick to

¹ The author wishes to thank Ian Phimister and Daryl Gowlett for their valuable comments on earlier drafts.

² For an example of this literature see David Blair, *Degrees in Violence - Robert Mugabe and the Struggle for Power in Zimbabwe* (London: Continuum, 2003); Martin Meredith, *Our Votes Our Guns: Robert Mugabe and the Tragedy of Zimbabwe* (New York: Public Affairs, 2003); and Heidi Holland, *Dinner with Mugabe: The Untold Story of a Freedom Fighter Who Became a Tyrant* (London: Allen Lane, 2008).

³ Zanu (PF), *Official Press Release issued by the Central Committee* (Chimoi: Zanu (PF), August 1979).

⁴ Zanu (PF), *Official Press Release issued by the Central Committee* (Chimoi: Zanu (PF), August 1979).

reassure the masses that socialism, loosely constructed as social welfare provisions, was not just a rhetorical device used in the context of wartime propaganda. While the march towards socialism would be a gradual process, Zanu (PF) was indeed committed to a socialist future.

In the event, this commitment never materialised and by about 1985 it was clear that whatever Zanu (PF)'s relationship with socialism might once have been, it was giving way to the strictures of structural adjustment, formally adopted in 1990. With the benefit of hindsight, and in light of the current crisis, a growing number of authors have concluded that Zanu (PF) and Robert Mugabe's relationship with socialism was never more than a cynical slogan employed to mobilise the masses. By contrast, this paper will argue that such interpretations are mistaken. In doing so, it will re-visit those scholars, prominent amongst whom is Christine Sylvester, who recognised that in this period, Zimbabwe was "somewhere in between socialist and capitalist parameters".⁵ Indeed, examination of Zanu (PF)'s welfare initiatives in the period 1980-1985 uncovers 'episodes of ambiguity'; ambiguous in as much as they opened up possibilities which pointed towards a possible socialist future, after the so-called 'national democratic' phase.⁶ As the then Minister of Labour, Kumbirai Kangai puts it, "the goals we were fighting for have not been abandoned... We believe we are going through a national democratic revolution whereby the institutions, the society have to be democratised. This is a national democratic phase but it is also a transition to socialism".⁷ Yet as this paper also acknowledges, these moments coexisted with and were soon superseded by authoritarian alternatives.⁸

According to David Moore, "much debate on the nature of Zimbabwean politics and ideology has focused on whether or not the 'revolution failed', and whether or not the petit-bourgeois leaders of the struggle for national liberation had the intention or were capable of transforming that battle into a socialist one".⁹ Consequently the particular nature of Zimbabwe in this period has been much debated, with many observers questioning why the country had failed to experience the socialist transformation that Zanu (PF) once promised.

⁵ Christine Sylvester, *Zimbabwe The Terrain of Contradictory Development* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1991), 183.

⁶ For further clarification of the use of the term 'ambiguity' in this context, see Robert Davies, "The Transition to Socialism in Zimbabwe: Some Areas for Debate." In Colin Stoneman, ed., *Zimbabwe's Prospects: Issues of Race, Class and Capital in Southern Africa* (London: Macmillan, 1988), 18-32.

⁷ The Ministry of Education and Culture, "Education: the road to Zimbabwe's future," *The Herald*, 1 May 1982: 12.

⁸ This article does not aim to assess the nature of Zimbabwe from independence to the present day, nor offer a defence of the actions of Robert Mugabe and Zanu (PF). Rather it aims to challenge a deterministic and Whiggish interpretation of Zimbabwe's history.

⁹ David B. Moore, "The ideological formation of the Zimbabwean Ruling Class," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 17 (1991): 472.

Accordingly, this article will firstly discuss the historiography of the early independence years, and secondly examine Zanu (PF)'s initial reforms in education, healthcare and labour. In doing so, it will suggest that initially the Party did follow a socialist agenda. The emerging authoritarian nature of the regime, as well as factors which may have mitigated against further socialist transformations will also be examined. The conclusion argues that by 1985 or so, elements within Zanu (PF) were becoming increasingly divorced from the socialist positions they had adopted towards the close of the liberation struggle.

The literature concerning Zimbabwe in the period 1980 to 1985 is characterised by two dominant positions. Most monographs written before 1990 were largely optimistic about the government and the course of action it was taking. In the first ten years of independence, a number of publications were written from the perspective of Zanu (PF) regarding the country's development. Herbert Ushewokunze, Canaan Banana, Fay Chung and Arthur Patsanza amongst others, were keen to emphasise the worst effects of Zimbabwe's colonial legacy, whilst simultaneously asserting and emphasising the socialist ideals of the new regime.¹⁰ Indeed in the early 1980s many writers were keen to both examine and explain Zanu (PF)'s adoption of socialism and further examine how scientific socialism would be implemented within the country. Fay Chung and Emmanuel Ngara, for example, stressed that Zimbabwean socialism "rejects all forms of exploitation, whether it be the exploitation of producers by the owners of capital, or the oppression of subject peoples by their rulers".¹¹ However, in subsequent passages the writers also noted that in the Zimbabwean context that "what socialism advocates... is not absolute equality but equal opportunity".¹² Furthermore, that "Marxist-Leninism is not a dogma but a guide to action which much be harmonized with our own historical, cultural and social circumstances".¹³ Consequently, in line with a broader continent-wide tradition, Zanu-PF's socialism was interpreted to be context specific, even as it tracked African post-colonial notions of socialism defined in development terms.

Christine Sylvester, while approaching the subject from a different perspective than the aforementioned authors, also suggests that in this period Zanu (PF) were "setting forth a revolutionary and action platform premised on

¹⁰ Herbert Ushewokunze, *An Agenda for Zimbabwe* (Harare: College Press Publishers, 1990); Canaan Banana, ed., *Turmoil and Tenacity Zimbabwe 1890-1990* (Harare: College Press, 1989); Fay Chung, "Education: Revolution or Reform," in Colin Stoneman, ed., *Zimbabwe's Prospects: Issues of Race, Class, State and Capital in Southern Africa* (London: Macmillan, 1988), 118-133; Arthur Patsanza, *Our Zimbabwe - An Element of Political Economy* (Harare: Govazvimwe Mukuruwenzira Publishers, 1988).

¹¹ Fay Chung and Emmanuel Ngara, *Socialism, Education and Development: A Challenge to Zimbabwe* (Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1985), 5.

¹² Chung and Ngara, 5.

¹³ Chung and Ngara, 12.

socialism”.¹⁴ Indeed, even writers such as Jeffrey Herbst and Tor Skalmes who subsequently argue that Zimbabwe had abandoned socialism by 1990, at least acknowledge moves towards socialism in the preceding decade.¹⁵

However, as early as 1983, Andre Astrow was suggesting that Zanu (PF) was entirely lacking in socialist credentials.¹⁶ He argued that after independence, the new ‘petty bourgeois’ leadership misdirected the socialism of the liberation struggle, creating affluence for themselves at the expense of the working classes. As such, the promise of the revolution lay with the working classes who could not fulfil their role because of the policies the government were pursuing. According to Astrow, the government’s decision to plan on the basis of stabilising capitalism meant that the country would never experience a socialist transformation. While Astrow’s overall conclusion may seem strikingly accurate with the benefit of hindsight, his attempt to read off political practice from class position was too deterministic for some tastes.

The second phase of the historiography, generally written after 1990, was to a large extent dominated by a sense of disenchantment with the government. Jenkins and Knight,¹⁷ like Raftopoulos and Savage,¹⁸ although writing from very different perspectives, discuss the associated problems Zimbabwe faced because of limited societal transformation. In their analysis, Jenkins and Knight argue that the policy of reconciliation employed by the government was in the main a rhetorical device, as after independence Zimbabwe experienced limited structural changes. Furthermore, while Zanu (PF) may have felt constrained because of fears of ‘White Flight’, South Africa’s destabilisation campaign and the Lancaster House agreement, Jenkins and Knight argue that it was the government’s own policies which hindered the transition to socialism. In doing so, they suggest that the regime’s concentration on micro rather than macroeconomics through the policy of ‘growth with equity’ was inherently flawed. Raftopoulos and Savage, in their edited collection, attempted to reconcile the increasingly authoritarian nature of Zimbabwe since 2000 with the image of the country as a “beacon of hope at the time of independence”.¹⁹ They also assess the ambiguous implications of the policy of reconciliation, and in doing so highlight the contradictory position whereby Zanu (PF) was actually emphasising “the centrality of race in Zimbabwe’s history”.²⁰ Hevina

¹⁴ Sylvester, 68.

¹⁵ Jeffrey Herbst, *State Politics in Zimbabwe* (Harare: University of Zimbabwe Press, 1990); Tor Skalmes, *The Politics of Economic Reform in Zimbabwe - continuity and change in development* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995).

¹⁶ Andre Astrow, *Zimbabwe: A Revolution That Lost its Way?* (London: Zed, 1983).

¹⁷ Carolyn Jenkins and John Knight, *The Economic Decline of Zimbabwe - Neither Growth Nor Equity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002).

¹⁸ Brian Raftopoulos and Tyrone Savage, eds., *Zimbabwe Injustice and Political Reconciliation* (Cape Town: Rondebosch: Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, 2004).

¹⁹ Raftopoulos and Savage, v.

²⁰ Raftopoulos and Savage, xx.

Dashwood, by contrast, argues that the key to understanding the current political situation in Zimbabwe requires a thorough analysis of its class position.²¹ For Dashwood, the key development after independence was “the embourgeoisement of the ruling elite... [which led to the] embracing of a capitalist ideology”,²² and largely contributed to the deviation and abandonment of the large scale welfare initiatives instigated in the early 1980s.²³

When assessing the historiography, it is clear that there has been a significant shift in the perspectives concerning the first five or so years of independent Zimbabwe. While the arguments outlined above are not exhaustive, they do reflect the broader historiographical trends which were dominant for this period. Interpretations have moved from broadly positive and supportive of Mugabe and Zanu (PF) to exclusively negative and condemnatory of the regime in Harare. It is this swing of the historiographical pendulum that arguably has gone too far.

In order to assess the socialist nature of Zimbabwe in the early 1980s it is useful to re-examine the party’s adoption of socialism alongside an appraisal of governmental initiatives in the early part of the decade. It must be remembered that Zanu (PF)’s adoption of the two stage theory of democratic revolution indicated that change would be gradual; indeed, the party itself accepted that “the mere adoption of socialism as an ideology does not mean automatic success”.²⁴ While the first stage of the revolution incorporated the overthrow of the Smith regime with the attainment of independence, the second phase was problematic and ambiguous, as the implication was that the achievement of independence was only the first step to true liberation. However, a closer examination of the government’s attempts in the early 1980s to reform the education, healthcare and labour sectors shows that they had arguably embarked on a course which was heading towards the fulfilment of the theory and the de facto transition to socialism; even if taken to be welfare reformism and development in this early stage. For this period the main published primary sources are newspapers such as *The Herald*, alongside various government supported periodicals. As the thirty year rule is still in force at the National Archives of Zimbabwe, this means that there are no other available sources in the public sphere. Consequently, this article draws on some of the limited primary material that is available.

²¹ Hevina Dashwood, *Zimbabwe, The Political Economy of Transformation* (Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

²² Dashwood, 3-4.

²³ See also Staffan Darnolf and Liisa Laasko, eds., *Twenty Years of Independence in Zimbabwe From Liberation to Authoritarianism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), particularly the article by Brian Raftopoulos and Daniel Compagnon, *Indigenization, the State Bourgeoisie and Neo-authoritarian Politics*, 15-34.

²⁴ Chung and Ngara, 37-38.

In 1979 there were 819,586 children in 2,401 primary schools, an average of 341 children per school.²⁵ As a result one of the government's main priorities was to democratise access to education, as it was felt that a heavy emphasis on education was "the main tool for developing...Zimbabwe's future".²⁶ Governmental policy was that of "education with production" with an emphasis, according to Zvongo, on "producing a politically conscious nation, aware of and devoted to the promotion of the welfare state".²⁷ By 1982 the number of children in primary school rose to 1,903,917, a 132% increase, with the number of primary schools virtually doubling to 4,012; an impressive growth rate over a three year period.²⁸ A particular success in this period was the number of children entering secondary schooling,²⁹ something that according to the government demonstrated that "education is now readily accessible to all people, particularly at primary and junior secondary school level".³⁰ Furthermore, in 1983, Zimbabwe's national literacy campaign was launched, which emphasised the importance of adult education. The government also decided that new educational methods were to be employed, as the rote learning favoured in Rhodesia was abolished in favour of an increased emphasis on scientific and technological education. Therefore in the education sector it seems that the promotion of socialism as a force 'which guarantees all round development... in the interests of society',³¹ was a key concern for the government as Zimbabwe's youth were particularly targeted. As Zanu (PF) had adopted the two stage theory of democratic revolution, in the early 1980s they were so far fulfilling their role in this, in as much as access to education became much broader based.

Once in power, Zanu (PF) attempted to redress the inequality of and access to healthcare, as according to Loewenson and Sanders, "the challenge at independence lay in reorganising a deliberately fragmented, inaccessible and oppressive form of healthcare, into one which would serve the needs of all and respond to changing social and economic demands".³² The official governmental policy was that of "planning with equity", which emphasised the need for a fully integrated health service which benefited the previously marginalised members of the population. The government also realised the

²⁵ The Ministry of Education and Culture, "Education: the road to Zimbabwe's future," *The Herald*, 17 April 1982: 12.

²⁶ The Ministry of Education and Culture, 12.

²⁷ Rungano Zvobgo, "Education and the Challenge of Independence," In Ibbo Mandaza, ed., *Zimbabwe: The Political Economy of Transition, 1980-1986* (Dakar: Codesria book series, 1986), 334.

²⁸ The Ministry of Education and Culture, 12.

²⁹ The number of children entering secondary education increased from 66,215 in 1979 to 218,430 in 1982; The Ministry of Education and Culture, 12

³⁰ The Ministry of Education and Culture, 12

³¹ E. Krustkaln, "Socialism, the way forward," *The Herald*, 6 September 1984: 4.

³² Rene Loewenson and David Sanders, "The Political Economy of Health and Nutrition," in Colin Stoneman, ed., *Zimbabwe's Prospects: Issues of Race, Class and Capital in Southern Africa* (London: Macmillan, 1988), 137.

need to “move away from the inappropriate hospital based curative system [to develop a] system that is relevant to our circumstances”.³³ Consequently, in 1981 the government launched the village health worker programme, an attempt to bring healthcare within reach of those in the most remote areas. Village health workers were trained “to provide basic health education and health care for their communities”,³⁴ with an emphasis placed on problem solving within the community. In 1982 a diarrhoeal disease programme was implemented, as diarrhoea-related deaths were identified as a key priority. These initiatives fitted in with a wider pattern of extensive childhood immunization and a drive towards improved sanitation. Additionally, by 1985 Zimbabwe had the highest use of contraception in sub-Saharan Africa, demonstrating an emphasis on education within healthcare.

Zanu (PF) identified its third welfare priority as that of labour reform. For much of the colonial era there was no legally recognised African representation in the workplace because of the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1934, which excluded Africans from the term ‘employee’. While there had been some limited reforms in the 1950s, there was little sense of equality on the factory floor, with women often facing the most stringent forms of discrimination. Consequently, the labour system needed to be completely reworked. According to Sachikonye, “the advent of independence... assumed added significance to the workers”,³⁵ and gave hope to a workforce who believed independence would positively alter their circumstances. Perhaps the most significant piece of legislation to be passed in the early 1980s was the 1985 Labour Relations Act (LRA). Far reaching in its objectives, but primarily concerned with introducing a comprehensive list of employment regulations, in doing so it built upon previous labour legislation, and defined the “fundamental rights of workers and unfair labour practices”.³⁶ Furthermore, “the passage of the LRA represented a major advance for the working class to the degree that its fundamental rights have been formally specified and guaranteed”.³⁷ Also in this period the second major achievement of the government was the founding of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions,³⁸ alongside the establishment of a national minimum wage, and the introduction of maternity leave. Consequently, as the second stage of the two stage theory argues that socialism is only achievable once the national democratic stage has been carried through, this in turn suggests that a period of transition from capitalism to socialism is seen as necessary. Arguably, Zanu (PF) was on its way to fulfilling the promises of the

³³ The Ministry of Health. “Health for all is the government’s target,” *The Herald*, 17 April 1982: 16.

³⁴ The Ministry of Health, 16.

³⁵ Lloyd Sachikonye, “State, Capital and Trade Union,” in Ibbo Mandaza, ed., *Zimbabwe: The Political Economy of Transition, 1980-1986* (Dakar: Codesria book series, 1986), 252.

³⁶ Sachikonye, 260.

³⁷ Sachikonye, 263.

³⁸ For an example of the increased importance placed on Zimbabwe’s industry see Kumbirai Kangai, “New Laws give workers a better life,” *The Herald*, 17 April 1982: 6.

revolution, as the democratisation of social resources such as access to education and healthcare were prioritised, alongside the implementation of labour reforms.

However, in this same period, it also appears that Zimbabwe's commitment to socialism was tempered by the desire to stabilise the economy through the continuation of capitalist production and markets. What precisely were the factors which hindered the larger scale implementation of socialism? While historians disagree over the precise inhibiting effects of the Lancaster House constitutional agreement, it is widely acknowledged that its provisions did have an impact on the new government. Jenkins and Knight believe that "for the first decade after attaining independence Zimbabwe's new government was constrained in implementing a full socialist programme by the constitution to which it had agreed in 1979".³⁹ Indeed, in September 1979 Zanu (PF) had anticipated that the Lancaster House conference would pose a serious threat to the revolution,⁴⁰ as land could only be sold on a 'willing buyer, willing seller basis', and furthermore that the tiny white minority had one fifth of the seats in parliament reserved for it. Both constraints had huge implications for a country which was supposed to be rapidly transforming in the interests of the black majority.⁴¹ As Mugabe was keen to encourage the white population to remain in Zimbabwe, this meant that radical land distribution was necessarily put on hold, being deferred for at least ten years until the Lancaster House agreement expired. Furthermore, according to Palmer, "the issue of land reform [was] so high on the political agenda a decade ago, but... a curious silence fell for much of the 1980s".⁴² While from 1980-1985, 2,298,241 hectares of land had been purchased by the government, many commentators insisted that this reappropriation was not substantial enough.⁴³ The silence identified by Palmer was explained by Moyo in his assertion that "what seems clear, given the interest of the 'West' in the resolution of Zimbabwe's 'land question', is that there is growing international consensus and local acceptance that there may really be no 'land question' worth talking about in 1986, given Zimbabwe's star agricultural performance".⁴⁴ Factors such as these, according to the government, had "greatly retarded the resettlement programme".⁴⁵

³⁹ Jenkins and Knight, 25.

⁴⁰ For an example of this type of literature, see the *Zimbabwe News*, especially vol. 11 no. 3, September-October 1979.

⁴¹ In this period, Robert Mugabe was advised by both Samora Machel (President of Mozambique) and Julius Nyerere (President of Tanzania) about the disabling effects which a radical restructuring of the economy can bring in terms of "White Flight". Consequently, it is widely believed that this advice was a driving factor for the post-Independence policy of "reconciliation" employed by Zanu (PF).

⁴² Robin Palmer, "Land Reform in Zimbabwe 1980-1990," *African Affairs* 355 (April 1990): 163.

⁴³ Quoted in *Parade* (October 1989), p. 9, cited in Robin Palmer, 170.

⁴⁴ Sam Moyo, "The Land Question," in Ibbo Mandaza, ed., *Zimbabwe: The Political Economy of Transition, 1980-1986* (Dakar: Codesria book series, 1986), 165.

⁴⁵ "Land to the People," *Zimbabwe News* 17, no. 3 (March 1986): 25.

Consequently when “during the political struggle... Zanu... [had] committed themselves to radical land reform on achieving power”,⁴⁶ the government’s inability to fulfil their promise did little to bolster their socialist credentials.

Another factor which is widely thought to have hindered Zimbabwe’s transition to socialism was South Africa’s campaign of ‘destabilisation’. Apart from the historic ties between South Africa and Rhodesia, South African capital was as influential in Zimbabwe as it had been in Rhodesia, with South Africa being the economic powerhouse of the region.⁴⁷ As described by Martin and Johnson, South Africa’s destabilisation campaign “can be subdivided into seven categories – direct military action including sabotage, clandestine support for banditry, assassination, espionage, economic sabotage propaganda and disinformation”.⁴⁸ Perhaps most importantly, “Zimbabwe’s...ties to South Africa, including the fact that it inherited Pretoria as its largest trading partner at independence, left it particularly vulnerable to economic destabilisation”.⁴⁹ Furthermore, according to Sylvester, “soon after Mugabe took office, South Africa began to impose sanctions against its neighbour, abrogating a long-standing bilateral trade agreement... disallowing Zimbabwean migrant labour and deporting forty thousand mine workers”.⁵⁰ Consequently it seems clear that South Africa’s campaign of destabilisation limited the room for manoeuvre enjoyed by the Mugabe government in the early 1980s. While this paper does not attempt to exculpate the actions of Zanu (PF), it seems entirely reasonable to suggest that Mugabe and the party tempered their socialist outlook because of fears of destabilisation. It appears as though Samora Machel’s observation that “there are two things you cannot choose, neighbours and brothers”,⁵¹ had for Zimbabwe never been more apt.

While “during the 1980s the new government felt constrained in its ability to engage in too radical a redistribution of wealth from whites to blacks”,⁵² and factors such as destabilisation may have tempered the government’s socialism, it appears that by the middle of the 1980s Zanu (PF)’s earlier welfare initiatives were not sustainable. Although many scholars see the “signs of stagnation and

⁴⁶ Palmer, 165.

⁴⁷ According to Carol Thompson, ‘South African investment in Rhodesia was estimated at US \$330 million for 1976 and \$1.03 billion in 1979’, Carol B. Thompson, *Challenge to Imperialism – The Frontline States in the Liberation of Zimbabwe* (Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1985), 154.

⁴⁸ David Martin and Phyllis Johnson, “Zimbabwe: ‘Apartheid’s Dilemma,’” in Phyllis Johnson and David Martin, eds., *Destructive Engagement: Southern Africa at War* (Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House for the Southern African Research Documentation Centre, 1986), 43.

⁴⁹ Martin and Johnson, 67.

⁵⁰ Sylvester, 77.

⁵¹ Martin and Johnson, 46.

⁵² Jenkins and Knight, 30.

maybe even a reversal of the trend”,⁵³ as evidence that Zanu (PF) were not interested in implementing a socialist agenda, it could also be argued that it was the demands of the market and particularly the drought of 1982/3, that caused Zanu (PF) to turn their attentions elsewhere. Indeed according to Agere, “the fundamental problem...is that [welfare systems are] influenced by the demands of capital”.⁵⁴ This suggestion gives further weight to the suggestion that Zanu (PF) were inhibited in implementing a fully socialist agenda because of a variety of external factors.

This article has so far proposed that in the early 1980s, Zanu (PF) were taking tentative steps to democratise and ultimately socialise the country, but were also inhibited by market forces. However, by the mid-1980s, the defining moment of *Gukurahundi* would suggest that this position had been overlaid by a ruthless authoritarianism. The origins and the consequences of the massacres in western Zimbabwe are a hugely complex topic;⁵⁵ suffice to say the Fifth Brigade who were responsible for *Gukurahundi* were Mugabe’s self-styled personal militia, and were created with the intention to ‘plough’ and ‘reconstruct’ Zimbabwe. In doing so, they introduced a “qualitatively new and more horrific kind of war”.⁵⁶ Arguably perpetrating genocide in their actions to eliminate Joshua Nkomo’s Zapu stronghold, the Fifth Brigade’s attacks were directed towards civilians, political opponents and civil servants, suggesting that this was an exercise in ‘total warfare’. Beatings, rape and torture were the key weapons employed by Mugabe’s personal army, alongside stringent curfews. Public executions were commonplace, with victims being forced to dig their own graves before they were shot. Consequently “Five Brigade were destined to become the most controversial army unit ever formed in Zimbabwe”.⁵⁷

The employment of the Fifth Brigade was an attempt by Mugabe to eliminate opposition and consolidate his power, a characteristic much in evidence in the subsequent 1985 election. During this period, reports of ‘terror and abduction’

⁵³ Colin Stoneman and Lionel Cliffe, *Zimbabwe: Politics, Economics and Society* (London: Pinter, 1989), 174.

⁵⁴ Samuel Takarina-Agere, “Progress and Problems in the Healthcare Delivery System,” in Ibbo Mandaza, ed., *Zimbabwe: the Political Economy of Transition, 1980-1986* (Dakar: Codesria book series, 1986), 374.

⁵⁵ See for instance, Ian Phimister, “The making and meanings of the massacres in Matabeleland,” *Development Dialogue* 50 (December 2008): 197-214; Shari Eppel, “‘Gukurahundi’ The need for truth and reparation,” in Brian Raftopoulos and Tyrone Savage, eds., *Zimbabwe Injustice and Political Reconciliation* (Cape Town: Rondebosch: Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, 2004), 43-63.

⁵⁶ Joycelyn Alexander, “Dissident Perspectives on Zimbabwe’s Post-Independence War,” *Journal of the International African Institute* 68 (1998): 159.

⁵⁷ Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, *Breaking the Silence Report – A Report on the Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands, 1980-1988* (Harare: Catholic Commission for Peace and Justice, 1997), 45.

were commonplace,⁵⁸ with Zanu-Zapu rivalry reaching its peak. Despite the government slogan of “Your vote is your secret”, it is clear that they did all they could to reinforce their dominance, using whatever means necessary. Polling stations were strategically placed to benefit Zanu (PF), and the process of registering people as members of the electorate was deliberately difficult and time consuming. The result of the election signalled further consolidation of Zanu (PF)’s power, with the party winning 64 seats (80% of the vote). The election was characterised by a strong anti-Nkomo sentiment, and after the election mock funerals were carried out for Zapu and Nkomo; “at one such funeral in Kadoma, a live bull (the Zapu election symbol) was actually axed to death in front of a huge crowd to symbolise the death of Zapu”.⁵⁹ By 1985, it was becoming even clearer that Zanu (PF)’s democratic socialist doctrine had given way to authoritarianism, and that this imperative was clearly in the ascendant.

Perhaps one way of beginning to understand the apparent ‘failure of the revolution’ and subsequent unsuccessful transition to socialism is to briefly re-examine the position of both Zanu (PF) and Zapu in the latter stages of the liberation struggle. While both parties were brought together under the Patriotic Front coalition and had the shared objective of bringing down the Smith regime, the earlier 1963 split and the formation of Zanu had profoundly altered the nature of the liberation struggle. While according to John Saul, Zanu distinguished themselves from Zapu in terms of an early commitment to armed struggle, he sees that the 1963 split was actually precipitated by “a confrontation between a faction of educated, middle class, rather elitist elements who had joined the nationalist movement in the early sixties... and those who had much firmer roots among the migrant workers and the peasantry itself”.⁶⁰ It was the former faction which would breakaway from Zapu to form Zanu, while the latter group remained under Nkomo’s leadership. Consequently the disparate class position of the liberation leaders proved decisive in shaping the rhetoric of both Zapu and Zanu during the ‘Second Chimurenga’ and after the latter assumed office in 1980.

