Cosmologies of Madness: Exploring Representations of Madness in Contemporary African Literary and Cultural Texts

By

Kundai Watson Fingson

2020490393

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (with Specialisation in English) in the Department of English of the University of the Free State.

Supervisor: Dr Kudzayi M. Ngara

Co-supervisor: Prof Oliver Nyambi

November 2024

Cosmologies of Madness: Exploring Representations of Madness in Contemporary African Literary and Cultural texts.

Kundai Watson Fingson

Key Words

Madness

African Cosmology

Ritual Archives Theory

Critical Psychology Theory

Mental Illness

Ritual Mothering

Ogbanje

IsiLimela

Ngozi

Queerness

Abstract

This study recentres the marginalised African cosmology to explore depictions of madness in seven contemporary African literary and filmic texts. The selected texts are *Digging Stars* (Tshuma, 2023), *Glory* (Bulawayo, 2023), *How Beautiful We Were* (Mbue, 2021), *The Death of Vivek Oji* (Emezi, 2020), *State of Mind* (Chin'ono, 2018), *Freshwater* (Emezi, 2018), *A Crazy Hope* (Berda, 2015). A majority of these texts conceptualise madness centralising specific Africa cultural, spiritual and ritual epistemologies to contest different colonial and postcolonial hegemonies. This is a connection that has not been theoretically established in extant literary analysis of madness in African texts. An African cosmology has been marginally conceptualised in these extant texts in that it is not the primary focus of reading but is treated as a theme that arises in different contexts of texts. Consequently, I applied Toyin Falola's *Ritual Archives* (2017) concept, Hook's *Critical Psychology* (2013) and various decolonial concepts to sufficiently appreciate, and critique African cosmological concepts fictionalised by writers in challenging both Western epistemological dominance and hegemonic distortions of African cultures. Such distorted and dominant cultures cause various sociopolitical crisis that these novels depict. Various concepts used by the novelists reveal a nexus between the (re)awakened emphasis on African cultural concepts and the objective to reimagine political organisation, nationalist politics, ethnopolitics, sexual identities (queerness) and approaches to mental health care in postcolonial Africa. These objectives to redefining these core concepts of being sometimes take the shape of regenerative, eschatological and reincarnation narratives that depict the rebirth of African narratives, deities and cosmologies whose human careers are mad or erroneously diagnosed as mad in Eurocentric psychiatry. The madness of these characters is often a result of metaphysical manifestations or psychopolitical injuries that initiate African cosmological, cultural and sociopolitical regeneration. I also analyse two documentary representations of psychiatric and mental illness health care crisis in selected postcolonial African nations to interrogate cultural influences in the treatments or worsening of mental illnesses in these nations. This aspect of my study provides insightful navigation of the field of psychotrauma in Africa, particularly in Zimbabwe and French speaking West Africa. The conclusion I arrive at is that there are significant political questions, philosophical and decolonial literary positions articulated through these texts' Afro-cosmologically hinged depictions of madness. Chief among these is the objective to rethink the marginality of black bodies, African generated concepts of madness, and other knowledge systems in the contemporary world.

Declaration

I, Kundai Watson Fingson, declare that the thesis **Cosmologies of Madness: Exploring Representations of Madness in Contemporary African Literary and Cultural Texts** that I herewith submit for the Doctoral Degree with Specialisation in English at the University of the Free State, is my independent work, and that I have not previously submitted it for a qualification at another institution of higher education.

K. W. Fingson November 2024

English Department

Acknowledgments

To my son, Kimi, I thank you for letting me miss parts of your infancy to pursue this dream. Mama Kimi, “you always made it clear, that you would be there with me in this 8-year affair”

I would like to give my unreserved gratitude to my Supervisor Dr Kudzayi Ngara for your availability from the beginning of the journey, through Covid delays, to the end. Your humanity and intellect are unparalleled.

My co-supervisor Prof. Oliver Nyambi, thank you for all the assistance, conferences and conversations.

The Department of English leadership, Dr Nonhlanhla Dlamini, Prof. Irikidzayi Manase and Prof. Rodwell Makombe, thank you for all the resources and opportunities you availed for the completion of this study.

Dr Chidora my mentor and friend.

My father and namesake, and my mother, thank you for everything that went into this project.

My brothers, the debt can never be repaid.

My friends from Qwaqwa campus.

And above all, God.

Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction: Background, Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Literary Background

African Cosmologies of Madness and Westocentric Framings

Madness is a recurring metaphor and an area of varied research interpretations in African literature and literature in general. In African literature, the metaphoric uses and readings of madness adopt, contest and problematise multiple literary, philosophical, cultural and psychiatric discourses as historically experienced in Africa, and elsewhere. Madness as a subject matter subverts various disciplinary boundaries (Felman, 2003) hence the intersections and convergences. In literature, the most dominant theoretical frameworks are feminist critiques which perceive madness as either, subversive (Gilbert & Guba, 2020) or valorisation of female silence (Caminero-Santangelo, 1998). As a psychiatric discourse in Africa, on the other hand, madness is historically implicated in colonial constructions of the other and the epistemological ethnocentrism which excluded African conceptualisations of madness from the corpus of knowledge. The discourse of madness, to service colonial hegemonies and colonial psychiatric practice, functioned to epistemologically construct Africans as biologically inferior and the continent as a mad place (Akyeampong, et al., 2015) (Fabian, 2000). The decolonisation of African nations which culminated in African postcoloniality brought multiple interrogations of the discourses of madness and psychiatric care in Africa. Most notably, Fanon's (1963) psychopolitical approach challenged colonial psychiatry deeming colonial hegemonies purveyors for psychiatric hospitals. While African literature, in its present iteration as written text, is ostensibly marked by a synchronicity with the colonial and postcolonial moment, using these historical contexts as starting points to define madness and its conceptualisations in Africa, and African literature is remiss. Using colonial and postcolonial definitions overlooks resilient precolonial African cosmologies which are indispensable to the conceptualisation of madness in the focal African literary texts. Consequently, I centre African cosmological concepts to explore how the literary depiction of madness and its variable use as psychiatric discourse in African documentary films interrogates and problematises the contemporary African socio-political terrain and colonial epistemological formations.

Various scholars have defined madness as a psychological departure from societal norms/reality and there seems to be a consensus that there are cultural and contextual differences in the conceptualisation of madness around the world (Veit-Wild, 2006) (Reid, 2002). For instance, Reid explains that the term madness may signify "a physical disease, a brain dysfunction, a deluge of passion, divine intervention, possession, repression or the consequence of environmental stress" (2002, p. 15). Veit-Wild acknowledges that "anthropological studies on Africa have touched on the issue of madness in the context of possession rituals or the treatment of mental illness in African societies" (2006, p. 2). Despite acknowledging such African cultural perceptions, however, her study of madness in African literature gravitates towards Eurocentric psychological conceptualisations in attributing writing madness to "the process of Western education and acculturation" which "opened sensitive minds to new dimensions of perception and lucidity [that] is at the base of many of the finest examples of African literature" (Veit-Wild, 2006, p. 54). This formulation reiterates colonial thought that "presumed aetiology of schizophrenia [among Africans] as a disorder arising from the stresses of civilization" (Read, et al., 2015, p. 79). Contrary to Veit-Wild's formulation, I concur with Roger Kurtz' coinage of "the African moral imagination" of trauma in African literature, that "African literature reflects a cosmology rooted in a communal identity that values reconciliation and features traditional mechanisms for repairing harm" (2021, p. 117). This is my reading of madness in contemporary African literary texts. I discuss the cosmological aspects of madness in African literature that such dominant African literary monographs such as Veit-Wild (2006) and Chigwedere (2015) theoretically marginalise by privileging Westocentric psychological formulations.

Despite their monographs' significant contribution to the literary field of postcolonial critical psychology in understanding the fictionalisation of madness, they fail to ground them in the African cosmologies that clearly inform or are expressed in many African literary texts as I will show in this section and the literature review. Their realisation of the theoretical insufficiency of Western generated models in reading African literature is not accompanied by a critical theorisation of African cultural ways of understanding of madness. Such approaches' weaknesses are twofold; they sometimes reveal aspects of epistemological ethnocentrism, and they are limited in scope to sufficiently explore African ways of being. I argue that such approaches are contested by a cosmological reading of African literary texts since it theoretically foregrounds the African rituals, cosmologies and philosophies used in the literary depiction of madness.

I have selected the following literary and cultural texts for their cosmological orientation on madness: *Digging Stars* (Tshuma, 2023), *Glory* (Bulawayo, 2023), *How Beautiful We Were* (Mbue, 2021), *The Death of Vivek Oji* (Emezi, 2020), *State of Mind* (Chin'ono, 2018), *Freshwater* (Emezi, 2018), *A Crazy Hope* (Berda, 2015). As Karmakar and Chetty (2023), argue about the madman in one of the focal texts, *How Beautiful We Were* (Mbue, 2020),

> Konga's defiance can essentially be read as an act of what Mignolo terms "epistemic disobedience"—a form of disobedience that challenges the hegemonic ideologies and structures and the discourses associated with them (p. 138).

While these two scholars admittedly limit the epistemic disobedience to the madman's specific act of staging a revolution against a White neo-colonialist corporation operating in fictional Cameroon, I will argue that Mbue's depiction of madness from a strictly African cosmological perspective positions madness as consistent epistemic disobedience to colonial ideology. Mbue uses madness to re-invoke the contemporarily forgotten African cosmologies and ritual archives to formulate epistemically different ways of resisting colonial and postcolonial subjugation of African people, cultures and epistemologies. This does not imply that an African cosmology is merely conjured in opposition to Western ethnocentrism. What the West condemns in its imperialistic quest to assert its superiority are African cultures and cosmologies which are often organic to African authors (Mbembe, 2001). Similarly, some of my focal texts use madness to philosophically interrogate the geopolitical and epistemological inequalities that continue to deliberately undermine African humanity and conceptual frameworks in the contemporary global order.

Notably, this disregard for African cosmologies, specifically in psychological discourses can be traced back to nineteenth century Western philosophers as Hegel, and psychological theorists such as Carl Jung and Sigmund Freud. Hegel claimed that "in Negro life, the characteristic point is that consciousness has not yet attained to any substantial objective existence" (1900, p. 93). Freud, using racist vocabulary of "primitive races" and "animalism", echoed Hegel's racial sentiments stating that,

> we can thus judge the so-called savage and semi-savage races; their psychic life assumes a peculiar interest for us, for we can recognize in their psychic life a well-preserved, early stage of our own development (1918, pp. 1 - 2).

Both Hegel and Freud were arguing that history had been static in Africa and other so-called "primitive" races. After observing these racialised orientations of imperialistic psychology, Fanon candidly states that "Freud and Adler and even the cosmic Jung did not think of the

Negro in all their investigations" (Fanon, 1952, p. 117). In other words, their "theories about the African mind were abstract: their inventors had no direct contact with the people about whom they wrote" (McCulloch, 1995, p. 46). The west, motivated by the ethnocentric ideologies of imperialism and constructions of its self-image, simultaneously disregarded African/Negro psychologies and generated psychological concepts and theories to prove Africa's supposed biological inferiority and insignificance to psychological enquiry. Traditional psychoanalysis and trauma theory are some of the concepts which are historically implicated in Western othering discourses of equating non-Western races to neurotics and perpetual children (ibid). Fanon's psychopolitical approach significantly interrogates Eurocentric psychological and psychiatric vocabularies for their non-coverage of Africans' harsh experiences of race in colonial Africa. As argued by Laubscher et al, it involves "a rigorous and non-retreating critique of who and what was being excluded by such vocabularies of analysis, which of course entails an omnipresent awareness of the racism perpetuated by such vocabularies" (2021, p. 7). A psychopolitical theoretical framework, therefore, reinserts black people and their historical experiences into mainstream psychology and psychiatric practice. Gibson (2021) correctly characterises Fanon' writing as decolonizing madness because of its thorough interrogation of the black man's experience of coloniality. Introducing Fanon's, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), Sartre depicts a postcolonial epoch that is inevitably a nervous condition. Sartre here introduces Fanon's psychopolitical approach which accounted for the racism related trauma and psychic alienation that colonisation inflicted on its African subjects. Zimbabwean author, Tsitsi Dangarembga's novel, *Nervous Conditions* (Dangarembga, 1988) fictionalises the nervous breakdown suffered by a young Zimbabwean girl as a result of the sociopolitical organisation in the Rhodesian colony. The young girl, Nyasha, experiences this psychological breakdown in response to the erosion of her cultural beliefs which reconfigures her relationships with her parents and the spaces occupied by women in her family. This symbolises one of the psychologically damaging ways in which Africans experienced coloniality.

Despite Fanon's interventions and the use of the psychopolitical framework in various critical works on African literary texts, however, African knowledge systems concerning madness remain fairly marginal. Derek Hook's *Critical Psychology* (2013) volume observes a similar lack of integration of African knowledge systems in African postcolonial psychiatry. The political and philosophical meanings captured within the cosmological features are thus significantly watered down. This is the case even in monographs and doctoral theses, such as

Veit-Wild's (2006) and Chigwedere's (2015), that purport to give these cosmologies attention. Despite their admissions to the cultural relativity of madness, there is an apparent reluctance to theorise African cultural components to create a wider framework in which to situate the fictionalisation of madness. An African cosmological theorisation of different African conceptualisations of madness as ritual/archive, disease and an oral sociopolitical device, to mention a few, is, therefore, of utmost urgency because, as these Westocentric approaches to madness in African literature succinctly demonstrate, we reside in a world "where the spectre of colonization and the challenges of decolonization hauntingly abide the present, and where Black bodies remain struck into the racist coin of hypervisibility and invisibility" (Laubscher, et al., 2021, p. 1). While I will sufficiently define an African cosmology of madness in the following subsections, I argue at this point that the texts I have selected reclaim spaces for the visibility of African and postcolonial bodies by reimagining their cosmologies to articulate contemporary African sociopolitical realities and possible solutions.

Literary discourses on madness in African literature largely maintain, to use Tonya Haynes' terminology, a "Westocentric framing" (2012, p. 65). I will interrogate a few examples of such Westocentric framing. Among the prominent writers to deploy madness in African literature in English are Nadine Gordimer, Dorris Lessing, Bessie Head and Dambudzo Marechera[1]. The first three authors have been discussed from a feminist perspective, making insightful contributions to the canon of madness. Their respective writings against misogyny and racism in apartheid South African and Rhodesian colonial settlements (Bazin, 1992) and the pitfalls of postcolonial politics in the case of Marechera are understood as subversive writings (Veit-Wild & Chennells, 1999). Despite their different racial and gender categories, these authors, like their mad characters, occupied marginalised spaces in the racially and sexually hierarchised political milieus of colonial Africa. The marginality of their mad characters concurs with Felman's theorisation that "madness occupies a position of *exclusion;* it is the *outside* of a culture" (2003, p. 13). They challenged and sometimes reproduced their contemporary sociopolitical hegemonic ideologies by fictionalising madness as a metaphor of refusal to fit within any authorised dominant identity constructs. For instance, while their white women characters were claiming space for themselves by writing madness, they were simultaneously projecting their own insecurities onto black men and women who, in their

[1] Nadine Gordimer – *July 's People* (1981), Doris Lessing – *The Grass is Singing* (1950), Bessie Head – *A Question of Power* (1974), Dambudzo Marechera – *The House of Hunger* (1978).

fictions, possess the biological/psychological inferiority outlined in colonial psychiatry as mental deficiency. Veit-Wild (2006) identifies these contradictions in the writing of madness in post/colonial fictions by identifying how writers like Marechera were "often projecting their Oedipal insecurities onto the feminine" (Gaylard, 2007, p. 179). Therefore, while madness does recur in African literature to emphasise marginality, it neither has a homogenous function nor definition since there exists different hierarchies, dimensions and experiences of institutionalised marginalisation in post/colonial African and the contemporary world. This is a very pertinent issue to contextualise the argued subversive function of madness in African literature in that we have to be aware of the African human, psychological and cultural categories marginalised in both the fictionalisation and in existing analyses of literary madness.

Through the madness of their characters, and therefore marginality in intra-white hierarchies, Gordimer and Lessing's writing was profoundly reimagining post/colonial nationhood and national identities which often did not include black African on an equal footing. Yelin's (1998) reading of these authors' works which features Freudian psychological theories, alerts us to their artistic involvement in the imagination of their national identities despite occupying geographical, gendered and political margins of Empire. This illustrates the profound utility of the metaphor of madness in political (re)imagination. While Yelin focuses on these authors' negotiations for national identity, I primarily pay attention to the fact that their literary output inevitably conveys white women's visions for colonial and postcolonial Africa. Central to their texts is the white woman's psyche in the colonial world, as both an insider and outsider and, thus, a psychically and physically identity endangered by the madness ensuing clashes between white male domination and the obscure terrifying figure of the colonised. Lessing's writing and personal life is characterised by departures from colonial outposts and returns to the metropolis, symbolising an escape from insanity to sanity. The neurotic fragmentation that Maureen suffers in *July's People* (Gordimer, 1981) is represented as the fragmentation of the society which ironically diagnoses her with the madness yet fails to see the same of itself (Bazin, 1995). Their white characters, Gordimer's in particular, psychologically break down under the weight of the historical and sociopolitical realities created by colonial politics resulting in their departures. While the critique of colonial establishments as madness is insightful, the psychological experiences of black people, especially women, are not equally developed in these fictions. In their fictionalisation of madness, one therefore sees an unequal visioning of post/colonial nations and national identities which especially focalises the "tenuous location of white women in the nations they inhabit" (Yelin, 1998, p. 147).

Clearly, there are marginalised aspects in the fictionalisation of madness in different African literary texts. What is central to my thesis, however, is the marginality of African cosmological concepts in the analysis of many Black African authored narratives. For instance, Veit-Wild (2006), dully credited as the foremost scholar of madness in African literature (Gaylard, 2007), pigeonholes her selected African writers into psycho-political, feminist, or postcolonial frameworks which entirely misses the cultural angles of analysis. In unison with Western theories of psychology such as psychoanalysis and colonial psychiatry, she also employs such theoretical frameworks as postmodernism to explain the experimental writing techniques used by African writers such as Dambudzo Marechera. The overriding theme of her reading is captured in the declaration; "the political situation in Africa is so full of absurdities, monstrosities, and gross aberrations that it *demands* a literary response reflecting the innermost madness of this very situation and the structures ruling it" (Veit-Wild, 2006, p. 2 my emphasis). Though her study concedes to the multiple historical layers of madness in African literature, this statement encapsulates Veit-Wild's dim view of postcolonial Africa which, to her, demands representation through the metaphor of madness. It is from this that writing madness is understood as characteristic of postcolonial realities and as an indictment of colonial practices and the postcolonial ethos of African political establishments. Undoubtedly, the histories of postcolonial African nations have been conducive grounds for chaos and psychic fragmentation which is reflected in various ways in the literature of both colonial and post-colonial epochs. Although it is a fair assessment that the literature termed "*Writing Madness*" by Veit-Wild (2006) is characterised by an affinity to fictionalise anguish, obscenity and psychic fragmentation resulting from the sociopolitical turmoil, a non-Westocentric analytical approach yields different literary and political meanings from the ones arrived at by Veit-Wild. Whereas Veit-Wild limits madness to a metaphor demanded by the absurdities and gross aberration of African political structures, a cosmological reading unveils the ancestral interventions that madness communicates to reorient African polities towards African political philosophy and more habitable imaginings of nationhood and society.

Literary critics also pay attention to authors' documented and assumed histories of psychiatric breakdown. In some instances, authors themselves are psychoanalysed since some authors from the colonial and postcolonial era probably succumbed to madness. For example, the institutionalisation of Bessie Head is well documented and discussed by literary critics who read her novel *A Question of Power* (1974) as semi-autobiographical (Young, 2010) (Bazin, 1995). Marechera is another author whose behaviour attracts a lot of attention from critics. Due

to his tramping lifestyle in both Harare and London and some autobiographic elements which portray a possible nervous breakdown in his novella *The House of Hunger* (Marechera, 1978), quite a number of critics have speculated about his in/sanity (Veit-Wild, 2006) (Veit-Wild & Chennells, 1999) (Wylie, 1991). To Veit-Wild, Marechera's personal insanity or lack of it does not change the fact that by writing madness in his fictions, he displayed "extraordinary powers of insight and imagination" (2006, p. 60). Interestingly, Veit-Wild's recent memoir, *They Called you Dambudzo* (2021), insinuates that Marechera may have suffered Borderline Personality Disorder and marginalises the fact that Marechera's brother explained that he was haunted by a family *Ngozi*[2]. This exemplifies one of the epistemic disparities that I seek to address in this thesis. The differences here are that, while Veit-Wild's psychoanalytic vocabulary restricts itself to Marechera's childhood and in the process marginalises cosmological conceptualisations existing outside psychoanalysis, a cosmological approach interrogates issues beyond Marechera as a physical entity. I critique the use of Western psychological models on the basis of their reductive conceptualisation "of the human being solely as a material entity, and use [of] strictly rational means to understand a person's condition" (Metz, 2017, p. 801), which in this case, blatantly sustains the epistemological inequalities that an African cosmological reading contests. A cosmological approach recognises malevolent spirits and aspects of the African world they convey. Though psychoanalysis and trauma are relevant to African literature, it is misleading to continue to ignore African cosmologies.