Yet even this perspective may overemphasize the differences between Zapu and Zanu. Ranger, for example, claimed that “Robert Mugabe offered no prospect of the man who might start from scratch. He was one of the ‘old guard’ leadership”.⁶¹ Accordingly it was this clash between the ‘old guard’, and those who had embraced the imperatives of guerrilla struggle who sought to

⁵⁸ “State of Emergency to Continue in Zimbabwe,” *Argus*, 26 February 1984.

⁵⁹ Masipula Sithole, “The General Elections 1979-1985,” in Ibbo Mandaza, ed., *Zimbabwe: the Political Economy of Transition, 1980-1986* (Dakar: Codesria book series, 1986), 92.

⁶⁰ John Saul, “Transforming the struggle in Zimbabwe,” in John Saul, *The State and Revolution in Eastern Africa* (London: Heinemann, 1979), 112.

⁶¹ Terence Ranger, “The changing of the old guard - Robert Mugabe and the revival of Zanu,” *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 7 (1980): 73.

radicalise the party once Zanu assumed power. While Zanu (PF) may have appeared to be radicalised in the ending stages of the liberation struggle, this was certainly a contingent process. Transformation was far from complete, and turned on authoritarian principles which rewarded unwavering loyalty to the 'old guard'. When the policies or legitimacy of this group were questioned, Mugabe and his closest political allies were well positioned to question the loyalty of these 'dissenting' factions, which ultimately resulted in the further purging of the leftist elements of the party. Once in power, the authoritarian elements of the party gradually trumped the more progressive and socialist elements of the party. While initially the "ideological struggles experienced by the intellectuals on the road to power were acute and did have transformative potential for the whole of Zimbabwe";⁶² this struggle was not allowed to play out and instead one party statism and authoritarianism triumphed.

While at first glance, it is tempting to accept the arguments of scholars such as Andre Astrow, and simply dismiss Zanu (PF)'s claim that the country was following scientific socialism, on closer inspection it appears that there were 'episodes of ambiguity' when it appeared that the country was edging towards a socialist transformation. But while the government's choice of following the two stage theory of democratic revolution appeared to reaffirm their connection with socialism, in the event even this limited goal was missed. Socialist and even welfare targets were not met, as democratisation itself also faltered; indeed by this period the party's model of socialism was not strong on either democracy or accountability. By the mid-1980s, it was increasingly clear that the reforms that had been instigated were not sustainable because of a lack of available funding. If Zanu (PF) had little room for dramatic economic manoeuvre, constrained as the party was by a variety of external factors, ultimately it seems that the promotion of western investment was the government's key concern. Davies may well be correct when asserting that a "period of transition from capitalism to socialism will be characterised by ambiguity and that this ambiguity will be heightened when the transition is attempted".⁶³

This article has suggested that at independence in 1980, the potential possibility did exist for a socialist transformation that would have allowed Zimbabwe to undergo profound change. Yet by 1985 it seemed that the transition to socialism was no transition at all. Instead, Zanu (PF) had consolidated itself as the dominant force in Zimbabwean politics, and the 'leftist' elements of the party had been silenced. Nonetheless, before that point was reached, the government did for a period, and on some levels, engage with socialism on

⁶² Moore, 473. For further debates on the emerging authoritarian nature of other liberation movements who subsequently formed government in Southern Africa, see for instance Henning Melber, *Limits to Liberation in Southern Africa: The Unfinished Business of Democratic Consolidation* (Cape Town: HSRC, 2003).

⁶³ Davies, 29.

more than just an entirely rhetorical level. While today's historiographical wisdom largely holds that socialism was never a realistic prospect in Zimbabwe, living and dying as mere rhetoric, this article has argued that 'episodes of ambiguity' were clearly discernable. A close inspection of the early 1980s reveals the hope of a better life encompassed within the liberation struggle and the possibility of a socialist future, even if it also included the ruthless authoritarian nature of the regime, coupled with Mugabe's determination to stamp out all opposition to the new order of things. Sadly, it was the latter characteristics that have triumphed and have become Zimbabwe's tragedy.

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Weaving¹ Paid Work, Informal Sector Work and Motherhood in Harare (Zimbabwe): A New Arena For Research?²

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to expound understandings of the work/life experiences of women in a non-western, non-white, Zimbabwean context. Although women's increased workforce participation while still being predominantly responsible for domestic and caring roles is a global phenomenon, significant research into women's work/family linkages has been undertaken mostly in western societies, oftentimes with white (middleclass) workers. As a result, little is known about how mothers in 'failing' African economies such as Zimbabwe experience and make individual paid work and family choices and negotiations in the face of constraining socio-economic and cultural circumstances. This article addresses this gap in research. Drawing on the experiences of a small sub-sample of six women interviewed in Harare as part of a larger project, this article illustrates that the difficult socio-economic situation in a failing economy in Zimbabwe introduces new challenges for working mothers that impact on their work/life realities. Specifically, it reports on and analyses the experiences of women who engage in what I have termed "multiple economic activities for subsistence" (MEAS): women whose economic work straddles both the formal and informal sectors. I have also called the women's non-salaried income generating, informal sector activities the "third shift", because it is an *addition* to their salaried or waged formal sector employment (first shift) and motherwork (second shift).

Introduction

The nexus between women's economic and familial roles remains under researched in analyses of Zimbabwean women's working lives.³ It is still

¹ I use the metaphor of "weaving" as advocated by Anita Garey, who argues that weaving, as a process is "a conscious, creative act. It requires not only vision and planning, but also the ability to improvise when materials are scarce, to vary colour and texture in response to available resources... it illuminates the meaning...[women give] to their life stories by capturing the interconnectedness of work and family within women's lives." See Anita Garey, *Weaving Work and Motherhood* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999), 14.

² A shorter, earlier version of this paper was presented to the African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific 30th Conference at the Australia National University, January 2008.

³ One can not overlook for example, the significant conceptual contribution of Christine Sylvester's work to the study of gender and labour in postcolonial Zimbabwe. See Christine Sylvester, *Producing Women and Progress in Zimbabwe: Narratives of Identity and Work from the 1980s*, (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000). This book focuses on Zimbabwean women's work lives to produce unprecedented information regarding women's (paid) work and familial roles. Though Sylvester does not particularly focus on or engage in analyses of the women's work/life interface, her work is important in that it provides vital explorations of

widely accepted that the “public-private does not necessarily hold a contradiction”⁴ for them. Despite the profound contributions made by Zimbabwean women to the economic life of their families as well as to their communities, this significant part of their working experiences is still rarely considered important to research. Neither feminist literature nor literature on the status of working women considers the experiences or patterns of working women’s work and family life intersection. As a result, little is known about the work/family experiences of working women in Zimbabwe. In view of this identified gap in research in Zimbabwe, this article provides a first qualitative account of the paid work and family nexus for women in Zimbabwe. In so doing, it contributes to creating new knowledge about paid work and family linkages for a previously un-researched population.

Specifically, the article reports descriptive accounts of some of the ways in which women in formal sector employment in Zimbabwe engage in non-salaried income generating activities *in addition* to their salaried (or waged) formal sector employment. I have called this engaging in multiple economic activities for subsistence (MEAS). I argue that the term MEAS is more appropriate than the commonly used term ‘survival strategies’ because it captures the multiplicity and diversity of income earning strategies that involve *both* formal sector employment and informal sector income generating activities for economic subsistence. They are means of ‘subsistence’ because the women are not seeking capital accumulation for themselves and their families, or to necessarily improve their economic standing, rather they are seeking to sustain viable survival incomes that enable them and their families to subsist in a failing economy. I also refer to the women’s informal sector activities as the “third shift”. Here I borrow from, and expand on Hochschild’s (1989) notion of the “second shift”. Hochschild argued that the unequal (gendered) distribution of housework which allocates a lion’s share of housework to women, leaves women experiencing a “double-day of work”⁵

(working) Zimbabwean women’s everyday life and everyday experiences. Elizabeth Schmidt’s much earlier work: *Peasants, Traders, and Wives: Shona Women in the History of Zimbabwe, 1870-1939* (London: James Currey, 1992), is also significant in its explorations of the roles of Shona women in peasant agriculture in pre-colonial Zimbabwe.

⁴ Mieke Maerten, “African feminism”, *RoSA Fact Sheet*, no. 34, <http://www.rosadoc.be/site/rosa/english/pdf/factsheetsenglish/34.pdf> (accessed 29 November 2006).

⁵ Melissa Milkie et al., *Taking on the “Second Shift”: Time Allocations and Time Pressures of U.S. Parents of Preschoolers*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association Annual Meeting, Sheraton Boston and the Boston Marriott Copley Place, Boston, 31 July 2008: See also, among others: Airlie Hochschild, *The Second Shift* (New York: Avon Books, 1989); Jodie Benveniste, *Woman, Work and Child: Women Talk About Balancing Work and Family* (New South Wales: Simon and Schuster, 1998); Barbara Pocock, *Having a Life: Work, Family, Fairness and Community in 2000* (Adelaide: Centre for Labour Research, Adelaide University, 2001); Barbara Pocock, *The Work-Life Collision: What Work is Doing to Australians and What to do About It* (Sydney: The Federation Press, 2003); Lyn Craig, *Contemporary Motherhood: The Impact of Children on Adult Time* (Ashgate Publishing: Aldershot, Hampshire, 2007).

that is: the ‘first shift’ of a paid job and the ‘second shift’ of unpaid work at home. I argue that informal sector activities for the women I interviewed add another set of roles and responsibilities that the women have to negotiate: hence a ‘third shift’.⁶ Although I acknowledge in this article, that weaving multiple economic activities and family life does not necessarily (re)present conflict for the Zimbabwean women, I contend nevertheless, that the work family interface presents the women with significant challenges, which points to a need for more in-depth sociological analyses.

The Study: A Brief Overview

The data presented in this article is part of a larger research project conducted in 2004/2005 with 30 working mothers in Australia and Zimbabwe (15 in each country). The research explored the commonalities and diversity of experiences in how working mothers in two such diverse regions of the world negotiate paid work and familial responsibilities. It was therefore an exploratory research, which sought to uncover the routine, commonplace, day-to-day activities of women’s work/life negotiations in a cross-cultural context. As such, the central focus was the women’s everyday contexts and everyday experiences.⁷

My emphasis on capturing the women’s subjective experiences led to a quest for a research method that could delve below the surface, not only to find out what the women do to negotiate their multiple work/family roles, but also the women’s ways of knowing ‘truth’ about their own circumstances. To this end I chose to rely on semi-structured, open-ended, conversational style interviews. The interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 90 minutes in length; the average time was one hour. I found that the interviews in Harare tended to be longer than those in Adelaide. I attribute this to the fact that the women in Harare were talking about and reflecting on aspects of their work/family experiences in ways they had not done before. All of the interviews in Adelaide were conducted in English. On the other hand, given that all of the participants in Harare were of Shona ethnicity,⁸ all of the interviews in Harare were conducted

⁶ I acknowledge, in using the term in this way, that other commentators have used the term in a different sense. See for example, Hannah Leah, “What Is The Third Shift?”, 8 Dec 2004, <http://www.ainfos.ca/04/dec/ainfos00115.html> (accessed 30 May 2007); Cheris Kramarae, *The Third Shift: Women Learning Online*, (Washington, DC: American Association of University Women Educational Foundation, 2001), Kramarae applies the term to women’s education/further schooling; and Michele Bolton, *The Third Shift: Managing Hard Choices in Our Careers, Homes, and Lives as Women*, (New Jersey: Jossey-Bass, 2000).

⁷ Here I apply Dorothy Smith’s idea of interpreting the “everyday as a problematic”, not only because it locates the women in their “bodily and material existence”, but because it also provides an interconnection between the ‘public’ and the ‘private’ worlds which facilitates in-depth analyses of the struggles and resistance that the women encounter on a daily basis. See Dorothy E. Smith, *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1987), 97.

⁸ In terms of ethnic divisions, the Shona are by far the dominant ethnic group in Zimbabwe (71 percent of the population). Other groups are the Ndebele 16 percent, other (e.g. Kalanga,

in their mother-tongue, Shona, and then later translated (post- transcription) into English.⁹

The discussions in this article draw specifically on interviews with the following six participants in Harare who, while being formal sector wage earners, also took on supplementary income earning activities in the informal sector in order to “manage the changes in their economic circumstances”¹⁰ in a failing economy:

- *Hama*¹¹ - a primary school teacher and mother of one, involved in sewing and baking as a ‘third shift’.
- *Kereke* - a clerk and mother of two, who also sells second-hand clothes sent by relatives living overseas (Britain and America).
- *Chenesai* - a personal assistant and mother of one who bakes and sells muffins for additional income.
- *Tadiwa* - a nurse (midwife) and mother of three who grows and sells fresh produce (vegetables) as a ‘third shift’.
- *Tendai* - a primary school teacher and mother of four who grows and sells fresh produce (vegetables) and other foodstuffs as a ‘third shift’.
- *Rutendo* - a data verifier and mother of three who does crochet work as a ‘third shift’.

Suffice to mention here, given the sample size and the in-depth qualitative nature of the research, that though referring to ‘women in Zimbabwe’ throughout this article, I remain cautious about generalising the experiences of the women interviewed in Harare to *all* working women in Zimbabwe. While ‘women in Zimbabwe’ constitute a group with many commonalities of needs and interests, with enough parallels to justify reference to them as a group, they by no means constitute a homogenous group. Thus to attempt to talk about ‘women in Zimbabwe’ is indeed an enormous task. Nevertheless, the value of the qualitative approach applied in this research “lies in the fact that it explores

Tonga) 11 percent, White 1 percent, and Asian 1 percent. This does not necessarily mean, however, that though the analyses here draw on the experiences of Shona women, they cannot be applied to the other indigenous groups in Zimbabwe.

⁹ Although I present all the excerpts from the interviews with women in Harare in English in this article, these are translated excerpts. This brings to the fore methodological issues of (mis)representations that arise when participants’ interviews are translated into another language, even when the researcher is the translator. Nevertheless, it goes beyond the scope of this paper to engage in an analysis of these methodological problems (for a detailed discussion, see for example Bogusia Temple and Alys Young, “*Qualitative research and translation dilemmas*”, *Qualitative Research* 4 (2004): 2, 161–178).

¹⁰ Deborah Potts, “Urban Lives: Adopting New Strategies and Adapting Rural Links”, in Carole Rakodi, ed., *The Urban Challenge in Africa: Growth and Management of its Large Cities*, (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 1997), <http://www.unu.edu/unupress/unupbooks/uu26ue/uu26ue00.htm> (accessed 10 October 2006).

¹¹ Not participant/s’ real name(s). In order to preserve confidentiality, each participant was assigned a pseudonym; their real names were not used in any writings relating to the research.

the ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions”,¹² it does not aim at being representative of a particular population.

A Short Background of the Informal Sector in Zimbabwe

The informal sector represents a significant part of the economy, and of the labour market in Zimbabwe. It plays a major role in employment creation, production and income generation,¹³ and has become one of the key mechanisms for coping with poverty, particularly in the urban areas. It has become a particularly significant fallback position for women who are excluded from formal paid employment.¹⁴ Once derided as the main employment option for uneducated and unskilled individuals with no prospect of gaining a job in the formal sector, the informal sector has become the lifeline for a growing number of Zimbabweans, from retrenched professionals and highly skilled workers to retirees and (as will be discussed below) those seeking to supplement wages from formal sector wages.

One cannot overemphasise the importance of the informal sector in Zimbabwe in terms of job creation. According to Mupedziswa and Gumbo, as far back as 1984, the informal sector in Zimbabwe constituted 64 percent of job creation compared to only 25 percent in the formal labour market.¹⁵ By 1996 the sector had employed 1.56 million people compared to 1.26 million in the formal sector. Moyo and Kawewe also argue that in 2002,¹⁶ it was estimated that two thirds of Zimbabwe’s labour force in urban areas was self-employed in the informal system. However, these figures for informal sector employment could be an underestimate as many are not included in public statistics because of their invisibility (by definition they are difficult to identify). It is not surprising, given the importance of the informal economy in the poorer countries, that it has been the subject of much research and debate since its introduction in studies of African urban economic activities in the 1970s.¹⁷

MEAS and the Informal Sector as a ‘Third Shift’

According to Potts, a significant strategy adopted by urban families (in Africa) to cope with the rising costs of living is increasing informal sector activity, not

¹² Ciara Smyth et al., *Women’s Lifework: Labour Market Transition Experiences of Women* (Sydney: Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales, 2005), 26.

¹³ Sara Elder and Dorothea Schmidt, *Global Employment Trends for Women, 2004* (Employment Strategy Papers no. 8, Geneva: Employment Strategy Department, International Labour Organisation, 2004), 10.

¹⁴ Elder and Schmidt, 10.

¹⁵ Rodrick Mupedziswa and Perpetua Gumbo, *Women Informal Traders in Harare and the Struggle for Survival in an Environment of Economic Reform* (Research Report No. 117, Nordic Africa Institute, 2001), 12.

¹⁶ Otrude N. Moyo and Saliwe M. Kawewe, “The Dynamics of a Racialized, Gendered, Ethnicized, and Economically Stratified Society: Understanding the Socio-economic Status of Women in Zimbabwe”, *Feminist Economics* 8 (2002): 2, 163-181.

¹⁷ Lillian Trager, “A Re-examination of the Urban Informal Sector in West Africa,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 21 (1987): 2, 238.

only in the case of “previously non-earning household members entering the petty commodity sector... [but also] ...wage-earners taking on supplementary cash earning activities in the sector”.¹⁸ Kanji¹⁹ also notes that in 1991, the second year of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in Zimbabwe, 80 per cent of households in Harare had at least one other source of income in addition to formal (paid) employment. While this figure had dropped to 70 per cent in 1992,²⁰ women’s income generating activities continued to be the most important and most common source of ‘additional’ income where women are involved in other formal sector paid work. The practice of engaging in small-scale informal sector activities to supplement meagre wages from formal sector employment (MEAS) is therefore not a new labour tradition,²¹ what is surprising is that it has not been the subject of much research, or any gender analysis.²²

Potts calls the practice of straddling several economic activities in the formal and informal economies the “second-job syndrome”. She argues that it is not just poorer urban workers, top-level formal sector workers are also involved in “moonlighting”.²³ I argue however, that the nature and activities of the ‘third shift’ differ from the ‘moonlighting’, which often takes the form of salaried employment, usually in the same industry that one is already in. For example, a nursing assistant may work in two or more health facilities.²⁴ In contrast, ‘third shift’ activities fall outside salaried or waged employment, and do not complement one’s salaried employment in terms of time requirements and transfer of experience and skills. ‘Third shift’ activities often include activities that participants have the resources to undertake, and which have niches in the local economy.

While the significance of MEAS for urban livelihoods is indisputable, its most striking feature is that it has several gender dimensions. Most apparent is the predominance of women. Though there are no available national statistical data in Zimbabwe to highlight the extent of this practice, findings emerging from the present research would indicate that women, more so than their male counterparts, engage in MEAS to cope with the intensification and persistence of economic crisis and to avert living in chronic poverty. Even when men’s earnings from their formal employment are inadequate to sustain the family, it is women who diversify their economic base to engage in MEAS as a strategy

¹⁸ Potts, 1997.

¹⁹ Nazneen Kanji, “Gender, Poverty and Economic Adjustment in Harare, Zimbabwe”, *Environment and Urbanisation* 7 (1995): 1, 46.

²⁰ More recent or up-to-date statistics could not be obtained at the time of writing this article.

²¹ See for example Veronica Brand, “One Dollar Workplaces: A Study of Informal Sector Activities in Magaba, Harare,” *Journal of Social Development in Africa* 1 (1986): 58.

²² See Sylvester, 2000; Potts, 1997.

²³ Potts, 1997.

²⁴ Francis Owusu, *Urban Impoverishment and Multiple Modes of Livelihood in Ghana* (Iowa: Department of Community and Regional Planning, Iowa State University, 2001), 7.

to lessen the risk of abject poverty for their families. This not only re-affirms debates that when families are faced with the threat of poverty, women are the ones who devise coping mechanisms for their families, but it also challenges the applicability of the “myth of the male-breadwinner”²⁵ in Zimbabwe. One participant’s comment confirmed this:

Some mothers, they have to work because... I mean, like their husbands, they don’t really do anything for them and their children, so the mothers are actually the breadwinners even if the men or the women themselves don’t acknowledge that sort of thing. So in that situation it gets a bit stressful because she has to sort of keep the house going on her own... (*Kereke*)

Kereke’s statement confirms that often women engage in MEAS not as supplementary income earners but as breadwinners. Fonchingong also observes that in their desperation to keep their families together and to provide food for their children, women in urban Africa have emerged in large markets in the informal sector, despite the risk, discrimination, and sometimes, gender biases confronting them.²⁶ Thus women’s MEAS becomes vitally important to the survival of the household, because it buys the food, pays the children’s school fees and also some of the bills.

Another gendered dimension of MEAS is that women’s informal sector activities are concentrated in domestic work and petty trade, with very little representation in other industries, such as small-scale manufacturing. This supports other research findings in Africa, for example, that show that although women predominate in the informal sector, their participation is concentrated in the narrow range of activities that have the lowest returns. In Zimbabwe, nearly 60 per cent of all women traders were involved in low profit sectors, for example the vending of fruit, which does not have high returns at the end of the day.²⁷ Elsewhere, Akinboade has noted that in Southern Africa, female informal sector employment in manufacturing and construction industry is low.²⁸ As the discussion will highlight, the women’s informal sector activities are linked to, or are extensions of the domestic realm, that is: the selling of prepared food (for example Chenesai’s activities), selling agricultural foods (for example Tendai and Tadiwa), or sewing (for example Hama). This

²⁵ David W. Drakakis-Smith, “The Changing Economic Role of Women in the Urbanisation Process: A Preliminary Report from Zimbabwe,” *International Migration Review* 18 (1984): 4, 1281.

²⁶ Charles C. Fonchingong, “Negotiating Livelihoods Beyond Beijing: The Burden of Women Food Vendors in the Informal Economy of Limbe, Cameroon,” *International Social Science Journal* 57 (2005): 184, 243.

²⁷ Mupedziswa and Gumbo, 15.

²⁸ Oludele A. Akinboade, “A Review of Women, Poverty and Informal Trade Issues in East and Southern Africa,” *International Social Science Journal* 57 (2005): 184, 263.

relegation of women to petty trading has been argued by some²⁹ to amount to little more than a labour-intensive method of subsidising the capitalist sector.

MEAS: A Work/Family Analysis

Given that most informal sector activities are labour-intensive undertakings, it is inevitable that they place considerable demands on women's time and energy. Some scholars³⁰ have argued that by doing informal sector work whose location is in the home or close to the home, women are better able to combine economic work with child-care, care of the old, disabled or sick as well as other domestic responsibilities. They argue that women's predominance in the informal sector is not only due to their weaker position in the formal labour market, but also due to their family responsibilities, which limit their mobility. They also argue that for many women, home-based activity is their only option especially if they have young children with no child-care support. Thus one of the reasons why the informal sector is appealing to women is the fact that it provides the flexibility that women seek in order to negotiate the work/family interface. The impression that these scholars gives is that many of the women working in this sector do so out of a range of choices. However, findings emerging from the present research point to a different reality; that most women work, not out of choice, but by the compulsion of survival.³¹ One would argue therefore, that the claims by these scholars need to be treated with caution particularly where the informal sector constitutes a 'third shift': the extent to which the women 'balance' their roles is debatable. Rutendo's statement below confirms this:

By the time you get home from work you are usually very tired anyway, and all you want to do is rest, but you don't, you have to get on with the crocheting, put in another 3 hours as well... [And] then the kids need your attention because you are home, you simply can't do it. You can't give them that attention; you have to work, because they have to eat. (*Rutendo*).

²⁹ See Robert E. Mazur and Marvellous M. Mhloyi, "Women's Work and Fertility in Zimbabwe: Ending Underdevelopment with Change", in Aderanti Adepoju and Christine Oppong, eds., *Gender, Work and Population in Sub-Saharan Africa*, (London: James Currey Ltd, 1994), 138.

³⁰ See for example, Elder and Schmidt, 10; Lakshmi Lingam, *Structural Adjustment, Gender and Household Survival Strategies: Review of Evidence and Concerns* (Michigan: Centre for the Education of Women, University of Michigan, 2005), 6; Rene Loewenson, *Health Impact of Occupational Risks in the Informal Sector in Zimbabwe* (Geneva: Safety and Health at Work and the Environment (SafeWork) Programme, International Labour Organization (ILO)), 1998.

³¹ See also Virginia Mapedzahama, *Worlds Apart? A Cross-National Comparative Study of Employed Mothers Negotiating Paid Work and Family in Australia and Zimbabwe* (Unpublished PhD Thesis: University of South Australia, 2007), 142-148.

The location of the women's income generating activity in the home where, as Franzway notes, a "discursive paradigm of altruistic care predominates,"³² does not mean that they can care for their children while they are working. In spite of their working from home, there is a separation of their mothering roles from their income-generating roles. When women involved in MEAS work from home (in their income generating activities), the emphasis is on 'work' not 'home'. Their working day is increasingly intensified in order to maximize earnings. Furthermore, even where the presence of a (paid or unpaid) adult helper in the house frees the women from some of their caring work, it also means that they intensify their economic work. Rutendo's statement above challenges assumptions that when women work from home their work life is always tailored around the family. Instead they minimise their time with family and maximise their working time despite the location of their income generating work in the home. Thus unlike other employed mothers, they spend even less time with their children than they would if they did not undertake additional income-generating work. Another participant, Tendai, also commented:

Sometimes the problem when you work for example as a teacher like me, is that after spending all day chasing after the students, when you get home you really have no more patience to deal with your own children. And then you need to be in the garden, and sort out things to sell; you can't spend time with the children. You'll be tired, so you simply let the domestic paid worker continue dealing with the children. (*Tendai*)

Kim and Ling also report that women who have their own income generating enterprises often worked long hours which deprived them of the time to spend with their families.³³ When women engage in MEAS they work very long days. All the participants in this research were asked to give a description of their normal/typical working day as the starting point for discussion in the interviews. What I found was that all the women engaging in MEAS worked the longest hours, on average of 14-16 hours on most days.³⁴ For example, one participant, Hama, a primary school teacher described her typical workday: she gets up at about 6.30 in the morning and gets herself ready for work, and then gets her son ready for crèche. The paid domestic worker helps in the morning by preparing breakfast while she, her husband and son get ready to leave. She usually starts sewing (or baking a cake if she has an order for one), as soon as

³² Suzanne Franzway, *Sexual Politics and Greedy Institutions: Union Women, Commitments and Conflicts in Public and Private* (Annandale: Pluto Press, 2001), 110.

³³ Jean L.S Kim and Choo S. Ling, "Work-family Conflict of Women Entrepreneurs in Singapore," *Women in Management Review* 16 (2001): 5, 205.

³⁴ Earlier research on African women's working lives reported similar findings. See for example, Edna Bay, "Introduction", in Edna Bay, ed. *Women and Work in Africa*, (Colorado: Westview Press Inc, 1982), 4. Bay noted that micro studies of African women's daily activities have documented the average female working days as being up to 16 to 18 hours long.

she returns home from work, normally after 1 p.m. She then prepares the evening meal around 6pm and oftentimes she will do some more sewing after supper. Hama testified that negotiating between paid work, informal work and family life is very challenging. She explained:

Sometimes I come home from school feeling very tired, my whole body aching especially if I have had a practical [lesson]... but then at the same time I need the money... and sometimes you already have the material [cloth] that someone has given you to sew, so you just have to work. Sometimes when I get on with the sewing I even end up sleeping around 12 midnight. (*Hama*).

The reality for women in MEAS is that their roles cannot be easily compartmentalized into domestic and public lives; instead, they are constantly intertwined,³⁵ and the juggling act they perform is not only difficult but it is constantly changing. In fact, as argued by Kim and Ling the dilemma of work and family can be “serious for women... [in the informal sector] as they are responsible for the success of their own... [income generating activities]”³⁶ as well as the welfare and survival of their families. It needs to be noted here that the difficulty with which women engaged in MEAS negotiate between work and family is worsened by the fact that most women in Africa do not have the luxury of labour-saving household gadgets that reduce the drudgery of housework (though not the amount of housework that women do),³⁷ therefore they have to substitute for this lack with their own labour power. Household chores are more manual and physical for women in Zimbabwe, compared to those of their counterparts in the west. This makes their domestic chores physically challenging.

A counterintuitive finding however, was that while the women interviewed acknowledged the challenges they face trying to negotiate between activities in the realms of paid work, income generating work and familial work, they still do not consider working in the informal sector an ‘additional burden’. For example, Tadiwa explained:

I wouldn’t say it’s a big burden, it’s no use complaining all the time while the family suffers from hunger. Things are better when I get the money from my sewing. When the money is not enough you have to look for additional income so that you can make ends meet. (*Tadiwa*)

³⁵ Mary J. Osirim, “African Women Entrepreneurship and Cultural Production: The Case of Crotchetiers and Knitters in Southern Africa,” *A Journal of African Diaspora* 1 (2003): 2, 162

³⁶ Kim and Ling, 204.

³⁷ See for example Cowan’s discussion of the paradoxical effect of technology on women’s roles inside the home. Ruth S. Cowan, *More Work For Mother: The Ironies Of Household Technology From The Open Hearth To The Microwave* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

Likewise, Hama emphasises how important her income generating activities are to the overall household income:

The [money from] sewing helps out a lot. Like the other time our salaries were...the debts were more than our salaries so I sew some baby pillows and I went and sold them, and they were all purchased by one person in the city who then gave me another order to do, so I was able to pay all our debt and also our bills. (*Hama*)

At first glance, this finding seems to run counter to Owusu's³⁸ contention that often, there is a fierce competition between 'third shift' activities and main employment, especially for time. None of the women interviewed spoke (explicitly) of experiencing such a conflict or competition between their formal paid work and income-generating activities. Instead, their emphasis was on the difference the income generating activities make to their survival in a harsh economy, and not on the incompatibility or conflict that engaging in multiple economic activities presented in their daily work/family negotiations. I argue that this focus is a result of what Aryee, Fields and Luk call 'utilitarianistic familism', that is, "the tendency to place family interests above those of the individual and to structure social relationships so that furtherance of one's familial interest is a primary consideration".³⁹ This is characteristic of communitarian cultures such as the women's Shona culture.⁴⁰ Thus paid work, and in fact, any income generating activity; is seen as part of motherhood, and so any economic decisions that mothers make are seen in the context of multiple and inseparable roles, rather than conflicting and competing ones. It is because of this that the application to African data, of western notions of work/family conflict presents some challenges.

I argue, therefore, even though the Harare participants' narratives of their paid work/family/income generating activities experiences did not include an equivalent of the word 'conflict' (*kupokana* or *kupikisana* or its contextual equivalent: *kusawirirana*), this should not be interpreted to imply that the issue does not pose problems to working mothers in Zimbabwe. Instead, it simply exposes that though women of the poorer nations might be aware of their constraints in negotiating the three shifts, they grapple more with, and put more emphasis on, issues of survival than on the incompatibility or multiplicity of their roles. Even though the women are committed to MEAS particularly as a strategy to avoid living in abject poverty with their families, they still feel the strain of the work/family negotiations. Feminists in Zimbabwe as elsewhere in

³⁸ Owusu, 21.

³⁹ Samuel Aryee et al., "A Cross-Cultural Test of a Model of the Work-Family Interface," *Journal of Management* 25 (1999): 4, 493.

⁴⁰ For a more detailed discussion of the Shona culture and Shona peoples see Michael F.C. Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples* (Gwelo: Mambo Press, 1976) and also Oyekan Owomoyela, *Culture and Customs of Zimbabwe* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2002).

Africa, concern themselves with issues of ‘bread and butter’, and women’s economic independence through participation in the labour market as *the* vehicle for women’s empowerment. I argue that though important, such a focus is narrow, and that addressing the challenges that women face when negotiating multiple roles is vital to women’s empowerment. Ignoring how women navigate between economic work and family can render attempts to empowerment ineffective particularly if the empowerment increases women’s roles and responsibilities without significant changes in other social institutions.

Women in MEAS and the Persistence of the Domestic Division of Labour

Findings from this research also show that the increased involvement of women in MEAS has not challenged the gendered domestic division of labour. Women have been pulled into the public domain, but men have not been enticed into the private realm, and so the patterns of household division of labour that prevailed before the increase of women’s participation in MEAS still persist. Even though a higher proportion of women are now paying a major share of household costs as a result of their involvement in MEAS,⁴¹ they are still the primary caregivers and entirely responsible for all household duties, men do not do any share of the housework and/or child-care.

I asked the women to what extent (if any) they received help from their husbands in terms of household chores. The responses I got from the women were the same: none at all. Some of the women explained that the lack of help from their spouses is a result of culture, insisting that it is because of the ideology in their culture (as with most cultures elsewhere in Africa) that still insists on women being entirely responsible for children and household responsibilities:

About the day-to-day help with household chores, aah these men of ours ... [laughs]. Our culture plays a big role there [laughs]. He [her husband] doesn’t really have anything that I can say is his/he does. Usually the man is expected to work in the garden. Our culture doesn’t normally expect him to do much in the house. We, ... [pauses] it’s queer in our Shona culture for a man to be seen cleaning the house, or cooking. If he is seen cooking, people will laugh at him saying he is greedy [laughs]. They will say he is greedy [laughs]. Or even if he is seen doing the bed they will ask what the problem is. They will laugh that ... [pauses] even the elders, especially from his side of the family, when they see him do it. In our Shona culture they will say he has been given those husband-taming herbs. That is the Shona culture [laughs] ... even when he does the laundry. (*Tendai*)

⁴¹ Lingam, 4.

While men accept the idea that their wives work, they do not share in housework or childcare and as the women reported, they do not feel any social or moral obligation to do so. On the other hand, the women do not normally protest because they know their society does not expect a man to do such chores. As Rutendo argued:

I don't know, I just see it as normal really...He doesn't do anything but I guess there's really no expectation for them to. I mean, who else are you going to complain to? No-one expects the men to do any housework. Maybe I'm being too general here, but I don't think there are any Shona men you will see do housework. (*Rutendo*)

Chenesai also said:

I think there is such a thing as 'a man's world' and a 'woman's world'...there are just some things that a man in our culture wouldn't do, and doing housework is one of those things. And as women we just try and do what we can without their help, no use worrying or complaining about it, we just find other people to help. (*Chenesai*)

One could argue that perhaps without even realising it, by retaining responsibility for household labour, the women endorsed the dominant ideology of housework as women's domain. Their testimonies not only demonstrate that "women's ... (narratives) reflect society's normative expectations about the gendered division of labour in families"⁴² but they also confirm what Dolphyne wrote more than two decades ago:

[the issue of the gendered division of labour in the home is]... something which ... is a non-issue for African women ... Every African woman grows up knowing that it is the woman who cooks the meals and generally sees to it that everything is in its proper place. Whatever the level of education or professional status, she does not normally expect her husband to share the household chores with her. If the husband enjoys cooking and chooses to cook dinner one day, she appreciates the fact that he is being helpful, but she does not expect him to do so as a matter of course.⁴³

I also found that where women's salaries or wages do not usually allow for employment of a paid domestic worker, especially due to the increasing costs associated with hiring such help in light of the economic crises in the country, working mothers in Zimbabwe rely on the help of a poor(er) relative, usually a

⁴² Carol S. Wharton, "Finding Time for the "Second Shift": The Impact of Flexible Work Schedules on Women's Double Days", *Gender and Society* 8 (1994): 2, 199.

⁴³ Florence A. Dolphyne, *The Emancipation of Women: An African Perspective* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1991), 4.

young girl, living with them. Customarily in Zimbabwe, as in other countries in Africa, women are helped with household chores by younger relatives and by their daughters when they reach an age when they can actively help, thus easing the burden of care.

Interestingly, despite admitting that having household help was instrumental in their ability to participate in paid work, the women still felt that this had a negative impact on their images as women, mothers and wives. Hama told me that,

[i]t does help a lot (having a live-in domestic helper); it's just that as a married woman you don't want the helper to do all the work for you; it seems like you are shifting your responsibilities to her. So whatever you can do yourself when you are home, you do. (*Hama*)

Hama's statement is significant in that it portrays housework not only as supervising the domestic worker, but also as 'doing'. Although it might seem, at first glance, that the presence of another female helper in the household would relieve the working mother of her familial responsibilities, this is not the case. The Zimbabwean woman is also expected to *do* the housework, even where there is a helper. Tadiwa's statement below also exposes this paradox:

In our Shona culture... it is said that a wife or a mother must do everything: waking up at 4 in the morning, cleaning the house, washing your husband's clothes and those of the rest of your family, sewing, cooking... Because even things like child abuse can happen to one's children without her knowing or being aware because she is not following what she should be doing as a mother, and because she is getting the paid domestic worker to do everything for the children, and she (the mother) spends no time with the children to see if they are having any problems. Simply because a woman works does not mean that she should not take care of her children. (*Tadiwa*)

Tadiwa's comments re-affirms the debates about the role of the domestic worker, who is seen as a secondary carer, and whom the mother must manage and not expect to organise the house or even to be good at it. In fact, while acknowledging the work/family juggle, Tadiwa seems defensive about it; one should not prioritise work to the (perceived) neglect of her children.

Conclusion

This article has provided an analysis of the working lives of a group of Zimbabwean women involved in informal sector work as an additional source of income to formal sector paid work. Most studies on women's work in the informal sector in Africa focus on the role of the informal sector in development, particularly on whether it constitutes arenas for increasing

income and employment especially among women. Unlike these studies, the aim and focus in this article has been to explore the lived realities of women undertaking informal sector activities to broaden their income base from formal sector paid work, and the implications of that involvement on their work/family negotiations. This article has shown how women's experiences reveal that informal sector activities add other roles to the women's work as a 'third shift': they find themselves negotiating three shifts: formal sector work, informal sector work and unpaid familial work.

I have also argued in this article that it should not be taken for granted that the spatial integration of the women's income generating work and home means that women can meet the dual demands of family and economic work. That the informal sector gives women in Zimbabwe an avenue to escape or avert absolute poverty is indisputable, but what needs to be acknowledged as well is its potential to add tensions between women's domestic and economic roles. I contend that undertaking income-generating work in the informal sector in addition to employment in formal sector has worsened Zimbabwean women's burdens. Given that Zimbabwean women, like most other women in Africa⁴⁴ are traditionally the primary care givers who seek to raise children while earning an income, it is inevitable that like their western counterparts they experience the strain of negotiating between multiple economic work activities and familial roles.

While the Zimbabwean woman can be admired and applauded for her determination, resourcefulness, initiative and ability to cope and to subsist in an extremely unfavorable macroeconomic environment that is: in a failing economy with diminishing resources, the implications of this resourcefulness on her work/family integration need to be acknowledged and addressed. The analyses in this article demonstrate that women in Zimbabwe do negotiate paid work and family in ways that are complex and challenging. I claim then, that the metaphor of work/family interaction which originated within the western context, can be applied with due caution, to women in non-western African contexts like Zimbabwe to produce meaningful and significant analyses that further understandings of African women's work/family issues. I am not advocating here for complete transferability of concepts and theories. Indeed,

⁴⁴ See for example, Eleanor R. Fapohunda, "The Child-Care Dilemma of Working Mothers in African Cities: The Case of Lagos, Nigeria", in Edna G Bay, ed., *Women and work in Africa*, (Colorado: Westview Press Inc, 1982), 277-288; Barbara Lewis, "Fertility and Employment: An Assessment of Role Incompatibility Among African Urban Women", in Edna G Bay, ed., *Women and Work in Africa*, (Colorado: Westview Press Inc, 1982), 249-276; Grace B. Aluko and Mary O. Alfa, "Marriage and Family", in WIN Organisation (Women in Nigeria), ed., *Women in Nigeria Today*, (London: Zed Books, 1985), 163-173; Catherine Di Domenico et al., "Urban Yoruba Mothers: At Home and At Work", in Christine Oppong, ed., *Sex Roles, Population and Development in West Africa: Policy Related Studies on Work and Demographic Issues*, (London: James Currey, 1987), 118-132.

my investigations and analysis of the third shift in this article show that women in Zimbabwe do experience work/family life in some ways not fully captured by western analyses. Notwithstanding the usefulness of the western metaphor of work/family as a framing device from which to instigate effective analyses and comparisons of Zimbabwean women's experiences, a more comprehensive interpretive and contextually appropriate metaphor, which takes into account the (failing) economic context in which the women work is necessary to address such a complex terrain of women's roles.

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‘Discipline and Punish’: Inscribing the Body and its Metaphors in Zimbabwe’s Postcolonial Crisis

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Abstract

Zimbabwe’s decade of crisis has been inundated with emotionally moving pictures of the body in suffering. Little, however, has been done to analyse how the body images metaphorically depict the practice of politics in the postcolonial state. This paper seeks to fill this void by showing how the body can be employed metaphorically to capture the crisis as the contending players in the crisis appeal to the body and its metaphors in their claims for legitimacy. This paper demonstrates how metaphors of the body can illuminate and add new nuances to the postcolonial crisis. The Foucauldian model emphasises how hegemonic culture maintains its dominance through its management of the body. It is employed here to show how ‘disciplining and punishing the body’ not only invokes the structuration and discursive forms of power within the body politic but also arouses invidious feelings towards the body politic itself. The metaphors of the body not only call for new ways of conceptualising the postcolonial crisis, but also mimic the deplorable state of the body politic in ways that seek rearticulating the maladies within the nation.

Introduction

Zimbabwe’s crisis has gained an almost permanent place in world news and documentaries. No immediate solutions to the crisis are in sight, thus making it prudent to call for new methods of interpreting it. The media has been inundated with emotionally moving pictures of the body in suffering and despite the fact these images have proliferated by the day, little has been done to analyse how the body images metaphorically depict the practice of politics in the postcolonial state. The object of this paper is to analyse how the body and its metaphors can be employed to fully capture and add new nuances to the Zimbabwean. This will be done by drawing from perspectives from Foucault’s analysis of the body that presents the body as a site for the struggle for power.

The history of the development of Western social and political thought is characterised by an ambiguous attitude towards the body. The body is presented by some analysts as the foci of human experience and source of knowledge, others have analysed it as an impediment to the attainment of objective knowledge. The human body has also been used to conceptualise the political formations of the nation and state. In some formulations, the nation is seen as a body and citizens (or subjects) are members of that body. In his *Republic*, Plato envisages a psychocentric *polis* whose ruler, the philosopher-

king, rules by employing reason.¹ The ruler should rise above the needs of the body or appetites as they corrupt the *polis*. Just as the body achieves harmony when each of the body part performs its own function, the entire city operates smoothly and achieves harmony when the soldiers and the rest of the people perform their respective duties, thus Plato uses the human body and its characteristic features to formulate how the *polis* can degenerate from perfection to imperfection.

Cartesianism has clearly separated the mind and body and argued that the real essence of being lies in the mind. The human body is extended and non-thinking, while the essence of the mind are thought and non-extension. Descartes defines a substance as nothing other than a thing which exists in such a way as to depend on no other thing but God for its existence.² The implications of this to political theory and practice are far-reaching. One of the implications is that Cartesianism brings forth some dualist formations of subject/object, mind/body, rational/irrational which constantly dog political theory and practice. Colonialism, for example, survived on the ascription of irrationality of the colonised who in most cases were racially different from the coloniser. Thus the assumption of epistemological superiority (which was inscribed in hierarchisation of race) of the coloniser gave him the 'right' to colonise. Colonialism was premised on the juxtaposition of the masters and subjects; and in this scheme, the colonised subject can be aptly described by what Gwendolyn Foster termed as the trope of the "bound body" or "body in captivity"³ because of how the body is expected to respond to the effects of subjectivity.

Hobbes' formulation in his *Leviathan* is that of the state as an 'artificial man' which is regulated by the force of the law.⁴ Members perform the different functions as do the different parts of the human body. However, the body parts cooperate through the agency of the joints and the nerves which play a mediatory role. The joints represent the executive and judicial role and the nerves represent the coercive function. The harmonious existence of the Leviathan is not natural but artificial, and something to be worked for. The strong links between the human body and the nation and state have invoked the complexity of the mechanical and organic operations of the national community. The importance of a constitutional order is to ensure that citizens are well placed to cooperate and be subordinated to the state just as body parts cooperate through the agency of the joins and nerves.

¹ Plato, *The Republic* (New York: Penguin Books, 1955).

² Rene Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*, Part 1, Section 51 (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1983).

³ Gwendolyn Foster, *Captive Bodies: Postcolonial Subjectivity in Cinema* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1999).

⁴ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

The configuration of power in the kingdoms of the late medieval Europe can also be used to highlight how the body of the king was also used to depict the body politic. Ernst Kantorowicz's idea of "the King's Two Bodies" highlights how in the figure of the king the natural body and the body politic were united in the living figure of the king.⁵ The insights provided by Kantorowicz are important as they provide an explanation of how subjectivity as an effect of power relations was achieved in the medieval political state. In the same vein, Hamilton analyses how the body of the king in its appearance and functioning participates in a network of signs or codes that links the king to the divine realm and to the body politic.⁶ The place of the king as the symbol and embodiment of sovereignty and the divine right he wields creates the subjects' conception of sovereign power and the use of violence directed to both internal and external threats. This analysis shows how the body is important in the ways political communities perceive, configure, contest and interpret the world and their place in this scheme of things.

The reason for referring to the array of ways the body has been conceptualised is to situate the discourse of the body and its metaphors within the context of western political theory in ways that allow us to appreciate the state and its functions and also how we can proceed to situate such conceptualisation within the context of African postcolonial politics. The African postcolonial state as a creation of modernity follows this precedence that was set by its colonial predecessor. The postcolonial state's easy slip into despotism can be fully captured in the ways it increases its hold on the bodies of the citizens. This has made the human body an object of discipline and punishment as the state seeks to achieve what Foucault calls 'governmentality'⁷ of its subjects. Thus the human body has intersecting interests with the exercise of power and politics and the control of behaviour within the polity.

Relevance of the 'Body' to Postcolonial Studies

For most colonial and postcolonial theorists, the 'body' presents multi-tier unit of analyses of the way politics is conceptualised and practised. From the Greek *polis* right to modern societies, political practice is still understood to be a man's business. There are undoubtedly challenges to this belief. In the Greek society, the bodies of women were to be circumscribed to the domestic or private realm (*aikos*), and concentrate on the material side of life, while the public realm (*polis*) was for the men, who could hold office and concentrate on the abstract and intellectual life. It is important to note how the dualities of

⁵ Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

⁶ Mark Hamilton, *The Body Royal: The Poetics of Kingship in Ancient Israel* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2001).

⁷ Michel Foucault, "Governmentality", in Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller, eds. *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 87-104.

mind/body, intellectual/manual or domestic tasks, private/public realms, men/women have resonance to the expectations of subservience from women and dominance from man. The dualities have also been operational in the making of the colonial subject as the colonised was expected to be submissive to the coloniser. Mamdani shows how the colonial subject was created as the 'Other' of the colonial citizen, and in the process of creating the subject, the body was used as a site through which racial ordering was inscribed to achieve both inclusion and exclusion.⁸ The body, therefore, carries with it important implications for political practice and is used both as a site to contest for political legitimation and as a tool to realise political agency.

Some feminist political theorists have mobilised their thoughts around the notion of how the female body and female sexuality have provided a symbolic space through which asymmetric power relations between African men has been discursively articulated, secured and contested.⁹ The colonial project was curved on the basis of the feminisation of the African space, with the violence entailed often described in ways that approximate the violent sexual exploitation of the female body in the hands of a loathed sadist. The colonisation of Africa, whose main motive was the acquisition of the abundant resources and labour, was also conceived as exploring and exploiting 'virgin territory,' a term that expresses how colonialism relied on the sexualisation of territory and human bodies and the maximum exploitation of their potential. Besides providing cheap labour, the bodies' reproductive capacity was harvested to sustain the settler economy as "women's bodies were harvested for their reproductive capacity for the advancement of white supremacist imperial enterprise."¹⁰ Another black feminist, Dorothy Roberts, situates her analysis within the context of America's race relations. For her, the human body is a site through which the discourse of racial ordering was inscribed to sustain racial exclusion. She argues to show how the discourse of population control is a strategy of delimiting the African-American women's fertility.¹¹ The analyses by Mire and Roberts are relevant in so far they show how the body is rich with a variety of meanings of political significance.

Colonialism rests on 'alterity', a concept which postcolonial theorists define as the state of being other or different.¹² The 'otherness' was racially defined. In analysing the postcolonial state, there is need to tackle the question of how the process of decolonisation and the power relations that exist in the formerly

⁸ Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

⁹ Amina Mire, "In/Through the Bodies of Women," *Southern African Feminist Review* 4, no. 1 (2000): 1, 1-24.

¹⁰ Mire, 4.

¹¹ Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997).

¹² Bill Ashcroft et al., *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 11.

colonised state constitute some imbrications with the preceding colonial arrangement. The African postcolonial state, within which this paper is contextualised, has been described in various ways. The predominant descriptions have emphasised the problems rife therein. Famine, disease, starvation, civil war and the concomitant refugee crisis, economic meltdown, declining infrastructure have all dominated the descriptions of the postcolonial state. Scholars have debated as to the causes of the array of problems and two reasons have been widely identified: the legacy of colonialism and the immediate causes stemming from poor governance.

Ajibola argues that since its partition, “Africa has been ruefully nursing the wounds inflicted on it by its colonial past.”¹³ For Ajibola, the current crisis in Africa is a sign of the “remnants of this unenviable colonial heritage [which] intermittently erupt into discordant social, political and even economic upheavals...”¹⁴ What is interesting in Ajibola’s contention for this paper is that, first, the African crisis is described as a wound that has affected the ‘African body’ and, second, the crisis is explained in ways that exonerate the postcolonial states and governments from the responsibility of the current crisis.

While Griffiths’ analysis recognises other analyses that identify and describe the current crisis as “self-inflicted wounds of political graft and corruption, flawed democracies and power-hungry military dictatorships”, he goes on to highlight that “the ‘unhealed wounds’ of the colonial past must also be remembered.”¹⁵ Griffiths seeks to show how the process of colonialism accounts for the current African impasse in ways that gloss over the responsibility of the past and present postcolonial leadership. Playing down the role of the postcolonial state in the current crisis is both naive and dangerous because it is a step towards sanitising bad political practices. While the debate of the extent of the responsibility of the leaders of the postcolonial states is equally important and needs to be pursued vigorously, the bearing of the current crisis on the body cannot be overemphasised.

Robert Guest argues that “Africans are poor largely because they are not free” and that they “live under predatory, incompetent governments, which they have great trouble shaking off.”¹⁶ Robert Guest’s portraiture of the African state and leadership is one of a structure that imposes itself upon and burdens the citizenry. He describes the African state, the governments as well as the leaders as “vampires” with “powers that enable them to feed on their own fellow

¹³ Ieuan Griffiths, *The African Inheritance* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 1.

¹⁴ Griffiths, 1.

¹⁵ Griffiths, 1.

¹⁶ Robert Guest, *The Shackled Continent: Power, Corruption, and African Lives* (Washington: Smithsonian Books, 2004), 24.

citizens.”¹⁷ Vampires draw blood from the bodies of their human victims. The descriptions of the crisis in the postcolonial state by both Griffiths and Guest, despite the disagreements they share as regards the principal cause of the African postcolonial crisis, are relevant. Griffiths’ description of the crisis that privileges and locates the ‘unhealed wounds’ of colonialism at the core and Guest’s argument that the government and leaders are the vampires who hinder political and economic progress in postcolonial state have ramifications on how the human body occupies a central position in descriptions of political governance and prospects of economic progress.

The brief description of the African state raise some conflicting views and as the image of the human body is being used to discuss the complex terrain that the postcolonial state occupies. At the centre of such analyses also is the issue of the legitimacy of the African state. Thomson defined legitimacy “*as a psychological relationship between the governed and their governors, which engenders a belief that their state’s leaders and institutions have a right to exercise political authority over society.*”¹⁸ The constant use of coercion and violence in postcolonial African states as the ruling seek to maintain authority is a sign that most states have lost legitimacy. The failure by the ruling elite to respond to the demands of the citizenry has further alienated the elite from the citizens. It is in the light of waning legitimacy of the postcolonial that we situate the concepts ‘discipline’ and ‘punish’ as the state employs its various mechanisms seeks to achieve a compliant citizenry.

Zimbabwe: Disciplining and Punishing the Body

Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* opens by a vivid account of how the regicide, Damiens, was made a horrible public spectacle as his body was condemned to torture by the executioners. The flesh of his body was lacerated by pincers and horse power that were used to pull the limbs apart ensuring that the joints were broken. The spectacle occurred in a series of repeated ceremonies of torture with interludes of sessions of confession and prayer. The naked body of the criminal and the humiliation that it underwent served as an inscription of sovereign power. Sovereign power employs the state apparatus to legitimate violence on the body or bodies of the condemned, and the effect of this is to secure obedience and ‘order’ considered important for the sovereign’s exercise of power. Foucault seeks to provide an analysis of the transformation of penal methods as the penal processes moved from public spectacles of violence and torture to the invention of the modern prison system as a concealment of sovereign violence. The prison is a modern transformation of the penal system. The previous spectacle of violence was replaced by a new set of technologies of the body.

¹⁷ Guest, 28.

¹⁸ Alex Thomson, *An Introduction to African Politics* (London and New York: Routledge 2004), 107.

The Zimbabwean case, however, has seen both the increase of ghastly spectacles of bodily violence and the exercise of some technologies that employed covert exercise of power. The postcolonial state has increasingly maintained its grip on its citizens by 'increased presence'. The presence of the police, military and the youth militia in the rural areas, city streets and the constant searches on citizens are all testimony of the attempt of the ruling party to maintain their tight grip on the population. For Foucault, discipline proceeds from the distribution of individuals in space by employing several techniques including enclosure, the specification of a place heterogeneous to all others and closed in upon itself.¹⁹ The period of elections in the postcolonial state saw some areas being cordoned and patrols, road blocks and constant searches conducted. The areas were termed 'liberated zones' or 'no-go zones' for the opposition, and residents were called on specific times for re-education programmes conducted by the ZANU PF war veterans and youth militias. This made the MDC difficult to move freely to campaign and meet the people.