The idea of psychoanalysing authors is Foucauldian in origin since it was Foucault who discussed authors and artists as recipients and amplifiers of those "barely audible" voices of an age which are so "foreign to the experiences of their contemporaries" (1965, p. 281). The trope of a writer of madness as a visionary has been maintained since then. The madman/madwoman character becomes a harbinger of vision or even a ventriloquist of a 'deity' as is shown by most writers of madness in African literature. Madness is therefore celebrated by these authors. Madness emerges as "excess intellectual prowess" and "spiritual superiority" (Brown, 2008, p. 95). Some of the selected literary texts frame madness in this way warranting a reading of their characters in similar framework. My argument will, however, centralise African cosmological

[2] Ngozi is a concept among the Shona speaking people of Zimbabwe which means being haunted by an unrested spirit of a dead person. The concept is acknowledged as a reality in different African cultures, albeit, in different names.

ways of spiritual intervention to sufficiently discover the intersections between African spiritual possession and madness, and to avoid uncritically equating forms of possession to madness. Though I focus on contemporary publications, I maintain here that cosmological tropes have always been present in earlier invocations of madness in literary texts such as *Bones* (Hove, 1987), *Fragments* (Armah, 1974) and *Things Fall Apart* (Achebe, 1978) and has been consistently marginalised due to singular interest in psychopolitical dimensions.

Reconciling psychopolitical features to an African cosmology of madness within it has been the constant weakness of existing research on the fictionalisation of madness in African literature. While madness in African literature is an aesthetic deployed to represent marginalities, its exploration abnegates African cosmologies to its own margins. The marginalisation of African knowledge systems in exploring literary representations of madness is connected to colonial biomedical, anthropological and ethno-psychiatric epistemologies, "which established modes of knowledge production (and knowledge representation) which continue to influence the field of research to this day" (Fabian, 2000). At the centre of such enquiries is a continuing ethnocentrism which does not give precedence to African conceptualisation despite claims that definitions of madness are culturally relative. This is the ethnocentrism I identify in Veit-Wild's seminal text. To contextualise the subversiveness of madness, Gilbert and Guba (2020) conceptualise the European architectural article, the "attic", as symbolising Victorian male oppression as in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1897). However, when it comes to perceiving madness in African literature, Veit-Wild (2006) harnesses anthropological sources and fails to take cognisance of the cultural forms of subversion portrayed in the texts. By harnessing anthropological insights, we are still caught up in the idea of proving that madness does exist in African writing instead of looking at how African writers aestheticize, problematise and theorise their cosmology of madness in their texts to subvert colonial and postcolonial hegemonies. For example, I will refer to Gelfand, who after defining the aspects of madness according to a Shona cosmology finds it important to express his doubts of the African traditional healer's ability to "differentiate between a neurosis and a psychosis" (1967, p. 41) as if these two aspects are the indubitable truths of madness. Veit-Wild (2006) falls into this pitfall in her attempt to prove that madness has always existed in Africa and has been misunderstood through psychological projections of white anthropologists.

There is need to reimagine the discourses of madness in African literature to centralise African cosmological belief systems which have been marginalised. Chigwedere's (2015) doctoral

thesis comes close to re-imagining the discourse of madness from an African cultural perspective though specifically focusing on Zimbabwean literature. On another note, Chigwedere's thesis argues that its intervention aims to reduce the misrepresentation of African cultures by outsiders, like Veit-Wild, without specifying the (mis)representations in Veit-Wild's monograph. An exploration of African cosmological tropes in fictionalising madness does not simply intend to assert their existence but also to analyse "their practical demonstrations" (Chimakonam, 2017, p. 106) as usable theoretical frameworks to interrogate contemporary African realities. These include postcolonial political upheavals, the apparent epistemic inequalities of the contemporary world, gender and sexuality in Africa and the state of postcolonial psychiatry. Chigwedere seems not to theorise these cosmological tropes. I propose to reconcile literary representations of madness in African literature and sociopolitical discourse to an African cosmology. In the absence of anthropology, since it is invested in ethnocentric ideologies (Fabian, 2000), how can we define madness in Africa? I treat the literary text as its own "ritual archive" (Falola, 2017) that traverses, defines and conceptualises the cosmology of madness. This study has two fundamental terms which are madness and cosmology. The most important question to this study is: what is madness from an African perspective and to different African societies, especially as fictionalised in the research's focal texts? Since cosmology is also a defining feature of this research, I will define the term and detail the core aspects of an African cosmology in the following subsection. I answer the question; What is an African cosmology of madness?

My research ostensibly avoids a dichotomised thinking which categorises the world in terms of Africa against the West and cosmological interventions versus neurological science. What is subverted is the singular philosophical and the claimed scientific authority of the latter over the former as signified by the existing non-theorisation of African cosmologies to understand literary depictions of madness. My discussion, though centralising metaphysical aspects, does not preclude neurological science and its practical methologies but presents cosmological positions as "different from but not useless to what modern science does" (Falola, 2017, p. 704). Conceptualising madness as cosmological appreaciates the selected texts's reinvigoration of African epistemologies, traditions and concepts that are often foreclosed in dichotomised approaches. The cosmology of madness includes the physical and the metaphysical aspects of madness which gives a more accurate understanding of African texts. I bring specific focus to the institutions of madness as understood in African cultures and the psychology they reveal about humanhood, contemporary politics and madness itself.

Insights into the African cosmology of madness

Old and contemporary oral traditions in Africa utilise madness in social commentary, in idiom and colloquialism. By using madness, selected literary texts tap into an already existing belief system and by utilising it, they breathe new life and inflate it into the multi-dimensional *Cosmology of Madness* of my title. It suffices to state that these texts culturally and philosophically interrogate the contemporary ideological organisation of the world which is prejudiced against African people, ways of being and epistemologies. Since its characteristics often relate to spiritual possession, ritual, disease and discourse of power, madness is an evocative metaphor utilised in the focal texts to narrate different aspects of African cosmologies that are often neglected in scholarly writing. In placing madness and its variations, its metaphoric and psychiatric aspects, and its vulgarities (political and sexual) at the epicentre of narration, textual depictions converge with a long oral tradition of using madness to chide litigious behaviour, folly and intoxication, but seldom actual insanity. To sufficiently define and conceptualise the various literary portrayals of madness, we first must briefly explore this cosmology and the psychology of Afro-cosmic cultures. These Afro-cosmic beliefs are so diverse across cultures that they will be the subject of detailed discussion as the study develops. This cosmology is not unproblematic (Muchemwa, 2005). It is riddled with its own self-preserving assumptions, regulations, silences, and inequalities; some of which are challenged in the texts.

When carefully analysed, African literature has always displayed a complete awareness of African cosmology in depicting madness. Owusu (1988) constructs a partial genealogy of madmen and madwomen in African literature revealing the cultural aspects of madness. Cosmologies of madness refer to an aetiology of madness, the mitigatory mechanisms and the various contextual invocations of madness within African cultures. African cosmology comprises God who may or may not be interlinked to other entities such as gods, natural phenomena, spirits, and humanity. Mkhize uses the term "the principle of cosmic unity" (2013, p. 38) to describe this system. This is a stable system which originates and explains all occurrences. In a state of equilibrium there should be good health, sanity, and life, although death and other misfortunes are expected. Consequently, there are laws and customs that individuals must observe to maintain this state of equilibrium. For practical ethical reasons and mnemonic purposes, the laws of this cosmology are preserved and disseminated within social institutions, mythologies, folklores, idioms, rituals, and taboos. These institutions are the "ritual archives" (Falola, 2017) through which this knowledge about madness has survived the

ruptures of colonialism and postcolonialism. These knowledge systems determine the different and sometimes conflicting ways black people approach madness in the novels.

The underlying psychology of many black cultures is based on the acknowledgement of the above-mentioned entities as binding. About African societies, Chivaura explains that "man has a bundle of duties which are expected from him by society, as well as a buddle (sic) of rights and privileges that society owes him." (2016, p. 2). Chivaura here describes the holistic approach to life in Africa, and its interconnectedness. While Chivaura correctly observes this aspect, his approach to the African cosmos is nativistic and inevitably leads to his writings exhibiting "the production of an apologetic discourse based on rediscovery of what was supposed to be the essence, the distinctive genius, of the black "race" (Mbembe, 2001, p. 12) which "glorifies African pasts beyond the scope of historical exactitude" (Chukwu, 2017, p. 816). Notwithstanding, in this cosmology life is based on harmony with community, nature and the cosmos, a harmony from which madmen and women are not exempt. In various cultures across the continent, there are various natal rites such as burial of the umbilical cord and the prohibition of immediate postnatal sexual intercourse which are performed to harmonise the individual with the cosmos before he is even aware (Nwadiokwu, et al., 2016). The Shona and the Lozi ethnic groups, for example, believe that the later example can prevent insanity (Mbiti, 1969). The madman or woman therefore belongs within this cosmos through both ancestral and ritual claim. This symbiotic psychology is exemplified in *How Beautiful We Were* (Mbue, 2021) where the community takes turns to bring food for their village's madman and in turn, the madman initiates an anti-imperialism revolution. Madness evokes the socio-religious beliefs on which these communities are structured. But what exactly is madness?

While there is neither an exhaustive nor monolithic definition of madness across African cultures, the basic identifications and diagnoses of madness are mental illness, embodiment, ritual and folly. Popular definitions perceive madness in African literature as an altered state of consciousness and therefore, transcendental consciousness and a clarity of vision (Veit-Wild, 2006) (Jules-Rosette, 1998). As Veit-Wild (2006) notes, what is considered madness sometimes is a phase of initiation into the office of the African traditional healer. According to this line of thought, madness endows its host with supernatural capabilities such as access to metaphysical entities. This, however, is not always the case. Sometimes madness is a manifestation of a harrowing punishment by angered spirit entities as I will demonstrate in my analysis of Bulawayo's (2023) and Mbue's (2021) novels. In these two novels, dead victims of

old social and political murders return to haunt their perpetrators and their descendants by causing madness. Madness, like other misfortunes, is in different African cultures conceptualised within a context of various cosmic interferences, natural cycles and occurrences, spiritual and human influences. As mental illness, it is to be treated and cured though intertwined ritual and medical interventions. In other scenarios, the Igbo culture of Nigeria for instance, there are deities whose manifestation on an individual may reveal signs of madness. With reference to traditional African cosmology, therefore, I define madness in the African literary texts as disease, possession, ritual, haunting, trauma and a sociopolitical, colloquial and fictional device. It is also an object of popular humour as I will argue about its deployment in Zimbabwean politics as caricaturised in NoViolet Bulawayo's *Glory* (2023) in chapter 4. In psychopolitics, it is a colonially induced alienation from one's traditions, what Tambu's mother terms "Englishness" (Dangarembga, 1988). These aspects align and intersect in some instances, while diverging in others. A holistic definition of madness, therefore, includes both punishment and transcendence, and is cognisant of its psychiatric, social, and rhetorical aspects. A cosmology of madness covers different aspects of peculiar psychological states depicted in the selected texts. Additionally, a cosmology of madness refuses to categorise the metaphysical as secondary to the physical experiences of humanity.

What emerges from the above characterisations of madness in Africa is that madness has quasi-religious aspects which interact with or are signs of social and sexual transgressions of the community that madness appears in. However, this is a limited definition of what constitutes madness, therefore, various defining features of madness will be discussed in detail in the following chapters. Nevertheless, it should be noted here that madness is intertwined with African people's life principles. We cannot truly define madness without dipping into the cosmology within which it exists. The question that follows is what can we learn from African concepts of madness, for instance the tactile contagiousness of madness? A follow-up objective would be to discover how African authors articulate and conceptualise various African experiences by harnessing cosmic epistemologies of madness as known in Africa. As Falola argues, "the cosmology and mythology cannot operate without forms of rationality, as they need to explain other issues such as medicine, politics, and critical appreciation" (2017, p. 708). The cosmology of madness in Africa has been a subject of anthropological enquiry (Gelfand, 1967) (Patel, 1995), but less so in literary studies. White anthropologists, motivated to document the inefficacies and primitiveness of African psychology, captured data, and conducted predetermined experiments on African epistemologies. Michael Gelfand's (1967)

study of madness among the Shona falls into this category. The literary texts I have selected go beyond these anthropological archives in their conceptualisation of madness in way which challenges the authority of these sources, revalidate their precolonial epistemologies and explain various forms of rationality.

From an African cosmological point of view, I make the claim that the use of madness in literature reflects attempts to re-inscribe one's humanity. By depicting forms of madness using cosmological concepts that have been historically marginalised by Eurocentric perspectives, African literary texts simultaneously reaffirm the humanity of the producers and creators of those epistemologies and lead to "non-Western meanings, ideas of the cosmos, and alternate philosophies" (Falola, 2017, p. 716). Reproductions of cultural ideas in literary texts mean that these authors originate from worlds in which these ideas are still relevant, sacred, and remembered. Writing on memory, Chivaura claims that the African, "remembers the past which is meaningful, that is, those events and personalities that explain, make life meaningful and justify the present." (2016, p. 3). Following this claim, memory in Africa is not anachronistic but an archive that can be revisited to discuss and frame discussions of contemporary African issues. Thomas's observation about African history should be taken seriously when he states that it, "is not evolutionary", neither does it "transition to another form, leaving its antecedents to disappear" (2020, p. 12). Selected African literary and cultural texts prove this point by their deliberate commitment to African cosmology., These texts deploy various past and present mythologies and philosophies to show that the African as a subject possesses a vibrant cultural past and future. An unbiased approach to this aspect means that I will also discuss instances in which this very cosmology is questioned by and loses its relevance to certain characters. This is necessary because a cosmological approach can easily assume a nativistic veneration of African cultures hence the importance of careful and unbiased readings. This questioning, however, leads to growth, experiential adaptation and modification of practices which are built around and defined by Afrocentric epistemologies. Resultant from this undertaking is an African epistemological formulation with the capacity of tackling contemporary postcolonial issues and querying historical political and epistemological impositions. Chigwedere (2015) borrows Cabral's (1974) idea of 'returning to the source' and Armah's 'remembering the dismembered continent' (2010) to discuss not only the evocations of ancestors in resolving madness but also to formulate theoretical frameworks that recentre African epistemologies.

In this study, I attempt to (re)discover the various African epistemological traditions in which madness can be framed and read in a way that does not further dismember the continent by marginalising its cosmologies. Although I realise that Africans and their cosmologies are "caught on the margins of political and economic power" (Caronia, 2017, p. 21), my cosmological reading resists the allure of what Caroline Brown calls "the extremes of magic vs science, [which is] a limiting paradigm too often based on the West vs the rest" (2017, p. 232). That the existence of an African cosmology and its functionality in the literary representation of madness are indisputable facts does not lead me to foreclose the validity of interrogating other knowledge systems. Neither is it the objective of this study to engage in a futile contrast of cosmologies as if African cosmologies only exist in contrast to European epistemologies as does Veit-Wild (2006). This thesis will not only show that analyses of madness in African literature can be framed within the dimensions of African cosmologies of madness but will also reveal how evocative these cosmologies are in packaging conceptualisations of epistemic decolonisation and African postcolonial subjectivity.

Literary texts selected for this study show an awareness of African cosmology which the authors utilise to interrogate Africa's contemporary sociopolitical world. These texts delve into how African knowledge systems function in the representation of madness. For instance, Emezi uses the Ogbanje concept in *Freshwater* (2018) to conceptualise the LGBTQI+ issues and *Glory* (Bulawayo, 2023) uses the aspects of ghostly haunting, *Ngozi* in Shona, to conceptualise the contemporary political situation in Zimbabwe. The latter novel portrays intriguing variants of madness; the weaponisation of "madness" in Zimbabwean politics, and Bulawayo's satirisation of the same. The chapter places the novel in dialogue not just with Zimbabwean literary and political history, especially with reference to the *Gukurahundi* as madness, but also, importantly, with the cosmological dimensions of this history. I discuss how Bulawayo's depicted forms of madness from an indigenous epistemological perspective interface with trauma theory. I explore African literary texts' representations of madness and the bio-medical significance of indigenous 'scientific' conceptualisations of madness and reimagine its causalities. Using ritual archives and critical psychology to foreground traditional African psychological/psychiatric epistemologies, I explore the ways in which cosmologies may yet yield more academic insights into the literary depiction of mental illness. For this purpose, I have selected the following literary and cultural texts mentioned in the previous subsection

Literature Review

In this section I discuss the literary history of the currently dominant framings of madness and the major theoretical trajectories followed in literary discussions of the deployment of madness in global and African literature in English. My point of departure are the feminist literary analyses that critique the representation of madness in English literature and each other's respective approaches to madness. I start from this in recognition of the invaluable contributions feminist frameworks have made to the literary conceptualisation of madness as a subversive tool against versions of patriarchal and political hegemonies. Furthermore, a significant number of literary texts selected for this study are female authored narratives with female protagonists who experience psychological breakdowns. These works partially or wholly include feminist visions in their fictionalisation of various contemporary African issues though madness hence the necessity of interrogating the ideas of madness from a feminist background. Developing from my discussion of the various feminist literary analysis will be the cultural aspects of madness that some of the extant literature gesture towards. It is at this point that I turn to the theoretical gaps left by existing research in their attempts to include, problematise and interrogate African cultural knowledge systems of madness. One volume focusing on black women's fictions in the diaspora is particularly important in establishing the epistemic, historic and bodily connections between African and black diasporic literature. Acts of going into the diaspora are also present in the texts selected for this study, therefore I will pay particular attention to the aesthetics of the diaspora in this review.

The Gilbert and Guba versus Caminero-Santangelo Debate (Subversion vs Collusion)

The discussion of madness in literature fits in either of two dominant perspectives, that is, Gilbert and Guba's (2020) notion that women's writing of madness is subversive or Marta Caminero-Santangelo's (1998) opposing claim that madness or *The Madwoman Cannot Speak*. These views comprise two opposite ends of this particular discussion. Although these specific academics do not primarily focus on African literature, their perspectives continue to influence perceptions of madness in different literary contexts. African literature and its literary academics also fit in either of these traditions, consequently, it is necessary to review these works. This study both borrows and departs from these traditions in trying to locate literary madness in contemporary African texts outside the dominant Westocentric readings.

Gilbert and Guba's book, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (2020), though focusing on nineteenth-century English literature, established the terminology that contemporary analyses still employ in the discussion of madness in African literature. Their approach established the tradition where terminology such as subversive, appropriation and resistance now collocate with literary madness. On a theoretical level, they established the relationship between feminism and madness that continues to dominate both literary representations and readings of female characters' madness. Foremost to their discussion is that, in the Victorian culture, the male writer's pen is a phallic symbol which conflates male authority with the power to create literature. They claim, "male sexuality, in other words, is not just analogically but actually the essence of literary power. The poet's pen is in some sense (even more than figuratively) a penis." (Gilbert & Guba, 2020, p. 4). The claim here is that Victorian writing itself is vested with male reproductive authority that creates metanarratives to legitimise male authors as actual and literary fathers. The father and the husband represent the same authority used to privilege themselves with rationality while equating women to irrationality. Tracing the history of these narratives vis-a-vis the social position of the nineteenth-century woman, they discuss how the woman was confined to domesticity in and outside literature. Male-authored texts they discuss depict women endowed with conservative personalities that do not challenge male authority and male ideologies of womanhood.