The events in the postcolonial state fully capture what Foucault described this as the employment 'the gaze' which is a principal technology of power "which is concerned with the gathering of information, to inform and create a discourse on its subject-matter."²⁰ The gaze is central for the construction of the subjectivities of those on whom the gaze is used. The intended function of 'the gaze' is that it should result in the 'self-discipline' of the subject and the reduction of the sovereign's ghastly violence. However, the situation in postcolonial Zimbabwe is one in which 'the gaze' is necessarily followed by the spectacle of violence. In Foucault's terms the body that is gazed is "the site and target of power."²¹ Through the gaze, the ruling party, which the ruling elite have deliberately conflated with the institutions of the state and made the two indistinguishable, plays the role of what George Orwell's *1984* called 'Big Brother' who constantly watches and renders the bodies of the watched docile and obedient. The concept 'docility' need not be understood in simple parlance. In a Foucauldian framework, it is broader than being submissive or being ready to yield. Foucault uses docility to discuss the economy and utility of the body as it responds to the operations of power. The 'docile body' can be fully understood in relation to discipline. Discipline involves three core elements of time, space and visibility. The docility of the body is achieved when these three elements bear on the body to make it compliant. Thus docility refers to the extent to which a body masters the skills to measure up to specific behavioural objectives within some spatial boundaries and temporal confines with some supervision that ensures the subject's collaboration.

¹⁹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Penguin Books, 1977), 141.

²⁰ Nick Fox, "Foucault, Foucauldians and Sociology," *The British Journal of Sociology* 49, no. 3, (September 1998): 416, 415-433.

²¹ Fox, 422.

In this discussion, Foucault's work is used to show how the violence on the body by the state ambiguously renders state power as both a source of excessive brutality and a reason for the people's resilience to brutality. The people on whom the brutal acts are perpetrated become resolute to offer even more resistance, thus giving new meaning to their bodies and the suffering they are subjected to. This paper acknowledges the vast difference between Foucault's object of analysis and the Zimbabwean case, but it seeks to show how Foucault's analysis of the body provides some insights into the developments of Zimbabwe's postcolonial crisis. The Zimbabwean postcolonial crisis has witnessed the state's violent crackdown on its citizenry. The violence has not achieved the intended results as it got new interpretation. These new interpretations point to the varied ways in which the body as an object of both violence and resistance to the violence.

Metaphors and the Human Body

Etymologically the term 'metaphor' is derived from the Greek *metaphora*. The word *meta-* means 'over' and '*phora*' means 'to carry' or 'to transfer.' Thus, metaphors are tropes that show the resemblance that ensues between two different or seemingly unrelated subjects by implying that there are attributes from one subject that are transferred or carried over from one subject to another in a progression from the familiar to the unfamiliar with the objective of clarifying phenomena. According to Aristotle, a metaphor consists in "giving the thing a name that belongs to something else; the transference being either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or on grounds of analogy."²² The Aristotelian view is that metaphors capture reality. This position is, however, rejected later by the positivists' view of all language as literal or as having some correspondence with some reality outside itself. There is also another perspective that considers metaphors as creators of meaning. So instead of emphasising that metaphors capture reality, it has also been argued that metaphors construct or create reality by informing and shaping the human's basic cognitive systems. This is a perspective advanced by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson which says that we understand the world and structure our perceptions of the world through the metaphors we use.²³ An example that can be given here is that when ZANU PF coined the MDC as 'stooges of the West' or as 'sell-outs who aimed to reverse the gains of the liberation struggle,' it was also prescribing a method of dealing with the opposition and justifying war and violence on them. How does the human body become an important source of metaphor? Michele Emanatian argues "metaphor is one of the resources we draw in expressing our views of the more intangible aspects of life."²⁴ Turning to the metaphors of the body, it can be

²² Aristotle, *Poetics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982) 1457b.

²³ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

²⁴ Michelle Emanatian, "Everyday Metaphors of Lust and Sex in Chagga," *Ethos* 24 no. 2 (June 1996): 195, 195-236.

argued that since our bodies are close to us and are an embodiment of our self-identity, we use them as resources. Thus the metaphors of the body play a transformative role in social and political discourse as their use invokes deep feelings and emotions about political and social realities and relations.

The open hand and the clenched fist in Zimbabwe's politics

Party symbols in Zimbabwean politics rely on the human body in that they depict specific body parts and also they require the body for their expression. The ZANU PF's symbol of the clenched fist has been traditionally used to deploy strength and people's power. Until recently, the fist has received new interpretations as the ruling party began to employ violent means as a way to achieve a compliant citizenry. Mugabe has also on various occasions employed a body language and political rhetoric in which he suggested that he was prepared for a fist-fight. At political rallies in the run up to the elections, Mugabe literally rolled up his sleeves and raised his clenched fist to show his determination to fight his perceived enemies. The fist has also been reinterpreted to mean a steadfast hold on national heritage. With the land taking a centre stage in the current crisis, the fist has symbolised the concomitant defiance to colonial land appropriation and the renewed strength to fight. Thus the party symbols underwent redefinition to find relevance to the land question. Thus the motifs of 'holding on to' and 'fighting' are juxtaposed to show between the Second Chimurenga and Third Chimurenga as a continuum. The fist has been represented in diametrically opposed terms with the open palm, which ZANU PF supporters have interpreted as a symbol of letting loose or giving away the land. The MDC's symbol of the open palm has been described as a symbol for openness, transparency and fairness. The open hand has been mobilised to deploy the idea of the 'violent other' that continuously disrupt and stifle its peaceful and democratic appeal to the citizenry. The defeats of ZANU PF in the various elections have humiliated the party and government that had ruled without any serious opposition.

The general view that takes election campaigns as 'battles' or 'fights' with 'winners' and 'losers' has also made the two symbols more relevant in a political environment in which the battles ceased being just metaphorical but real. In counteracting the fist's leitmotif of physical strength and fighting prowess, the MDC's open hand was reinterpreted to make it a tool for fighting. Besides the democratic connotation, the open hand assumed a new meaning as a fighting tool against a heavy-handed and abusive party that claimed a patriarchal role. The open hand began to be called a slap, and ZANU PF's loss to MDC was described as a slap in the face. It is common sight to see rival party supporters from the two parties showing off their party symbols with these suggestive 'battle' or 'fight' leitmotifs. In a general conversation about the state of the economy, politics and any other aspect of life, it is common to hear the question: "*Uri wembama here kana wechibhakera?*" Literally that means "Do you belong to the clap (MDC) or to the fist (ZANU PF)?" The

violence which has characterised the politics in the country has strengthened the leitmotifs and also pointing the imbrications of the body, the party symbols derived there from and political thought and practice. Tendai Biti, on the day of the memorial service of Susan Tsvangirai, who died in a fatal car crash in early 2009, said “The Prime Minister told me that his wife raised her hand and waved to him to say good bye, using the open hand symbol of the party.” Biti also described the late Susan as the mother of the Zimbabwean struggle for democracy. He said: “The struggle for Zimbabwe was mothered and breast-fed by Susan Tsvangirai. She was there when we were brutalised, beaten up by the police she was always with us.”²⁵

The mention of Susan’s last moments before her death is employed to invoke a political message. The leitmotif of the wave renders the episode to convey a political message not only to the husband but also to the nation to continue in the struggle. The wave becomes a message from the ‘mother of the struggle for democracy’ to all the sons and daughters whom she had nurtured under trying times. The portraiture of Susan’s status as a mother and nurturer of the struggle who gave moral support to her husband and his compatriots forms a continuum and resonates with earlier analyses of Zimbabwean women in the nationalist struggle in which their traditional domestic roles were foregrounded.²⁶

The Metaphor of the Fragmented Body

The polarisation of the nation has made it difficult for social and political cohesion. The economic collapse has also created an individualistic notion of survival through plunder, and the moral fabric of society has been shredded. Personal survival by any means has taken priority. The institutions of the state have callously sought the compliance of the citizenry and corporations, and this has resulted in deeply entrenched distrust and animosity. The fragility of the human body and its imbrications with the body politic is a constant reminder to the possible collapse of the body politic. The Zimbabwean state has been described as a failed state. In his speech to accept the power-sharing deal, Morgan Tsvangirai, the leader of the opposition said: “We had two options: To put aside our differences and unite in order to give our people real hope, or continue to let the impasse plunge our country into the abyss of a failed state.”²⁷ Analyses of a failed state characterise a failed state as one that has power vacuum that renders impossible the performance of basic functions like education, health, security and governance. The power vacuum can be because of such factors as poverty, civil strife or violence. Tsvangirai’s speech was

²⁵ “Mutambara booed at memorial service,” *The Zimbabwe Times*, 10 March 2009, http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/mar11_2009.html (accessed 27 March 2009).

²⁶ Tanya Lyons, *Guns and Guerrilla Girls: Women in the Zimbabwean Liberation Struggle* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2004).

²⁷ “Zimbabwe: Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai’s Speech at the Signing Ceremony”, Monday 15 September 2008, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200809151516.html> (accessed 27 March 2009).

meant to show that his agreement to the deal was to assist to redeem the country from a failed state. A failed state is like a dismembered body whose parts have lost coordination and basic functions to facilitate common purpose. The metaphor of the fragmented body got its full expression when the state sponsored violence on the citizenry. The collapse of institutions of governance was symmetrically juxtaposed with the dismembered bodies of the victims of violence.

The political impasse was further exacerbated by the threats of the split of the ruling party before the elections. Simba Makoni's decision to stand as an independent candidate for presidency, and Dumiso Dabengwa's open support for him, brought anxiety as many expected a major shake-up within the ruling party and also increasing the prospects of a landslide victory of the opposition. The threat of a major split was interestingly captured by the metaphor of the fragmented body as the breakaway of a member is described to the dismemberment of the body parts from the whole. Mugabe's words: "*Hatibvarurwe pakati. Munhu anozvibvarura kana abuda pakati pevanhu,*"²⁸ [We won't be torn apart. A person tears himself apart if he breaks away from the people] were aimed at reiterating his usual claim that his party is united. The claim that the party is united suggests that the ruling party is a strong body that does not break or gets torn apart and it is members who leave it to their own peril since breaking away is a self-destructive measure that makes one sink into political oblivion. It is interesting to note that in appealing for unity within the party, Mugabe's does not make a distinction between ZANU and the nation. In the addresses he makes about national unity, he makes constant references to the merger between ZANU PF and PF ZAPU as the major step to unite the nation. Thus opposition parties are nothing but attempts to divide the nation and to take it to the madness and chaos of the mid-1980s. This is one case in which the party is deliberately presented as the nation, government and state. Mugabe presents the ZANU PF party as one intact and strong body, and leaving it is straying into the wilderness. As an extension of this logic, the party has legitimated violence by the armed and police force, war veterans and the militia on the citizens in its bid to curb the break-away of members from its body. The violence can be described in Radcliffe and Westwood's words as a "forced homogenization of the citizenry,"²⁹ and the party leadership plays the patriarchal role of overseeing that members of the family conform to the demands of the fathers.

While Mugabe presented his party and nation as united, there were dead bodies found dismembered, burnt and sexually abused. The contrast of what he said about his party and what was taking place could be understood as a

²⁸ Caesar Zvayi, "Gen Mujuru Disowns Makoni," *The Herald*, 13 March 2008, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200803130145.html> (accessed 27 March 2009).

²⁹ Sarah Radcliffe and Sallie Westwood, *Remaking the Nation: Place, Identity and Politics in Latin America* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 10.

proclamation that the injured, dead, dismembered and burnt were not his, and were of no concern to him and his party.

The Metaphor of the Sick and Hungry Body

After the ZANU PF chaotic land reform in which productive land was grabbed from the white farmers, Zimbabweans began to experience an endemic food crisis. Hunger threatened a nation that had been known as the bread basket of Southern Africa. Shortage of basic commodities made a tight grip. The HIV/AIDS pandemic has left many people in despair. The shortages of antiretroviral drugs due to an underperforming economy have seen a higher mortality rate and unprecedented levels of human suffering. The recent cholera outbreaks have also added to the misery. The political leadership in the ruling party attributed this to the constant droughts and illegal sanctions from the West. The opposition argued that it was a result of the ill-conceived land policy for political expediency and mismanagement. Civic society increased its campaign for aid from the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) especially in the rural areas where the majority of the people live. The government feared that the activities of the NGOs would undermine its hold on the peasants who had been the traditional supporters of the ZANU PF party, and therefore ordered that the NGOs suspend all operations. The timing of this was curious as it was in the run-up to a second round of presidential elections. As the threat of starvation loomed, it became apparent that food aid became entangled in politics. In his address at the United Nations Food Summit in Rome, Mugabe argued that the illegal sanctions were responsible for hunger in the country. On the other hand, The NGOs and some sections of the international community accused Mugabe of using “food as a political tool to intimidate voters ahead of a political election.”³⁰ While Mugabe argued that food was used as a weapon for regime change, the Human Rights Watch and other international civic organizations argued that the ruling party used food as a weapon to gain votes. It is undisputed that ‘food aid’ in Zimbabwe has been handed over at political rallies accompanied by political slogans and constant reminders that it was only the ruling party that knew the people’s needs. Thus there is merit in the claims by the NGOs.

The images of malnourished bodies in the Third World characterise the appeals made by donor agencies in the metropolitan cities of the developed world. The poverty, malnourishment and hunger are usually depicted in ways that grip the potential volunteers and donors. Contrasted with the pleasure and plunder of the rich class, the bodies of the poor children and women represent the inequalities of the distribution of resources in the Third World states. Politicians manipulate and interpret the images of hungry and starving people to justify their claims and using Foucault’s analysis, this shows how “the body

³⁰ Chris McGreal, “Mugabe Mugabe accused of manipulating aid,” *The Guardian (UK)*, 5 June 2008, also available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/jun/05/zimbabwe> (accessed 27 March 2009).

is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs.”³¹ The ruling party seeks the subjection of the body not only by the use of instruments of violence or ideology, but by clearly calculated and technically thought out and subtle ways. For that reason Foucault argues that there may be ‘knowledge’ of the body that is not exactly the science of its functioning, and a mastery of its forces, but this knowledge and its mastery constitute what might be called the political technology of the body.³²

The Metaphor of the Pregnant Body

The many problems facing the Zimbabwe postcolony are incomprehensible to the majority of the citizens who are constantly bombarded by the jargon and the propaganda of ‘illegal sanctions,’ ‘national sovereignty,’ ‘democracy,’ ‘hyper inflation,’ ‘government of national unity,’ ‘power-sharing deal,’ and other terms sometimes deliberately used to distort facts and defend the status quo. Under such circumstances, it is common to depict the people of the nation as carrying a heavy load whose contents they do not know and destination they are not even sure. The problems within the postcolonial nation have no easy solutions and no end in sight. The metaphor of pregnancy can best capture the state of the nation. Citizens in postcolonial Zimbabwe are like Mūturi in Ngũgĩ wa Thiongo’s *Devil on the Cross* who observed that “This country, our country, is pregnant. What it will give to, only God knows.”³³ Citizens have resigned about casting their thoughts about the future, and what remains is a bleak shadow of doubt about how their heavy load is going to be offloaded. They are fully aware that there is need for solutions; they acknowledge that the postcolonial state is fraught with ambiguities and burdened with suffering, but they do not know who can decipher the cryptic colouration on the walls of the postcolonial nation. Like Mūturi, the citizens acknowledge that their “country should have given birth to its offspring long ago” and that “what it lacks now is a midwife” but they cannot also answer the question: “who is responsible for the pregnancy?”³⁴ The metaphor of a pregnant woman augments the corporeal portraiture of the crisis of the nation as citizens have more questions than answers. The metaphor of pregnancy is rich with meaning especially when it is juxtaposed with the issues of the foetus’ indeterminate parentage, the failure to locate the midwife and the pregnancy’s inability to come to full term. The metaphor evokes the anxiety that grips the citizens as bearers of the burdens within the nation, and heightens the showdown between contending political parties as they claim to be the appropriate agents for the task of rebuilding the shattered economy.

³¹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Penguin Books, 1977), 25.

³² Foucault, 26.

³³ Ngũgĩ wa Thiongo, *Devil on the Cross* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1982), 45.

³⁴ Thiongo, 45-46.

Further, the metaphor presents the nation as either bewitched or profane and in need of some forms of 'spiritual exorcism' to regain its sacredness to which citizens would show their awe and reverence. The impasse reached its climax in 2008 as the March 29 elections were indecisive as they could not conclusively decide the winner to assume presidency. The elections also put the political establishment into disarray as it failed to garner the required seats in both the senate and lower house of assembly to constitute a majority. The June 27 elections, which the opposition boycotted, and the subsequent 'victory' of ZANU PF's Robert Mugabe in a one-candidate race which the international community described as a sham could not also break the social, political and economic impasse. The mediation process pushed for by SADC and AU did not produce the expected results either. All these can aptly highlight the concern of a lack of a midwife as the political body is failing to carry the pregnancy any longer. The pregnant political body is oscillating from one point to the other without getting anyone to help it to deliver or relieve its pain of carrying the burden.

The metaphor of the pregnant body has strong implications as it fully captures the travails of the opposition in its attempts to embark on any form of democratic engagement with the ruling party. Given the various acts done by the ruling party to stifle and frustrate the opposition, democratic engagement becomes a Sisyphean endeavour. Like the Sisyphus of the Greek mythology who was condemned to eternity to repeat the act of rolling a huge rock boulder up a steep hill and the boulder only to roll back down again before he could reach the hill top, the citizens as agents of the processes of political engagement are continuously frustrated as their actions, despite that the actions come at the cost of blood and untold suffering, come to nought. Under such continued acts of frustrations, the metaphor of the pregnant woman becomes important as it not only portrays the heavy burden which the people bear but also as it depicts the threat of abortion that faces the pregnant body politic. Forced abortion is abhorrent and so is the pain that it comes with. The continuous presence of a government whose legitimacy is questionable and the violence it perpetrates and allows to continue on the people can be described as 'miscarriage of justice,' a phrase that aptly captures the very common insinuation of the links between pregnancy and the undemocratic political processes within the state institutions.

The Metaphor of the Wounded Body

Wounds are sources and signs of suffering and pain. The Zimbabwean nation has been described as wounded. The real wounds that the citizens sustained from the violence instituted by the state apparatus were a source of their determination to continue in the struggle. The wounds and gruesome suffering of people have some moral currency as they depict not only the resilience of the wounded but also the brutality of the perpetrator. The images of the tortured bodies transform the spectators and the victims alike in various ways. Morgan

Tsvangirai suffered under the hands of the police and security agents, and was publicly beaten and detained several times. He has constantly appealed to these events as acts of ruthlessness, and his supporters and admirers have taken these as acts of courage that befit a leader who is prepared to suffer with the people. Thus state violence may fail to achieve the passive citizenry as desired by the leaders. Tsvangirai said that his commitment to the formation of a new government was because of “my belief in Zimbabwe and its people runs deeper than the scars I bear from the struggle.”³⁵ Thus scars and wounds carry various connotations which are quite opposed. The scars and wounds referred to by Tsvangirai here can be both on the body and on the mind. The latter is hardly given serious attention yet is very central for both the full operations of the body and the mental health of the subject. Amongst others, Frantz Fanon’s essays ‘Concerning Violence’ and ‘Colonial War and Mental Disorders’ have shown how war and mental disorders are related, and the close relationship should inform us how we should take seriously the effects of violence on the mind.³⁶

Tsvangirai’s appeal to the scars bore from the struggle is similar to that the war veterans of the war for liberation made in their quest for compensation from the government, albeit under different circumstances. In his analysis of the wounds sustained on the soldiers of the First World War, Tom Slevin’s argues that although the wounds of the body are treated as the mark of the ‘other’, nevertheless still belongs to the reconfigured flesh of the subject, and yet “the wound demonstrates that human corporeality is not a barrier nor boundary, but a site, a territory that is in constant interaction with the environment.”³⁷³⁴ The wound on the human body invokes meaning and unites those who are suffering, and the unity is also important for post-war reconstruction. The wounds define the identity of the bearers as much as they define the identities of their perpetrators. Some discussions of the post-war wounds have shown how wounds can bind if they are positively mobilised to end conflict and begin the process of national healing.³⁸

The metaphor of the wounded body has also been reinforced by the imagery of bleeding. The country’s poor economic performance and the corruption in the higher offices have been described as haemorrhage. This portraiture has been used to show the immediacy of permanent solutions. The importance of blood

³⁵ Morgan Tsvangirai, “Speech at the ceremony of signing the Global Peace Agreement,” Tuesday 16 September 2008, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200809151516.html> (accessed 27 March 2009).

³⁶ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1968).

³⁷ Tom Slevin, “The Wound and the First World War: ‘Cartesian’ Surgeries to Embodied Being in Psychoanalysis, Electrification and Skin Grafting,” *Body and Society* 14 no. 2 (June 2008): 51, 39-61.

³⁴ Slevin, 51.

³⁸ Keith Beattie, *The Scar that Binds: American Culture and the Vietnam War* (New York: New York University Press, 2000).

to the body system and the dangers associated with continued and uncontrolled bleeding were factors which the opposition cited for increased calls for diplomatic pressure from the regional bodies and the international community on the ZANU PF regime.

The wounds of the opposition activists and their denial of access to medical treatment served to further alienate the victims from the government which had only shown that it cared less about the citizens. Thus the suffering of the victims formed some centripetal force around the displaced opposition party leaders with which victims identified and shared in their suffering. Homelessness, poverty, hunger, broken limbs, scars and bruises became traces of a new victimhood. The wounds ran deeper than the skin to the mind and the heart, and became internalised. New communities were formed in which identification was both physical and virtual, and the global technologies deposited large amounts of both still and moving pictures smuggled out of the country to show to the world. The wound has a double effect on the victim. It brings pain and suffering, and for the perpetrator, it is the pain and suffering that brings the sense of punishment so that the victims learn not to do or perform the prohibited acts. The flip side to it is that the wound inflicted on the surface of the body leaves marks and the “marks are ‘badges of honour’ in the confrontation with the enemy.”³⁶ The wounds, therefore, have an enduring effect and they resist and elude what the perpetrator seeks to achieve. The wounds become a rallying point for unity amongst the victims and their resolve to continue united in the struggle.

Conclusion

Zimbabwe's decade-long postcolonial crisis has revealed a lot of cleavages not only to the body politic but also to the regional and continental formations responsible with governance. The effects on the body politic have been far-reaching. The ubiquity of body metaphors to depict the crisis provides a convenient way of characterising the crisis. An analysis of the metaphors of the body provides some new ways of understanding the crisis. The postcolonial crisis arises from the attempts by the state to discipline and punish the citizenry, and also the concomitant resistance by the citizenry to conform to the disciplinary processes. The images of the wounded body, the body in pain, the starved body and dead bodies carry various connotations for political practice. The connotations range from awe of the ruling elite who sanction violence, to contempt for the perpetrators of violence whose acts show their failure to show concern for human suffering and also to reverence for the suffering, who bear the brunt of sovereign power and resist the intentions of the sovereign. Thus the deplorable state of the citizens' bodies who suffer violence depict the political practices and mimic the deplorable state of the body politic in ways that seek rearticulating the maladies within the nation. The exercise of political power is done on the bodies, and it entails self-description by those who act on other

³⁶ Slevin, 53.

people's bodies by directly causing pain. Thus the body remains central for the construction of subjectivities.

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Caught in the Crossfire: Writing Conflict in Two African Novels

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Abstract

The link between history and literature is particularly clearly seen in the last fifty years of writing out of Africa especially in those narratives which focus on the damaging fall-out from wars of liberation and the dismantling of Empire. In this context, the history of Africa is a history of violence and African literature is writing that attempts to reflect (and reflect on) the conflicts embedded in Africa's disengagement from Europe and its legacy of violence. This paper looks at two different kinds of conflict, and the very different construction of violence, in two novels published almost half a century apart, and the ways in which they address the problem of writing an inclusive national narrative: Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's novel, *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), set in a village in Kenya in the days leading up to Independence in 1963, and looking back on the period of the Emergency, is one of the first fictional representations of the impact of a war of liberation on an indigenous population. Yvonne Vera's *The Stone Virgins* (2002) set in the five years that followed the declaration of Independence in Zimbabwe in 1980, is a powerful contemporary rendering of the continuing impact of such wars. Both texts redefine commonly experienced conflict through the lives of ordinary people, focussing on local figures caught in the crossfire of globally driven forces.

Introduction

Violent acts produce violent stories and writing out of Africa has always had the courage to look those historical moments in the eye. Increasingly in Africa since the 1950s both conflict and writing have taken place under the global spotlight. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Yvonne Vera have taken as subject matter the collateral damage experienced by those caught in the crossfire of liberation wars fought, as they tend to be, on home ground. Vera's novel, *The Stone Virgins* (2002), is a chilling exposé of the aftermath of such a war in Zimbabwe, particularly the unleashing of a hidden wave of violence on a population already devastated by conflict and made vulnerable by continuing political instability. Ngũgĩ's novel, *A Grain of Wheat* (1967; rev. ed. 1986), published just four years after Independence in Kenya, focuses on the period of the Emergency, the colony's violent response to the equally violent threat of Mau Mau, and its impact on those who lived through it. The official versions of both conflicts strategically neglected to detail acts of violence perpetrated against civilians. Both novels launched important alternative readings of these conflicts, directing global attention to local issues reported differently at home and abroad. The retelling of public events, mediated through the prism of private lives, challenges the foundations on which Kenyan and Zimbabwean new-nation narratives have been and continue to be constructed.

Ngũgĩ's depiction of the Emergency in Kenya in *A Grain of Wheat*, particularly in the first edition, suggests that his interpretation of events was determined as much by the global moment as by local circumstance. The novel simultaneously illustrates the influence of colonial and emerging nationalist ideologies (in the one text) powerfully reflecting the divided loyalties of those witnessing at first hand the transfer of power from colonial regime to embryonic nation. Ngũgĩ himself has commented, in hindsight, that his colonial education had necessarily compromised his own position in relation to the events of the time,¹ and indeed there is a sense of ambivalence reflected in the first edition that is not entirely eradicated by the changes that produced the revised version: Obumselu, writing in the mid-seventies sees the first edition as "a radically divided work",² while Maughan-Brown, writing in the early eighties, before the revised edition came out, labels the novel "a crisis text".³ Ngũgĩ's reading of Fanon on the necessity of violence in wars of liberation no doubt had some influence on his representation of the period,⁴ as did his awareness of changing attitudes to the assertion of African sovereignty both in Kenya and abroad. Later, the revised edition of 1986 removed some of the ambivalence attached to the original portrayal of Mau Mau.⁵ By excising some of the cruder acts of violence (for example, the rape of the plant pathologist, Dr Lynd) and reworking existing descriptions of violence, the earlier image of Mau Mau as an unsanctioned guerrilla force engaged in indiscriminately

¹ Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, "J.M. - A Writer's Tribute," *Writers in Politics: Essays* (London: Heinemann, 1981), 82.

² Ben Obumselu, "A *Grain of Wheat*: Ngũgĩ's Debt to Conrad," *The Benin Review* 1 (1975): 85.

³ David Maughan-Brown, *Land, Freedom and Fiction: History and Ideology in Kenya* (London: Zed Books, 1985), 247. See also Maughan-Brown's discussion of Ngũgĩ's changing attitude to violence and his 'ambivalent attitude' to Mau Mau in "'Mau Mau' and Violence in Ngũgĩ's Novels," *English in Africa* 8 no. 2 (1981): 1-22.

⁴ Ngũgĩ read Fanon, Marx, Engels and Lenin while at Leeds University in the mid-1960s. He found Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* and Lenin's *Imperialism: The Highest Stages of Capitalism* 'eye-opener[s]'. See Carol Sicherman, *Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o: The Making of a Rebel: A Source Book in Kenyan Literature and Resistance*, Documentary Research in African Literatures, 1. (London: Hans Zell, 1990), 6, 23). See also Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms* (London: James Currey; Nairobi: EAEP; Portsmouth N.H.: Heinemann, 1993), 2-3.