Writing for women, therefore, becomes performatively subversive. In their view, writing madness and other metaphors that men consider unsavoury becomes the pinnacle of such a resistance. Goddard picks up the metaphor of fatherhood and madness and posits that women's literary madness is "a resistance to patriarchy, a refusal to enter into the symbolic world where the laws of the father prevail" (2008, p. 99). Gilbert and Guba argue that Victorian female writers such as Virginia Woolf considered their own writings as performative acts of killing "the aesthetic ideals through which they themselves have been "killed" into art" (2020, p. 54). Here lies their subversiveness, in the fictionalisation of female madness to rupture both the male Victorian ideals of angelic and monstrous women. Killing the angelic implies subverting the images of ideal and pure womanhood modelled after the Virgin Mary by Victorian patriarchy, while the latter implies killing the rebellious packaging of womanhood modelled after Eve as responsible for the fall of mankind. Women writers, therefore, subversively uncover the complexities of womanhood by fictionally locating womanhood outside male-authored categories and embracing madness. Caminero-Santangelo disagrees with such

readings, especially Gilbert and Gubar's uncontextualized reading of Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1890), noting that "to achieve happiness, Jane must learn to separate herself in all ways from Bertha, to stifle and finally kill the Bertha in her" (1998, p. 4). Caminero-Santangelo contends that women are in fact killing essential parts of themselves by using madness and by scholarly elevating madness as a subversive tool. Though my research is not foregrounded in feminist theoretical critique, the correlation between writing and dominance raised by these scholars is valuable to this study. I recognise how contemporary African authors attempt to subvert the contemporary order of knowledge that privileges Western conceptualisations and theories of madness over indigenous ones. The selected authors' characters, through their varied psychological states, refuse to inhabit the spaces created for them by the epistemological ethnocentrism of Eurocentric frameworks and the tyrannical postcolonial sociopolitical hegemonies.

The ubiquity of madness in literature and its appreciation as an aesthetic of resistance, however, leads to various scholars questioning of madness's real literary value. Questions are raised by Caminero-Santangelo whether madness is still useful, or it is now functioning to further incarcerate women in this metaphor of irrationality. In her monograph, *The Madwoman can't speak: Or Why Madness is not Subversive*, Caminero-Santangelo (1998) contends that the trope of female madness is not subversive. She reads literary madness and the Gilbert-Guba interpretive model that establishes madness to be a subversive concept as valorisation and romanticisation of a condition of silence. Here, Caminero-Santangelo adopts a Foucauldian interpretive model that "madness is, primarily, an "absence of a production", the silence of a stifled language" (Felman, 2003, p. 14). Caminero-Santangelo's analysis of madness directly dialogues Gilbert and Guba's (2020) work, directly titling the introduction of her work "*Emerging from the Attic*" to critique their title's aestheticization of the attic and madness. She argues that the Victorian trope of madness is not outside the male-authored categories as Gilbert and Guba claimed. Instead of women recreating more representations of themselves inhabiting the same confined space created for them by male authors, she argues for the bursting of the attic altogether. She views feministic literary protest framed within the constructs of the hegemony it seeks to dislodge as collusion.

What we see here are not only different definitions of madness but also of subversion. For Caminero-Santangelo, the major question concerning the representations of madness is,

> "if the connotations carried by the notion of madness must be completely supressed for such a metaphor to work – if the word is to be emptied of its meanings and provided

> with an entirely new set of significations (in fact, an impossibility) – then why use it at all?" (1998, p. 2).

For her this is collusion. Madness represents an inhabitable appellation, one that the Victorian male establishment loaded with significations about the type of woman that feminist theorists then claim is subversive. Writing of the *Madness in African Diasporic Fictions*, Brown finds herself in the same conundrum of trying to reconcile her emotions of "dread, concern and shame" at encountering a homeless woman she assumes is mad with the academic heroification of the fictionalised madwoman as an "embattled heroine" (Brown, 2017, p. 4). She steps into the discomfort of what Caminero-Santangelo calls "the chaos of violence, abuse, battering, rape, political unrest, and discrimination that affects real women's lives" (1998, p. 3). Indeed, experiences of (mad) women may be difficult to reconcile with their fictionalised counterparts, however, my reading argues that the visualisation of these real women in the selected documentary films is precisely subversive. I consider it subversive because it goes against the political narratives preferred by the concerned hegemonies.

However, Caminero-Santangelo highlights why the theoretical value of subversive symbols should not be accepted at face value but critically questioned. These undertakings to convert this symbol can be equated to what Mudimbe identifies as "fantasies of political insurrection that despite their violence against the Same, remain thought products of the same order" (1988, p. 56). I do not treat these sentiments as absolute truths; however, they allow for the questioning of the value of madness as a literary symbol of protest in African literature. Is the African still protesting by using the same language that was used on him by colonial powers? Which African writers of madness truly detach their literary output from the generics of the Same? Should we privilege every deployment of madness as symbolically insurgent? In this study I try to answer these questions through analysing the cultural formulations of madness and psychological dimensions that novelists use for their characters to accomplish subversive acts. I argue that, by centring African cosmological knowledge, these authors have ostensibly located themselves and their fictional representations outside dominant Eurocentric frameworks thereby subverting their claim to authority. Also notable about my focal texts' use of cosmologies of madness is the subversion and expansion of these cultural concepts to cover aspects that African hegemonies locate outside their sacrosanct version of African culture.

The subversive value of negative aesthetic tropes cannot therefore be easily dismissed on the account of being concepts that dominant hegemonies have used. As Brown (2017) later

resolves in her chapter, the representations of madness in black women's texts challenge the historical under-documentation of black women's trauma. She argues that this under-documentation has, "tangled roots in racist and hypocritical Western scientific discourses and legal history" (2017, p. 9) on the suppose inferiority of the black race. These racist scientific discourses postulated that black people do not possess the same psychological faculties as the white man or woman, therefore, they cannot experience certain aspect of mental illness. On the African continent and its diaspora, madness is tied to a colonial culture which facilitated human exploitation and produced pseudo-scientific discourses that justified its existence. Jackson (2005) uses Rhodesia as one of the numerous examples where the lunatic asylum functioned to sustain colonial governmentality. For instance, the colonial establishment interpreted as "disorder" the "African woman's refusal to stay put or to cooperate with other people's restrictions on her body and mobility" (Jackson, 2005, p. 102) and responded by incarcerating her in the insane asylum. Her research also demonstrates how "Africans were locked up in custodial asylums not to be gazed upon or, indirectly, to be forced to work, but simply to get them out" (Jackson, 1999, p. 41). Jackson proceeds to argue that the Rhodesian government deliberately constructed one of its Psychiatric Institutions, Ingutsheni, at the vanquished Ndebele King Lobengula's wives' kraal as an act of subverting the political meaning of the space. The aestheticization of madness by black women is memorialisation of the now denied politicisation of madness in colonial Africa and the African diaspora's troubled history.

Brown and Garvey's volume harnesses insights from various diasporic critics and literary texts which construct the African diaspora as an "endemically flawed and illogical space" (Caronia, 2017, p. 20) where the madness inherent in the historical institutions of slavery is currently legitimised in unfair immigration policies. To Garvey, "the African Diaspora begins in a kind of madness" (2017, p. 103). What it means to inhabit a space begun and sustained through madness is to inherit insanity and to be haunted by fragmented memories. There is an underlying thought that black women have been/are coerced into situations which can only succumb to madness and are blamed when they go mad. Madness therefore becomes historical contestation in the face of a deliberately amnesiac Empire. Caronia (2017) discusses how recent White British politicians, specifically Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair used rhetoric that pushed race outside to the fringes of British history despite the continued disenfranchisement of England's Black citizens. The brutal history of how Africans were violently uprooted from their continent and permanently dispossessed of their memory is whitewashed in favour of a homogenous culture. African diasporic fictions in this case deploy madness to challenge a

pretended history that forgets how black people find themselves in the diaspora. Aestheticization of madness in black women's diasporic fictions, as argued by the various contributors to Brown and Garvey's volume, is a

> creolized ritual that both character and reader must submit to in order to symbolically return to the expunged past and reformulate appropriate responses not only to its depredations but to its cultural wealth (Brown, 2017, p. 12).

The idea of madness as ritual aligns with my own reading in this thesis. In this aspect, the frameworks used in the volume and the texts discussed therein appreciate the presence of, and often coheres with an African cosmology and rituals in the African diasporic cultures they focus on. Some of the readings show how African diasporic characters are often hosts of African cosmological beings, signalling their multi-cosmological heritage (Douglas-Chin, 2017) (Stone, 2017). Specifically, writing madness in the diaspora, "becomes not only a metaphor for the dispossession felt by individual characters but a pivotal aesthetic strategy that will force new ways of reading, engaging, and understanding history as both ancient past and active present" (Brown, 2017, p. 9).

Indeed, new ways of re-inscribing, packaging, and discussing the atrocious diasporic experience are developed from that same experience. For example, Garvey uses the concept of "mad marooning" to read her selection of Haitian women's fictions which, she claims, "serves as [a] site outside of the Western episteme that solidified during the era of the Atlantic slave trade and the plantation system in the Americas" (2017, p. 105). "*Marronnage*" is, therefore, used by Garvey as a historical f(act) of resistance and a literary aesthetic that actively resists white hegemony by invoking history. Other African cosmological theoretical concepts, such as, Sankofa and Mami Wata used by contributors in the volume reveal how the African diaspora shares and taps into the African cosmology. Assuming a Foucauldian lens, Mountain's (2001) use of the tragic pun in referring to African women's bodies as *Bodies of Knowledge* is equally intriguing. Her thesis revisits the historical scientific experimentations conducted on African women's bodies through a painful recollection that, "Our vaginas have been measured, spread open for comparison – to bear witness to white women's virtue" (Mountain, 2001, p. 38). Through such inhumane practices, African women's bodies were inscribed with another form of knowledge which black women "re-inscribe in their texts" by representing the disfigured, self-mutilating and an aggressively sexual mad black woman (Brown, 2017). Black Women's bodies and psyches may be read as archives that bear memories about the brutalities of colonialism and the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade that the white world attempts to repress and

ignore. The idea of the woman's body as archive significantly influences my reading of cosmological and rituals as archives which subvert the academic conceptualisation of an archive. This discussion has revealed that madness intersects with, challenges, and reproduces ideologies of domination. The next section interrogates how African critical works have framed the discussion of madness.

The trajectory of madness in African literary critical works

Earlier interpretations of madness in African literature in English mainly focused on Southern African Women authors (Bazin, 1992) (Kerr, 1999). Veit-Wild (2006) is dully credited with having noted the prevalence of, and carrying out an expansive analysis of madness in African literature to an extent that Gaylard claims, "it often takes an outsider to recognise the value of what the locals cannot see under their own noses" (2007, p. 177). Gaylard emphasises Veit-Wild's foreignness to African cultures which to him, gives her a locally absent insight, but in my view, may have contributed to her Eurocentric lack of appreciation of certain cultural aspects in the focal texts of her monograph. Instead of the inconsequential engagement of racial component, Veit-Wild admits that she can only analyse African literary texts as a white woman because she is in fact one (Veit-Wild, 2021), I am more concerned with the Eurocentric approach she uses in the book. Indeed, African literary academia was guilty of overlooking representations madness in African literature. Prior to Veit-Wild's publication, literary depictions of madness were mainly studied in individual articles which remained obscure as noted by Himmelman (2010). In *Writing Madness: Borderlines of the Body in African Literature* (2006), Veit-Wild discusses various strains of 'writing madness' and it is indeed an influential work worth another review. Despite correctly observing that colonial psychiatric and psychoanalytical theories are insufficient conceptual frameworks for African literature, epistemological ethnocentric sentiments reveal themselves regularly in the book.

This book establishes false dichotomies between African and Western psychology. To argue for the existence of an African knowledge system of madness, Veit-Wild still defines madness from a Western perspective. She claims that what the West considers madness maybe understood as spirit possession in Africa. The premise of this argument is flawed in the sense that it invokes Western definitions of madness instead of giving precedence to what Africans themselves perceive as madness. In the process, African cosmological representations take a back seat or are interpreted using Western theoretical frameworks. These frameworks isolate the madmen or madwoman from his cultural philosophy and belief system. What Veit-Wild

discusses, therefore, is sanity. Absent from her work is African knowledge systems of in/sanity. Her chapter "*Wandering Wombs*" in which she analyses folklores and mythologies from different parts of the world which has already been criticised for conflating obscenity with madness (Newell, 2008), also conflates medieval Europe with Africa. The result of such an approach is that attitudes from totally different societies are equated to make an argument which cannot be sustained when viewed from African rationality.

Though Veit-Wild (2006) observes that earlier white writers projected their own psychological epistemologies onto African thought, there are several instances of similar projection in her own work. She claims that writing madness is the most apt response "demanded" by the insanity in African political structures. The overriding impression one gets after reading her work is that of chaos and uncivility in Africa. After going to lengths to show how earlier Europeans misunderstood Africans and their cultures, Veit-Wild falls into the same ideological presuppositions. There is an ingenious attempt to read madness as "positive instability" in African literature "which repeatedly turns to anthropological studies of spirit possession and witchcraft" (Newell, 2008, p. 484) while completely missing the texts' apparent Afro-cosmologies components. There is so much eagerness to discuss the political value of madness that the African cosmological aspects of the novel are discarded in a stampede for politics and gender aspects.

Not to be outdone by 'an outsider', one Zimbabwean scholar has, by her own admission, taken up Gaylard's challenge and has added to the discussion of madness in African literature as an autochthonic African. Specifically, Chigwedere's *Head of Darkness: Representations of Madness in Postcolonial Zimbabwean Literature* discusses madness from an 'insider' perspective to "possibly reduce the danger of misconceptions" (2015, p. 3). Zimbabwean literature provides numerous interesting forms of madness which this scholar studies. A provocative addition she makes to the canon of madness is her characterisation of madness as *ufuru* which is "freedom and liberty" (p. 9). This leads to a fascinating discussion of the fictionalisation of madness in various texts to hint at the desire for freedom. She additionally approaches "*Ngozi*", a Shona traditional concept of restorative/punitive justice in her analysis of *Harare North* (Chikwava, 2009), as one of the major causes of family misfortunes such as madness. Her observation of the role of nationalist politics in Zimbabwe in the commission of crimes by a youthful "Green Bomber" militia quite remarkably reveals how the Zimbabwean government invokes and appropriates cosmological dimensions such as *ivhu* (land) to

legitimise its political and cultural tyranny. The Zimbabwean government as depicted in the novel is notorious for harnessing culture codes that inspired Zimbabwe's liberation 'wars' to justify its continued hold on power. I also add to this discussion of how the ZANU PF regime has recently been utilising discourses of madness to discredit its opponents and to enforce its own tyranny as the correct cultural regime.

While it makes significant contributions in including indigenous dimensions, the thesis, is neither entirely successful on this objective nor significantly different from Veit-Wild's. The most notable weakness of Chigwedere's thesis is that it does not sufficiently demonstrate the critical epistemological and philosophical relevance of the selected texts' cosmological features. It struggles to move beyond its author's nativistic motivation to discuss literary representations of madness as an indigenous African scholar which is markedly different from studying madness from an indigenous perspective. Thus, even when Chigwedere is cognisant of the spiritual aspects of a character's psychological breakdown, trauma ends up as the most dominant explanatory theory. Essentially, Chigwedere's cognisance of cultural aspects has a superficial tone because it does not theorise the artistic expressions of cosmological knowledge for its problematisation of the categories such as trauma. Chigwedere clearly prefers Western clinical terminology. For instance, clinical terminologies of psychological fragmentation such as hysteria, schizophrenia and depression play a crucial role in characterising her characters even when the novel ostensibly offers a cultural framework. Characters such as Munashe in Kanengoni's *Echoing Silences* (1997) and the nameless protagonist of Chikwava's *Harare North* (2009) are read in the context of traumatic memories of violence when both novels gesture towards *Ngozi*. That Ngozi becomes a secondary concept even when it is prioritised in the concerned text is problematic in that it gestures towards the lack of integrity of cultural components as explanatory frameworks. Even white anthropologists such as Gelfand (2007) acknowledge that Africans have a pretty good idea of what mental illness is but lean towards emphasising the inefficacies of this psychology. One can only speculate why Chigwedere sees it necessary to accept this hierarchy. One of the possible reasons is the acceptance of African epistemology as non-scientific and therefore, just mythologies and quasi-religious beliefs incapable of framing literary discussions on their own.

Chigwedere also does not do justice to her title's implied deconstruction of the Conradian myth of Africa as *Heart of Darkness* (1994). She explains,

> whereas in *Heart of Darkness* (Joseph Conrad, 1994) equates "darkness" with mystery and savagery, in this thesis I equate it to the trauma and ontological insecurity that the

> authors' protagonists experience which, in turn, threaten their identity resulting in an obscure sense of being (Chigwedere, 2015, p. 1).

Admittedly, trauma is the principal implication of the use of madness in literature in her discussion, however, the epistemological shift expected from such a title is missing. The thesis leans heavily on the continued psychic, cultural and political abuse of Africa by Europe and in the process fails to recognise how authors use their cultural symbols to transcend the colonial era as the starting point of African history. Contrary to Chigwedere's approach, I recognise madness not simply as trauma but also as a ritual archive or leading to ritual archives to generate an epistemic shift, contesting these (Veit-Wild and Chigwedere's) literary imagination of madness itself and against other pervasive Eurocentric epistemic constructions. Thus, I deploy the African conceptualisation of madness as merited ways of imagining African ways of being that go beyond the Conradian myth. Theoretically, Chigwedere deploys an infusion of existentialism and psychoanalysis to analyse certain African institutions. In African societies life has meaning and stable reference points which characters in these novels either depart from or return to, to explain their existence (Chivaura, 2016). When confronted with existential crises characters intuitively return to their families, communities or even evoke the cosmology for meaning. These institutions and certain rituals are understood as stable culture codes for healing and mental stability. Some characters do lose sight of the significance of these reference points as will be shown in the literary texts.

Chigwedere also discusses the representations of madness as anti-imperialist discourses in Mashingaidze Gomo's *A Fine Madness* (Gomo, 2010). Despite its own contradictions, Chigwedere's thesis arguably steers away from older traditions of madness and points Zimbabwean literature in the direction where there is need for thorough investigation of cosmological aspects of madness. Kofi Owusu (1988) pays attention to this aspect of madness. Although situating his study in a European context in which Baako in Armah's *Fragments* (1974) is studied as a counterpart to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1603), Owusu (1988) captures the rich genealogy of madmen and madwomen in African literature. He posits that

> Baako's madness has a long list of ancestors and descendants in African literature. Against the eerie background of the talking drums' insistent message, "Udomo traitor Udomo die," Michael Udomo in Peter Abrahams's *A Wreath for Udomo*, goes through the telescoped motions of insanity (". ... he did not know which was heartbeat, which drumbeat") just before his death. The loss of control over his bodily and mental functions reflects Udomo's inability either to control or give direction to the realization of his "dream"; he has, thus, outlived his usefulness, and die he must. Variations on Udomo's "insanity" are worked out in the "crack in Ezeulu's mind" (in Achebe's *Arrow*

> *of God*), Sekoni's "madness" (in Soyinka's *The Interpreters*), Aduke's "insanity" (in Chukwuemeka Ike's *Toads for Supper*), the antics of Yacobo, the "'mad' Sergeant" (in Robert Serumaga's *Return to the Shadows*), and so on. (Owusu, 1988, p. 362).

Owusu brings into the discussion of madness cultural codes such as the drum and its socio-religious relevance in the African belief system. A host of other codes such as ritual dressing in madness play a central role in the literary works' discussion of pertinent issues in Africa. Although various journal articles have discussed different aspects of African cultural features of madness, there remains a need to theorise these cosmological features and how they contribute, not only to the critique of postcolonial African political hegemonies but also to the interrogation of epistemological coloniality across the continent's critical psychology, archives and psychiatry.

Owusu then makes an important observation that in these novels, "we need to invoke more than cultural codes to interpret madness" (1988, p. 362). Culture codes are very important to reveal the psychology that brings them into existence. The practices, institutions and belief systems around madness need critical attention since they also intersect with approaches to life. Paying attention to the customary structure of African societies, their spiritual values, and frameworks of their transmission, I will carry out a close reading of how these cultural codes interact with histories of coloniality, migration and sexuality. I do not exclude the centrality of ecologies such as mountains, forests, and rivers from these belief systems. The evolution of these codes is also particularly important. This is particularly important in my reading of *How Beautiful We Were* (Mbue, 2021), which reminisces on the beauty of traditional African life while acknowledging the maddening taboos surrounding madness. Among the texts selected for this study, Mbue's text depicts various rituals and their empowering aspects throughout Africa's pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial life. Use of language in this aspect becomes important, not only as anti-imperialist discourse (Chigwedere, 2015), but also as a repository for African cultural discourses of madness. These can be applied to understand sociopolitical issues too.

In this literature review, I have demonstrated the hierarchical structure of knowledge which locates African epistemologies of madness on the margins of the literary analyses of the metaphor in African literature. African knowledge systems are assumed and classified as folk mythologies while western frameworks with their contested claim to scientism are prioritised by many researchers (Hook, 2013) (Nobles, 2015). Mudimbe (1988) claims that African

researchers also use these categories without much thought into the ideological stance they are assuming. I should emphasise here that my leanings towards African cosmology are not a form of nativism. I do not uncritically treat these cosmologies and culture codes as unproblematic or use them to avoid a thorough introspection of contemporary African realities. I will use an older and a newer text of madness to make this point, that is Marechera's *The House of Hunger* (1978) and Emezi's *Freshwater* (2018). Marechera deliberately refused categorisation as an African writer according to Veit-Wild & Chennells (1999) and his writings used African cosmology to assail its core aspects such as family and rituals with "excruciating disgust and horror" (Muchemwa, 2005, p. 197). For example, the narrator in *The House of Hunger* (Marechera, 1978) only recovers from his nervous breakdown, or more accurately, an experience of being haunted by family spirits or national spiritual ancestors, after a seemingly homosexual entanglement with a classmate. Emezi's *Freshwater* (2018) does the same with the *Ogbanje* spirit which she depicts as approving and the reason of the protagonist's transgender surgery. This surgery may, therefore, be read as a therapeutic ritual that corrects the cultural silences and heteronormative regulations of queer sexualities (Magaqa & Makombe, 2021). The argument here is not that there is anything intrinsically nativist in the literature of Black African authors. I have selected contemporary African authors whose literary texts I consider most representative of madness from an indigenous knowledge systems perspective including those that problematise and reject these epistemologies.

Madness in texts under study

Because of the contemporaneity of this study's focal texts, only a few yet important critical works have been published based on them. The oldest of the selected fictions are the documentaries, *A Crazy Hope* (2015) and *State of Mind* (2018), which have not yet received any critical responses on their respective visual portrayal of the politically and culturally-linked mental health crises in West Africa and Zimbabwe respectively. Therefore, my thesis will inevitably be the first critical response to these documentaries. The same applies to Tshuma's *Digging Stars* (2023). The existing critical works on Emezi's two novels, Mbue's *How Beautiful We Were* and Bulawayo's *Glory* (2023) primarily critique these novels using decoloniality theorisations. Existing critical works neglect the symbolism of madness despite the central characters of these novels exhibiting varieties of cosmologically explained mental illnesses. In their analysis of sexuality in *Freshwater*, for instance, Magaqa and Makombe argue that

> to free notions of gender, sex, and sexuality from the shackles of the colonial episteme,

> it is important to "move the centre" by acknowledging Africa as a legitimate epistemic centre with its own cosmologies and ways of being (2021, p. 26).

They perceive *Ogbanje* as a concept that decolonises African gender and sexuality epistemes. I concur with their reading, especially considering Euginia Ossana's (2021) reading of precolonial Igbo voices, sexuality and psychology in the same novel. In a way representative of Westocentric framing, Ossana argues that western psychological categories such as gender dysphoria would be more efficient in labelling the evidently Ogbanje protagonist. The trope of madness that is not central to both articles depict a wider cultural decolonisation. The predicament of African cosmologies confronted by Emezi's depiction of madness is that they are perceived by both contemporary African and the Western world as undeveloped categories of thought, in other words, madness. Thus, in their reading, Magaqa and Makombe miss the protagonist's constant attempts to diagnose herself with psychological illness, not simply because of her sexuality but primarily because of her spiritual temporalities. The novel's resolution to the protagonist's psychological restlessness and sexuality are only achieved by spiritually and geographically returning to Africa.

I emphasise the idea that the Ogbanje are a sixteen-thousand-year-old institution of African memory that manifests in ways that may be misunderstood in Western psychological terms as mental illness. Because of this longevity and many other similarities, I read madness in *Freshwater* and *How Beautiful We Were* together as my springboard into returning to the African ritual world. While several critical works exist on the latter text, for example Nare et al (2024), Karmakar and Chetty (2023) and Ehanhire (2022), they all neglect the madman who is crucial in the depicted community's resistance to neocolonialism. Nare et al (2024) and Karmarkar and Chetty (2023) specifically focus on the novel's decolonial/environmentalism motifs, and they demonstrate the antagonistic environmental philosophies between traditional African life centred approaches and colonial extractive approaches to the environment. Ehanhire (2022) operates in a similar order, albeit, focusing on the subjugation of Africans, African environments and psychologies by (neo)colonialism. Her psychoanalytic reading focuses on the wider community's psychological and economic subjugation while overlooking the madman whose ritual madness makes him impervious to the subjugating Westocentric episteme. This same madman becomes the community's ritual fountain to break the shackles of neocolonial subjugation. Ehanhire's (2022) reading of weapons of subjugation does not address the madman's political and ritual potential to redress these colonial psychological injuries. The madman's psychiatric reality as being haunted by ghosts is a trope that signifies the eternity of African memory.

On Bulawayo's *Glory* (2023), Mavengano's two articles; the first, an ecofeminist reading (2023a) and the second, a reading of Zimbabwe's Nehanda mythology (Mavengano, 2023b) provide a nuanced discussion of Zimbabwe's political history in relation to gender. Mavengano uses the mythologies of the Biblical Eve and the local Zimbabwean ancestral medium, Nehanda, to deconstruct what she calls the phallocentric paradox. By this, she refers to the centrality of gender as a site for the contested narratives of Zimbabwean nationhood where ZANU PF's male hegemony excludes women yet extol the female ancestor, Nehanda. Mavengano (2023b, p. 4) briefly explains that "madness could be interpreted as a symbolic disengagement from such a nation". She argues that Bulawayo's intertwined depiction of Edenic ecosystems and the Nehanda mythology illustrates Zimbabwe's need for "new gender, political and religious consciousness that privilege justice, liberation and empowering expressive capacity" (Mavengano, 2023a, p. 8). In both analyses, Mavengano does not necessarily articulate the functionality of madness to depict Mugabe's senility and haunted experiences by Nehanda to force him to unwittingly self-incriminate in the nation's genocide, the *Gukurahundi*. Bulawayo subverts Mugabe's once reticent rhetorical inference that the genocide was 'a moment of madness' by converting it into a lifetime of madness. Other nuances of madness in the novel include depicting the weaponisation of madness in Zimbabwean political discourse and to peek into their psyche of haunted autocrats. Additionally, a reading of madness as a manifestation of psychic scars would have enriched Mavengano's argument that "Bulawayo employs the [violated female] body [bearing scars and wounds] to convey the unpalatable grotesque in the postcolony" (2023a, p. 5). Bulawayo's cosmology of madness depicts the panorama of psychic and bodily scars borne by Zimbabwe's postcolonial subjectivities as well as the haunted-ness of Zimbabwean history and future due to unresolved genocides and histories of political violence.

While the scholarly works reviewed in this section address very crucial themes in the respective novels, they neglect the centrality of madness/mad persons to the novels' overall cosmological standpoint.When African writers deliberately unmoor themselves from portraying madness solely using Western terminologies and diagnostic methods and utilise African culture codes to interrogate the contemporary African predicament, can we therefore dismiss the subversive deployment of the madness metaphor? Madness can, therefore, be used tactically to subvert both dominant knowledge systems, alternative epistemologies and question our assumptions of madness as a subversive trope. It remains to be seen whether madness can be used to subvert the dominant idea of reading literary madness as subversive. Thus, this thesis departs from

critical traditions whose preference for Westocentric frameworks instead of African ones equally undermines both African knowledges and Africans as "generators and creators of these archives" (Falola, 2017, p. 720). I critically use concepts birthed in African cosmologies precisely to avoid this scenario. For instance, I use the *Ogbanje* concept to discuss Emezi's *Freshwater*'s philosophical positions and in recognition of its potential to disrupt both Western and African heteronormativity, Eurocentric versions of history and to assert *Ogbanje* as a human and psychological category which no Western theoretical construct can explain, except through distortion. I critically explore knowledge which can be acquired from the representations of madness from an African perspective and the relevance of African concepts of madness in African literature. I recognise cosmological knowledge's potential to subvert the colonial epistemological hierarchy through the fictional narratives' engagement with various aspects of coloniality. My study also interrogates the literary and sociopolitical value of the various cosmological concepts it centres.

Research Problem and Objectives

A close review of critical works surrounding writing madness in African literature encounters the same problem in theory, content, and diagnosis of characters. With a few exceptions, the nomenclature favoured is Westocentric. Several concepts of madness in Africa are studied as symptoms of some other disease with a European name instead of being deployed as the analytical tools they already are. If we can deploy trauma as a theory, why should we not deploy *Ngozi*, *Ogbanje* and other currently obscure concepts as theoretical approaches? Does the repetitive use of Westocentric terminology point to a lack of credibility of African concepts or to a fixation with Western epistemologies? Do these lack credibility simply because they are African? When something as mundane as "attic" is aestheticized to interrogate a phallocentric psychology of the Victorian period and becomes a powerfully evocative metaphor, questions arise about components of African cosmology which still occupy the back seat in academia. These African concepts equally problematise postcolonial Africa. The marginality of these concepts about madness in African literature is concerning. Veit-Wild's *Writing Madness: Borderlines of the Body* (2006) is one of the remarkable studies of the use of madness in African literature which unintentionally marginalises this cosmology. It traces the history of colonial psychiatry in Rhodesia which misunderstood the concept of madness and African ways of being. After identifying this, Veit-Wild does not widen her scope to cover an African cosmology besides stating that "mental illness is sometimes regarded as a form of possession and is often a phase of initiation in the life of a person who is elected by the ancestral spirits to

become a healer" (2006, pp. 23-25). No deeper attention is given to the nuances and aspects of African spirituality beyond the Rhodesian colonial context. The book does not significantly engage how this spirituality informs or is appropriated to achieve the selected texts' overall aesthetics and ideological standpoints. I contend that African cosmology informs many of her selected texts and notably intersects with her preferred categories of postmodernism, therefore, not giving due credence to these knowledge systems further marginalises them.

Chigwedere (2015) identifies this gap in Veit-Wild's monograph and attempts to fill it by making references to a Shona cosmology in her study of Zimbabwean Literature. Her thesis flirtatiously discusses the use of Shona concepts such as *Kutanda Botso* and its location within the dialogue on the Zimbabwean crises. However, her thesis is limited to the Zimbabwean context and invokes the Conradian myth of the *'Heart of Darkness*[3]' as the curious title goes; *Head of Darkness: Representations of Madness in Zimbabwean Literature*. As already noted, the thesis does very little to prove how her reading of the novels deconstruct this Conradian myth. A Shona cosmology is eventually abandoned in favour of existentialism as the theoretical framework. While existentialism is not an exclusively Eurocentric concept, Chigwedere's use limits it to "the racial, political, social, sexual and emotional pressures that result in "madness" as depicted in the literary works being studied" (2015, p. 16). The spiritual element is clearly missing here, as it is elsewhere in the thesis where her claim to take cognisance of the "cultural context" (ibid) is not sufficiently backed by critical theorisation of the cultural elements. In taking cognisance of the cultural contexts, very little is done to interrogate how the spiritual aspect of the African being may impact or resolve characters' existential crisis. Apart from correctly identifying spiritual presences in the texts, a critical exploration of how an African cosmology epistemologically problematises some of the Westocentric concepts she uses remains peripheral in her study. I argue that her study limits itself to a descriptive approach to cosmological knowledge where a more analytical framework would have enriched the arguments.

Other research into the use of madness in African literature such as Mountain (2001) centre Foucauldian concepts which perceive madness as knowledge and discuss the ambivalence and ambiguity. What needs to be emphasised is that Foucault's establishment of madness as

[3] Joseph Conrad – *Heart of Darkness* (1899) depicts Africa as a place of savagery and mystery. Chigwedere's intended irony in appropriating this title is not achieved at the end of her thesis.

knowledge referred to the knowledge of Europeans and not the colonial subject. Dyson makes an apt observation about Foucault that, "in spite of his awareness of the evident intolerability of French (neo-)colonialism in North Africa, the themes of race, racism and colonialism remain, at best, peripheral to his thought" (2020, p. 6). Himmelman's (2006), realising its total Eurocentrism, avoids a Foucauldian lens and uses fluidity, ambivalence and play to conceptualise madness as a struggle for discursive space. Again, this research does not engage the centrality of cultural concepts in the African's struggle for discursive space in the texts. Such formulations do not account for the presence of indigenous knowledge systems in African literature, thereby relegating them to the margins of the literary discourses of madness. The deployment of cosmological concepts in African fictions remains unexplored. I will discuss the nuances of African spirituality and non-spiritual forms of madness in different cultural contexts as depicted in the selected literary texts.

I foreground this study in Critical Psychology and Ritual Archives which discuss how traditional Eurocentric psychology has been used to support colonial power structures in Africa and conversely identifies the need, "to engage in a dialogue with theoretical frameworks emanating from the life perspectives of the people in question." (Mkhize, 2013, p. 35). In this case, African societies are analysed using African concepts. These life perspectives include ancient knowledge systems and adaptations they have undergone due to various influences. The objective of this research is a holistic exploration of representations of African cosmologies of madness, situating literary depictions in their cultural and philosophical context to problematise Westocentric modes of interpretation. The problem, therefore, is the deployment of Western theoretical frameworks on "phenomena for which there already exists an [African] traditional, folkloric account or explanation" (Horsthemke, 2017, p. 597).

Objectives

- To explore the literary representations of an African cosmology of madness in selected African literary texts.
- To examine the meanings generated through literary deployments of madness in the representation of contemporary African sociopolitical issues.
- To explore non-western epistemologies in the depiction of madness.

Theoretical Framework

Since the conceptualisation of madness in African literature as written text comes along with theories imposed/adopted and adapted from Eurocentric psychological orthodoxies, there has been a challenge of formulating theoretical frameworks that adequately appreciate the inherent cultural components of madness. For Chigwedere (2015), trauma theory tends to supersede cosmological aspects of her characters' experiences and ways of being. As I demonstrated in the literature review, theoretical frameworks used by Veit-Wild (2006) and Himmelman (2006) similarly fail to centralise African conceptualisations of madness. Contrary to being accidental, this is a result of dominant Western psychologies being historically imposed on both African bodies and African literary critical works (Hook, 2013). Early writers of madness in Africa, such as Lessing and Gordimer, used a colonial psychological lens to depict an African continent troubled by the chaos of colonial occupation and whose culture and people were not worth as much attention as the white woman. This psychopolitical thread underlies critics such as Veit-Wild's works which, despite all efforts to see madness as positive in Africa in that it, supposedly, often represents "altered [ancestral] consciousness" (2006, p. 3), still emphasise gross aberrations as characteristic of African politics. To adequately challenge such Eurocentric logic, Brown and Garvey's (2017) volume reveals the critical significance of using theoretical tools that facilitate the centralisation of conceptualisations that exist outside Eurocentric logic and geographies, hence my similar interest to explore African cosmologies. I have selected two theoretical approaches to this subject in my study, namely, *Ritual Archives* (Falola, 2017) and aspects of *Critical Psychology* (Hook, 2013). These theoretical tools allow me to critically explore "newer voices that are reimagining their cosmologies to integrate and give new flame to their traditions" (Falola, 2017, p. 725). As I will show in the subsequent subsections, these tools allow me to discuss the ways of knowing and fictionalising madness from African cosmological perspectives which clearly inform the selected literary texts.

Falola's Ritual Archives

In terms of theory, I repeat Mudimbe's question that, "Does this mean that African *Weltanschauungen* and African traditional systems of thought are unthinkable and cannot be made explicit within the framework of their own rationality?" (Mudimbe, 1988, p. 10). By "this" Mudimbe refers to the Westocentric framing of discussions about Africa. The answer is a firm negative. Not only is it possible to understand African philosophy within its own rationality but it is also of utmost urgency to do so. The dominance of western philosophies in

African understanding of madness is detrimental to the fruitful discussion of how contemporary and past authors mobilise cosmological aspects of imagining madness in their novels to interrogate various realities. To speak of an African cosmology is to speak of the epistemological objective to "convert our own [African] categories into theories of knowledge" (Falola, 2017, p. 716). In various methods of interpreting the representation of madness in African literature, it is the credibility of African concepts as integral explanatory frameworks that is at stake. As shown in the literature review, the fictionalisation of madness in literary studies is always traced back to the Victorian womanhood (Gilbert & Guba, 2020). Similarly, Western historians like Hegel and psychoanalysts like Freud agree about the poor psychological development of Africans and other races classified as primitives. In colonial ethno-psychiatry, while the African is incapable of experiencing certain forms of psychological anguish which can be experienced by Europeans, his continent is a place of madness. Thus, the uncritical use of Western explanatory categories and the non-theorisation of African epistemologies solidifies the assumed inferiority of African knowledge of madness. Consequently, Foucault's analysis of the history of madness in European societies should not be imposed as unproblematically applicable to non-Western societies. In effect, these "borrowed and transposed intellectual theories and frameworks often injure the recipient subalterns because they are structured from the vantage point of the proponents and their respective cultures" (Magosvongwe, et al., 2016, p. 7).

It is not necessary for me to repeat the role of the colonial enterprise in how African epistemologies came to occupy the bottom rung. What I emphasise using Mudimbe's *Invention of Africa* theoretical framework is the potency of African epistemes as living experience (Chivaura, 2016). These epistemic tools could be further enriched by being studied on their own terms. This does not mean that African epistemes are immune to criticism. This study avoids such a nativist approach which is not only warned against by Mbembe (2002) but would inhibit the critical interrogation of tragedies that stem from and are sustained by African cosmologies as depicted in the texts under study. Theoretical insights from Falola's encouragement that Africans "should think in terms of an epistemic difference to create an alternative knowledge system to question the intertwined concepts of coloniality and modernity that have established a firm grip" (Falola, 2016, p. 267) on discourses on Africa, shapes the most suitable framework usable to analyse cosmological representation in literature. Consequently, I use Falola's *Ritual Archives* (2017) to discuss how, using the cosmology of madness, the texts selected for this thesis engage multiple postcolonial African issues to

unfasten the grip of colonial epistemology. The "task", as Falola puts it, "is not to reject modernity but to disentangle it from race and domination" (2017, p. 714).

Falola's definition of "ritual archive" is particularly important to my conceptualisation of the terms madness, ritual and cosmology. By ritual archive, Falola refers to,

> the conglomeration of words as well as texts, ideas, symbols, shrines, images, performances, and indeed objects that document as well as speak to those religious experiences and practices that allow us to understand the African world through various bodies of philosophies, literatures, languages, histories and much more (2017, p. 703).

Ritual, with its intrinsic language, incantations and invocations is an epistemology and a repository of cosmic knowledge, as well as a social practice of healing and cultural meaning-making (Borah & Sotunsa, 2020). Literary texts stand as one aspect of African "ritual archive" and the rituals therein can be utilised to frame the analyses of the selected texts. In that case, the experimental writings of authors studied by Veit-Wild (2006) such as Leopold Senghor are not only post-modernistic impressions but are in and of themselves archives of African cosmology, epistemology and history. They enact a reawakening of overlooked experiences and a reframing of everyday practices that repeat themselves in the lives of African characters (McCulloch, 1995). Therefore, definitions and critical perspectives of madness, and if necessary, the existence of an African psychology can be located inside this literary archive.

Several aspects of African psychology cannot be explained using western categories, may even lose their meaning, and their subversive value extirpated when subjected to Westocentric readings. For example, the tactile transferability of madness as a psychological condition and cultural position emanating from an ancestral curse is a belief system that is scoffed at by white imperialists in Mbue's *How Beautiful We Were* (2021) as backward and superstitious. However, there are underlying religious and ethical practices, such as acknowledging the spiritual entities present, avoiding laughing at the next person's misfortune and thus, ascertaining that madness is not imagined as subhuman category. The mad person's daily physical needs are therefore owed to him by his community since he shares their blood, history and humanity. This challenges the Westocentric subhuman categorisation. Most importantly, the clash of approaches towards the madman in the novel reveals the epistemic ethnocentrism held by the white world towards African knowledge systems. Legitimating African conceptualisation, therefore, is one way to resist modern guises of epistemological ethnocentrism which, as will become clear in this study, are not simply limited to madness itself but span the width of African epistemology and humanity. I see this similar

epistemological ethnocentrism in Emezi's *Freshwater* (2018) where the *Ogbanje* concept, in the text's modern psychiatric discourse and Euginia Ossana's (2021) critical analysis of the text, is disaggregated to its queer and trauma aspects while the Igbo deities' articulation of the urgency of reclaiming African cosmological personhood, culture and history are ignored. My conceptualisations of *Ogbanje* in the text as a ritual archive and a critical psychology that "lead[s] us into the reinvention of the cosmos that we inhabit" (Falola, 2017, p. 704) will demonstrate the significance of these theoretical approaches towards addressing the existing epistemological ethnocentrism.