⁵ Jacqueline Bardolph's critique of an earlier MS version of *A Grain of Wheat* supports this idea of Ngũgĩ's evolving view of Mau Mau and violence during the Emergency. Bardolph's analysis of these changes tracks a softening of Ngũgĩ's portrayal of the Emergency when she notes that the unpublished manuscript 'has an even more nightmarish quality than the final version.... Physical repulsion is connected with humiliation, and the humiliation is always of a sexual nature. The main elements which did not find their way into the published book have to do with rape fantasies of a twisted nature.... On the whole, the world in the early manuscript is more irrational, more anguished. All the characters, colonized or colonizers, are locked in nightmares and guilt, distrustful of one another...and ultimately alone with their shameful past and oppressive fantasies'. See Jacqueline Bardolph, "Moving Away from the Mission: Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's Versions of *A Grain of Wheat*", in Gerhard Stilz, ed., *Missions of Interdependence: A Literary Directory* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2002), 134-5).

terrorising Kenyan citizens is reconstructed as one of a national liberation army energised into unity through the iteration of traditional rituals (in the oath-taking ceremonies) and a reconstituted belief in the continuity of African resistance to foreign intervention (through the invocation of past heroes). ‘The Party’ becomes ‘the Movement’, allied more clearly with Kimathi’s Land and Freedom Army, and is seen as central to African resistance because it “had always been there, a rallying centre for action...gathering greater and greater strength, till on the eve of Uhuru, its influence stretched from one horizon touching the sea to the other resting on the great Lake.”⁶

In one sense, Ngũgĩ was himself caught in the public crossfire generated by perceptions of Mau Mau at the time. Until 2002, when Mau Mau was decriminalised under President Kibaki, the role of Mau Mau in Kenya’s transformation from colony to nation had remained controversial. In a public statement in 1962 Kenyatta spoke out strongly against Mau Mau: “We are determined to have independence in peace, and we shall not allow hooligans to rule Kenya. We must have no hatred towards one another. Mau Mau was a disease which ha[s] been eradicated, and must never be remembered again.”⁷ At Independence there was no national recognition of Mau Mau fighters as resistance or liberation heroes who had helped to usher in the new Kenya. In the speeches that followed Independence Kenyatta publicly declared closure on the debate, consistently employing the rhetoric of unity – Harambee/Pull Together – to discourage ethnic divisions in the new nation.⁸ Information surrounding the events of the fifties, and with it Gikuyu prominence in Kenyan resistance, was to be culled from the records, a directive made easier by the departing Colonial Government’s systematic destruction of official documents and papers at Independence.⁹ In a special Address to the Nation, broadcast in Kenya on Oct 20, 1964 (Kenyatta Day), Kenyatta, as Prime Minister, urged the people to look forwards, not backwards:

Let this be the day on which all of us commit ourselves to erase from our minds all the hatreds and difficulties of those years which now belong to history. Let us agree that we shall never refer to the past. Let us instead unite, in all our utterances and activities, in concern for the reconstruction of our country and the vitality of Kenya’s future.¹⁰

⁶ Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, *A Grain of Wheat* (London: Heinemann, rev. ed. 1986), 10.

⁷ Jomo Kenyatta, *Suffering Without Bitterness: The Founding of the Kenya Nation* (Nairobi: East African Publishing, 1968), 189.

⁸ Kenyatta consistently addressed unity in his public speeches. See Jomo Kenyatta, *Harambee! The Prime Minister of Kenya’s Speeches 1963-1964* (London and Nairobi: Oxford, 1964). Kenyatta also maintained an inclusive view of the struggle for freedom, in the sense that all were deemed to have fought for Uhuru.

⁹ Caroline Elkins, *Britain’s Gulag: The Brutal End of Empire* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005), x-xi.

¹⁰ Kenyatta, 1964, 2.

Here, in the process of celebrating new-nation birthing, with the controversy and confusion surrounding the role of indigenous resistance fighters still unresolved, Kenyatta is seen crafting an appropriate national narrative in which the past is to be memorialised in a way that serves the perceived national interest and placates international concerns. One is reminded of Ali Mazrui's comment in *On Heroes and Uhuru-Worship*: "one essential factor in the making of a nation is to get one's history wrong", and to be "selective about what did happen."¹¹ Controversy over Kenyan historiography persisted. Mau Mau continued to be sanitised or ignored in accounts of the Emergency, even after the release of Colonial Office and Foreign Office papers relating to the early 1950s gave public access to confidential documents for the first time. Carol Sicherman notes that in 1986 "President Moi contributed to the... controversy by declaring that the history of Mau Mau should not be written."¹²

In an interview published in 1981 Ngũgĩ clearly articulates his, by then, unequivocal departure from the official view of Mau Mau when he describes it as "the first modern anti-colonial guerrilla movement in Africa."¹³ The first edition of *A Grain of Wheat* leans towards this reading of events: Ngũgĩ invokes the Gikuyu myth of origin to validate the African struggle to regain lost ancestral lands, claims resistance had always been part of the African response to European intrusion into Kenya and reinforces the idea of African cultural continuity. To rewrite history, in this sense, is to alter the angle of vision, to write from the point of view of the people, and to revise common perceptions of grass roots movements and heroes. To soft-pedal on the atrocities in the process, is to respond to, and reflect, the shifting ideologies of the time and, perhaps also, to submit to the pressure to produce a narrative that could be heard by all sectors, including the European, at home and abroad. In this sense, the 1967 edition of *A Grain of Wheat* is a remarkable elaboration of the conflicting and ambiguous views current at the time, and which have continued to characterise historical, political and literary accounts of the period ever since. At the same time it captures the divisiveness generated by the Emergency and not resolved at Independence. The 1986 edition works further towards legitimising Mau Mau's role as that of a liberation army which sought African autonomy and land restitution in Kenya, challenging views of the Emergency expressed by the colony's settlers and promoted by the colonial administration, and feeding contrary and conflicting views being developed among the British people at home once news of what was actually happening in Kenya began to leak outside the colony's borders.

¹¹ Ali Mazrui, *On Heroes and Uhuru-Worship*, (London: Longman, 1967), 21.

¹² Carol Sicherman, "Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and the Writing of Kenyan History," *Research in African Literatures* 20 no. 3 (1989): 363.

¹³ Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, "Interview with Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o: Part 2." By Jürgen Martini et al. *Kunapipi* 3 no. 2 (1981): 139.

Launched into an arena in which there was already an awareness of atrocities committed on both sides, and reading national events through private lives, *A Grain of Wheat* gestures strongly towards a multiplicity of perspectives. J.M. Kariuki's autobiography, *Mau Mau Detainee*, had appeared in 1963 detailing breaches of human rights in British detention camps in Kenya during the fifties. Ngũgĩ was aware of its impact: "It was immediately the centre of a critical rage and storm."¹⁴ Writing with the benefit of hindsight in 1975, Ngũgĩ ventured the opinion that the explosive reaction to *Mau Mau Detainee* occurred because an African, "a Kenyan native, had dared to write openly and proudly about Mau Mau as a national liberation movement."¹⁵ Important revisionist texts were already altering the literary landscape into which Ngũgĩ wrote. Among these, Tom Mboya's *Freedom and After* (1963), Oginga Odinga's *Not Yet Uhuru* (1967), Kenyatta's *Suffering Without Bitterness: The Founding of the Kenya Nation* (1968) and *Facing Mount Kenya: The Tribal Life of the Gikuyu* (1974) and Bildad Kaggia's *Roots of Freedom: 1921-1963: The Autobiography of Bildad Kaggia* (1975) were key works published in the sixties and early seventies that together challenged previously published accounts of Mau Mau as, to quote a widely-held opinion of the time, an "emotional, irrational, and atavistic response to problems of rapid social change" by members of a "secret, tribal cult" aiming at Gikuyu "domination."¹⁶

A rewriting of the role of Mau Mau as a national liberation force, however, was slow to gain ground, and not only because it challenged official narratives of the period. Scholarly accounts from the early seventies on more closely reflected the African campaign as one fraught with internal disunity rather than being a focused mass movement.¹⁷ *A Grain of Wheat*, which imaginatively reflects this disunity, was not Ngũgĩ's first literary engagement with the Emergency. His first published novel, *Weep Not, Child* (1964), had also broached the subject of the disruptive impact of the Emergency on Kenyan village life in the fifties. This earlier novel refers to the strategic responses adopted by the colonial administration to the threat of Mau Mau (the imprisonment and torture of Africans suspected of terrorism) and the generational conflict (fathers refusing to take oaths administered by sons, and

¹⁴ Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1981, 82.

¹⁵ Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1981, 82.

¹⁶ Carl G. Rosberg Jr and John Nottingham, *The Myth of 'Mau Mau': Nationalism in Kenya* (New York: Praeger, 1966), 330. Rosberg and Nottingham examine and argue against this and other colonial interpretations of Mau Mau.

¹⁷ See, for example, Robert Buijtenhuijs, *Mau Mau Twenty Years After: The Myth and the Survivors* (The Hague: Mouton, 1973); Bruce J. Berman, "Bureaucracy and Incumbent Violence: Colonial Administration and the Origins of the 'Mau Mau' Emergency," *British Journal of Political Science* 6 (1976): 143-75; Anthony Clayton and Donald C. Savage, *Government and Labour in Kenya 1895-1963* (London: Frank Cass, 1974); Frank Furedi, "The Social Composition of the Mau Mau Movement in the White Highlands," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 1 no. 4 (1974): 486-505; Sharon B. Stichter, "Workers, Trade Unions, and the Mau Mau Rebellion," *Canadian Journal of African Affairs* 9 no. 2 (1975): 259-75.

sons engaging in retaliative violence against colonial attempts to repress Mau Mau) that was part of the wider fracturing of village life. In *A Grain of Wheat* Ngũgĩ highlights this division by depicting a community at odds with itself through a narrative constructed as a series of confessions of acts of disloyalty, treachery and betrayal. By positioning each character at a distance from the community, Ngũgĩ reinforces the irony that Mau Mau, rather than uniting indigenous Africans in a race alliance against Europeans, actually increased African disunity.

Vera's novel, *The Stone Virgins*, similarly challenges the official version of a national event. Hers is a dissident voice that, for the first time in a work of Zimbabwean fiction, opens up dialogue on a specific instance of hidden history, the suppressed narrative of the terror and violence that attended the years following Zimbabwean Independence in 1980, what the historian Richard Werbner refers to as "an ethnically targeted campaign of state terror, imposed by a special force of the Zimbabwean Army, the Fifth Brigade, against Matabeleland."¹⁸ If the defining event in Kenya, in terms of global scrutiny, was the colonial government's responsibility for the Hola Massacre,¹⁹ one of the defining events in Zimbabwe was the massacre of the Ndebele, for it exposed to the world the Mugabe government's investment in allowing the continuation of civil conflict in the new nation. Government attempts to suppress widespread knowledge of the massacre were, for the most part, unsuccessful.²⁰ Werbner notes that, "[a]lthough the full horror [of the massacre] was not exposed publicly and without ambiguity before the whole country until the dredging of abandoned mines for water in the drought of

¹⁸ Richard Werbner, "Smoke from the Barrel of a Gun: Postwars of the Dead, Memory and Reinscription in Zimbabwe" in Werbner, ed., *Memory and the Postcolony: African Anthropology and the Critique of Power* (London: Zed Books, 1998), 79.

¹⁹ See Colonial Office, *Documents Relating to the Deaths of Eleven Mau Mau Detainees at Hola Camp in Kenya*. Cmd. 778. British Parliamentary Papers 1959-60, volume 25 (London: HMSO, June 1959); Colonial Office, *Record of Proceedings and Evidence into the Deaths of Eleven Mau Mau Detainees at Hola Camp in Kenya*. Cmd. 795. British Parliamentary Papers 1959-60, volume 25 (London: HMSO, July 1959); Colonial Office, *Further Documents Relating to the Deaths of Eleven Mau Mau Detainees at Hola Camp in Kenya*. Cmd. 816. British Parliamentary Papers 1959-60, volume 25 (London: HMSO, July 1960). See also Sicherman's documentation of the Hola massacre, Carol Sicherman, *Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o: The Making of a Rebel: A Source Book in Kenyan Literature and Resistance*. Documentary Research in African Literatures, 1. (London: Hans Zell, 1990), 398-410.

²⁰ This is not to suggest that in the case of either Kenya or Zimbabwe such public exposure has led to those responsible being brought to justice. Although the Hola Massacre was debated in the British House of Commons, no independent enquiry was commissioned and those involved were not brought to trial. Elkins suggests that the public airing of this and other shocking irregularities, hastened the loss of the colony: 'The British had won a large, costly, and bloody battle against Mau Mau, only to lose the war for Kenya'. See Caroline Elkins, *Britain's Gulag: The Brutal End of Empire in Kenya* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005), 351. In the case of Zimbabwe, the government's attitude towards the ruthless repression of the Ndebele by the Fifth Brigade has encouraged a culture of 'forgetting' that ensures those responsible escape punishment.

1992, it was widely known throughout Matabeleland that the Fifth Brigade had massacred its victims and stuffed the mines with their bodies.”²¹ The Mugabe government was silent on the discovery of mass graves, arguing that “old wounds should not be reopened.”²² But these incidents and government attempts to suppress their reporting were not isolated. The 1997 Catholic Commission’s *Report on the 1980s Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands: 1980-1988* provides evidence of the systematic use of state violence and the devastation and terror visited on the rural population during this period. Initially suppressed in Zimbabwe, the *Report* became available on the web early in 1997.²³ Global attention was guaranteed. Local newspapers entered the fray, likening Matabeleland to “the killing fields of Cambodia.”²⁴

Werbner’s *Tears of the Dead: The Social Biography of an African Family* (1991) and *Memory and Postcolony: African Anthropology and the Critique of Power* (1998), and Terence Ranger’s *Voices from the Rocks: Culture and History in the Matopos Hills of Zimbabwe* (1999), together with the Catholic Commission’s *Report*, clearly established the extent of state-sanctioned terror and its role in national politics. Such accounts focus on the massacre of the Ndebele as an event that was somehow emblematic of the savagery and duplicity of the state, made worse because it came after an already destructive war of liberation in the seventies that had ushered in the promises of new nationhood. Shimmer Chinodya’s *Harvest of Thorns* (1989) and Chenjerai Hove’s *Bones* (1991), among other fictional works, have represented the movement from colony to nation in Zimbabwe as devastatingly costly in terms of human lives and livelihoods. Vera’s work concurs with their view, and in *The Stone Virgins* she describes the landscape of Zimbabwe as one that is literally bursting with its own turbulence: “The country is landlocked, bursting. The war is in their midst.”²⁵ As in the case of Kenya, however, the official narrative continued to gloss over the details, relegating them to a forgettable past.²⁶ Like Ngũgĩ’s, Vera’s text represents important archival work, exposing

²¹ Werbner, 1998, 94.

²² Jocelyn Alexander, JoAnn McGregor and Terence Ranger, *Violence and Memory: One Hundred Years in the ‘Dark Forests’ of Matabeleland* (Harare: Weaver Press, 2000), 257.

²³ Werbner, 1998, 95-6.

²⁴ Werbner, 1998, 96. Werbner cites a metropolitan paper’s editorial to demonstrate local understanding of the issue: ‘we were told that allegations of brutality from Christian groups, hospital doctors, legal investigators and others were all “lies” (Mugabe) or “malicious stories spread by the foreign press” (Sekeramayi). Now we know who was lying. The atrocities committed in Matabeleland and the Midlands in 1982/87 were part of a well-orchestrated campaign of terror directed by the state to impose its authority on what was perceived to be a politically recalcitrant region’. See Editorial, *Financial Gazette* 9 May 1997, cited in Werbner, 1998, 95-6.

²⁵ Yvonne Vera, *The Stone Virgins* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), 9.

²⁶ For an in-depth discussion of *The Stone Virgins* in the context of the past, memory, mourning and the construction of national narratives, see Dorothy Driver and Meg Samuelson, “History’s Intimate Invasions: Yvonne Vera’s *The Stone Virgins*,” in Bettina

and memorialising what had previously been hidden, but also opening the way to a re-visioning of the national narrative. As Driver and Samuelson put it in an incisive article on the novel, “[i]t was only with the 2002 publication of *The Stone Virgins* that Zimbabwean fiction has been able, twenty years after the event, to turn full focus on the Matabele massacre of the 1980s and to unearth memories of horrors that, though swept under the carpet, continue to inform present-day politics, albeit silently or without acknowledgement.”²⁷

What is different about Vera’s *The Stone Virgins* and Ngũgĩ’s *A Grain of Wheat* is the imaginative treatment of ordinary, private lives subsumed into the new-nation rhetoric of post-Independence Africa. By focussing on individual experience Vera and Ngũgĩ give voice to the stories that circulate beneath national narratives, stories that then undermine those public narratives in an overtly public way. *A Grain of Wheat*, set in the five days leading up to Kenyan Independence in December 1963, looks back over the period of the Emergency primarily, but not exclusively, through the perspectives of five central characters whose lives have been damaged by the Emergency: Mugo, the disaffiliated anti-hero who betrays a local Mau Mau activist; Kihika, the freedom-fighter whose death gives the Movement a martyr; Karanja, the opportunist Home Guard who supports colonial rule and in so doing betrays his own people; Gikonyo, the detainee who betrays the Mau Mau oath to return home to his wife; and Mumbi, the villager who endures the privations of home detention and betrays her husband. Their collective stories detail the experiences of those caught up, willingly or unwillingly, in the events of the time. Preparations for the Independence Day celebrations trigger individual memories of the traumatic events of the fifties, exposing not so much the brutality of those events but more the acts of betrayal made possible in the context of war. Vera’s novel focuses on the years between 1980 and 1985, after the war of liberation is over, in a period marked, at least officially, by buoyant optimism, but also dogged by dissident dissatisfaction and government reprisals. At the centre of the narrative are two particularly brutal events: a random attack against two sisters, Thenjiwe and Nonceba, carried out by the displaced and disaffected Sibaso, possibly a freedom fighter from the 1970s war of liberation - Vera carefully refrains from positioning him as dissident or Fifth Brigade; and the burning of a local rural store, along with the slaughter of its customers and the torture and burning of the store owner by members of the Fifth Brigade ostensibly engaged in clearing the area of Ndebele dissidents. Through these specific events, and others that surface during the narrative, Vera draws attention to the widespread violence that civilians were (and continue to be) subject to in post-independence Zimbabwe. Terence Ranger notes that *The Stone Virgins* “is not a book in which narratives are compressed into a private tragedy. It is a book about people caught up and destroyed by a

Weiss, ed., *The End of Unheard Narratives: Contemporary Perspectives on Southern African Literatures* (Heidelberg, Germany: Kalliope Paperbacks, 2004): 175-208.

²⁷ Dorothy Driver and Meg Samuelson, 175.

public disaster.”²⁸ Vera, herself, has commented on the period as one in which “there was no escape from the encounter with brutality. If there were witnesses, then we heard what had occurred, but otherwise it just happened.”²⁹

Of the two writers, Vera positions the reader closer to the violence at the heart of the conflict under scrutiny. The murder of Thenjiwe and the rape and mutilation of Nonceba are narrated in the present tense in a mix of first and third persons so that we witness the violent acts as if we are there watching, hear Nonceba’s thoughts as if they were spoken aloud:

His head is behind Thenjiwe, where Thenjiwe was before, floating in her body; he is in her body. He is floating like a flash of lightning....How did a man slice off a woman’s head while a bucket was carried above it? How did a man slice a woman’s throat and survive?³⁰

The horror of the scene is heightened by the intimacy Vera constructs between reader and event, mirroring, as it seems to do, the necessary intimacy between murderer and murdered, raped and rapist:

I am waiting. I am alive, now, a companion to his every thought. I am breathing. My temples, beating. She closes her eyes and her body listens as his movements pursue each of her thoughts. She breathes. Harm. He enters her body like a vacuum. She can do nothing to save herself. He clutches her from the waist, his entire hand resting boldly over her stomach. He presses down. He pulls her to him. She hesitates. He forces her down. She yields. She is leaning backward into his body. He holds her body like a bent stem. He draws her waist into the curve of his arm. She is molded into the shape of his waiting arm – a tendril on a hard rock.

He is at the pit of her being.... He is a predator, with all the fine instincts of annihilation. She, the dead, with all the instincts of the vanquished.³¹

²⁸ Terence Ranger, “History has its Ceiling. The Pressures of the Past in *The Stone Virgins*”, in Robert Muponde and Mandi Taruvinga, eds., *Sign and Taboo: Perspectives on the Poetic Fiction of Yvonne Vera* (Harare: Weaver; Oxford: James Currey, 2002), 206.

²⁹ Vera in Jane Bryce, “Interview with Yvonne Vera, 1 August 2000, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe: ‘Survival is in the Mouth’”, in Robert Muponde and Mandi Taruvinga, eds., *Sign and Taboo: Perspectives on the Poetic Fiction of Yvonne Vera* (Harare: Weaver; Oxford: James Currey, 2002), 225.

³⁰ Vera, 2002, 73.

³¹ Vera, 2002, 68-9.

We are mesmerised by the choreography of the scene,³² shocked by the implications we read into the pliant bodies of what we come to understand are two women (sisters), and sickened when, with the same economy of language, Vera has Sibaso, in “a final cruelty”, slice off the lips of the sister who survives. Vera’s portrayal of Sibaso is equally intimate. Traumatized by war, he has failed to be rehabilitated into post-independence civilian life: adrift in a population still haunted by the violence of the recent past, he can only remember death and how to inflict it, and in the absence of an enemy ‘he invents another.’³³ As “one who remembers harm”,³⁴ Sibaso drags the past into the present to be imprisoned by it, and, like the woman forced to kill her husband with an axe to save her sons, serves to remind us of the totally brutalising effect of war.

The immediacy of Vera’s descriptions here resonates strongly with recorded eyewitness accounts of atrocities committed in Matabeleland. Similar records of atrocities in Kenya occur in autobiographies, salvaged colonial documents, letters by detainees to the Queen and British MPs, and in more recent historical research, most notably Caroline Elkins’ *Britain’s Gulag: The Brutal End of Empire in Kenya* (2005). Such accounts serve to detail and confirm the savagery of war particularly with regard to the brutalisation of all sections of the population.³⁵ It has been argued elsewhere that settler violence against

³² Vera uses this term when commenting on the way in which she constructed the scene so as to gain maximum impact on the reader: ‘So I have to choreograph it. The death becomes like a dance, the way the man kills this woman is almost sexual, its skill and passion and intimacy, while maintaining the violence and blackness of the scene, which was true of the experience in Matabeleland. That scene had to capture all the scenes of horror which visited this region...’. See Vera in Bryce, “Interview with Yvonne Vera, 1 August 2000, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe: ‘Survival is in the Mouth’”, in Robert Muponde and Mandi Taruvinga, eds, *Sign and Taboo: Perspectives on the Poetic Fiction of Yvonne Vera* (Harare: Weaver; Oxford: James Currey, 2002), 224-25.

³³ Vera, 2002, 83.

³⁴ Vera, 2002, 97.

³⁵ A petition from a group of Gikuyu women to Queen Elizabeth II, for example, draws attention to the common experience of rape among women in the reserves: ‘The police, while Patrolling the Native Reserves, constantly commit rape on us, even though some of us are pregnant or have just given birth. Communal slave-labour has been introduced by the Kenya Government and women are mercilessly collected from their homes to go to work in police camps. There the police commit untold atrocities, such as raping and beating for no reason’. See Richard Pankhurst, *Kenya: The History of Two Nations* (London: Independent Publishing, 1955), cited in Carol M. Sicherman, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o: *The Making of a Rebel: A Source Book in Kenyan Literature and Resistance*. Documentary Research in African Literatures, 1. (London: Hans Zell, 1990), 362. The fear felt by ordinary men and women during the Emergency is reflected in the words of an informant from Mutira who comments on the precarious position of civilians caught between opposing forces: ‘Those times were bad. People were living in between fear of Mau Mau and fear of the Home Guards. Both were our enemies. The Home Guards supported the British and the Mau Mau were on the side of the Agikuyu. If you made a mistake with the Home Guards, you would die. If you made a mistake with the Mau Mau you would die too’. See Jean Davison with the Women of Mutira,

Africans was an indicator of prevailing colonial attitudes with some settlers believing there was an “open season” on “Kikuyu, Embu and Meru tribesmen. Forced confessions, beatings, robbery of stock, food and clothing, brutalities of various sorts and outright killings were frequent enough occurrences to arouse a fear in the hearts of most Kikuyu that the intent of the Government was to eliminate the whole tribe.”³⁶ Rawcliffe notes that because of a “tacit conspiracy involving the Kenya Government, the police and the Press” to suppress “anything which the outside world would term acts of brutality or callous behaviour toward the Kikuyu”, those outside Kenya had no knowledge that the British were fighting Mau Mau “terror...by even greater terror.”³⁷ Elkins claims that there were perhaps up to “1.5 million people, or nearly the entire Kikuyu population”³⁸ of Kenya who felt the impact of the conflict during the Emergency, including those in detention camps as well as the women, children and elderly in approximately “eight hundred enclosed villages” that “were detention camps in all but name.”³⁹

In the context of rumoured and substantiated brutality in Kenya, what further differentiates Ngũgĩ’s approach from Vera’s is that his representation of the period focuses less on the violence meted out during the Emergency and more on the general malaise felt at Independence. The past is recollected, rather than represented as experienced in the moment of the narrative. Through the retrieval of memories each character retells the moments of betrayal around which the narrative circulates – betrayals of self, each other, the cause, and the community. There is little detail in Ngũgĩ’s novel of the fighting that occurred during the Emergency, or the lived experience of those in the forests, the unsanitary reserves, or the enclosed villages. Although the more brutal aspects of the Emergency are referred to – starvation, savage beatings, forced labour, rape, torture, including emasculation, and execution without trial – we do not actually witness them. Rather, Ngũgĩ positions the reader as eavesdropper on remembered violence, on private and public confessions of betrayal. The conflicted Mugo, for example, relates to Mumbi the following memory of detention:

I saw men crawl on the ground, you know, like cripples because their hands and feet were chained with iron.... Once bottlenecks were hammered into people’s backsides, and the men whimpered like caged animals. That last was at Rira.... I saw a man whose manhood was broken with pincers. He came out of the screening office and fell down

Voices from Mutira: Lives of the Rural Gikuyu Women (Boulder, Colorado and London: Lynne Rienner, 1989), 52. For further examples see Davison, 102-3; 159-61.

³⁶ Donald L. Barnett, *Mau Mau: The Structural Integration and Disintegration of Aberdare Guerilla Forces* (Unpublished dissertation, UCLA), cited in David Mauhan-Brown, “‘Mau Mau’ and Violence in Ngũgĩ’s Novels,” *English in Africa* 8 no. 2 (1981): 4

³⁷ D.H. Rawcliffe, *The Struggle for Kenya* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1954), 68.

³⁸ Caroline Elkins, *Britain’s Gulag: The Brutal End of Empire in Kenya* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005), xii.

³⁹ Elkins, xii.

and he cried: to know I will never touch my wife again, Oh God, can I ever look at her in the eyes after this? For me I only looked into an abyss and deep inside I only saw a darkness I could not penetrate.⁴⁰

Similarly, Mugo's courage in saving the pregnant woman in the trench from a beating is retold as part of the myth of heroism that surrounds him. Kihika's torture and execution are summarily dealt with: what is important is their capacity to provide a martyr for the cause. Mumbi is not raped by Karanja but gives herself to him, her confession bringing to light one more betrayal in the litany of betrayals that constitutes the substance of the narrative. Where an economy of silence obtains between characters in *The Stone Virgins*, in *A Grain of Wheat* characters tell and retell the past, *as* the past. The brutality of the period is thus tempered by a narrative strategy that distances the reader from the violence of the conflict itself. Post-war angst is foregrounded, while the war itself is firmly relegated to the past, made more remote by having characters reminisce about the Emergency rather than relive it: the past is quarantined in the past, the details rendered somehow obsolete in the retelling.