The ritual concepts fictionalised in the selected texts, then, would not require to be analytically packaged in any of the European psychiatric jargon such as psychoanalysis and psychopolitics. *Ogbanje*, *Ngozi* and *Kutanda Botso* will be conceptualised as complete entities, institutions and mythical-epistemological archives which are not reducible to theoretical constructs such as trauma and oedipal complex. Though their symptoms may manifest in ways similar to Western clinical terms, these beliefs can explain themselves because they represent specific aspects of madness and reveal certain political meanings within their cultural settings. They are evidence that these authors were "socialised into their own cultural mythologies before entering European education systems, and that the influence of orature is manifested in their works in different ways" (Vambe, 2005, p. 94). The influence of oral mythologies manifests itself in the appeals to and representations of culture codes which should not be rushed into the categories of subversion and Western clinical terms. In these literary texts, madness should not be solely diagnosed in Western clinical language where African terminologies are available since it leads to the misreading of cultural epistemologies used to rupture colonial and postcolonial hegemonies. For example, Chigwedere posits that Munashe, in *Echoing Silences* (Kanengoni, 1997), "who during the [Zimbabwean Liberation Struggle] war ruthlessly kills a woman with a baby on her back, is haunted by the traumatic memory after the war right up to his death" (2015, p. 47), whereas he is in fact haunted by the dead woman's angry spirit; *Ngozi*. Such misapplication of western and African epistemology inhibits the investigation of the cosmology in which the novel is set and ultimately means that the madman and his community remain uncured. Furthermore, the authority of Westocentric concepts as explanatory models goes unchallenged and the relevance of African ritual archives goes unacknowledged. In the case of *Echoing Silences*, using trauma in the place of *Ngozi* fails to perceive how this culture code is utilised to contest the Zimbabwean postcolonial government's cultural legitimacy. I will make such a case in my analysis of *Glory* (Bulawayo, 2023) in Chapter 4 by showing how the

conceptualisation of the Zimbabwean postcolonial madness is attributed to various unresolved political, social and spiritual issues.

Following the path of African epistemological model of *Ngozi* does not mean expunging the memory of war atrocities, rather, it means both admission and reparation for the crimes committed. It means the whole cosmology remembers. Cleansing rituals hold a pertinent place in indigenous psychology. It is not in talking to the troubled psyche that relieves the psyche fragmenting pressures but in invoking and appealing to spiritual entities such as the ancestors. Such a scenario again plays itself out, for instance, in the novel *Freshwater* (Emezi, 2018) where psychotherapy is used in place of ritual resulting in categorising the *Ogbanje* selves as the protagonist's, The Ida, hallucinations. The underlying causes of madness in characters in the novels selected are, therefore, interrogated within their own cultural frameworks. Such an approach better explains the mitigatory methods employed in the novels. This is my theoretical approach to the literary texts themselves as ritual archives of African epistemologies. Since this concept does not interrogate Western psychology's claim to scientific facticity in a specific manner, I also use critical psychology to account for the various psychological aspects of the literary texts. This is especially important considering the different ways in which authors textually disrupt Western psychological constructions as a way of disrupting their monolithic application in readings of texts and as a way of disrupting the colonial power relations between Africa and the West and within different African hegemonies. As an equally important complimentary theory, I use concepts from the field of Critical Psychology to ground my study in the theories and definitions of madness that recognise the ethnocentrism within orthodox psychology. While Ritual Archives is mainly concerned with the fate of ancestral knowledge, Critical Psychology interrogates the field of psychology from which we receive Western conceptualisations of madness and approaches to African psyche.

Critical Psychology

In the volume *Critical Psychology*, Hook argues that critical psychology is a transdisciplinary "kind of or orientation towards psychological knowledge and practice – and to relations of power…" (Hook, 2013, p. 11). Though the volume avoids explicitly defining critical psychology, deductively; it is a conceptual refusal of the uncritical use of Western psychological formulations by critically integrating a myriad of epistemic approaches produced by those who Western traditional psychology has,

> silenced, ignored, explained away, pathologised, marginalised or otherwise oppressed, (thus, creating spaces for) asserting new values, new freedoms, new ways of imagining oneself, and new ways of conducting one's life. (Collins, 2013, p. 2).

Critical psychology is the critique of the racist notions of orthodox psychology to reclaim epistemological space for psychological and political formulations that were both historically racially marginalised and those which were (are) used in the process of decolonisation and anticolonization. Being a transdisciplinary approach, it is therefore applicable to literary studies. Along with its realisation that traditional psychological theorisations ideologically marginalise non-European peoples and their epistemologies, is the idea of interrogating those marginalised psychologies on their own terms. Drawing from this framework, this research seeks to question the mechanisms, technologies and institutions deployed in the novels to conceptualise madness in African contexts. I rely on this theory to define what comprises an indigenous psychology and its difference from Western traditional theories of psychology. According to Heelas, indigenous psychologies are "cultural views, theories, conjectures, classifications, assumptions, and metaphors – together with notions embedded in social institutions which bear on psychological topics" (1981, p. 3). An interrogation of different African cultures shows that these African cultures have intrinsic assumptions and beliefs about humanity and human relations which are archived for posterity in the African cosmology. These fundamental beliefs determine human behaviour and structure communities. In literary texts selected for this study, these social structures and beliefs are entirely present and practical. Drawing from African mythologies, these literary texts depict a continent where humans are actively engaging the world and interpreting the sociopolitical realities, confronting them through their indigenous belief systems. There are visible psychological functions in the actions depicted in these texts.

Critical psychology does not only address how African epistemologies are to be understood in their own rationality but allows for the interrogation of these psychologies (Mkhize, 2013). As already noted above, I intend to critically explore the various aspects of this cosmology to avoid an apologetic discourse that amounts to a "simple polemical reaffirmation of black humanity" (Mbembe, 2001, p. 12). My analysis explores how, African literature, caught in a postcolonial moment that still has not successfully extricated itself from colonial hegemonies, uses these cosmologies and psychologies to forge new identities, generate new philosophical positions and express political aspirations that are undermined by both colonial epistemology and postcolonial tyranny. Unlike the marginalisation of an African cosmology of madness in extant

scholarship as epistemologically irrelevant, this research appreciates the psychological theories contained within African cosmological practices, institutions and mythologies as a critical epistemological body. Through fictionalising cosmological positions, selected texts definitely imagine liberated ways of being and of inhabiting the contemporary African modernities and diasporic worlds.

Two major ideas raised by critical psychology are relevant to my study. The first idea is that African psychology is not dated (Mkhize, 2013). To provide evidence of this, Mkhize explains that "far from being dated, the worldview continues to guide the lives of many people in traditional sectors of African society" (2013, p. 30). While Mkhize correctly argues that the cosmology is not dated, he mistakenly equates traditional to rurality and overemphasises the effects of acculturation in urban spaces. While there are undeniably some Africans who imagine that these concepts are outdated, and others who have an ambivalent attitude towards them, the applications of these indigenous concepts are not divided along rural-urban lines. Literary texts show that African cosmology is evident in all sectors of African societies inclusive of the urban, modern and the diasporic spaces where they are reincarnated in descendants of the formerly enslaved, perhaps, to contest the African literary ideas of rural as more authentic spaces of African cultures. Various texts transgress the geographical divides enacted by the West by presenting their deities and spiritual entities' capabilities to transcend human borders. Literary representations of indigenous psychologies show that they are not alternatives to Western psychology but often primary ways of thinking for many Africans. They are central and organic to black people's understanding of themselves hence their disregard and contestation of the limiting Western explanatory models of madness as will be shown in my analysis of the literary texts. Selected texts often abandon Westocentric frameworks and conceptualise the contemporary world through a cosmological lens forcing the re-adoption of ancestral epistemologies, philosophies and psychologies as interpretative ideas. Thus, I delve into the interpretations of sexuality, politics, neo(post)colonial practices and psychiatry proffered through the metaphors of madness. Critical psychology is especially important in my analysis of the competing aspects of Western psychiatric care and African traditional care systems and the tropes which are used to discredit the later in selected documentaries.

The second key idea from critical psychology relates to Fanon's psychopolitics which employs "psychological concepts, explanations and even modes of experience to describe and illustrate the workings of power" (Hook, 2013, p. 20). Fanon, according to various contributors to the

volume, is a crucial influence behind and a factor within postcolonial Critical Psychology because he demonstrates how psychological theories may be used to challenge colonial hegemonies. I reiterate that Fanon (1952) revolutionarily reimagined psychology to include black bodies, thereby, rupturing the racial ideologies of the then contemporary orthodox psychology. Most importantly, Fanon's ideas about the colonial experience's alienating effects on colonised subjects is particularly important in my discussion of the novelists' reassertion of their cultural objects to rupture colonial madness. He explains that alienation of the "negro" results in the destabilisation of cultural frames of reference because,

> his metaphysics…., his customs and the sources on which they were based, were wiped out because they were in conflict with a civilization that he did not know and that imposed itself on him. (Fanon, 1952, p. 83).

It is in this line of alienation that I read fictional attempts to recentre the metaphysical aspects of African cultures as political articulations of desires to undo the epistemic and cosmic alienation of the African in the postcolony. As I will demonstrate in my reading, African political establishments have done so little to create spaces for the pursuit of spiritual, cosmological and political aspirations in their various postcolonial nations. This has effectively created its own pathologies and reactionary psychoses amongst local populations. Psychopolitical analysis allows me to use psychological theories, indigenous and Western, spiritual and scientific concepts, to interrogate the sociopolitical and cultural origins of different psychological pathologies in postcolonial Africa. Fanon's psychopolitics facilitates the application of critical psychological approaches to simultaneously critique postcolonial hegemonies and to assert African cultural reference points. In my theorisation of ritualisation of mourning in Bulawayo's *Glory* (2023), for instance, I discuss spiritual manifestations, neurological and oral-metaphoric forms of madness which intersect with political experiences and practices of contemporary Zimbabwe. The spiritual aspects of this study do not preclude the political since madness is ostensibly deployed to articulate a plethora of intersecting political and cosmological issues confronting contemporary Africa. The revolutionary potential of madness is seen in the representation of revolts initiated by a possessed and politically conscious village madman and its completion is overseen by a ritually created nation-mother figure as an inheritor of the madmen's ideology (Mbue, 2021).

Critical psychology also includes decolonial and postcolonial theories, especially, their conceptualisations of power relations in postcolonial Africa. My study intersects with aspects of decolonial theorisations in that, in foregrounding African cosmologies, it discusses and

contests the colonial discourses surrounding the literary depiction of madness in African literature. As Falola, the thinker behind ritual archives, claims "without an aggressive decolonization of knowledge, ancestral knowledge will never find its deserved pride of place" (2017, p. 717). Decoloniality, critical psychology and ritual archives all intersect on the fact that the contemporary postcolonial African world is still caught up in the ideologies of colonialism and imperialism which require rupturing. The authors themselves are aware of the decolonial visions which they articulate in various ways in different aspects of their fictions. The most notable aspect is the epistemic decolonisation in Tshuma's *Digging Stars*' (2023) dualistic contestation of Euclidean geometries as colonial constructs, and postcolonial Zimbabwe' ethnonationalist hegemony through the use Bantu geometries and *isiLimela* mythologies. Although my study is not reliant on decolonial theorisations, it certainly engages the decolonial concepts as part of critical psychology that may potentially fulfil the ideas of epistemic decolonisation. My study is more aligned with ritual archives because, in foregrounding African rituals and ritual archives as starting points, they are better placed to conceptualise African cosmological ways of inhabiting the contemporary world represented in the selected texts.

In summation, this is going to be an in-depth study that analyses fictional representations of madness in the articulation of contemporary ideas of mental health, sexuality, decoloniality, metaphysical and sociopolitical issues. All these are articulated within an African cosmology of madness which ruptures certain Western epistemic formulations and internal hegemonic constructs. The representations we encounter in these texts are iconoclastic in their rupturing of Western conventions of diagnosing madness. They destabilise the hegemony of European models which have been hitherto used in the discussion of African literary texts of madness. The use of elements drawn from African cosmologies in these representations makes it impossible to minimise this cosmology to a single chapter as Veit-Wild (2006) does. It will be shown that these are of primary importance to how African societies understand madness and therefore cannot be dismissed as ridiculous or backward.

Conclusion

In summation, the project is concerned with African cosmology of madness as a conglomeration of systems, social institutions, rituals, and mythologies that literary texts harness from African cultures in their depiction of madness. This approach transcends the

perception of madness as a nervous condition resulting from centuries of internalised traumas and the mechanisms of colonisation. A postcolonial psyche is understood to be inevitably volatile and fragmentary (Fanon, 1963). It also departs from the need to harness anthropological sources to 'rescue' literary interpretation of African literature in a futile attempt to prove the existence or difference of African approaches to madness. African literature can define madness without revisiting the anthropological archive which is riddled with colonial ideological patterns. Literary representations of madness portray an awareness of the cosmology that critics such as Veit-Wild (2006) locate outside literature. This leads to monologic assumptions that madness is always positive because it is often altered consciousness such as spirit possession or initiation into healing practices. To unmoor this study from these traditions, I interrogate the African cosmology for its various thoughts as depicted in the texts. Having provided a snippet into this cosmology, the following chapter goes into detail.

In the second chapter of this study, titled 'Revisiting the African Cosmology: Narratology, Ritual and Madness in *How Beautiful We Were* (Mbue, 2021) and *Freshwater* (Emezi, 2018),' I put into dialogue various aspects of African spirituality in relation to memory, narration, sexuality and embodiment. My choice of these two texts is based on the overlapping aspects of embodiment and ritual aspects of African deities in politico-cultural attempts to reconfigure an African nation, cosmology and consciousness to its precolonial parameters. I approach *How Beautiful We Were* (Mbue, 2021) as a ritualistic and narratological reconfiguration of the modern political imaginary to the ancient time of an unbroken pact with the cosmos. There are fascinating invocations of deities, mythologies, and sacred traditions in both texts to articulate anti-imperialist extraction struggles in Mbue's novel and queer being in Emezi's novel. I will discuss the different spiritual dimensions and social dynamics of typical African communities. Using Emezi's text, I interrogate how the concept of Ogbanje, deployed as a psychological theory, practically disrupts applications of psychoanalysis and trauma. I also argue that Emezi uses the ogbanje concept to challenge, not only how queerness is imagined, but how ideas of African being are conceived by contemporary Eurocentric and postcolonial hegemonies. It ultimately highlights the inadequacy and contradictions of these Eurocentric theories for their claimed interest in human psychology yet failing to account for ogbanje being as a concept of humanity.

The third chapter interrogates how the text *Digging Stars* (Tshuma, 2023) problematises trauma theory as a political approach that tends to subsume Africans and their continent within the images of catastrophe. The chapter is titled 'Cultures of Madness: Interfacing Trauma, Politics and African Cosmologies in Novuyo Tshuma's *Digging Stars* (2023)'. I specifically read how Tshuma reimagines trauma as 'terror' and uses the mythology of the *IsiLimela* (digging stars) to author various aspects of trauma while centring vibrant political and epistemic pursuits that may emerge from engaging various intercultural mythologies that relate to the Bantu's. Tshuma constructs this trauma-terror nexus to explore the depths of colonial legacy in various postcolonial cultures. The novel decries as madness the colonial legacy of inventing non-Western worlds on rigidified ethnic identities. This is the predicament that causes political terror in postcolonies. Tshuma uses the *IsiLimela* to symbolise the fragmented and discredited African cosmology and as a way to recover the interconnected ritual archive of various precolonial identities.

In chapter 4, I analyse how Bulawayo's *Glory* (2023) similarly depicts how the presence of a scientific traumatic experience does not preclude metaphysical manifestations and colloquial articulations of madness but may actually lead to a political reimagination of postcolonial nationhood. Under the title 'Madness and Historical Fictional Caricature of Zimbabwean Politics in NoViolet Bulawayo's *Glory* (2023)', I look into how, through subversive caricatures of historical events, personalities and hegemonic discourse using animal fable, *Glory* successfully harmonises the modern concept of democracy with the Zimbabwean cosmic forces and beings of liberation from colonial and postcolonial tyranny to assert its liberatory vision for Zimbabwe. As a historical fictional caricature, *Glory* depicts two false starts of Zimbabwean liberation, that are, the independence in 1980 and Emmerson Mnangagwa's coup in 2017. Bulawayo is critical of postcolonial discourses of progress which she depicts using the Mugabeist rhetoric of a 'moment of madness'. I will use madness to read these hegemonic terminologies. To maintain its cosmology, the text animates the unrested dead to fight for democracy through simultaneously empowering victims of political genocides and hauntingly maddening hegemonic characters who are perpetrators. Extending this metaphor, I discuss how under some African political entities, and political situations such as coups, assassinations and genocides, the rituals of mourning are rendered impossible as we shall see in the text. I observe the relocations of an entire cosmology into political entities. *Glory* locates haunted madness in Zimbabwe's significant historical landmarks to subvert their perceived value as symbols of transition and progress. The novel uses the historicity of discourses of madness in Zimbabwean

politics to contextualise the Zimbabwean genocide, the *Gukurahundi*, and the power squabbles that preceded the coup.

Chapter 5 analyses another of Akwaeke Emezi's novels, *The Death of Vivek Oji* (Emezi, 2020), disrupts the contemporary ideas of queerness in Nigeria from a point of view of mental illness and Igbo reincarnation. In this chpater, I pay attention to the intersections between the discourses of queerness as mental illness in Africa and the ideas of spiritual beings from a cultural position. I argue that Emezi expands Igbo cosmology to include those categories which contemporary political cultures imagine as non-conforming to traditional African values. Emezi parallels contemporary Nigeria's sexual intolerance to its ethnocentrism. The protagonist's ability to inhabit different sexualities and incarnations symbolises Emezi's argument for an ethnically accommodative and unprejudicial national identity.

In the sixth chapter, I explore two African documentary films' representation of madness under the title ''State of Mind'; Politics, Culture and Postcolonial Psychiatry in two Contemporary African Documentaries.' The central idea of this chapter is to look at madness as mental illness as depicted in the respective Zimbabwean and West African documentary films, *State of Mind* (2018) and *A Crazy Hope* (2015). I include these visual texts in this predominantly literary study to open another analytical angle to problematise the metaphor of madness by discussing mental illness as a public health crisis in postcolonial Africa.

Using these cultural texts allows me to critique postcolonial psychiatry and to explore what contemporary African psychiatric practice informs us about the state of postcoloniality. Jackson's critique of Rhodesia's colonial psychiatry leaves us a challenge by its concluding remark that; "It would be interesting to know what stories the psychiatric patients in a post postcolonial Zimbabwe might tell us today about the world in which they live" (2005, p. 191). What stories do postcolonial African psychiatric patients tell as visualised in the documentaries? Psychiatric health care in the countries of filming is depicted as a looming crisis as a result of governmental negligence, poor equipment and infrastructure, an unbalanced psychiatrist/psychologist-patient ratio (treatment gap), and the interference of the unqualified and outdated African traditional health practitioner. Pertinent issues such as the abuse of dangerous substances as a major contributing factor to "madness" we see in the documentaries give us an entry point to discuss the economic and political hegemonies in the documentaries. This leads to drug users' perspective on the political economies they are situated in. These political economies sabotage efforts made by health practitioners to improve human lives. In

Virgin Berda's *Crazy Hope*, I especially interrogate the visualisation of shackled psychiatric patients which functions as the documentary's main image of African traditional psychiatry. Cosmological ideas are put to the test in this documentary. I interrogate how African culture and postcolonial politics intersect on psychiatry. By interrogating the construction of crisis in the documentaries, I discuss the representation of the state of mental health care in Africa and the place of different psychiatric institutions in African cultures.

In the final chapter, I revisit some of this thesis' major epistemological concerns about the contemporary fictionalisation of madness in African literary and documentary film texts. I reiterate how this study is premised on the need to closely interrogate the human cultures that inform, are enshrined and whose meanings are subverted or expanded in the fictional representations of madness. The final chapter harnesses the major thoughts discussed in the chapters preceding it. The central epistemological concern of this thesis is the marginality of African epistemologies and the privileging of Western models in the analysis of African literary texts which have madness as their central theme. Among many things, this marginality points to the epistemological ethnocentrism that silently directs the way we do research. I contend that a cosmological approach I use in this thesis significantly contributes to the appreciation of the various ways Africans are trying to inhabit the contemporary world which is clearly contemptuous of them and their ways of being. It leads to a richer understanding of the internal political agitations, what Veit-Wild calls "gross aberrations", and how citizens depicted attempt to negotiate spaces for themselves within them. A cosmological approach appreciates how the novelists, and their characters destabilise the cultural legitimacy that certain African political leaders and social constructs crave, thereby, actively engaging power. Thus, madness as *Ogbanje*, as *Ngozi*, as colloquial discourse in Zimbabwe, as ritual and as a psychiatric crisis, to mention a few, does subvert certain meanings put in circulation by politically and socially dominant hegemonies. Admittedly, my study is not conclusive of the entire cosmology of madness in and outside of African literary texts, I argue that it significantly contributes to a different way of imagining madness and other thematic concerns of African literary texts.

Chapter 2: Revisiting an African Cosmology; Narratology, Ritual and Madness in Imbolo Mbue's *How Beautiful We Were* (2021) and Akwaeke Emezi's *Freshwater* (2018)

Introduction

One of the most glaring flaws in existing critical analyses of madness in African fictions is the marginality of African conceptions, theories and cosmologies. In the preceding chapter, I borrowed Haynes' (2012) concept of Westocentric framings to discuss the marginality of African cosmologies in Veit Wild's (2006) and Chigwedere's (2013) research into this subject matter. Mbue's *How Beautiful We Were* (2021) and Emezi *Freshwater*'s (2018) use of madness as metaphor challenges these existing readings. The titles of these novels articulate a return to African archives to formulate epistemologies and political theories to displace the colonial and postcolonial hegemonies that continue to marginalise African cultures. *How Beautiful We Were* is a nostalgic title that reverts to earlier epochs of African beauty and cultural wholeness. In similar fashion, "*Freshwater* is a title that metaphorically challenges the stale water of Western epistemology" (Magaqa & Makombe, 2021, p. 32). Contemporary African culture as it is contaminated by colonial imbalances is incapable of subversively articulating contemporary African experiences and providing epistemological tools to subvert this predicament, hence, as captured in these novels' titles, the authors necessarily revisit earlier epochs of potentially unsullied beauty of African cosmology. They use African ritual perspectives of madness to (re)generate theories, rituals and practices to displace coloniality. I similarly conceptualise my chapter as revisiting to discuss these disruptive returns to ritual archives in the discussion of madness in African literature.

Revisiting an African cosmology in literary representation of madness ignites a number of epistemologically mobilising assumptions. First, it correctly assumes a pre-existing yet fragmented and marginalised Afro-cosmological template. This fragmentation is a result of epistemological ethnocentrism embedded within colonial and Westocentric modernity. Reconstructing this cosmology aims to "decentre ways of thinking premised upon alien (Western) assumptions of life, as well as axioms of existence" (Headley, 2017, p. 276), therefore, the selected novels use a synergy of narrative strategies consistent with this objective. These strategies include depictions of ritual madness, mythopoetic narrative strategies and intertextuality with other African historiography, philosophical and literary writings. Second,

it establishes itself a category of thought and an interpretive framework while acknowledging the limitations posed by colonial presences. Additionally, reassembling is not simply a past-oriented dismissal of everything Western but of colonial ideologies in the contemporary sociopolitical world. It involves numerous present and future oriented possibilities. These two novels use madness, as a ritual steeped in African cosmology, as a narrative strategy to depict what has been poignantly termed the African 'mythic inner world' (Soyinka, 1976). My selection of these two texts is based on their narratological similarities, that is, placing madness and African cosmology at the centre of their divergent different thematic concerns. Mbue and Emezi's texts, though situated in different African postcolonialities and African diasporas, harness the cosmologies of their respective pre-colonial societies.

While it is accurate that the current African cosmology has been fragmented by colonial erasure and postcolonial amnesia, these writers align with Falola's argument that some of these pasts are recoverable. Falola argues that

> the contention that the past is unrecoverable became an assertion that many people came to accept, simply because of how it was packaged by the coloniality of knowledge, which unfortunately incapacitated the possibility of the use and knowledge, …and transformation of our collective memories. The very incapacitation of ritual archives is by itself an example of what prevails as epistemic violence (2017, p. 705).

I concur with Falola that various memories of African cosmologies are recuperable, albeit requiring concerted of ritual effort to "preserve and refound/rediscover/recover our precolonial knowledge" (p. 726). This results in both decolonial representations of the thematic concerns of Mbue and Emezi's texts and an epistemological shift in their fictionalisation of madness. By re-animating cosmological figures of their cosmologies, these texts argue against the fossilisation, in colonial discourse and practices, of African knowledge systems, psychologies and epistemologies. African celestial beings re-animated and re-incarnated in these texts frame the longevity of African belief systems because of their ability to "see human history from a much higher and longer vantage point" (Ng, 2020, p. 7). The manifestation of these various entities in postcolonial nations whose histories have been "corrupted" serves a re-assemblage purpose. They do not present societies unscathed by colonial presence, rather, they construct rituals as epistemological formulations to spiritually re-birth African cosmologies.

Their mad protagonists transgress cosmic boundaries and occupy spaces in both the visible and the invisible world which equates their entire existence to ritual. Consequently, Mbue and Emezi's mad protagonists transgress Western ideas of memory which are limited to the

physical archive. Mbue's madman is haunted by centuries-old ghosts while Emezi's character is a sixteen-thousand-year-old *Ogbanje* spirit which are the authors' ways of depicting African perspectives that predate colonial presence in Africa. While *ogbanje* is not equal to madness, the character (self)misdiagnoses as such using Western medicine which signifies the fractured connection between contemporary Africa and its cosmology. These characters embody centuries of African cosmology which can be ritually accessible and through which they revisit African cosmological components. In both texts, the cosmology asserts its existence by unprovokedly embodying these individuals' psyches and converting them into conduits of ancestral voices initially discarded as madness. Apart from the mad protagonists at the epicentre of narrative, these texts share narratological features emanating from African cosmologies. They use African orature techniques as the most suitable to capture ritual experiences and African cosmological presences. Both novels use polyphonic narrators, including spiritual voices, communal voices, (demographic) age-groups voices and single narrators who speak in terms of the plural "we and us". These metaphoric tropes and narratological aspects of plurality establish a nexus between these otherwise thematically different texts. Thus, these narrations are concerned with the plurality of their societies.

The various issues addressed through Mbue and Emezi's literary revisits to African cosmologies demonstrate Emily Ng's observation, about post-Maoist China, that, these "cosmological engagements involve matters of national, world-historical, and cosmic proportions far beyond the locals tend to connote" (2020, p. 70). Although Ng's specific context was the cosmological interpretations of the cultural and geopolitical impasses faced by China after the death of Mao Ze Dong, this extensive perspective is applicable to my reading of these texts. The selected texts' characters' cosmological engagements offer perspectives on Africa's contemporary geopolitical position far beyond these characters' comprehension. In this chapter, I discuss how this cosmological madness is strategically deployed to re-align African thought and being to its cultural origins. Contrary to Freud's psychoanalytical assumption that African cosmologies are simply "the projection of primitive man's emotional impulses" (1927, p. 161), these texts demonstrate that cosmologies are the residence of African "historic-empirical-ethical-psychic structures" (Soyinka, 1976, p. 35). The resurgence of African cosmological thought in these texts and in my own study legitimates African spiritual, historical and intellectual resources as presently usable concepts to challenge Westocentric thought.

Madness as Cosmological Reconfiguration in Mbue's *How Beautiful We Were*

How Beautiful We Were (Mbue, 2021) evokes numerous cosmological artefacts to depict a fictional postcolonial Cameroonian village's anti-extractive resistance against Pexton, a Western mega-corporation fronted by the local autocrat, possibly Paul Biya. It is essential to pre-empt the fact that the village madman plays a central role as the architect of the revolution because his actions lead to recentring African epistemologies to inspire political resistance against the intertwined Western global coloniality and their handpicked postcolonial autocrat. The madman's interventions lead to the reconfiguration of the existing vestiges of African cosmology into a pivotal resource for anti/decolonial and anti-autocratic resistance. Mbue's representations familiarise us to the worldview that informs Kosawa's cosmological interpretations of madness as well as their history, environment, and the contemporary postcolonial autocracy. The novel's depiction of the village, Kosawa, emphasises places as natural landscapes, cultural heritage sites and as repositories of cosmological knowledges which are desecrated by colonial incursions. Places are not singularly defined by their natural resources as is assumed by the colonial terra nullius myth which clearly still informs Western mega-corporations' contemporary approaches to resource extraction in Africa. My analysis investigates Mbue's narrativization of her cultural beliefs on madness and environment to articulate the violence of oil extraction in Africa and possible alternatives that disrupt the primacy of colonial economic considerations. I explore how Mbue's text utilises cultural resources such as foundational mytho-ecologies, indigenous oral narratives, rituals, and totemic inscriptions as cosmological and social ideation towards reconfiguring the fragmented cosmology, cultural ecologies, and ancestral memory. Ultimately, I discuss the narrative effect of madness' invocation of a ritual archive that launches this story's plot.

This novel establishes a connection between slavery, colonialism and postcolonial extractions as evolutionary stages of the same imperialistic ideology, firstly through Konga and later on through the protagonist's grandmother. Yaya, the grandmother, laments that, "nowadays young people talk about the oil as if it's our first misfortune; they forget that, long before the oil, the parents of our parents suffered for the sake of rubber" (p. 222). These intergenerational economic exploitations of Africa by Europe are also concomitant with cultural erosion metaphorised by the statements that, "for generations, a different sort of fire had been burning down our way of life" (p. 220) and "one day, we know, our world and our ways will vanish in

totality" (p. 224). In their decolonial reading of this novel, Nare et al correctly argue that "Eurocentric economic and geo-political dominance in the Global South is reinforced by endless epistemic constructions, which are based on veiled racism and the naturalization of neocolonialism" (2024, p. 352). To displace these epistemic constructions, the narratological strategies employed in this text simultaneously depict the suffering caused by European extraction in Africa and use madness to remember the cosmological aspects of African ways of being. Towards the end of the novel, we realise that this story is narrated by grandparents to their grandchildren years after their ancestral village has been destroyed. The older generation employs narrative strategies consistent with their African worldview, which are, folklore, mythopoesis and ritual narratives to capture the aspects of African cosmology. In African tradition, grandparents are a cultural archetype who employ folklore in their story telling. It is often the grandparents' reserved duty to tell folktales to their grandchildren as a way to inculcate cultural values and to entertain.

Consistent with this tradition, the novel's concern with telling African stories of decimation is encapsulated in one of Kosawan folktales about "three little fishes who escaped the belly of a monstrous creature by itching the insides of its stomach for so long that the monster got a stomach-ache and vomited them out" (p. 138). The grandparents narrating this tale in a plural/communal voice emphasise that "*this story must be told, it might not feel good to all ears, it gives our mouths no joy to say it, but our story cannot be left untold.*" (ibid). The urgency in telling this story is to both document global inequalities which justify colonial genocides in Africa and retain African rituals before they are completely extinct. As I will demonstrate when I unpack what I conceptualise as the novel's ritual mothering trope, telling this story opens ritual spaces for an eschatological return of an African messianic spirit to reclaim Africa's stolen heritages. This process of reconfiguring African cosmologies unpacks how the contemporary global world is structured on colonial relationships of subordination and exploitation. Mbue's novel is this folktale in that it communicates the same anti-imperialism and decolonial message. In appropriating the folkloric, the novel simultaneously shows Kosawa as a historical community and resists the imposition of European narrative techniques. These narrative strategies show that the ritual archive is not a simply pre-existing and static epistemological body, but an actively constructed knowledge base constantly fed with more mythologies and events built on ancestral antecedents. Kosawa views itself as the folkloric fishes in the stomach of an imperial monster which is Europe. Mbue's textualization of this

folklore concurs with Vambe's argument that in African literature folklore is "a site of potential rebellion against the white settler values." (2004, p. 1).

Although this story is told to mostly exilic/diasporic grandchildren who are absent in the actual novel, it significantly bridges the cultural gap left by their parents who treat their "spirit, music, umbilical-code bundles, and language as relics to be admired" (p. 359). The story therefore propagates a cosmological and political reconfiguration that was historically ignited by their deserted ancestral village's madman. It is both a folkloric and a historical account of Kosawa's centuries old resistance and eventual violent capitulation to Western capital and it provides cosmological tools through which the exiled descendants of Kosawa can reclaim their pasts, lands and rightful position in human history. It challenges the middle generational acceptance "of the West as a producer of material goods, intellectual ideas and culture" (Chivaura, 1998, p. 3) which results in their psychological subjugation to Western capital's displacement and cultural erosion (Ehanhire, 2022). With the realisation that "our world and our ways will vanish in totality" (p. 359), reassembling that world as a culturescape and psychic landscape becomes an urgent matter in the fights against imperialism. The narrative is invested with apparent spiritual elements to elevate Kosawa beyond the banal definition of place as reflected in statements such as "it may be long dead, Kosawa, but we never forget it, the splendid piece of the earth it was. We can never forget it, for there our spirits were whole." (ibid). This demonstrates the veracity of Butler and Athanasiou's observation that "dispossession is not only a problem of land deprivation but also a problem of subjective and epistemic violence" (2013, p. 26). Reconfiguration rhetoric reveals these psychical dimensions of the village.

As I will argue in this chapter, mythopoesis and rituals are critical cultural tropes to reconstruct a disintegrating Kosawan and African cosmology. Mbue and her depicted characters use these cultural touchstones to reconstruct a historical account of resistance which is distorted in official media such as newspaper and television, and to restore a cosmology which has been reduced to relics by colonialism. Employing multiple first person narratorial voices such as Thula (the protagonist), a group of five known as Thula's disciples, Thula's brother and grandmother and the entire community, Mbue shows how different characters participate to reconstruct the story of their resistance. As a counterpoint to post/colonial epistemological rationalisations of Kosawa's destruction through "rhetoric of modernity…future economic prosperity and social utopias" (Nare, et al., 2024, p. 360), the story gets its cosmological and nationalising impetus from a madman. Konga, the madman, primarily articulates the novel's cultural and philosophical positions that even beyond his death, his ritual directives seem to

inform subsequent rituals to incarnate Kosawa's destroyed cosmology. His legacy lasts beyond Kosawa's destruction as symbolised by the novel's closing chapter that "Today, in the year 2020, forty years since the night Konga told us to rise" (p. 358). This reference to Konga is not simply an epoch marker, but also encapsulates his cosmological insights. While I agree with existing critical analyses that Mbue's novel espouses decolonial/environmentalism concepts (Nare, et al., 2024, Karmakar & Chetty, 2023), I centralise the analytically neglected figure of Konga and madness as entry points into reconfigurations of Kosawa's fractured mythic inner world. Konga is neglected in existing analyses so much that even Ehanhire's psychoanlytical reading does not focalise the obviously mad character, only calling him "a mentally deranged man", (2022, p. 107) but focuses on the subjugation of the entire Kosawan community. In the process, Konga's value as a culture trope who is impervious to pyschological and political subjugation is not necessarily analysed. I argue that Konga initiates the revisit to Kosawa cosmology to map ways of resistance.

Madness as disruptive cosmological memory; reconfiguring ancestral pacts, and foundational mythologies.

Although Kosawa is a fictionalised post-colonial village historically subjected to various colonial incursions, its precolonial modes of thinking and storytelling defiantly exist creating a vast knowledge archive used to contest the siege of postcolonial autocracy and global colonial capital. Its foundational mythology – preserved in song, folktale, social institutions and festivals – is an important psychic and ideological resource which, according to the narrators, "reminded us of who we were as a people and the kind of life we were created to live" (2021, p. 281). Kosawa society is based on a ritualistic belief system of origins centred on a ritual exchange of blood between Kosawa's three founding brothers and a leopard. Their founding of the village is memorialised through a mythological tale, anthem and totemic inscriptions about how three brothers founded the village. Through this "admixture of oral genres" (Vambe, 2004, p. 29), the narrative recounts how three brothers having found a leopard caught in one of their hunting traps,

> decided to let her go home to her children. In gratitude, the leopard made a cut on her paw and asked the brothers to use their spears and make cuts on their fingers too. On this day, the leopard said as she forged a blood pact with each brother, I give you my blood: it will flow in your veins and the veins of your descendants until the sun ceases to rise. All who seek to destroy you will fail. (Mbue, 2021, p. 31).

As the tale continues, "they packed their belongings and left to create a new village, one in which every child would grow up to be as fearsome and dignified as a leopard" (ibid). This

ritual is monumental in Kosawa's inception and self-definition as a culturally homogenous group. In their understanding, Kosawa is a unique cosmological enclave whose inhabitants are related through a ritual and biological ancestry with intricate ties to this particular geographical space. Their defiance to displacement and massacres by the Western sponsored postcolonial dictator is inspired by the madman, Konga, who reminds them of the pact as an integral psychic resource of their communal sense of being. Before the narrative is furnished with more syncretised traditions, this mythopoesis creates a figurative and ritual foundation for resistance. Figuratively, Kosawans identify with the leopard's "hunting skills, natural strength, and tenacity" (Stone, 2017, p. 285). On a ritual and biological level, "blood is the strongest of all lineal ties. It not only lends a religious aspect to the tribe, it also puts an individual under obligation towards his consanguines" (Aschwanden, 1987, p. 23). The leopard is simultaneously a direct spiritual ancestor of Kosawa and a symbol of their strength. As Wylie observes, the totemic animal's "characteristics provide a base for describing the clan's identifying qualities" (2005, p. 149). Thus, Kosawa's political institutions, social categories and spirituality are embedded within this mythology as symbols of strength, responsibility towards their progeny and environment. Accordingly, Konga, the village madman is a communal responsibility to whom the villagers "took turns bringing food and water" (p. 16). His autochthonic belonging to the group makes ostracism impossible.

Konga's madness is a ritual state of being haunted by ghosts of people possibly killed by one of his ancestors centuries before him. We learn that "as punishment for an evil committed by one of his ancestors centuries before Konga was born, a vengeful spirit had taken Konga's sanity", and that this spirit manifested "in the form of men, women, and children who'd been in the grave for so long they'd lost most of their flesh." (p. 16). This ghostly haunting manifesting centuries after, illustrates Falola's (2017) argument that ritual archives are not irrecoverably lost but may disruptively manifest in ways that evoke African cosmological memory. As another character in the novel argues through the mythology about Nubia, "as surely as the ocean's waves are born and reborn, gentle and mighty, everything that once existed would return to take its rightful place, be it where it was before, or wherever it finds suitable upon return" (p. 331). To reconcile this to Konga's haunted madness, ghostly appearances are African cosmological mnemonic ways of disrupting present reality to memorialise unresolved pasts. By memory I do not imply that Konga's ghosts are imaginary, rather, I emphasise these apparitions as real manifestations of unresolved pasts. Certainly, Konga disruptively reactivates Kosawa's collective memory to the significance of their

defining blood pact as descendants of the leopard capable of resisting Pexton's intrusions. On a literal level, Mbue introduces Konga disrupting a meeting which occurred once every eight weeks between Kosawa and Pexton officials by orchestrating taking these officials hostage until Pexton maps practical methods to purify Kosawa of oil spillages. This act has been correctly described as "epistemic disobedience" (Karmakar & Chetty, 2023, p. 138) because by disrupting the meeting, Konga contests all three intertwined necropolitical hegemonies subjecting Kosawa to death and cultural erosion, that are, the corrupt local Woja (Chief), the postcolonial autocrat and Western capital. The subsequent madman-initiated resistance epistemologically pushes against this power matrix by reminding Kosawa of its cultural (re)sources of power, primarily, their ancestral blood pact with the leopard. Madness becomes a way to reanimate Kosawa's cosmological vestiges to configure a liberating cultural and political course for postcolonial Kosawa and, and by extension, Cameroon. As I will argue, Konga's intervention (re)opens Kosawa's subjugated ritual spaces.