In this way Ngũgĩ's novel suggests that the Emergency's greatest impact was on civilians, not combatants, and that it fragmented communities who were left with little to believe in at Independence: "We slaughtered the rams – and prayed for our village. But it was like warm water in the mouth of a thirsty man. It was not what I had waited for, these many years."⁴¹ In the Preface to the novel Ngũgĩ draws attention to the disappointment felt by many at Independence: "the situation and the problems are real – sometimes too painfully real for the peasants who fought the British yet now see all they fought for being put on one side."⁴² By re-examining the period through the eyes of a range of ordinary people, Ngũgĩ emphasises the divisive nature of the conflict, casting it as a force that broke the back of collective identity and cohesion, even as the rhetoric of Harambee was being invoked. While Ngũgĩ's fictional representation of the Emergency has come under fire from Kenyan historians who accuse him of deliberately distorting history – by manipulating historical 'facts' and incorporating material derived from myths and legends into narratives that are quasi-historical – for the purpose of supporting his own subversive agenda, *A Grain of Wheat* remains a critical early text on colonial violence and the violation of human rights that has had a significant impact on the way in which Mau Mau has come to be seen internationally and locally.

Vera's novel also addresses the question of human rights in civil conflicts and the way in which national histories are constructed. Vera's specificity with regard to dates and places (Bulawayo and Kezi) and her representation of the immanence of war being felt throughout the country contributes to the edginess

⁴⁰ Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986, 184.

⁴¹ Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986, 241.

⁴² Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986, vi.

of a narrative that shifts its focus between the national and the local. *The Stone Virgins* is a confronting text with its inclusion of a raft of violent acts terrorising rural Zimbabwe, where war can be as much part of day-to-day life as the weather: “The year is just beginning, with its mixture of strong winds, full sun, and war.”⁴³ Vera is on public record stating that she “didn’t want to write a novel about those six years at all” but felt strongly that this was a history that should be told.⁴⁴ “These scenes of intimidation which we witnessed were part of a political strategy. Why we’re revisiting the horror of this is to ask how it was possible.”⁴⁵ She has said of *The Stone Virgins* that it is her “most brave novel.”⁴⁶ In the context of the current situation in Zimbabwe, Vera’s novel publicly calls the nation to account. It disrupts the public amnesia that has facilitated the continuation of the conflict and courageously allows the under-narrative a voice. For those who continue to live the conflict there can be no erasure of memory: “We may die but we can never forget. When we sleep, we wake up remembering it. However many years we live, we can never forget.”⁴⁷

Ngũgĩ’s and Vera’s novels bear witness to the impact of war on ordinary people caught up in national conflicts not necessarily of their making. Although they write about experiences common to the dismantling of Empire, different audiences and historical periods have required different approaches. Both lift the lid on atrocities, put on show the collateral damage of war, and in Vera’s case divulge the rancid underbelly of a nation still embroiled in unresolved conflicts. Vera’s portrayal of post-Independence brutality, in particular, derails any notion of utopian nationhood. Both novelists have defied government injunctions about writing the past and while Ngũgĩ’s more guarded narrative can be seen as a product of his time, Vera’s freedom from such restraint can be seen as a product of hers. The tight government control on information and the political complexities of the moment in which Ngũgĩ’s novel came into being and into the public eye perhaps help to explain the muted construction of what was, in hindsight, a period of extreme violence on both sides. By redefining the conflict, focussing the narrative more closely on civilians caught in the crossfire between colonial authority, loyalists and indigenous resistance Ngũgĩ has constructed a somewhat diplomatic portrayal of the period. The text demonstrates a deft awareness of audience in its restrained and inclusive representation of an insider’s view of a period that shocked the outside world: in short, it was an exposé of the conflict constructed in such a way that ensured its wide circulation, shocking without alienating its readership. If Ngũgĩ’s

⁴³ Vera, 2002, 25.

⁴⁴ Vera in Bryce, 225-26.

⁴⁵ Vera in Bryce, 225.

⁴⁶ Vera in Ranka Primorac, “‘The Place of the Woman is the Place of the Imagination’: Yvonne Vera interviewed by Ranka Primorac,” *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 39 no. 3 (2004), 161.

⁴⁷ Informant, cited in Richard Werbner, *Tears of the Dead: The Social Biography of an African Family* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP for the International African Institute, 1991), 172.

novel represents a somewhat restrained challenge to Kenya's national narrative, Vera's flies in the face of Zimbabwe's silencing strategies. By unearthing the recent past and facilitating connections between colonial and postcolonial violence that have ramifications for the way we view current conflicts in Zimbabwe, Vera demands the world's attention. *The Stone Virgins* speaks to a global community and calls it to action. For us, as readers, the memory of the text, like Nonceba's memory of her mouth wound, must come to reside in "the blood of [our] bones."⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Vera, 2002, 109.

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*Things Fall Apart: Culture, Anthropology, Literature*¹

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Nigerian Chinua Achebe is undoubtedly Africa's best known and most widely studied author. His publishers estimate that his first novel, *Things Fall Apart*, has sold more than eight million copies. This official estimate obviously excludes the many pirate copies that have circulated in Africa (and probably elsewhere). *Time Magazine* lists the novel among the top 100 best English-language novels of all time.² Elaine Showalter one of the judges of the Man Booker Prize, says that *Things Fall Apart* inaugurated the modern African novel, and showed "the path for writers around the world seeking new words and forms for new realities and societies."³ Small wonder then that Achebe has been lauded as one of the "Makers of the Twentieth Century."⁴ Certainly he illuminated the path forward for African writers. Without *Things Fall Apart*, African literature, particularly West African literature, would probably not have achieved the quality and renown that it has today.

I want to consider here, in the fiftieth anniversary year of its publication, the history of the novel's reception; and I shall do so initially by reference in particular to the entangled history of two academic disciplines, literary studies on the one hand and anthropology on the other. In the 1970s, when there was still an object of study known as the 'new literatures,' or otherwise in the case of Anglophone cultures as 'Commonwealth Literature,' the discourses of literary criticism and anthropology were sometimes mutually sustaining. The original terms of critical approval, for example, of *Things Fall Apart*, often included the fact that it conveyed an accurate anthropological insight into a culture previously trivialised by British and European fictions of Africa. Anthropology, although like literature contributing substantially to the 'worlding' of Africa as 'other,' nonetheless then seemed capable of providing a counter-discourse to the colonialist perspective.

As Phyllis Taoua argues,⁵ the emergence of the experimental genre in francophone African fiction begins with the dialogue that African philosophers took up in the 1960s and 1970s in response to French theories of the dissolution

¹ This is a later version of a paper delivered at the 30th African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific (AFSAAP) conference, "Africans in Australia and outsiders in Africa," Australian National University, Canberra, 2008.

² "Time's 100 Best Novels," http://www.time.com/time/2005/100books/the_complete_list.html (accessed 10 June 2008).

³ Elaine Showalter, quoted in "Chinua Achebe wins 2007 Man Booker International Prize," <http://www.themanbookerprize.com/news/release/1059> (accessed 27 March 2009).

⁴ *1000 Makers of the Twentieth Century* (London: Random House, 1997).

⁵ Phyllis Taoua, "Performing Identity: Nations, Cultures and African Experimental Novels," *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 14 no. 2 (December, 2001): 193-219.

of the 'sovereign self,' a Western identity no longer centred or cohering in rationality; and it is no accident that this articulation occurs precisely at the time of France's loss of empire. At the same time Anglophone critics found much to admire in Achebe's fictional ethnographies of the Igbo peoples of Nigeria, his resurrecting of an African identity. Not surprisingly, in this context, anthropology's relation to Africa has historically been ambiguous. Many African theorists, desiring to dismantle the logic of empire, inevitably turned their decolonising gaze to the Western discourse that most of all had influenced perceptions of African identity, anthropology; but rather than seeking to refine or revise its primary methods or assumptions, they sought to dismantle the entire project of anthropology.

Eventually, of course, anthropology came under attack from almost all sides; and by the 1990s literary critics in the West prided themselves on performing a heuristic function across the multi-disciplines of cultural studies, using literature to reveal to anthropology the nature and origin of its own biases. Thus, in his 1995 book, *Masks of Difference*, David Richards examined anthropological discourse as it had been applied in the past to so-called 'savage' peoples as a *textual* practice that operated in literature and in art, purporting to hold a mirror to nature but inevitably betraying the biases of its own subject-position.⁶ By the end of the decade, Eleni Coundouriotis, in her 1998 study titled *Claiming History: Colonialism, Ethnography and the Novel*, was able to argue that literature provides a stronger -- indeed, a more *truthful* -- version of ethnography than anthropology.⁷ Why? Because the anthropological method and textual practice of ethnography, born of the colonial encounter and hence shaped by a peculiar myopia of power, keeps ethnographers constantly fascinated by their own discoveries, so that they are unable to read them as historical events. In other words, anthropology has made it impossible for ethnography to overcome its lack of historicity; whereas, in the imagined space of literature, Coundouriotis implies, the two sides of the colonial encounter are able to occupy the same historical time. Postcolonial Studies, according to this view, seemed to offer a substitute ethnography, even a more 'correct' ethnography.

This is a particularly interesting historical statement when one considers that *Things Fall Apart* is now perhaps almost as widely set as required reading for students in African anthropology courses as in African literature courses. At Bates College in Maine (a liberal arts college that proclaims itself "dedicated to the principle of active engagement") students read Achebe's fiction as a means of exploring the idea that "the reality we inhabit is socially or culturally

⁶ David Richards, *Masks of Difference. Cultural Representations in Literature, Anthropology and Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁷ Eleni Coundouriotis, *Claiming History: Colonialism, Ethnography and the Novel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

constructed”⁸ - and that idea is presented as a fundamental insight of anthropology. In the Kent School system in the U.S. anthropology students learn to “analyze an Interdependent World through Patterns of Continuity and Change,”⁹ reading no less than three novels by Achebe, alongside Ruth Benedict’s *Patterns of Culture* and Robert Braidwood’s *The Emergence of Man*. Analysing patterns of culture in fiction, thus becomes a means to promote citizenship, to appreciate diversity and to increase understanding of an interdependent global system of relations.

Similarly, at the University of Sydney, *Things Fall Apart* is recommended reading in the foundational unit of a Bachelor of Global Studies degree. The outline of that unit states that it draws upon a broad range of disciplines, ten in all, including anthropology, but specifically *not* literary studies - although perhaps that is subsumed under the rubric of cultural studies. The Global Studies degree is arranged according to four themes, the first of which is the making of a global world, reaching back well beyond the contemporary phenomenon of globalisation; and *Things Fall Apart* is clearly positioned to represent one of the key historical moments of that process. It is of course the colonial moment, which the unit indicates as follows: “We will consider how different nations, peoples and cultures have interacted and highlight the ways in which power relations have shaped their mutual influence.”¹⁰ But this description seems to me to run the risk of emptying the colonial moment of its political significance, certainly in terms of African history, or African Studies. And one might argue also *Things Fall Apart*, resituated intellectually in terms of globalisation, is also stripped of its historical and literary power, as well as the context in which it was written and produced. Instead the novel is made to function toward producing “ideas and theories about social justice and different understandings of equality.”¹¹

The social justice perspective is a key determinant of how *Things Fall Apart* is now read and situated within the globalised academy. The University of Minnesota lists on its website a bibliography of titles compiled and recommended for their usefulness in teaching human rights.¹² The list has been

⁸ “Social Anthropology 101,” Bates College, Lewiston, Maine, <http://abacus.bates.edu/Faculty/Anthropology/Anthro101/Anthro101.html> (accessed 10 June 2008).

⁹ “Kent School District Social Studies, Anthropology Grades 10, 11, 12,” <http://www.kent.k12.wa.us/KSD/IS/SLO/SS/SS-Anth.html> (accessed 10 June 2008).

¹⁰ University of Sydney, GBST1001 Global Studies: Themes and Approaches. <http://www.arts.usyd.edu.au/degrees/globalstudies/Attachments/2007%20Syllabus.rtf> (accessed 10 June 2008).

¹¹ University of Sydney, GBST1001 Global Studies: Themes and Approaches.

¹² “Fictional Literature, Literature for Teaching Human Rights. An Annotated Bibliography,” compiled by Nancy Flowers, Curriculum Coordinator Amnesty International USA 1989. Updated and edited by Lory Schwedes (1999), Mollie Smith (2002), and Alexis Howe (2005). University of Minnesota. <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/bibliog/literature.htm> (accessed 12 June 2008).

updated and edited at least twice since its original compilation, but its original author in the late 1980s was the then curriculum coordinator of Amnesty International in the US. And there again, on that list, is *Things Fall Apart*.

Graham Huggan, another Australian critic who has written about *Things Fall Apart*, observes how a recent edition of the novel “features a formidable battery of prefatory notes including a glossary and a short essay on Ibo culture and history,” from which he concludes that the publisher is clearly inviting the novel to be read anthropologically – “a smart marketing move when one considers the novel’s prevalence as high school introduction to a ‘foreign culture.’”¹³ In fact, however, in Australia at least, the process of de-Africanising the text begins in high school.

In NSW the Higher School Certificate syllabus for the Advanced English subject, “Representation and Text,” includes an elective entitled “Powerplay;” only one novel is set there as the basis for study, and that is George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. But the author of the study materials on Orwell considers it advisable that students should know that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* appeared previously in the syllabus of a different HSC elective, entitled “Utopias and Anti-Utopias;” he lists the texts with which it was set there, as providing “interesting insights” into “power and the language that it uses.”¹⁴ Here again is *Things Fall Apart*, where we might never have expected it, in an abandoned course on utopian and anti-utopian writing, which has evolved now into a unit instead where students are asked to analyse “portrayals of the powerful,” and to consider “how the depiction of particular relationships provides insight into the nature of politics” generally.¹⁵ *Things Fall Apart* has dropped out of the new course, yet is recommended still for the light it might throw on Orwell’s political satire, and on the three other texts set for the study of “powerplay:” Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra* and two Australian texts, Hannie Rayson’s play, *Life After George*, and most interestingly perhaps, the documentary film directed by John Hughes, *After Mabo*.

This reminds me of the review in the *Law Society Journal* (New South Wales) of Herbert Ekwe-Ekwe’s polemical “Essay on Chinua Achebe,” entitled *African Literature in Defence of History* (2001), which the reviewer judged as

¹³ Graham Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic. Marketing the Margins* (London: Routledge, 2001), 41.

¹⁴ Bruce Pattinson, “*Nineteen Eighty-Four*, by George Orwell,” NSW HSC Online: English (Advanced. Module C. Representation and Text. Elective 2: Powerplay), <http://www.hsc.csu.edu.au/english/advanced/representation/powerplay/1984/title.html> (accessed 12 June 2008).

¹⁵ NSW HSC Online: English (Advanced. Module C. Representation and Text. Elective 2: Powerplay), http://www.hsc.csu.edu.au/english/advanced/representation/powerplay/powerplay_intro/intro.html (accessed 12 June 2008).

“stimulating, but not satisfying.”¹⁶ Yet he recommended the book as especially challenging in Australia, for its raising issues parallel to our “stumbling attempts at reconciliation and restitution.”¹⁷ The point again is how Achebe’s novel has been re-contextualised – this time in a multi-media framework of de-historicised power relations, where parallels seemingly can be drawn just as easily with African history and Roman tragedy (albeit of an English Renaissance flavour) as with debate “surrounding the concept of native title in Australia.”¹⁸ Or with the pessimistic post-World War II political philosophy of Orwell’s *1984*, futuristic in its setting, but written in the wake of the defeat of Nazism and the apparent loss of individual identity under Communism in Russia and China. Or even with the university politics of Hannie Rayson’s take on liberal education, the rise of managerialism and the corporate university.

There are many ways in which such intertextual readings can be interesting and productive. For example, Rayson’s exploration of Australia’s alleged “cultural resistance to passion: our self-consciousness about the passionate gesture, the passionate expression,”¹⁹ might be read revealingly against the tragic passion of Achebe’s anti-hero, Okonkwo.

But the postmodern trend in anthropology, the idea of anthropology as literature, comes at a time when professionalised literary study is so bogged down in identity politics that many are doom-saying the death of the discipline. The central irony of the situation is this: anthropology, in order to acknowledge and compensate for its alleged bias and lack of historicity, has taken a literary turn - just at the moment when literary criticism has turned *away* from anthropology, and indeed from *literature* as a category of writing. Still, there is something that the disciplines share nonetheless: the sense of crisis. The English Association in the UK was set to celebrate its centenary with a conference in September 2006 called “The Health of the Tribe: the State of English Studies Today.” It was to be held at Wadham College, Oxford; it had its keynote speakers all organized and advertised, and its key question ready for the call for papers. The question was this: “Does ‘English’ still have a coherent identity and an imaginable future in the academy, or will it transform itself into

¹⁶ Stephen Booth, “Windows on Africa,” *Law Society Journal* 42 (November 2004): 91, <http://www.lawsociety.com.au/page.asp?PartID=16196> (accessed 27 March 2009).

¹⁷ Stephen Booth, 2004

¹⁸ Jenny McDonald, “*After Mabo*, by John Hughes,” NSW HSC Online: English (Advanced. Module C. Representation and Text. Elective 2: Powerplay), http://www.hsc.csu.edu.au/english/advanced/representation/powerplay/2918/After_Mabo.html (accessed 12 June 2008).

¹⁹ Hannie Rayson, quoted in “By George - she’s got ‘It’,” *Artbeat* (April 2001), http://archive.dcita.gov.au/2001/04/artbeat_april_2001/by_george_shes_got_it (accessed 27 March 2009).

a range of separate disciplines and activities?”²⁰ But then suddenly the conference was canceled.

The organizers made the mistake of defining ‘English’ (and by extension literary study generally) in terms of a discarded anthropology, by their adopting the taboo discourse of tribalism, which had been one of the key categories of exclusion and inclusion in colonialist anthropology. The proposed central trope of the conference, tribal health, was assumed to depend upon a ‘coherent’ identity, which would then imply an ‘imaginable future’ for English;²¹ the *inversion* of the trope, which would then imply the *death* of the subject English, suggests that the dispersal of identity must be a disease, causing fragmentation. So much for the lessons learned from *Things Fall Apart*; and this at a time when diaspora studies are clearly dominant in literary studies, or at least in its postcolonial sub-domain.

Nothing could better illustrate the point that post-colonial criticism itself has been making for the past twenty years: that the consolidation of the sovereign ego of Englishness depended upon the othering of its subjects, in a whole variety of ways. The organisers, setting the theme of this apparently doomed conference, state specifically: “English studies, like the English language itself, have had an impact in countries and communities outside England ...”²² The question they ask - “[d]oes ‘English’ still have a coherent identity?” - raises the spectre of the dystopian future as they fear it, a trans-disciplinary migration of literary studies into an academy itself conceived as a global diaspora. Yet in a way this horror vision is repeat performance, the Death of the Subject, with which of course literary scholars are only too familiar.

This cuts to the heart of another question: what kind of story, in a globalised academy of transdisciplinary studies, does *Things Fall Apart* continue to tell? What does it tell us about the past and how does it help us imagine the future. For the *New York Times* in March 2006, the headline “Things Fall Apart,” raised a warning against the Nigerian President’s efforts to change the nation’s constitution so that he might have a third term of office, and the story of the future that it predicted was civil war in Nigeria and the consequent destabilization of Liberia, Togo, Ivory Coast and the Congo.²³ In January 2007, the Brookings Institute translated “Things Fall Apart” to the Middle East to warn against Iraq sliding into abyss of civil war.²⁴ There are 25 different songs

²⁰ “The Health of the Tribe. The State of English Today. Higher Education Conference, Wadham College, Oxford, Saturday 2 September 2006.” <http://www.le.ac.uk/engassoc/conferences/20069.html> (accessed 12 June 2008).

²¹ The Health of the Tribe. The State of English Today. Higher Education Conference.

²² The Health of the Tribe. The State of English Today. Higher Education Conference.

²³ Editorial: “In Nigeria, Things Fall Apart,” *New York Times*, 26 March 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/26/opinion/26sun2.html> (accessed 12 June 2008).

²⁴ Brookings issued a Saban Center Analysis Paper authored by Daniel L. Byman & Kenneth M. Pollack and titled “Things Fall Apart: Containing the Spillover from an Iraqi Civil War”

listed in iTunes called “Things Fall Apart” and a further 13 titles that contain those words. There is a crazed guitar band called *Things Fall Apart*. There is a hip-hop/rap album called “Things Fall Apart,” and a country album of the same title.²⁵ “Things Fall Apart” is now an unsourced catch-cry, a logo, a free-floating branding device of sorts. In Australia, a book called *Things Fall Apart* tells the story of the financial collapse of the State Bank in South Australia, which the author alleges was caused by the bank’s “turning its back on its community roots.”²⁶ The NSW union movement chose “Things Fall Apart” as the title for its 2005 policy conference to discuss the impact of the government’s Work Choices policy in the community: the story there is of the fragmentation of families and of society by increasing workloads, and the struggle to connect workers’ rights with family values.²⁷ In still another context, “Things Fall Apart” tells the story of the death of centre politics, the implosion of the Australian Democrat Party and the erosion of objective debate to determine the public interest.²⁸ Finally, it has been used to tell the story of the implosion of the university itself, as an ideal of the rational community of scholars, its traditional disciplines now in disarray and defenceless against the new market-driven economies of knowledge.²⁹

One thing is certain: many more students coming to university from high school now have read *Things Fall Apart* than have read Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, the novel with which it is most often paired in university English courses. There is thus a strangeness about the pairing, an unspoken false assumption of familiarity with a largely decentred canon, perhaps expressive of a nostalgia for the time before the death of the subject. Of course, it might be said that the miscellany of hijacks that I was describing a moment ago is no more than what Achebe himself did in 1958, when he took the title *Things Fall Apart* from a line in Yeats’ poem, “The Second Coming” (1919).³⁰ But that was

on 1 January 2007, http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2007/01iraq_byman.aspx (accessed June 12, 2008). The book of the same title and by the same authors was published by Brookings Institution Press six months later.

²⁵ The artists respectively are The Roots and Lonesome Bob.

²⁶ Greg McCarthy, *Things Fall Apart: A History of the State Bank of South Australia* (Kew, Vic.: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2002).

²⁷ Note also Marion Baird, “Things Fall Apart,” an issues paper written following the conference, <http://www.nswnurses.asn.au/documents/3497/extract/index.html> (accessed 12 June 2008).

²⁸ Tim Colebatch, “Things fall apart when centre cannot hold,” *The Age*, 5 September 2006, <http://www.theage.com.au/news/tim-colebatch/things-fall-apart-when-centre-cannot-hold/2006/09/04/1157222065635.html> (accessed 23 December 2008).

²⁹ A. Welch, “Things Fall Apart: Disintegration, Universities and the Decline of Discipline(s),” in Kodron, C. et al., *Vergleichende Erziehungswissenschaft: Herausforderung, Vermittlung Praxis* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 1997), 182-191.

³⁰ It might of course be argued that these diverse texts refer more directly to Yeats’ poem than to Achebe’s novel. But what I am suggesting here is that, while it may be a measure of the novel’s cultural impact that the phrase “things fall apart” now floats free of its original contexts, its new readers will close the loop from these other contexts when reading either the

neither a branding nor a marketing ploy, nor a de-historicising, and of course the debt was acknowledged by the epigraph. This in fact was a clear and deliberate re-contextualising, a re-historicising, in full awareness of the phrase's European origins, and of course it was highly successful in locating Africa in *world literature*.

What has happened since is unfortunate. The novel continues to thrive in the marketplace, and in market-driven universities, but seemingly it has little effect now in focusing African Studies; it assists the pedagogies of decentred disciplines of anthropology, sociology, global studies and interdisciplinary studies in social justice; and it contributes to literature courses where, in Australia by and large, it will always be the only African novel. In Australia's corporatised universities, lacking both the population and the politics of the Afro-American diaspora, *Things Fall Apart* is in danger of being finally co-opted by capitalism as a logo to 'sell' identity politics, not unlike the way that the Gold Coast Yoga Centre uses it to 'promote' alternative psychotherapies.³¹ The title has become a kind of Orwellian double-speak.

Australian students respond very positively to the novel, particularly when it is paired with *Heart of Darkness*, or perhaps Francis Ford Coppola's film (based on Conrad's novella), *Apocalypse Now*. But they show little ongoing interest in the issues Achebe raises as they relate specifically to an African problematic; they are much more interested in the implications for postcolonial discourse analysis as it might apply to classic English texts, and if they progress along these lines they become capable of producing the same predictably correct readings over and over.

So what value has *Things Fall Apart* now in Australia? Random House which markets the Anchor mass market paperback in Australia provides the following note to teachers on its website:

[Things Fall Apart] offers far more than access to pre-colonial Nigeria and the cataclysmic changes brought about by the British. It also can be a window into the story of the Aborigines in Australia, the Maori of New Zealand, and the First Nations of North, Central, and South America in the "falling apart" of the indigenous cultures of these and other places whose centers could not hold.³²

novel or the poem, bringing new intertextual understandings to bear (diachronically, as it were) upon the "original."

³¹ Gold Coast Centre, <http://www.goldcoastyogacentre.com/welcome/page84.php> (accessed 12 June 2008). The title "Things Fall Apart" here refers to Pema Chodron's classic interpretation of Tibetan Buddhism, *When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult Times* (Boston, Mass.: Shambhala, 1996).

³² Anchor Books Teacher's Guide, "Things Fall Apart", <http://www.randomhouse.com/anchor/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=9780385474542&view=tg> (accessed 13 June 2008).

The value of the novel in literature courses seems to be mainly to develop interracial-understanding, or as an introduction to postcolonial discourse analysis. But it appears to have been stripped of its ability to interest students in the history, past or future, of the culture it specifically portrays. Somehow the novel serves now more as a mirror than a window, a usefully distorting mirror to be sure, that reveals the biases and the limitations or 'our' own value system, but does not kindle the multicultural interest in root cultures that one finds in the US, and so does not generate any great interest in Africa, or in Australia's relationship with Africa. This is particularly unfortunate at a time when Australia has been gradually increasing its intake of migrants and refugees from African countries, and as many Australians, lacking familiarity with African peoples, seem ill-equipped to respond to the dominant media imagery of Africans as either helpless and starving or pre-programmed for violence.³³

³³ Note Margaret Walker's discussion of the media profiling of Africans, in "Imaginary Links Between Africa and Australia," AFSAAP conference, Canberra, 2008 – unpublished.

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‘Embracing the Aussie Identity’: Theoretical Reflections on Challenges and Prospects for African-Australian Youths

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Abstract

The high influx of Africans into the western Diaspora triggers new insights into the nexus of migrancy and the formation of new identities. Little, however, has been researched about these issues as they relate to Africans in Australia. This article seeks to fill the void. It is argued here that in the quest to become Australian, ‘Australianness’ constantly confronts African migrants in very profound ways. It is argued here that ‘being Australian’ is a tool for both inclusion and exclusion in Australia. Juxtaposing two sets of images of Africans as they have featured in the Australian media, this article will firstly interrogate the challenges presented to African youths as they settle in Australia, and secondly it will highlight how ‘Australianness’ has been redefined in confrontation with the ‘African other’. This article urges for a conception of identities as flexible so as to accommodate the changes as they shift across the globe. It is further argued that within the context of multiculturalism and against the backdrop of the legacy of Aboriginal dispossession and discourses of white hegemony, Australia presents fertile ground for reflecting upon such issues. An Africans’ quest to embrace an Australian identity is situated within the broader context of the normalisation of whiteness as the essence of ‘Australianness’.

Introduction

This article is motivated by a number of developments involving youths of African descent in Australia in 2007. As an African who was coming to terms with the realities of settling in Australia, the events involving African youths changed my perceptions of place and people. As I was watching Channel Ten’s *Australian Idol*, a reality TV singing show, I was surprised to see images of a young female Zimbabwean artist, Tarisai Vushe. Though Tarisai finished in fifth position, her last appearances raised a lot of concerns as she complained of unfair judges who were bent on discrediting her. Despite her failure to win the title, she undoubtedly did well in the 2007 national competition. The auditions for *Australian Idol* ran from March to May 2007 in all Australian major cities and was premiered on Channel Ten on August 5 and concluded on November 25. Judging from the duration of the competition alone, and the fact that it drew thousands of young Australian artists from its preliminary stages right up until the end, it can be said that Tarisai put up a successful performance. Tarisai’s ‘African’ image in the Australian media was juxtaposed with other images of Africans in a vastly different form: of young Sudanese refugees who were reportedly failing to integrate and adapt to the Australian way of life. The images of the Sudanese became imbued in the

politics of the November 2007 federal elections as the government announced it was going to reduce the intake of African refugees. Various stories about Sudanese refugees from different parts of Australia implicated them as the perpetrators of violent acts and criminal behaviour, but they also featured as the victims of crime. In either case, the images identified them as a group of Africans that faced difficult challenges in adapting to the Australian way of life.

The images of Tarisai and the Sudanese youths and the issues that the images raised were brought to the public sphere and in the debates that followed, various views were raised. It is some of these views that this article uses to analyse the problems of the nexus between migration and identity in relation to Australia and issues that affect some African youths. These views form the theoretical underpinnings of this research. It is emphasised here that the views from 'ordinary people' are important as they converge with some theories that have gained currency in academia. Further, the experiences of African youths are crucial as they in part constitute responses to perceptions and policies that directly relate to them as a category. The two images demonstrate the complex nature of the processes involved in migrating and settling in a foreign country and also the mixed and contradictory perceptions that the general Australian population has about Africans. There is a need to unravel the nature of the complexity of the processes of migration and settling and show how they impinge upon identity.

Defining Identity

The concept 'identity' is a subject of philosophical debate. In its general use 'identity' refers to a set of characteristics that make somebody recognised as belonging to or constituting a category. However, this simplified definition does not exhaust all there is to the use and application of the concept, and it requires further elaboration. A working definition will assist to put the debate into perspective. Maier's approach is more insightful for the purpose of this article as he stresses that the general usage of 'identity' applies to at least two different psychological orientations: our inner personal identity as contrasted to a group or collective identity.¹ Our inner personal identity is "based on an awareness of persistence through time: it expresses the individual's psychic continuity across the years and its major instrument is personal memory."² On the other hand, collective identity "is constructed out of a synchronic web of affiliations and sentiments" that "express individuals' sense of belonging within a society or community."³ From the preceding, it is clear that collective identity is parasitic on personal identity as the collective memory that sustains it is attained with the convergence of the personal memories of the individuals

¹ Charles S. Maier, "'Being there': Place, Territory, and Identity," Seyla Benhabib et al., eds., *Identities, Affiliations, and Allegiances* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 67.

² Maier, 67.

³ Maier, 67.

who constitute the collective group. The formation of group identity, therefore, entails the cultivation and crystallisation of the qualities that bind members of the collective against those perceived as 'the outsiders'. This is achieved when the personal memory of an individual flows into the collective memory of the group and finds accommodation therein. The nation as a collective has its memories sustained by narratives. Carr argues that narrative plays a central role in constructing both individual consciousness and community consciousness.⁴ The term 'national identity' refers to the shared memories that bind or provide the basis for solidarity to a people. Smith defines national identity as involving some sense of political community and by implication at least some common institutions and single code of rights and duties for all the members and also a definite social space and a fairly demarcated and bounded territory with which members identify and to which they feel they belong.⁵ Looking at the definition simplistically glosses over the possibility of contestations that may ensue as to what the shared memories and traditions are. This article considers migration as one of the ways some personal memories gain entry into the collective memory, thus collective memory is not static but cumulative.

Theoretical Perspective

The theoretical perspective employed here incorporates a postmodern conception of identity and its refusal of totalising discourse. Lyotard defines postmodernism "as incredulity toward meta-narratives."⁶ Thus postmodernism holds to the possibility of an emancipatory politics by denying the essentialism of identities. Essentialism invokes certain characteristics as immutable, thus downplaying the fluidity of identities and it also emphasises that the processes of identity formation are relational and contextual. This theoretical framework seeks to deconstruct and call for the reimagining of an Australian identity in the light of both past historical developments and current global trends and challenges which have seen unprecedented movements, especially of refugees, to various parts of the world. The migrations have resulted in a Diaspora which remains a countervailing force against the once-dominant discourse of *the* Australian identity in its totalised and essentialised form. Postmodernism challenges the predominant narratives of Australianness and urges a more flexible conceptualisation that accommodates the kaleidoscope of cultures that have characterised the world today. Postmodernism's rejection of essentialism provides a discursive space for identity formation that gives agency and voice to minorities. In this vein, theorists have argued for hybridity based on the notion of the fluidity and malleability of identities. For example, Bhabha has celebrated hybridity and the subaltern voices from the margins,⁷ and also

⁴ David Carr, *Time, Narrative, and History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

⁵ Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 9.

⁶ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), xxiv.

⁷ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

Gilroy's notion of the 'Black Atlantic'⁸ is meant to advance a hybridised and black identity that countervails and subverts the dominant paradigms of essentialised identities of mainstream British society. Employing this postmodern theoretical framework will highlight as misguided and oppressive describing the description of identities as being essential and fixed. .

Being Australian

The question 'who is an Australian?' is as problematic as it is unavoidable. The attempt to answer this question is further complicated by a search for the 'essence' of Australianness. The question also raises other equally problematic issues of race, ethnicity, language and religion. The dominant perspective of Australianness is one shaped by Australia's national foundations and its allegiances to the British Empire. This perspective needs to be further interrogated if we are to decipher its further influence and implications to the migration and settlement of Africans and other nationalities in Australia.

'Australia' and 'being Australian' are concepts that assume some recognisable characteristics of a place, people, culture, artefacts, way of life and a host of other things considered to have endured over time. Thus 'being Australian' is supported by narratives that order the lives of a people and shape their experiences. The narratives serve the purposes of situating an individual or a group of people against others and are therefore an integral part of the existence of both those inside and outside the category 'Australia'. The category ceases to be just a vast tract of land surrounded by the oceanic waters, but a geographical terrain *discovered* and *tamed* for occupation by certain people. The term "unlocking the land"⁹ or "opening up Australia"¹⁰ suggest the making of a place from some pre-existing chaos or disorderly past with the creative agency of the 'founders' whose descendants make claims to the geographical area and the way of life to bear therein. For Smith, the 'discovered' place is considered *terra incognita*: "as worlds without names, waiting like Eden for words and history to envelop them."¹¹ As depicted in the 'Pioneer Legend', the pioneers considered themselves as altruistic agents taming the new environment to 'man's' (sic) use so, "That ye might inherit the land" and "Take now the fruit of our labour" and "Nourish and guard it with care..."¹² This points to the assumed benign nature of the pioneers and the need for their offspring to protect the space, culture and identity that sprang from their labour

⁸ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993).

⁹ Victor Swain, *Australia: Moments in History* (Sydney: New Holland Publishers, 2003), 39.

¹⁰ Ian Wynd and Joyce Wood, *A Map History of Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1964), 10.

¹¹ Andrew Smith, "Migrancy, hybridity, and postcolonial literary studies", in Neil Lazarus, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 243.

¹² John B. Hirst, "The Pioneer Legend", in John Carroll, ed. *Intruders in the Bush: The Australian Quest for Identity* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1982), 14.

and sacrifice. In the narratives, the settlers' image is foregrounded, while any claims made by the land's original indigenous inhabitants are backgrounded. It is around the pioneers' cult that individuals gain the status of national mystique and their beliefs, values and actions acquire the status of national symbols and images. Thus naming the 'discovered' places involves the simultaneous acts of imprinting and erasing identities within the space.

This article benefits from this perspective as it shows that privileging some identities inevitably relies on negating and suppressing others. Narratives are used to make sense of the world and validate claims to knowledge and existence and also attempt to exert control over others. Through the narratives of being Australian, the people who make claims to the category of 'Australian' locate themselves as real or potential actors in the time-space continuum. As actors, they ontologically, epistemologically and morally validate themselves and realise their agency at the expense of the foreign 'other'. One's status in the community depends on one's inclusion in or exclusion from the narratives. These narratives, more often turned into grand narratives, depict Australianness and migrants have to negotiate, question and come to terms with these narratives as they seek belonging and recognition in the Australian community. The process of negotiation occurs in various ways and it presents various challenges and prospects for the young African-Australians.

This article pays particular attention to the challenges, frustrations, hopes, and prospects that young Africans have as they embrace the Australian identity. The importance of this theoretical analysis is that it feeds into our conceptions of the complex nature and the problems of the connections between migrancy and identity.

The focus here is on African youths because they display an interesting mix of optimism, pessimism, anxiety and fear, which reveals a duality in their formation and the actualisation of their agency.¹³ This duality highlights the ambivalent place of African-Australian youths as they represent a cultural transition between themselves and their parents and Africa and Australia. Youths lead the way in embracing an Australian identity and resist the African past in a number of ways. They also offer resistance to what mainstream society considers as the 'norm' (both from their parents' and an Australian perspective).

Two Images Juxtaposed

This section juxtaposes the two images of African youths with the view of highlighting the controversies surrounding issues of identity and some subtle points on how Africans are confronted with challenges and prospects as they

¹³ Sunaina Maira, "Imperial Feelings: Youth Culture, Citizenship, and Globalization", in Marcelo M. Suarez-Orozco and Desirée B. Qin-Hilliard, eds., *Globalization: Culture and Education in the New Millennium* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 206.

seek to embrace an Australian identity. The images of Tarisai and the Sudanese youths as they were featured in the newspapers, television and some of Internet sites triggered a lot of public debate about how Africans in general have managed to make Australia their home.

(i) *Australian Idol*, Tarisai and ‘fake’ identity

Australian Idol is very popular among Australian youths. It is a contest in which participants display their musical talents and their success is based on the judges’ comments and the audience’s popular vote. The audience votes by either phoning in or sending a text message in support of their favourite performer. Undoubtedly, the comments of the judges may either boost the profile of the performer if they are positive or dent the image of a performer, if they are negative as they influence the popular vote. Besides the stage performance, the reality show also features pre-recorded back-ground video footage that shows aspects of the lives of the participants, their families and friends. While the video footage is for the benefit of the audience and the TV ratings, they also allow the performer to reveal other identities over and above the one that is known on the stage.

Tarisai joined *Australian Idol* in May 2007. She was twenty years old and studied Psychology at university. She is a Zimbabwean-born migrant who came to Australia with her mother, who now owns a shop in Sydney. Her early appearances on *Australian Idol* impressed both the audience and the judges and she was a favourite for many. She managed to be amongst the five finalists. The *Australian Idol* website offered an interactive fan club which focussed on the top twelve finalists in 2007. A flurry of related websites also appeared on the Internet debating the virtues of each of the contestants and in that way shaping the audience’s perceptions and votes. Discussions about Tarisai’s performance in *Australian Idol* touched on various issues, but less so than about her singing talent and more so on her identity as an African, and a Christian, and raising questions about whether she was a *genuine* Australian artist.

Some judges and audiences said that she was a “fake” because on stage she tried to portray an image of a polite girl, like in a beauty pageant.¹⁴ For example, in the face of criticism, she would smile and say “thank you” to the judges when they passed some negative comments about her stage performance. One report said that bloggers were “incensed by her non-communicative demeanour during judging each week.”¹⁵ Tarisai’s response to

¹⁴ Mythor in Television, “Tarisai Vushe is a fake,” <http://www.mythor.net/2007/10/29/tarisai-vushe-is-a-fake/> (accessed 1 June 2008).

¹⁵ “Australian Idol wannabe Tarisai Vushe blasts judges for ‘fake’ slur,” *Adelaide Now*, 29 October 2007, <http://www.news.com.au/adelaidenow/story/0,22606,226648705006301,00.html> (accessed 17 February 2008).

criticism became imbued in her identity as an African as those sympathetic to her pointed out how her African culture and manners had been misrepresented in Australia. They argued that it was un-African for a young person to show anger and rage to elders, especially in front of an audience. As such Tarisai was behaving consistently with a well mannered girl. As the “fake” image became increasingly used on her, Tarisai slowly became defensive and eventually confronted one of the judges, and protesting against the ‘fake image’, banged the door on him backstage. This backstage tantrum was shown in the video footage on the day Tarisai was eliminated from the show. The video has been described as Tarisai’s “death knell” as it marked her exit from the competition.¹⁶ Showing Tarisai’s backstage rage on one of the judges was taken as an attempt to discredit her and the attempt was interpreted as racially motivated. Tarisai’s anger at the ‘fake’ tag was broadcast and depicted as a scandal and the video clips that were shown on television were undoubtedly influential in the crucial vote.¹⁷

Other critics, however, like Hodges, the director of the Anglo- Australian National Community Council, posted on the council’s website an article that openly attacked Tarisai’s angry behaviour with judges who had said that she was a fake pointing that Tarisai was after all not an Australian.¹⁸ Tarisai’s frustration and despair at her failure to win the competition and the title of the *Australian Idol* could be explained by her elimination song, ‘*When it all falls apart*’, a song whose lyrics are quite revealing of somebody battling against some erasure from a contest.

(ii) Sudanese youths and the ‘failure to integrate’

In January 2007, a Sudanese community party in the Dandenong area of Melbourne ended with a brawl and a stabbing. The violence was not racial as it involved the Sudanese themselves. It was rather described by some as ‘ethnic’ or ‘tribal’. For example, Peter Brown, the Councillor of Keysborough South ward of the city of Greater Dandenong, alleged that where the Sudanese congregate, “they bring their tribal differences with them erupting into violence,” and that the problems of the Sudanese refugees are due to the Australian government’s choice “to ease the ethnic problems of Black Africa by transporting their citizenry to Australia by the jumbo jetload” since these

¹⁶ Andrew Banks and Garth Montgomery. “‘Fake’ slur Tarisai dumped from Australian Idol,” *The Daily Telegraph*, October 30 2007, <http://www.news.com.au/entertainment/story/0,23663,22671484-5000660,00.html> (accessed 13 January 2008)

¹⁷ Garth Montgomery, “Matt Corby a protected species?” on <http://www.news.com.au/dailytelegraph/story/0,22049,22704650-5001021,00.html?id> (accessed 20 February 2008) suggests the bias that the channel had towards Matt at the expense of Tarisai, a point that critics suggest was purely a racial bias.

¹⁸ Darrin Hodges, “Go back to Zimbabwe and take your foul mouth with you,” <http://voiceoftheshire.blogspot.com/2007/10/go-back-to-zimbabwe-and-take-your-foul.html> (accessed 20 February 2008).

problems “were not there before the jumbos flew in.”¹⁹ Brown further asserts: “Australia should not be the repository for global social and ethnic problems in the misguided belief that we can solve them.”²⁰ In short, Brown argues that Australia had no justification in dealing and assisting with the problems in Africa, and also that African refugees are “the Australians of convenience.”²¹

Similar views were also shared by the Australia First Party (AFP), which in the run-up to the 2007 federal elections expressed that the intake of Africans and other Third World refugees for resettlement in Australia was a deliberate attempt to destroy the true Australian character and its dominant European heritage and culture.²² While it is known that the AFP holds extremist views which many have not taken seriously, it is interesting to note how in their attempt to do so, they appealed to the view of the ‘true Australian’ which is shaped by the idea of nativism, a view which occupies a dominant position in the discourse of Australianness.

In the Australian context, nativism is “the belief that being ‘truly Australian’ means being born in Australia, having Australian ancestors, and living here most our lives.”²³ The belief has a strong bearing in shaping the social attitudes of Australians towards immigration and immigrants, as it is a constant reminder of the reality of ‘true Australians’ who stand opposed to the ‘foreign other’. Nativism results in ethnic absolutism as it rests on the essentialist claims meant to strategically position the native at the vantage point of culture and render the migrant as the cultural outsider. Thus for Gilroy, nativist nationalism is characterised by ‘cultural insiderism,’²⁴ a term which can be defined as an attitude strategically designed to mobilise a sense of racial and ethnic difference to distinguish people from one another and simultaneously acquiring an incontestable priority over other dimensions of their shared social and historical experiences. The comments passed about the Sudanese refugees are relevant as they highlight the constitution of the racialised Black Sudanese subjectivities, a feature that sways them from one form of marginality as the

¹⁹ Peter Brown. “No, this is not multiculturalism – it’s madness,” *The Age* on the web, 9 January 2007, <http://www.theage.com.au/news/letters/no-this-is-not-multiculturalism-8212-its-madness/2007/01/08/1168104919459.html> (accessed 10 February 2007).

²⁰ Brown.

²¹ Brown.

²² On its website, <http://www.australiafirstparty.com.au/cms/> Australia First Party’s unreservedly voices its dislike of African refugees. The website is awash with comments, speeches and debates arguing for white Australia. The website also features the slogan “Australia Must Remain Predominantly White”, words attributed to Graham Campbell, the party’s founding member. It is interesting to note the convergences and continuities shared by the party and other radical views that endorse a monolithic white Australian policy.

²³ Murray Goot and Ian Watson, “Immigration, Multiculturalism and National Identity”, in Shuan Wilson et al., eds., *Australian Social Attitudes: The First Report* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2005), 183.

²⁴ Gilroy, 72.

refugees towards the other form of marginality as 'black other'. This point confirms Hall's argument that identities are not given but are a production.²⁵

Further analyses highlights that Brown has a case against Australian multiculturalism which he sees as being abused and taken for granted to benefit people who do not deserve it. Standfield discussed how multiculturalism as a political discourse has promoted the construction of white Australians as benign, as people of goodwill and tolerant to racial others as they have 'opened the doors' to refugees and immigrants.²⁶ Standfield discusses the constructions of benign whiteness in the context of how multiculturalism has been used to deflect the arguments of Aboriginal peoples' claims to land and sovereignty and allow whites to ignore the persistence of structural inequality based on race. Be that as it may, the point that she makes is important for the purpose here as it shows the political significance of policies in relation to how identities of the host community are in turn shaped by the migrants. The central point by Standfield is that Australian multiculturalism is at the behest of the agency of whiteness and is meant to sustain white hegemony.

The Herald Sun of 31st January 2007 carried a story about a Sudanese young man in Melbourne who was involved in cases of rape and murder. The author, Andrew Bolt, wrote that the Sudanese immigrants "are struggling to make their way here and integrate" mainly because they are "coming from a very different culture and a much poorer country with much lower standards of education."²⁷ Bolt's words are interesting in that he moved from the talk of *one* Sudanese who had committed a crime to *all* Sudanese immigrants in Australia. The shift precludes the possibility of Sudanese immigrants who have successfully integrated. Reports about immigrants usually take this turn from one to all. This can be illustrated by the December 2005 riots at Cronulla beach in Sydney in which a fight between three surf lifesavers and four Lebanese-Australian young men became a conflict between 'Australians' and all 'people of Middle Eastern origin'. The riots show the extent to which the Australian public easily slips into generalisations when dealing with non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants.

Deconstructing the Metanarrative of Australianness

From the comments about the images of the Sudanese refugees, it can be noted that some commentators were more worried that the refugees were disrupting social cohesion in Australia. Migration and social cohesion are central to

²⁵ Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", in Jonathan Rutherford, ed., *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference* (London: Lawrence and Wilshart, 1990), 222.

²⁶ Rachel Standfield, "A Remarkably Tolerant Nation? Constructions of Whiteness in Australian Political Discourse", in Damien W. Riggs, ed., *Taking Up the Challenge: Critical Race and Whiteness Studies in a Postcolonising Nation* (Adelaide: Crawford House Publishers, 2007).

²⁷ Andrew Bolt, "Our Sudanese Refugees pose a Question." *Herald Sun* on the web, 31 January 2007, http://blogs.news.com.au/heraldsun/andrewbolt/index.php/heraldsun/comments/our_sudanese_question/ (accessed 13 February 2008).

Australian multiculturalism. In the words of Nieuwenhuysen, the question is: “how can Australia, with its considerable cultural diversity and continuing high (permanent and temporary) immigrant intake, remain socially cohesive?”²⁸ Multiculturalism is a settlement policy and philosophy with the aim of making Australia home for immigrant settlers. It is the coexistence of diverse cultural groups guided by tolerance and mutual respect for each other. There are a number of strategies that relate to education, health, employment, local infrastructure, translation services, social security services, policing services, and culture that aim to preserve the dignity of the immigrants and at the same time make them part of the Australian community. Australian multiculturalism “is the safety-net that has helped steer our culturally diverse society towards social cohesion and away from social conflict between ethnic groups.”²⁹ What is said here is not that there are no problems with Australian multiculturalism, but that in principle, Australian multiculturalism aims at offering social justice for all irrespective of cultural, linguistic or religious backgrounds and it gives a chance for immigrants to participate as equals. However against the background of the problems and incidents like the Cronulla riots of 2005, Collins argues that Australian multiculturalism needs urgent revitalisation.³⁰

The basic premise underlying the idea that Australia is an immigrant society is that the citizens who make it up have their origins from the various corners of the world and that their presence in the land is a show of determination to be part of this nation.³¹ At the level of government policy, multiculturalism entails that the government ensures equity in its treatment of different cultural groups, as they constitute the Australian nation. According to Tavan, the previous efforts of successive governments and the recommendations of the commission headed by Galbally in 1978, all led to the realisation that Australia was “at a critical stage in developing a cohesive, united, multicultural nation and that the need to further steps to encourage multiculturalism are needed.”³² The government had to enhance and develop its migrant settlement services and recognise cultural pluralism while at the same time emphasising citizens’ overriding commitment to the Australian nation. Seen in this light, pluralism was considered as a merit and strength that needed to be celebrated. As a political ideal, multiculturalism seeks to promote cultural diversity as the

²⁸ John Nieuwenhuysen, “Introduction”, in James Jupp, et al., eds., *Social Cohesion in Australia* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1.

²⁹ Jock Collins, “The Landmark of Cronulla,” in James Jupp, et al., eds., *Social Cohesion in Australia* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 68.

³⁰ Collins, 68.

³¹ Among others, James Jupp highlights that Australia is an immigrant society. See, for example his *From White Australia to Woomera: The Story of Australian Immigration* (Port Melbourne, Victoria: Cambridge University Press, 2007). The implication of this is that we should be critically reflecting on the predominant notions of identity as they are produced and disseminated in ways that disenfranchise others.

³² Gwenda Tavan, *The Long, Slow Death of White Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2005), 216.

distinct cultural images assert themselves and claim an enduring presence on the Australian cultural landscape.

The policy of multiculturalism was adopted against the backdrop of the white Australia policy. The policy was a way of managing who settles in Australia in ways meant to maintain a racially and culturally homogenous society that shares some distinct values and norms. Thus racial whiteness and Britishness were considered to be the cornerstones or the essence of being Australian. Dominant narratives of Australianness rest on the presumption that the real Australian is someone with a British heritage.³³ In pursuant to this point, Goldlust also argues that the notion of 'the Australian' has been understood not only in racial but also in ethnic terms as the history of Australian citizenship indicates that clear distinctions were made between persons of British and Irish nationality and the rest, and Australian nationality and citizenship was clearly based on an understanding of Australians as people of British ethnicity and culture.³⁴ The tag of Australianness was accorded to Anglo-Celtic people and others were considered as 'aliens' and other.

A lot has been written about how whiteness has been mobilised in defining the Australian identity. Larbalestier, for example, presents whiteness as a component of social relations that has been used to classify all other Australians, and as a metaphor for relations of domination, as a circulating power enabling and constraining identities, and as a normative framework for comprehending the world.³⁵ Irving argues that the White Australia policy aimed at achieving sameness by having an Australian community populated by people of common appearance and imbued with common culture are core areas around which ideas of Australianness are deployed.³⁶ The intended outcome of the White Australian policy was to found a racially and culturally homogenous society. The introduction of multiculturalism signalled the end of this policy, and it also triggers the debate of what constitutes an Australian identity.

Embracing Australian identity: African Youths' Experiences

This last section explores and analyses the experiences of African youths as they seek to embrace the Australian identity. Sánchez's critical realist theory of identity presents the notions of positionality, identification and the epistemic

³³ Catriona Elder, *Being Australian: Narratives of National Identity* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2007), 115.

³⁴ John Goldlust, *Understanding Citizenship in Australia* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Services, 1996), 15.

³⁵ Jan Larbalestier, "White over Black: Discourses of Whiteness in Australian Culture", in Damien W. Riggs, ed. *Taking Up the Challenge: Critical Race and Whiteness Studies in a Postcolonising Nation*, (Adelaide: Crawford House Publishers, 2007), 125.

³⁶ Helen Irving, *To Constitute a Nation: A Cultural History of Australia's Constitution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

value of experiences in identity formation.³⁷ The two terms, 'location' and 'positionality' refer to the claims that people make about their position or place or in relation to where they stand in the social order. The society imposes some structures within which individuals understand themselves. The structures configure and constrain the individuals' agency. For Sánchez, identity formation takes place at a conjuncture of external and internal, contingent and necessary, processes that interconnect and emerge within specific historical conditions that are not of our own making.³⁸ The youths are social agents who are not only produced by their social location, but they also constantly reproduce and transform the very social sites that shape their identities. It is for this reason that positioning remains tied to one's location within a given social reality, thus "one is always situated with respect to other locations, enabling individuals to become aware of differences between and commonalities among positioning."³⁹ Thus identification serves "to signal a groups' isolation, uniqueness, segregation, rejection, subordination, domination, or difference vis-à-vis others; it can involve a defensive or exclusionary mechanism."⁴⁰ This identification within the context of Australia, and its legacy of Aboriginal dispossession and myths that are historically deployed to justify the dispossession, crystallises the already-held notion that Blackness is the lowest in the racial order.

Conclusion

This article argues that any attempts to pick the essences of Australian identity result in exclusions which are detrimental to other migrants. There is a need to understand Australian identity in emancipatory terms. That means conceptualising the Australian identity as an experience and a subjective formation that evades the racial essentialism which masquerades as *the* Australian identity. Conceiving Australianness on the basis of a single narrative, for example, in terms of whiteness, normalises that narrative and disempowers other players' narratives. The two juxtaposed images of Africans in Australia depict the construction of the Australian identity conceived on the basis of whiteness and indigenous Blackness, and the Africans as the 'foreign other'. I have highlighted how the images of the Africans have evoked the dominant paradigm of Australianness. To deconstruct this dominant paradigm by arguing for the accommodation of difference is an imperative to be pursued to circumvent the challenges that stifle a wider conception of Australianness. A more flexible notion of identity is needed to accommodate and empower 'the African other' to be part of the Australian migrant heritage. The images of Tarisai as an African in the *Australian Idol* remain an inspiration to Africans, but demonstrate 'white Australia's' exclusionary practices. The images of

³⁷ Rosaura Sánchez, "On a Critical Realist Theory of Identity", in Linda Martínez Alcoff, et al., eds., *Identity Politics Reconsidered*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 34.