Madness here is disruptive memory because it is a ritual rupture in the cosmic fabric, therefore, a manifestation of memories of other cosmic beings. Wright's definition of ritual as "the meeting point of the numinous and the mundane, of human and cosmic essences" (1992, p. 48) locates Konga's life as perpetual state of ritual. Kosawa's origins also fit within this ritual paradigm. By virtue of his madness, Konga corporeally inhabits the visible world, yet psychologically dwells in "a world in which spirits ruled and men were powerless under their dominion" (p. 16). Konga's mad consciousness transgresses cosmic boundaries which separate the living from the dead and disruptively animates the dead who resist the living's amnesia. Up to his death, Konga gravitates towards authentic African ritual spaces and Mbue depicts him to articulate a cosmological worldview in opposition to Pexton's postcolonial modernity. Thus, when Kosawans recognise madness as a sacred ritual; "to touch a madman was to invite the worst curse", Pexton officials consider it beneath them to touch the "crazy one, the lunatic, the brainless idiot" (p. 16 & 180). Pexton officials dismiss conceptualisation of madness anchored in that ritual archive as "nonsense, utter nonsense" (p. 18). Postcolonial modernities dismiss African cosmologies as nonsensical in this manner because colonialism and slavery left a ready-made world which relegates Africans from humanity to "sub-others" (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 245). Mbue depicts madness as ritual and disruptive memory to conceive political and epistemological routes to ritual archives as a way of disrupting what Mignolo terms "space configured by imperial global designs" (2017, p. 295). In Kosawa, imperial configurations approve Pexton' necropolitical co-option of "the social and physical death of

colonized people as a mode of extracting economic resources and cheap labor" (Nare, et al., 2024, p. 352). Madness, by its disruptive entrance into the meeting, reasserts Kosawa's humanity. Konga challenges the economic exploitation of Kosawa, and his community interpret his actions as "the Spirit telling us to dare" (p. 24). He reawakens Kosawa's leopard ancestral Spirit to challenge global colonial epistemologies which historically thrive in African epistemicide, ecocide and genocide.

The invisible incarnated dead in Konga propel Kosawa back into what Soyinka declares the mythic-inner world which "is both the psychic sub-structure and temporal subsidence, the cumulative history and empirical observations of the community" (1976, p. 35). Following Konga's intervention, therefore, Kosawans regain their urgency as active agents to map their future and that of Cameroon. They (re)assert their ancestral pacts by declaring "the blood of a leopard flows through our veins…how did we ever lose sight of that?" (p. 23). Konga's disruptive madness shocks Kosawans out of their spiritual lethargy generated by years of intimidation, cultural and environmental destruction. Ehanire's (2022) psychoanalytic reading attributes this spiritual lethargy to capitalist weapons of subjugation which erode Kosawa's sense of being through perpetual cycles of violence, disease and death. Thula explains this spiritual subjugation by stating that "every eight weeks we went to the village square to listen to them. We were dying. We were helpless. We were afraid" (p. 3). Konga presents madness as agency and refusal to acknowledge Western constructed hierarchies which exploit Africa. Kosawans appropriate Konga's madness as a psychological, political and philosophical unshackling, and conclude that, "maybe madness is what we all need." (ibid). This position recognises that Konga's actions rupture Western colonial monologue over Kosawa which, prior to his disrupting presence, is symbolised by Kosawa's attendance of Pexton's meetings as mere listeners. Having been thrown into a philosophical crossroads, on which Konga's hostage-taking spelt certain death from the postcolonial autocrat's military while releasing them would perpetuate infanticide and ecocide, Kosawans reconfigure madness into a site of agency which unlocks their metaphysical memory. Madness is a site where the global order and its political relationships of subordination and exploitation are contested.

Such a contestation requires a total exit from Western epistemology, and a philosophical anchorage on the mythic inner world of African cosmology. In his madness, Konga realises this and thus explicitly instructs Kosawan men to consult their village mediums, Jakani and

Sakani, for further spiritual guidance and exorcise colonised mentalities. After taking Pexton officials hostage, Konga sends

> word for all the men of the village to meet him in front of Jakani and Sakani's hut, but he never showed up there, leaving the twins to preside over the rest of whatever happened that night, things we'll never know (p. 57).

Jakani and Sakani represent cosmological knowledge and memory in that they continuously reincarnate as twins after their cyclical deaths. After their deaths in a massacre authorised by the postcolonial dictator, they later reincarnate as "Bamako and Cotonou" (p. 267), entering the world holding hands as they had left it. This reincarnation trope borrows from African ontology and "challenges colonial notions of human dualism which divide the universe between good and evil/life and death" (Nare, et al., 2024, p. 369). With the names Bamako and Cotonou, Mbue eponymically personifies the cities of West African nations of Mali and Benin, respectively, to create geographical/human connections. Although these cities do not directly relate to Cameroonian setting of the novel, they evoke the livingness of geographical spaces in this instance. Kosawa's continuity and ancestral memory is enshrined in these incarnating twins to whose guidance Konga directs Kosawan men. The twins' supernatural guidance synthesises Kosawan men's modern political imagination with their forgotten cosmological insights and ritual processes. It is interesting that, like Konga, the twins never attended Pexton's meetings signifying their epistemological location outside neocolonial configurations. Madness in this novel functions to return Kosawa to its cosmological thought and sources of cosmological memory where the significance of geographical spaces as metaphysical culturescapes is reinstated.

Similarly, Kosawa the geographic space is linked to its original inhabitants' metaphysical beliefs as encoded in various epistemological canons such as anthems and ritual ornaments. These anthems and ritual ornaments, forms of "documentation, transmission and learning…of [Kosawan] cosmological and metaphysical views" (Osunlakin, 2020, p. 47), ascribe sociopolitical authority to Kosawan life rituals in opposition to Western terminal epistemologies of resource extraction. For instance, after returning from the medium's huts, Kosawan men seal the fate of the kidnapped Pexton officials by making their families swear over the "the umbilical cord bundle" (Mbue, 2021, p. 122). All family members, including children, take oaths not to tell anyone that Pexton officials were kidnapped in Kosawa. As the narrators explain, because it comprised all umbilical cords dating "all the way back to the time when our ancestors first established our bloodline, signified – the essence of our existence"

(ibid). Embedded within the umbilical cord are transgenerational histories, the beliefs of the continuity of Kosawa and its future. Most Bantu ethnic groups believe in the umbilical cord as a sacred symbol of paternity and continuity of life (Mbiti, 1961). The umbilical cord bundle is a cosmological ornament or memory database that contains the full length of Kosawa's cultural history and simultaneously usable to map sociopolitical directions for posterity. I concur with Soyinka that this cosmological "inner world is not static, [but is] being constantly enriched by the moral and historical experience of man." (1976, p. 35). Cosmological reconfiguration here depends on this foundational mythology as an archive for an earlier identity, existence and history apart from the one contaminated by Pexton's oil spillages.

Thus, Konga dissuades his community emissaries from leaving Kosawa to request European or the Bezam located governmental. He displays his historical and oracular acumen by locating Pexton within historical colonial economic and political hegemonies operating in Africa. He similarly questions their geopolitical, historical and spiritual awareness by asking, "Americans, the Europeans, every single overseas person who has ever set foot on our soil, you know they all want the same thing, don't you?" (p. 103). These emissaries are shocked by Konga's ability to connect these varied imperialist mutations in different historical moments in Africa, they wonder how "he remember[s] the Europeans when he has no memory?" (ibid). Clearly, Konga articulates Mbue's ancestral and decolonial visions which depict Europe's evolving imperialistic syphoning of African resources. Although his advice is ignored, with fatal consequences to these emissaries, Konga is a disruptive cosmological memory and a ritual being who becomes the unlikely decolonial sage for African centred rituals, cosmologies and decolonisation. His advice that "we are the only ones who can free ourselves" (ibid) reads like an adaptation of Marcus Garvey's speech which emphasised that "none but ourselves can free the mind" (Garvey, 1937). To Konga, Kosawa's liberation lies outside all Western established hegemonies, including postcolonial ones. Kosawa's attempts to seek help from the same hegemonies they seek liberation from, while done in recognition of Western technological superiority and the postcolonial military brutality, is a self-defeating admission to the West's claimed epistemological and intellectual superiority. The departure of these emissaries from Kosawa symbolises epistemological departure from African cosmologies as encapsulated in their explanation to the madman that "we need people bigger than us to join our fight" (p. 103). Such departures lead to Africa's subordinate assimilation into global imperialism as merely an empty geography as contemporary global extraction methods demonstrate. Consequently, Konga emphasises an Afro-cosmological approach to reconfiguring Kosawa on its

foundational mythology rather than a mere extension of empire. Konga's disruptive memory mobilises modern anticolonial thought and reconciles it to precolonial ritual vestiges to forge liberatory countercultures to Eurocentric epistemologies. The novel's Afro-cosmological representation of madness deliberately emphasise its cultural decolonial ideological inclinations and gestures towards recovering what Brown calls "Africa's discredited knowledge" (2017, p. 252).

Konga also symbolises ritual haunting and justice-seeking manifestation of the unrested dead African spirits against European colonial hegemonies. One of the most evocative occurrences after Konga's hostage taking is when Lusaka, a father latest to lose all his children to Pexton's toxicity, shows Pexton officials "the grave of every child we've buried, and they'll count the graves so that they'll know the number and never forget it." (p. 23). Similar to Konga bearing witness to his ancestor's crimes, Pexton is forced to testify to its own, and to the West's historical enslavement and genocidal exterminations of African people, ecosystems and cultures. These processes of stock taking which are absent from history, and other rituals practiced later in the novel are a clear domino effect of Konga's madness. The ghostly appearances of centuries old crimes create a platform to remember and challenge Europe's historical amnesia of uncountable victims of colonial and postcolonial regimes of death. We are able to draw similarities between the condition of the madman as a ritual spectacle of ancient crimes and the revisiting of the graves of those who died of routine exposure to toxins in Kosawa. Madness becomes a way to radically confront coloniality's ever accumulating body count in the Global South and to possibly force them to atone for the dead. This is not to elicit sympathy since colonial psychologies are incapable of such ethical politics as symbolised by one of Pexton officials' response to Lusaka that "Where are the graves of your dead sons? Do you even have dead sons?" (p. 90). Madness therefore makes it possible to represent these accumulating graves as archives detailing the brutalities of imperialism.

In Kosawa's spiritual lethargy, the madman is the most provocative subject to ventriloquise the Spirit because of the various cosmological dilemmas he poses. Kosawans believe in this society, the ritualistic nature of madness informs the tactile boundaries which make Kosawa powerless before Konga's hostage taking. These nuances of ritual spaces help frame madness outside the simplistic categorisations of madness as spiritual superiority. Madness as a ritual and disruptive memory (re)opens Kosawa's ritual spaces which become the narrative's cosmological resistance launchpad. Indeed, the madman is utilised to reorient Kosawa towards

its cosmology and functionally unlocks a ritual route to resistance. That non-ritual methods of resistance are attempted and result in two massacres makes the dismissal of Konga's advice tragic. Kosawa sends two emissary groups to the capital, Bezam, to engage Pexton's African headquarters. Both groups are "disappeared" leaving the revolution in the leadership of a young generation led by Thula and her five disciples. As the madman warns of non-ritual approaches used by earlier generations, ironically, in Biblical allusion; "There is a way that seems right to a man but in the end, it leads to destruction" (Mbue, 2021, p. 103). Konga himself is tortured and executed by the postcolonial government because of his position as the "brain" behind Kosawa's resistance. Years after his death, Kosawa's resistance becomes radically violent and ritualistic gesturing towards the rejuvenation of Konga's cosmological advice. In fact, Kosawans perceive something of Konga's aura in Thula, the revolution's new leader. Clearly, madness informs the novel's central plot by legitimating ritual spaces as sources of epistemological and decolonial resistance. I characterise the novel's central ritual process as ritual mothering which nationalises Kosawa's resistance and symbolises Africa's spiritual renaissance. As I have established in this section, ritual processes later adopted in the novel snowball from Konga's madness, therefore, in the following two sections, I discuss Konga's unfolding impact in challenging postcolonial nationhood. This challenges Ehanire's reading of Konga's revolution as "pyrrhic" (2022, p. 117) and Karmakar and Chetty's view that it was "futile" (2023, p. 139).

Ritual Mothering: "Madness Ignited"

Although there is no sustained direct biological and physical contact between Konga and Thula, beyond that Thula was a scared child when Konga first led Kosawa into rebellion, Thula becomes Konga's spiritual successor through what I term ritual mothering. What I refer as ritual mothering in this text is the politicoreligious ritual which Thula unconsciously undergoes prior to launching Kosawa's now nationalised revolt against the postcolonial autocrat. In the ritual, she is inseminated with sperm from an unknown young man whom "the Spirit would cause to sleepwalk into the twins' hut, spill his seed into a bowl, and return to his bed still unconscious." (pp. 310 - 311). This ritual, according to the incarnated village twin mediums, Bamako and Cotonou, would "anoint her the Mother of a people ready to be reborn." (ibid). This direct application of African rituals to modern politics illustrates, among many things, the adaptability of African epistemological formulations (Falola, 2017). The discourse of rebirth used by Bamako and Cotonou demonstrates the need to reformulate Kosawa's and the

contemporary fragmented vestiges of African cultures, nationhood and political consciousness. In Thula, the objective becomes to reimagine postcoloniality to extricate it from colonial structures, thus, creating a democratic Cameroon. Similar to Konga, Bamako and Cotonou locate the rebirth of African cultures within Falola's ritual archives.

Ritual, according to Wright,

> holds in place the walls of a sacred cycle of being, mending the cracks that occur along the seam of the continuum by acts of libation, prayer, thanks offerings, and sacrifice, and maintaining the contiguity of the cycle's interdependent phases of childhood, adulthood, and spirithood. Ritual, therefore, does not retain but sustains, does not renovate but regulates existence. (1992, p. 48).

Wright's definitions of ritual contextualise the contemporary reality of African cosmologies and demonstrates the necessity of Thula's ritual mothering as one that mends the fractured postcolonial nationhood and political consciousness to overthrow colonial relations. Fractured philosophies and identities are similarly reborn anew through this ritual. This concurs with the argument that "African philosophy is 'incarnated in the mythical/religious conceptions, worldviews, and lived ritual practices of ethnic Africans'" (Adegbindin, 2017, p. 316). Similar to Konga's invitation of Kosawan men to the twins' hut, Thula's revolutionary movement is given its ritual elements by the reincarnated twins. Konga's madness re-establishes the cosmological routes making this ritual a fulfilment of Konga's vision which places African life within ritual frameworks. Thula is Konga's intergenerational successor in the sense that her nationalised revolution has its roots in Konga's madness and in that it is buttressed by the mediums as Konga suggested for the first revolution. The ideas of reincarnation and rebirth represented by the mediums demonstrate the continuity of thought, rather than of persons themselves, therefore, the aura of Konga's madness seen in Thula signifies this continuity. The idea is that the Spirit is still accessible and would require a different vessel to continue Konga's resistance. At this point in the narrative, to use Garvey's statement about Haitian women and literary madness, Kosawans ritually "call upon the spiritual realm for models and guidance" (2017, p. 108). This mothering ritual opens a direct route to the ancestral and invites the cosmological to inhabit and guide Thula as the new leader of the struggle.

There are numerous contact points between this ritual and the birth of Christ in Christian theology. The Virgin Mary receives a heavenly mandate and thus in Catholic mytho-theology, she becomes a mediatrix of all graces. Though this is not the oldest tradition of ritual mothering, it is undeniable that the biblical narrative of this ritual looms large and overshadows other

traditions such as the birth of the Egyptian deity, Osiris[4]. Osiris – the deity of transition and regeneration – bequeathes on his mother the same capabilities. I argue that this ritual is an appropriation, replication and subversion of the Christian mythology with African spirituality due to a plethora of Biblical allusions in this text. In all these mythologies, the Son-deity to be born regenerates socioreligious systems. While Mbembe locates the "thaumaturgic power of the god [in] the avoidance of semen" (2001, p. 220), the Spirit child's miraculous power is epitomised through his ability to hijack another's semen and to stay dormant until "whenever it was that Thula woke up in the arms of a beautiful man" (Mbue, 2021, p. 311). Whether these similarities are coincidental or are evidence of subversion is not easy to determine since various cultures share, borrow and appropriate similar ritual structures. To leave this ritual to replication would thus miss the Spirit of regeneration archived through it. This Spirit is Kosawan, thus, particularly concerned with the regeneration of Kosawa. It is the same spirit which was incarnated in Konga and initiated the revolution. That there is a platform for such a ritual within this cosmology could be evidence of colonial residue, or, since the ritual is directed by reincarnate beings, it could be an ancient African tradition.

Lastly, ritual mothering transfigures Thula into a national political figure of mythic proportions, to become an integral part of the nation's genealogy. The possibilities of a Thula cult are not downplayed in the text. Unpleasant as it is in modern sensibility, this process apotheosises Thula into the corpus of national mythology. True to ritual structures, ritual mothering initiates societal "transition from one area of existence to another…with changing levels of awareness and progression to the higher states of collective consciousness required for concerted political action." (Wright, 1992, p. 47). Emphasis should be placed on the cosmic and political regenerative powers of the deity-birthing ritual. The power of this ritual is the instant national resurgence of agitation for democratic space and electoral processes. As if aware of her carrying a Spirit-child, Thula proclaims that the entire nation has "awakened" (Mbue, 2021, p. 313). To borrow Muponde's terminology on childhoods, similarly, ritual mothering conceives "a renewed quest for autonomy, unity and identity" (2005, p. 122). Thula's own knowledge of world politics acquired in America makes her a suitable successor to Konga in that she is better placed to articulate decolonial visions beaconed by Konga's traditional conceptualisation of power. This ritual becomes especially important after Thula's

[4] In Egyptian mythology, Osiris was born after his mother Isis copulated with Horus' dismembered phallus.

murder, in a proverbial battle over her dead body. In official narratives, she is known as the "Fire Lady" born to violence whereas in local mythology she becomes part of the spiritual arsenal available to marshal the nation into resisting postcolonial dictatorship. Thula's name becomes a necessary memory tool in both cosmological and national reconfiguration process. Apparent, is the ritual investment with another narrative of culture-nation and Thula's own person. Rituals are a question of il/legitimacy.

Ritual mothering challenges His Excellency, Paul Biya's political legitimacy. I can infer that the character depicted as "His Excellency" references Paul Biya because of textual references to the postcolonial government's location in Bezam, a city in Eastern Cameroon. While Kosawa is fictional, and Bezam is not the Cameroonian capital, references to this factual place and the longevity of the fictional autocrat's presidency provides clues that Mbue also uses madness and ritual mothering to transgress Biya's postcolonial Cameroon. His excellence, together with Western capital are responsible for the continued fragmentation of African cosmologies which Thula un/successfully attempts to rebirth. His excellence's continuing forty year-long presidency is ascribed to bloodletting rituals. Nationally circulated rumour narrates that "he went to a medium in his ancestral village and gave his manhood in exchange for power so he could rule over us for the rest of his days." (Mbue, 2021, p. 225). His Excellency perverts African cosmologies for lifelong political power. The rulership of numerous African dictators is surrounded by such oral narratives of using rituals. Writing of Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, Gunda argues that such legendary and mythic narratives "cannot be falsified due to the fact that the source is popular communal memory," and the leader's position "extremely difficult to challenge" (2020, p. 65 & 63). While Gunda does not specify what mythical powers Mugabe possessed, he suggests that Mugabe possessed some disarming charms that made his positions unquestionable. In the same volume, another Zimbabwean scholar, Tarisayi Chimuka argues that "it is not preposterous to imagine that" he used mystical powers such as "*kutsira* [to enhance his business], *kutanda munyama* [to expel misfortune] and *mangoromera* [to fight and destroy opponents]" (2020, p. 83). The narrative under consideration here has all the ingredients of a ritual narrative which sublimate the leader into a ritual being whose self-emasculation ultimately dismembers opposition. Such ritualisation leaves the opposition wondering; "Did we surrender our balls?" (Bvuma, 1999, p. 17). Such and more makes the terrain of power in this postcolony a ritualised affair in this text. This ritualisation occurs essentially because, though the truthfulness of these narratives cannot be verified, as the

narrator says, “these stories have travelled from Bezam through countless villages before arriving in ours (p. 226).