³⁸ Sánchez, 34.

³⁹ Sánchez, 34.

⁴⁰ Sánchez, 34.

Sudanese refugees demonstrate the ease at which 'white Australia' generalises all 'Others' into one category, thereby demonising them, or portraying negative stereotypes. However, these images should also remain a reminder of the need to seriously look into what can be done to assist migrants from challenging environments to cope and be proud members of a culturally diverse community. The two juxtaposed images serve to remind African migrants that positive images of themselves are needed so that they can begin to deposit their narratives into the collective memory of the nation and continue in the struggle to subvert the totalising discourse of Australianness that is hinged upon essentialism and exclusivity.

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RESEARCH MATTERS

Digitising and Archiving Syliphone Recordings in Guinea

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Background History

Guinea is an unfrequented country. It lacks the sandy beaches of Sierra Leone, the allure of Mali, and the *caché* of Senegal, but what it does have is some of the finest music in Africa. It is blessed with tourist potential and rich in minerals, yet let down through corruption and mismanagement so rampant¹ that basic infrastructure such as transport, water and electricity is denied to most of the population. Geographically and ethnically diverse, the savannah lands in the north-east of the country are close to the centre of the ancient Empire of Mali, an empire which at its height in the 14th century CE encompassed great swathes of West Africa, including large parts of Senegal, Mali, Mauritania, The Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire, and Burkina Faso. Those who trace their origins to the Empire of Mali are known as the Mandé, and griots are the hereditary musicians of the Mandé. The role of griots is very broad in Mandé society. They are the oral historians, and also act as genealogists, as the master of ceremonies at significant events in Mande life, such as births, deaths and marriages, and in the pre-colonial era they were the court musicians.

Guinea was colonised by France in 1898 and its experience with colonialism was as disastrous as its neighbours. Under French rule, barely 10% of children received a primary school education and infrastructure outside of the capital, Conakry, was virtually non-existent. Sékou Touré led the independence movement, famously proclaiming that “Guineans prefer freedom in poverty to riches in chains”, and in 1958 Guinea became independent. President Touré immediately set about revitalising the nation and introduced a range of radical reforms. He decried the philosophy of *négritude*, which he considered as carrying an admission of European culture's superiority over African. Rather, he was an adherent to the newer philosophy of *authenticité*, a movement which had captured the imagination of several African leaders, including Mali's Modibo Keita and Zaire's Mobutu Sese-Seko. Authenticité postulated that pre-colonial cultures were superior to post-colonial, and it sought a return to the values of “authentic” African traditions. Touré introduced a series of cultural policies which adhered to authenticité and which redefined Guinean art and music.

¹ In 2006 Guinea was described by Transparency International as the most corrupt nation in the world – see Chris McGreal. “History repeats itself in country judged most corrupt in the world.” In *Irishtimes.com*, Wednesday 24th December 2008, <<http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/world/2008/1224/1229728523878.html>> (accessed 16th March 2009).

At independence, Guinea's orchestras performed popular French or Spanish songs, with no local material represented in their repertoires. Early in his Presidency, Touré banned all foreign music from the radio, disbanded all musical groups, and instructed musicians that they were to seek inspiration for their songs from the indigenous repertoires. State-funded dance groups, theatrical troupes, and traditional music ensembles were created in every region, as were modern orchestras who were supplied with their own musical instruments, and national arts festivals were held every year.

All these successes were possible thanks to the application of the mass policy which liberated the creative capacities of the People and supported the return to African sources, the revalorization of traditional musical instruments, the rehabilitation of our songs, and the setting-up of instrumental ensembles and modern orchestras which drew their repertoire from the content of popular culture.²

The Syliphone recording company was created by Presidential decree with its purpose to capture the music of the era, and from a period of 1967 to 1984 Syliphone released 159 vinyl discs containing some 728 songs. Such a volume of recordings was unprecedented, and Syliphone pioneered the authenticity movement, promoting Guinean music throughout Africa and the world.

This side of Sékou Touré's government is not well known, for his autocratic and brutal rule will forever mark him as a tyrant.³ Under his régime thousands were executed without trial and Guinea's standard of living plummeted. When he died in 1984 a *coup d'état* led by Col. Lansana Conté quickly dismantled the cultural policies of authenticity. Syliphone was no more. In 1985 a counter-coup saw the buildings of Guinea's national radio broadcaster bombed, and the Radiodiffusion Télévision Guinée archives which housed the Syliphone recordings was destroyed. Since then, no-one has been able to reassemble the complete collection of recordings, and many thought it had been lost forever.

² Sékou Touré, cited in Dukuré "La festival culturel national de la République Populaire Revolutionnaire de Guinée", 1983: 13-14, translation by Graeme Counsel.

³ For further reading see Lansiné Kaba. "From Colonialism to Autocracy: Guinea under Sékou Touré, 1957-1984." In Prosser Gifford and William Roger Louis, eds., *Decolonization and African Independence, the Transfers of Power, 1960-1980*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); also see Graeme Counsel. "Popular music and politics in Sékou Touré's Guinea." *Australasian Review of African Studies* 26, no. 1 (June 2004a): 26-42; and also see Graeme Counsel. "Music in Guinea's first republic." In Jan Jensen, ed., *Mande-Manding. Background reading for ethnographic research in the region south of Bamako*, (Leiden: Leiden University Department of Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology, 2004b).

Digitising and Archiving

In November 2007 I applied for funding through the British Library's Endangered Archives Programme (EAP). I knew nothing of this programme until an employee of the British Library contacted me. He was also interested in African popular music and had discovered my web site, Radio Africa, and my penchant for discographies of rare African recordings. He suggested that I apply for EAP funding, and upon reading what kind of research projects the EAP were involved in⁴ I thought I had a decent chance. My proposal to the EAP was two-fold, that I create the world's first complete catalogue of Syliphone recordings, and that I digitise the reel-to-reel recordings of Guinean orchestras held at the sound archive of Radiodiffusion Télévision Guinée (RTG). These projects would be achieved in the briefest time slot of 4 months, and I submitted what I thought was a modest budget.⁵ In February 2008 I passed the initial round of offers and so proceeded to contact the director of the RTG. The political situation in Guinea is such that many government appointments are brief, and the average tenure of a Minister, much less a director, one would assume, is less than 12 months. Needless to say, my emails to the last known Director of the RTG bounced back, so I contacted the members of the Mande Studies Association for their assistance. I received a reply from Seydouba Cissé who suggested that the BNG would be a very willing partner in my project. I was provided with the email address of the current Director, Dr Baba Cheick Sylla. Dr Sylla was very amenable to my proposal, and agreed that the BNG would act as my archival partner. In July I was informed that my EAP Major Research Project was approved and in August 2008 I was in Guinea.

My daunting task was to first reconstruct the complete catalogue of Syliphone recordings. Over 14 years I had assembled a fair collection of the discs, however some were in very poor condition whilst there were others I had never seen and had only heard rumours of their existence from record collectors. I had been to Guinea twice before, though not since 2001, and I gave myself only a fair chance of gathering all of the discs.

Upon arriving in Conakry and escaping unscathed through the 'formalities' at Conakry's notorious Gbessia airport, I met my translator, Allen Nyoka, and then with Dr Sylla of the BNG. From the outset Dr Sylla was very supportive. He arranged meetings with musicians, RTG personnel, government ministers, and people associated with the Syliphone label, and I found myself very busy early on. The newly created *Ministère de la Culture, des Arts et Loisirs* became

⁴ British Library. *Endangered Archives Programme*, <<http://www.bl.uk/about/policies/endangeredarch/abouteap.html>> (13 March 2009)

⁵ Whilst the EAP will fund independent researchers they prefer the backing of an institution, and here AFSAAP agreed to act as my Institutional Host. I am very grateful to the former President of AFSAAP, Dr Geoffrey Hawker, for agreeing to this, and to the former AFSAAP Treasurer, Dr Tanya Lyons, who agreed to administer the funds.

involved, and I met with Minister Ifono who threw his complete support behind the project, declaring that it was the number one priority of his Ministry. Jeannot Williams, the lead guitarist with the Sékou Touré-era orchestra Camayenne Sofa, and now a senior journalist in Guinea, took over the media liaison, and a series of interviews on Guinean radio ensued. Riad Chaloub, the vocalist and harmonica player of Camayenne Sofa, and the number 2 in the Ministry of Arts, was also firmly backing the archival project. My days were spent with Dr Sylla in meetings with a broad spectrum of government officials and musicians. I scoured markets and private record collections for Syliphone discs, and as word of my project filtered out the recordings began arriving and my digitising of them commenced. Record players are now very rare in Guinea, so my project was to copy the vinyl recordings to compact disc format. I also scanned and printed the covers, and gave the completed CDs to Dr Sylla.

Each week the archive grew in size, and when it became apparent that it was close to completion Dr Sylla and the Arts Ministry arranged for an official launch. It was to be held at the National Museum and was called the *Exposition du coffret Syliphone*. Jeannot Williams contacted the media and the invitations went out. He even arranged for the RTG to broadcast a commercial advertising the archive launch, and so one day a camera crew arrived at the BNG and filmed Dr Sylla and I miming 'oohs' and 'aahs' as we looked over the Syliphone CDs. There are perhaps four commercials aired on Guinea's only TV station, so this one drew a lot of attention.

The launch was set for September 29. I worked hard to prepare all of the compact discs and clearly recall the morning when I gave Dr Sylla the last of the Syliphone CDs. We shook hands. The collection was now complete. On the morning of the archive launch a huge storm blew in and it rained very heavily. A good sign, I was informed. The crowd gathered and there were many government officials, ambassadors, journalists, musicians, and friends. All of compact discs were put on display, in addition to original vinyl discs and posters I had made which featured some of the great Syliphone cover art. Speeches were made by Dr Sylla, who noted the role of AFSAAP, myself, Minister Ifono, and by Facinet Fofana, the ex-Minister of Energy and Natural Resources and a senior figure of the government. At the end of the ceremony Mr Fofana awarded me a *Diplome d'Honneur*. It was quite an emotional event. I was being congratulated by everyone, being pronounced "a Guinean", and some told me that they were so happy when they had heard of my project that they felt like crying. Others told me they did cry when they saw the archive. When asked, I would often inform people that my 14 years of research on Syliphone wasn't work for me, it was actually a pleasure.

The Syliphone archive was shown at the National Museum for a week, and was then re-shown for another week during Guinea's 50th anniversary celebrations. It is also set to tour Mali through the Ministry of Tourism, and three Guinean



Photo- Graeme Counsel

ministries are now involved. In February 2009 I deposited a copy of the archive with the British Library, thus completing the major part of my EAP project.

After the launch of the archive I focused my efforts on the second part of my project, the digitisation to compact disc format of the reel-to-reel recordings of Syliphone-era musicians held at the sound archive at the RTG. These reels were the actual master tapes of the original studio recordings, and were destined for release on vinyl through the Syliphone label. Most of them, however, were unreleased and they represented an amazing archive of undiscovered material. Though I had the support of the RTG archive head, Mme Yayé Haby Barry, it took several weeks for the paperwork to come through. It is not easy getting access to the RTG, it's a heavily protected building with armed soldiers at the gates. I was finally given approval to access the material, and I discovered rooms in the RTG archive that I never knew existed, rooms full of reel-to-reels. In 2001 I was shown a hand written catalogue of their holdings, which amounted to some 50 reels of material. Now I had discovered perhaps 600 reels alone of *musique moderne*, with many unreleased recordings by the national orchestras. The bulk of the recordings, however, focused on the federal orchestras, with the earliest recordings from 1963. It was a dirty and dusty job to winkle out the reels from the shelves, where they had sat for years, and I set up my recording studio and began copying as many of them as I could. On a good day I could copy 5 reels. I began to see first hand how desperately in need of archiving the reels were. Any reel recorded prior to 1965 usually broke when played and had to be repaired many times, for the tape had become brittle. Any reel recorded between 1965 and 1970 usually broke when re-wound and also had to be repaired, though tapes after 1970 were in a reasonable condition. I copied some truly rare and incredible music at the RTG, with some examples being 1963



Dr. Graeme Counsel with staff of the Ministère de la Culture des Arts et Loisirs at the presentation of the *Palme Académique en Or*. To his left is Dr Sylla, Directeur of the Bibliothèque Nationale de Guinée, and to his right is Minister Ifono.

Photo- Graeme Counsel

recordings by the Orchestre Honoré Coppet (an early member of the Syli Orchestre National), 1963 recordings by Orchestre de la Paillote, 1964 recordings by the Orchestre de la Garde Républicaine 1ère formation, an unreleased 1988 album-length reel by Balla et ses Balladins, and many recordings by great Federal Orchestras such as Manden Könö, Kébando Jazz, and Kaloum Star. CD copies of these recordings, over 100 reels, were given to the RTG archive and will also be housed at the British Library.

I worked at the RTG archives 6 days a week, copying as many reels as I could. Eventually, however, I ran out of time. 600 plus reels presents a lengthy archival project, and my 4 month window had proved too short. Furthermore, I had discovered that at the RTG offices in rural Guinea many more reels await digitisation. I am applying for further funding in 2009 to complete this aspect of the archival project. A few weeks before I left Guinea I was informed that I was receiving a medal in recognition of my work on the Syliphone archive. The Guinean government through the *Ministère de la Culture, des Arts et Loisirs*, awarded me the medal of the *Palme Académique en Or*, Guinea's highest civilian honour, and on the day before I flew back to Australia I received it.

Since then, much has changed. President Conté, who had ruled Guinea in a dictatorial manner akin to his predecessor, and who had been infirm for many years, died on December 22 2008. Shortly after a bloodless coup installed Capt. Moussa Camara as head of state. Minister Ifono has been replaced by Justin Morel Jnr. in the newly created *Ministère de la Culture et de l'Information*. Morel was a journalist and leading figure in the Syliphone era, and was responsible for the annotations to many of the Syliphone discs. This augurs well for Syliphone related research, as does President Camara's commitment to democracy and fair elections. Given Guinea's history of authoritarian rule and political disenfranchisement, however, the future is very uncertain.

To access the Syliphone archive of vinyl discs digitised to compact disc format please contact Dr Baba Cheick Sylla, Directeur, Bibliothèque Nationale de Guinée, via email at sbabacheick@yahoo.fr. To access the archive of RTG reel-to-reels digitised to compact disc format contact Mme Yayé Haby Barry, Chef Service Documentation, Archives RTG, at byayehaby@yahoo.fr. Both archives are only available on site and for research purposes only. Copying of material is not permitted. Guinean reports on the Syliphone archive can be found at http://www.justinmorel.net/index.php?id=33&no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=331&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=2, <http://www.tamsirnews.com/archive807.htm>, and <http://www.guineefest.com/cinquante%20ans%20de%20melody.htm>,

Both archival collections are held at the British Library. To access them please visit the British Library's web site at <http://www.bl.uk/>.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Flora Veit – Wild, *Writing Madness: Borderlines of the Body in African Literature*. Oxford, James Currey; Harare, Weaver Press; Johannesburg, Jacana Media; Hollywood, CA, African Academic Press; 2006. pp. v +155, B/W Photos, Bibliography and Index. ISBN 0-85255-583-0 (James Currey paper).

Flora Veit-Wild studies the diachronic evolution that the concept of madness as a trope has undergone in narratives on Africa and about Africans, from the colonisers' texts of the colonial era to the most modern film representations of traditional folktales in Africa. She acknowledges in her introduction that "madness speaks from outside reason" and is "analysed as part of the unconscious", and is therefore "seen as akin to literary imagination" (p.1). Hence her theoretical frame has been informed by the works of Laing, Foucault, Derrida, Lacan and Kristeva. In addition to the psychoanalytic approach and the apprehension of the relationship between literature and madness, she enriches her work by the idea of "reading the bodily symptoms as textual images." (p.1) Here she relies on the results of feminist researchers such as Jones, Michie, Jacobus, Bordo and Curti who worked out the paradigm of "writing the body", including the aspect of "writing madness" developed by Showalter, Gallop and Felman, and the idea of the "monstrous body" introduced by Curti. She shows how Frantz Fanon's works about the psyche of the colonised subject have been the launching pad for the postcolonial theories of Edward Said and Homi Bhabha.

The author observes, however, that apart from the historical and anthropological studies on Africa regarding madness in the context of rituals and rites of passage, there was no other scholarly research on the subject in, for example, the literary field, least of all in the Anglophone African literature. So she consistently and coherently sieves her reading of different types of Anglophone and Francophone African texts through theories emerging from different disciplines such as the literary by Bhabha and Bakhtin, the feminists noted above, and the anthropological works by Turner and Douglas, along with the psychoanalytical approach already mentioned. A thorough reading of Veit-Wild's work will show how she perceives madness as a trope and works out enlightening conclusions for researchers, scholars, teachers and students from different fields of knowledge by intertwining concepts such as "borderline", "liminality", "betwixt and between", "dirt and filth", "body liquids", "secretions and excrements", "grotesque realism", "elements of pollution", "orifices and apertures", "grotesque body", "contamination", "gender roles", "social order" and "carnival".

Although Veit-Wild introduces from the first pages of this book her definitions and explanations about the way she perceives and understands madness, her

cornerstone is Sontag's affirmation about the relativity regarding the definition of the concept of madness, depending as it does on the historical moments and the social communities involved.

She begins, in the first chapter, with the study of the way madness was perceived in the colonial era, and gives examples of the fear that the colonialists experience towards the African other, in addition to their need to underscore the superiority of the white race by measuring the brain and classifying the mind of the African as inferior. Having in mind the idea of relativity, in the second chapter the author focuses on the difficulties that the concept of madness undergoes when it comes to the translation from the African indigenous system of knowledge on madness to the European medical discourse on mental maladies. She resorts to the work of the white medical doctor Wulf Sachs (*Black Hamlet: The Mind of an African Negro Revealed by Psychoanalysis*), which she considers a good example of a "borderline" text that stands "in-between" medicine and literature, where the psyche of the black healer as a patient is the object of the study of the white doctor.

In chapter three, the author brings forward the concept of Surrealism and the psychic bases from which it has sprung as an important literary movement. She reviews the ideas and works of European and African intellectuals such as Rimbaud, Senghor, Césaire, and Tchicaya U Tam'si. The unconsciousness, spontaneity and freedom that sprouts from dreams, myths, and irrational states of mind produced writings that only the African mind could produce without any effort. This drove the European gaze to African writings, a trend that Africans took advantage of to revive the "authentic" African personality and to counter-attack the colonial discourse.

In chapters four, five and six, Veit-Wild underlines the power of the written word to fight against the violence of colonial oppression. The most effective words are those engaged with "obscene speech" and other concepts that she presents from different texts to shed light on the fascinating "terrible beauty", the "literary shock treatment", "the blasphemous", "the grotesque body", "the Carnavalesque Universe", "the verbal absurdities and alogisms," and the "Menippean Satire" of the African poetic expressions of madness, such as those found in the works by Dambudza Marechera of Zimbabwe, Lesego Rampolokeng of South Africa and Sony Labou Tansi of the Congo.

Her contribution in the seventh chapter deserves attention since she comes to grips with oral culture, studying folk tales, social relationships, rituals, songs, dance, folklore, taboos, stone carvings, engravings and myths. The bulk of examples in this section of her research shows that there is a direct relationship between the body and the social order, and emphasizes some aspects of borderline concepts such as "the unclean", "the ugly", "hysteria", and "the grotesque organs" (more specifically here the genitals, the bodily liquids, the

menopausal woman, “the dancing penis”, “the walking vagina”, “the wandering womb”, and other bodily matters from old European and African communities). According to the author, the re-evaluation of these elements in the case of African societies and the representation of the bodily boundaries in the cultural texts “can be read as one form of writing madness.” (p126)

Chapter eight serves as a way of concentrating her attention on the literary works by Bessie Head, Tsitsi Dangaremba and Rebeka Njau who write about the different aspects of the mental illnesses of African women. Veit-Wild shows that these writers give a voice to those patients whom Frantz Fanon forgot to include in his works on the mental effects of colonisation in the African mind. Similarly, in order to work out her ideas on the fragmented female body and the borderlines between the body and the mind, in the last chapter the author tackles Dangaremba’s film *Mother’s Day*, where a mother is brutally mutilated by her husband.

The highest achievement of Veit-Wild in this work is the result that she gets from confronting the diachronically mapped vision of the discourse on madness with the synchronic network produced in each historical moment by European or by African authors.

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NOTES

Habari kwa Ufupi

The African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific has begun publishing an occasional newsletter called Habari kwa Ufupi (Swahili for News in Brief). This is emailed to all AFSAAP members as a word document. Contributions under 50 words can be sent to david.lucas@anu.edu.au

AFSAAP Postgraduate Essay Prize winners

The AFSAAP 2008 Annual Conference Postgraduate Essay Prize was won by Matthew Doherty, for the paper “Subsistence amid turmoil: Daily life in Central Africa during the rubber plunder”; and also Tarekegn Chimdi, for the paper “Systematic repression and rampant human rights abuses against the Oromo people in Ethiopia”. Details of the postgraduate prize are available from the AFSAAP website www.afsaap.org.au

Women and Empire, 1750-1939

The research project that Dr. Liz Dimock has been working on since 2003 has at last been published as a volume on Africa in a five-volume series titled *Women and Empire, 1750-1939*. Published by Routledge in London, New

York and Tokyo in January 2009, the series comprises a selection of primary sources with a general introduction and introductory notes to the sources. Volume I is on Australia and is edited by Susan Martin (also from La Trobe University), Volume II on New Zealand is by Caroline Daley, **Volume III is on Africa**, Volume IV on India is by Cheryl Cassidy and Volume V on Canada is by Cecily Devereux. The series is only available as a whole.

Forthcoming Book Publication on Zimbabwe

Finex Ndhlovu has written “The Politics of Language and Nation Building in Zimbabwe” which will be published by Peter Lang International Publishers for the Africa in Development Series. This book examines the exclusion of minority languages (and their speakers) from the mainstream domains of everyday social life in postcolonial Zimbabwe. It considers forces of hegemonic nation building, subtle cultural oppression and a desire for linguistic uniformity as major factors contributing to the social exclusion of Zimbabweans from language groups other than Shona and Ndebele. The book interprets the various forms of language-based exclusion exercised by Shona and Ndebele language speakers over minority groups as constituting a form of linguistic imperialism. Contrary to the popular view that English is Zimbabwe’s ‘killer language’, which should be replaced by selected indigenous languages that are perceived as more nationally ‘authentic’ and better grounded in both pre- and post-imperial framework, this book argues that linguistic imperialism has very little to do with whether the dominating language is ‘foreign’ or ‘indigenous’. The author deracializes the notion of linguistic imperialism and shows it to be an ideology of language-based domination that transcends the traditional dichotomy between indigenous and foreign languages. The book makes two significant contributions. First, drawing on insights from hegemony theory and critical discourse analysis, it provides an innovative conceptualization of the intersection of language, nation building and social exclusion in multilingual contexts. The second contribution is empirical. Contrary to traditional language policy research that often relies on the views of ‘big’ men and women (mainly the political elite and speakers of ‘major’ languages), this book is based on the voices of ethnic minorities and marginalized sections of the Zimbabwean society. The author discusses oral submissions from minority language speakers, language experts, policy-makers and educators. While the focus is specifically on the politics of language and identity in Zimbabwe, this case study is used as an entry point into the complexity of identity and nation building in postcolonial Africa.

Note: Contributions to the notes section here should be submitted to the editor by April and October of each year. Contributions can include for example -

- Field Notes of 1000-2000 words: any African field work experiences or observations that would make an interesting contribution to the field of African studies. Please submit any photos that might be relevant.
- Short notes / news / comments on reports 300-1000 words
- Postgraduate research outlines from students and/or their supervisors in the Australasia region.

ARAS GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

The Australasian Review of African Studies aims to contribute to a better understanding of Africa in Australasia and the Pacific. It is a fully refereed inter-disciplinary journal that seeks to provide critical, authoritative and accessible material on a range of African affairs that is interesting and readable to as broad an audience as possible, both academic and non-academic.

The Australasian Review of African Studies (ARAS) is published by the African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific (AFSAAP) twice a year in June and December. As the only journal in Australia devoted to African affairs ARAS aims to maintain an accepted and respected focus for the academic study of Africa in Australia. The ARAS is available to all members of the African Studies Association of Australia and the Pacific as part of their membership. Membership is open to anyone interested in African affairs, and the annual subscription is modest.

ARAS will consider for publication:

- Scholarly articles: original, research-based articles between 1000-6000 words. Please include all relevant material such as graphs, maps and tables.
- Generalist articles, opinion pieces or debates between 1000-6000 words, relevant to African studies, African politics, society, economics, religion, literature or other relevant areas of interest to AFSAAP members.
- Field Notes of 1000-2000 words: any African field work experiences or observations that would make an interesting contribution to the field of African studies. Please submit any photos that might be relevant.
- Book reviews between 300-1000 words.
- Review Essays between 1000-2000 words
- Short notes / news / comments on reports 300-1000 words

For all contributions please use the Chicago style referencing system (Footnotes, and include a bibliography in alphabetical order). Full details and guidelines for authors available from www.afsaap.org.au/ARAS/ARAS.htm

The Deadline for Submissions to

Vol 30 No. 2 June 2009 – A Special Edition on Africa and the World

- Submit articles for peer review before July 1st 2009 and submit all Notes and News before September 15th 2009 to ARAS editor editor@afsaap.org.au
- All book reviews should be completed and sent to the reviews editor Geoffrey Hawker editor@afsaap.org.au before September 15th 2009.

Further deadlines are posted on the AFSAAP website www.afsaap.org.au



The African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific (AFSAAP)

The African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific (AFSAAP) welcomes new members of the association. Formed in 1979, AFSAAP is the Asia-Pacific region's peak representative body on African studies, with over 150 members from many diverse areas of research and representation.

AFSAAP's principal aims and objectives are:

- to promote research and teaching of African Studies in Australia and the Pacific;
- to facilitate contact among scholars and students in the field of African Studies through conferences, regional meetings, and publications;
- to coordinate African Studies programs and the acquisition of African materials by Australian and Pacific libraries;
- to contribute towards an understanding of Africa in the community at large;
- to serve as the professional body representing Africanists' interests to governments and the community;
- and to establish contact with African universities and scholars, other overseas scholars and African Studies associations, and to promote interchanges with them.

AFSAAP members receive regular email bulletins advising of conferences, employment and research opportunities, new publications, and events related to the broad topic of African Studies. Members also receive copies of the Association's peer-reviewed journal, *The Australasian Review of African Studies*, in addition to the regular newsletter, *Habari kwa Uupi*.

AFSAAP's web site features a range of useful information and links, including downloadable copies of *The Australasian Review of African Studies*, information on forthcoming AFSAAP conferences (including papers and abstracts from previous conferences), a clickable map of Africa with links to AFSAAP members with regional expertise, contact information for the AFSAAP executive members, plus a host of other resources.

For further information and for details on how to join the association, please visit the AFSAAP web site – www.afsaap.org.au