Even medical surgeries which sustain the dictator’s health and by extension his longevity in power are depicted as ritualistic, for instance, the narrative continues, “once a year, apparently, he goes to Europe so his blood can be drained and replaced with the blood of a younger man – everyone in this country will be dead and gone and he’ll still be here.” (pp. 225 - 226). Synthesising this purely medical procedure with the leaders’ illusions of immortality invokes a ritual interpretation of his illegitimacy (Mbembe, 2001). Such rumours are often characteristic of geriatric leaders who demonstrate confounding power retention abilities (Melber & Southall, 2006). I use a ritual interpretation here due to its similarity with the ritual exchange of blood which gave the people of Kosawa rights of ownership of their land. Similarly, through these rituals, “the country became his property” (p. 226). Konga’s rebellion, therefore, already challenges this unseen ritualistic power, which, similar to global extractive practices, syphons citizens’ blood in abortive rituals. The amputation of genitalia, syphoning young men’s blood and the fact that His Excellency “does not sleep in the same bed as his wife, that his children do not carry his blood” (ibid), demonstrate the necessity of Thula’s ritual mothering process as a procreational one that gives the nation back its life.

Through these abortive rituals, “the *commandment* [postcolonial power] defines itself as a cosmology” (Mbembe, 2001, p. 111). It does not only “aspire to be made sacred” (ibid) but transforms itself into a sacred hegemony by harnessing magico-ritual aspects which forego re-electability. Thula’s grandmother identifies this and asks her husband “which he thought was worse: the European masters, or His Excellency. The madmen who created this farce of a nation, or the servant who took over the task of making sure it never fell apart” (p. 225). The creation of postcolonial nations, to quote Falola,

> was [not] the result of a sincere effort at nationalism but rather of a practical strategy toward convenience for the British Empire to successfully manage the politically crafted spatial entity and continue to have a stake in its affairs after independence, thereby consolidating the hegemonic inequalities that forced the nation into being (2022, p. 8).

Besides interpreting colonial extraction and colonial nation-making as its own brand of psychiatric disorder, this characterisation denotes the prefiguration of postcolonies on imperialistic templates. The postcolonial tyrant is a stooge to slavery and serves as a custodian of foreign indirect rule (Mbembe, 2001). The postcolonial nation as prefigured on colonial

consciousness is incompatible with cosmological Kosawa. Worse still, the autocrat's sociopolitical paralysis inducing rituals maintain the madness of coloniality.

Ritual mothering is thus a radical politico-cultural continuation and nationalisation of Konga's vision of reconfiguring the nation. Despite this ritual, Thula is murdered/disappeared. Her death, however, contextualises the thematicization of madness as a mechanism to ignite an anti-extractive revolution and to launch the text's plot and instigate this reimagination of postcolonial nationhood through this ritual. My argument in this chapter is based on the cosmological aspect of this ignition. The African cosmological sensibility revisited through madness in these texts transcends the political realm. Austin, the boyfriend who Thula left in America to continue fighting for Kosawa, writes a eulogy for Thula from which this section's heading is adopted. Austin eulogises,

> *farewell to the revolution, weep not, silence lasts for a night*
> *rise children, get in formation, madness ignited, fists clench up*… (Mbue, 2021, p. 357)

The eulogy frames the history of the revolution marking Konga's actions as its igniting event. The text's numerous narrators also situate their narrative as, "Today, in the year 2020, [it is] forty years since the night Konga told us to rise" (2021, p. 358). The madman's actions are a decisive epoch marking, as well as ritual igniting event. Evocations and references to Konga sustain this story like its own ritual. Emphasising the mythological succession between Konga and Thula, Thula's disciples attribute to her "a soft aura of madness … as if something of Konga's now lived within her." (p. 303). Eager to see the transformation made possible by the Spirit-child, these cosmological renderings coincide in the person of Thula. The text conflates madness and revolution in Thula while in Thula, the madman's localised approach to revolution is realised. This eulogy also functions as a call to arms and a call to recover lost politico-cultural spaces.

This eulogy contextualises the effect of narrativizing madness in this text. Madness transforms a village story into a national revolution anchored on its own folk heroes and cosmological figures. Thula is afforded a central role in this new cosmology, featuring as a ritual maternal figure to the revolution and to a mythical Messianic figure whom the community wonders if he would "someday return to us, reclaim for us what was stolen" (p. 354). The novel demonstrates that the theft of African resources and lands by Western capital and its autocratic proxies is an ongoing process. Mbembe similarly observes that "technologies of domination are still being elaborated, they have not yet … totally replaced those already present.

Sometimes they draw inspiration from the old forms, retain traces of them, or even operate behind their facade" (2001, p. 67). In the fictional world of *How Beautiful We Were*, evidence abounds to this effect as explained by Thula's grandmother that "new forms of greed and recklessness overtake the old ones" (p. 136). While Konga initially vocalises the theft of Kosawan resources, his successor, Thula shows that the nation as a whole has been stolen by Western capital through the help of a captured autocrat. Both individuals attempt to reclaim their land by revisiting ancestral memory archived in the foundation mythology of sons and daughters of the leopard. Thula's spirit-child is therefore prophesied to reclaim Kosawa and Cameroon from the grip of ritualised postcolonial power. This reclamation of what was stolen is not strictly limited to the land from which the people of Kosawa were displaced. In a text that evokes slavery and colonialism, reclamation of what was stolen literally refers to people, cultures and other important artefacts central to definitions of identity. I concur with R. Douglass-Chin's reading of madness as ancestral reclamation in NourbSe Philip's *Zong!* (2011) that such an exercise includes "a returning of Africa, her stolen goods, epistemologies, ontologies, and peoples – absented from genteel, amnesiac white history – to a place of recognition in the collective global consciousness." (2017, p. 52).

The ultimate objective, however, is to reconstruct a cosmological pathway for African progeny. Within my cosmology interpretive grid, spiritual restoration combined with restoring a fragmented humanity, epistemologies and political consciousness takes centre stage in ritual mothering. I argue that in the contemporary world in which Kosawans claim "our ancestors' pride [have been reduced to] ashes" (p. 355), the re-assemblage of these cosmological ways synthesises with the promise to "build a new nation" (p. 313). Ritual mothering possesses what Donald observes elsewhere about mythopoetic narratives as, "immense potential for cultural regeneration and national resurgence" (2000, p. 27). Kosawans mythologise Thula, adding her to the corpus of cosmological figures such as Konga and their founding ancestors who struck a pact with the leopard. Thula's ritual and eventual death therefore add to the reconfiguration of Kosawan cosmology and feed into new imaginaries of postcolonial nation. Thus, the absence of Thula's corpse, though intended to break the spirit of the revolution, provides space for further mythopoesis and counterhegemonic narratives that foment the nation's cosmological reconfiguration. While written narratives in state media focus on her past, her revolution moniker (The Fire Lady) and the fabricated history of violence in her family, the ritual archive created around her name focuses on a possible future. To divest Thula of these resurging calls for democratic space, national and American media publish her story without her portrait. This

vacuum is filled by Kosawan mythopoetic imaginings that narrate her divine-led escape from physical death. Kosawans

> imagine that Thula ran deep into the forest and there the Spirit caused her belly to swell, and birds and leopards tended to her, wiped her brow, and watered her lips as she pushed forth the child, and in unison, all the living things sang: *For unto us a child is born* (p. 354).

Syncretising with Isaiah 9:6 (King James Version), *How Beautiful We Were*'s political imaginary creates an eschatology that does not legitimise the dispossession of Africans like colonial Christianity. While this Messianic narrative is clearly a by-product and residue of slavery and colonial and post-colonial Christianity, it does provide useful ritual antecedents and interpretative frameworks. Indeed, the Messianic narrative is synthesised with African spirituality, and Thula's death becomes "saturated with ghostly national imaginings" (Anderson, 2006, p. 9). It is interesting that these significations emerge after Thula and her disciples' deaths, making it a mythopoetic assemblage of apotheotic political discourse. Essentially, this discourse immortalises the cosmological strands woven through Konga and Thula. The proclamation of "all the living things" is a very important rendering of the non-human world's endorsement of Thula's child. It is easy to see how this myth could eventually permeate popular interpretations of nation.

Mythopoesis becomes a space through which Thula's family legacy is reconstructed and the history and cosmology of the nation reimagined. The co-mingling of cosmological aspects and modern political systems in Thula is probably encouraged as a way of wrestling postcolonial power through the same ritual means it is preserved in the autocrat. I simultaneously reveal the cracks within this cosmology though my discussion of the postcolonial state as a ritual affair of exploitation. It is necessary to point out at this point the fact that "ritual practices may be positive or negative, beneficial or exploitative in the uses to which they lend themselves." (Wright, 1992, p. 53). In the next section I conclude my discussion of Mbue's novel by showing how madness becomes an evocative tool to reconfigure spaces historically constructed to sustain colonial exploitation

Cosmological reconfiguration

To conclude my discussion of Mbue's novel, I argue that African cosmologies were fragmented due to historical systematic dispossession of Africa by Europe. In this instance, Kosawa as part of postcolonial Cameroon, exists in a prefigured political space where colonial madmen

handpick and empower a dictator to maintain colonial hegemony. The postcolonial autocrat in *How Beautiful We Were* holds hostage his nation's political imagination through bloodletting rituals. This, and repeated violent massacres, the West's divide and rule tactics and bribery create what Ehanire terms Kosawa's "immobility engendered by the oppressor's actions" (2022, p. 108). Kosawa's psychological and mnemonic stasis is ruptured by Konga who conceives of a localised revolution that, through Thula, his mythological successor, escalates into a national political revolution that leads to ritual performances of cosmological reconfiguration. Konga envisions a revolution that credits African cosmological vestiges as powerful psychological and philosophical foundations of successful revolt. Konga's madness, read in this chapter as ritual and disruptive cosmological memory, aligns with Brown's observation that

> madness permits not only the individual protagonist but the larger audience to reframe perspectives on social systems built on the logic of greed, hypocrisy, and dispossession—both historical and contemporary—from the normal and acceptable to the irrational and unjust (2017, p. 258).

Konga confounds other characters who assume that he is oblivious to colonial history and the machinations of extraction in the postcolony. He demonstrates deeper memory and insight by making the pertinent connection between colonial and postcolonial extraction practices. Konga asks, "You do understand that all people from overseas are the same, don't you? The Americans, the Europeans, every single overseas person who has ever set foot on our soil, you know they all want the same thing, don't you?" (Mbue, 2021, p. 103). The ability to recognise the various guises through which coloniality garbs itself is an important quality of the madman. Encoded in the madman's question are not only epochal particularisations of the madman's generalisations of neo/colonisation but are also methodologies of epistemological enquiry into the changing modalities in the West's exploitative relationship with Africa (Rodney, 1964). Madness conceives space to revisit history and mythologies to contest and reimagine contemporary global political structures, hence, Konga's hostage taking has been read as "epistemic disobedience" (Karmakar & Chetty, 2023, p. 139). Konga's madness opens spaces for further disruptions of colonial hegemonies. Nare et al read actions following Konga's intervention as "debunking colonial and capitalist conceptions of ecology and related knowledge systems and replacing them with a model of a local and indigenous ecosystem" (2024, p. 364). I add that Konga's conception of Kosawa's resistance leads to the further epistemological disobedience, particularly, Thula's ritual mothering which brings about the rebirth of cosmological based conceptions of politics, economics and humanity. The

eschatological ending of the novel infers a possible reclamation of African epistemologies through Thula's Spirit-child's expected return.

Konga's madness ignites the revolution while Thula's ritual capacitates her with cosmological energy to facilitate the rebirth of an old African consciousness. Madness, in this novel, motions towards cosmological regeneration. Consequently, the novel ends on an ambiguous note, comprising both a speculative eulogy of the possible return of the Spirit Son, and a dirge over the uncertainty of the survival of the cosmology of Kosawa. The novel does not give an illusion of easy reclamation of ancestral pasts, for instance, it problematises Kosawa's symbol of strength, the leopard, by arguing that "leopards are disappearing; few remain in our part of the world" (p. 341). This testifies to the dwindling of cosmological symbols yet also acknowledges their subversive political and epistemological value. The alluring eschatological nuance attempts to transmit Kosawan foundational insights into a diasporic progeny to displace colonial/diasporic identity and to possibly conceive another successor to Konga and Thula. A revisit to the cosmology goes before and beyond the ashes that symbolise the current state of ancestral ritual archives. I consider ritual mothering and its concomitant metaphors of spiritual regeneration, an attempt to reintegrate African foundational philosophies into emerging ones and the telling of this tragic story an attempt to inculcate old values in this diasporic and displaced progeny.

In conclusion, the madman is disruptive memory and a ritual whose representation in this text eschatologically reconfigures Kosawan cosmology. His credentials as memory are vindicated by the nomenclature and rituals used in the narrative. The narrative, in many ways is ignited by, and aligns with the madman's vision. The progeny to whom the story is told relies on Konga and Thula as mythic figures who represent their culture and history. To tell a story is an attempt to reconfigure the cosmology and a refusal of total erasure. Through the madman mythologies, rituals and folktales are brought back to memory and aestheticized to reconstruct a Kosawan identity. Most importantly, telling Kosawa's story demonstrates the continuity of the contemporary globalised racial and epistemological imbalances that historically precede Kosawan descendance's postcolonial diasporic existences. *How Beautiful We Were* utilises these as archival sites as methods of transmitting discredited African ancestral knowledge and recentring discredited humanity. Since the children to whom the story is told do not "have any awareness of a Spirit at all" (2021, p. 359), this story opens avenues for the Spirit's reincarnation through them.

An Ogbanje State of Mind: Resituating African Approaches to Psychology in Emezi's Freshwater (2018)

Like *How Beautiful We Were*, *Freshwater* also revisits African cosmology, specifically Igbo cosmology using the Ogbanje concept. While Mbue's concerns are basically an earthly origin of a community, *Freshwater* takes us into the Ogbanje realm as a spiritual psychological state which is misconceptualised as madness by the novel's young protagonist and Westocentric medical interventions of the contemporary world. The title *Freshwater* is cosmological as the narrators tell us "All water is connected. All freshwater comes out of the mouth of the python" (Emezi, 2018, p. 9). This dimension of water has spiritual significance which is practiced through the ritual "dance and song of Uwummiri, the worship that is drowned in water" (ibid). It is in acknowledgement of this ancient Igbo religion that the protagonist's uncle names her Ada, a name "with all the god in it" (ibid). The Ogbanje spirits, who reside in the young protagonist's psyche or "marble room" (p. 34), address their human vehicle as the Ada in recognition of their metaphysical plurality. They call themselves "a godly parasite with many heads, roaring inside the marble room of her mind" (ibid). The Ada initially imagines these realities as madness, and later in her life after meeting an Igbo priest, she reimagines them and herself as freshwater from the mouth of the python Igbo deity, Ala. The novel itself morphs into *freshwater* from the mouth of the python, absorbing the reader from Western contaminations of African cultures into its world of Igbo cosmology. This gives the text its mythopoetic orality. The text ropes the reader into its cosmology and converses directly with the reader/listener playfully referred to as *sha*. *Sha* is a colloquial term of endearment which can mean dear or friend. These oral resources of designating a title to the listener are adopted from folklore in which the listener actively, though in minor roles, sings refrains to the tale. By transmuting these, the novel shows that its symbolic archive is Igbo cosmologies.

Freshwater is a depiction of its protagonist's "crazed timeline of embodiment" (p. 134), starting before birth and dissipating in the moment when the character resituates herself within African/Igbo cosmology. This timeline begins with the Ogbanje spirits decrying the "madness" of being "singled out and locked into the blurred consciousness of a little mind" (p. 4). Madness in Emezi's novel symbolises Africans' cultural/cosmological dislocation that results in the young protagonist's psychic spirals because of lack of the necessary rituals to normalise living with the spirits. Thus, the manifestation of these spirits leaves visibly unstable mental states

which exhibit themselves as madness and queerness. Since humanity is oblivious to the daily activities of the spirit entities and regard the observable behaviour of the Ada as unusual, who else better narrates the story than the spirits themselves? Spirits animating themselves in different phases of the Ada's life is what I refer to as an Ogbanje consciousness. Because of the dual lack of ritual practitioners in her contemporary world, and the absence of Ogbanje in mainstream psychology, these cosmological realities confound even the embodied vessel such that she believes herself to be mad. The Ogbanje narrate of their vessels that the

> Ada wanted a reason, a better explanation. We were not enough. We were too strange. She had been raised by humans, medical ones at that. So instead she read lists of diagnostic criteria, things like disruption of identity, self-damaging impulsivity, emotional instability and mood swings, self-mutilating behavior and recurrent suicidal behavior. (Emezi, 2018, p. 140).

The Ogbanje depict the Ada's ostensibly Westocentric attempts at self-diagnosis as misrepresentation of the Ada's psychospiritual experiences. The listed diagnostic categories are not evidence of psychological or emotional illnesses and do not equate to madness in the Eurocentric sense but are evidence of different spiritual entities living in the Ada's body. While I do not to deny that the Ada does experience all the above listed realities, I argue that the tricksters inside her require ritual interventions rather than modern scientific medicine which is represented by the Ada's parents as medical professionals. Combined with the text's reference to its setting as "those Queen Elizabeth days" (p. 2), the parents' medical professions create a trope that bespeaks of a proclivity towards Western modernity and its pharmacological diagnosis and treatments. It shows that the Ada's, in her human imagination, privileging of these psychiatric criteria is not entirely her own. Rather, it is evidence of the established dominance of mainstream psychology in meaning-making. Stone refers to this as a "form of medical colonialism [that] made it possible for greater numbers of British soldiers, missionaries, and administrators to thrive in West Africa" (2017, p. 274). Various forms of medical imperialism are apparent in modern medical interventions and diagnostic systems.

This novel animates numerous spirit entities to absolve the Ada's actions as neither entirely always madness nor always her own. These spirit entities have diverse personalities, each tugging the Ada towards their own proclivities. I read *Freshwater* (Emezi, 2018) as a text that rethinks topics that bear on psychology. I will thus read Ogbanje as a narrative and diagnostic tool and a reservoir of Igbo spirituality that reasserts African metaphysical knowledge that is discarded in discourses of madness such as the Ada's. While the concept of Ogbanje is not

madness, the novel's various strands of madness stem from the misconceptualisation of this spirituality. The first strand of madness is the deliberately insensitive act of the gods of incarnating the Ogbanje through a little girl whose parents are steeped in Western ways. Saul, the Ada's father is symbolically described as "blind, modern man" (p. 10) while the mother, Saachi, is Malaysian and inevitably not Afro-cosmologically literate. They both reductively treat the Ada's experiences of Ogbanje awakenings as mere nightmares. Saul even kills the python which is a god in Igbo cosmology. Brown describes such a disconnection from one's culture as the madness of being "out of sync with the relational web [of] the ancestors, and god(s) or metaphysical creeds" (2017, pp. 258 - 59). Another related strand of madness is the young protagonist's inevitable psychological breakdowns because of the horrors of embodying the gods who oscillate between generosity and cruelty. For instance, the vindictive spirit entity named Asughara continuously hijacks the Ada's consciousness and mischievously compels her into spiralling sexual encounters which at one time involve two brothers. This spirit sometimes suppresses the Ada's traumatic memories and voyeuristically draws her towards the sight of human blood. The Ogbanje retrospectively argue that "it was clear that she (the baby) was going to go mad" (p. 10). Madness also functions metaphorically to signal Calixthe Beyala's now regularly quoted definition of literary madness as "clarity of vision" (Jules-Rosette, 1998, p. 204). Echoing this subversion of madness as disease, the Ada declares that "I am not entirely opposed to madness, not when it comes with this kind of clarity" (p. 69). By "this clarity", the Ada refers to the facticity of Ogbanje as spiritual beings residing in her consciousness rather than hallucinations. Clarity simultaneously refers to queerness as precisely African and cosmological. Madness, therefore, signals the psychic-crisis ridden process of psychologically resituating oneself within African cosmology, especially in the absence of necessary rituals, sages and institutions.

The novel uses the phrase "a litany of madness" (p. 16) to characterise the Ada's individual psychological crises as well as to characterise the Westocentric misrepresentation of African cosmologies as mere hallucinations. As the Ogbanje inform the Ada, "we're the buffer between you and madness" (p. 115).Their insistence on finding explanatory models within Igbo cosmology acts as a buffer between the Ada and her persistence to diagnose herself or look for psychotherapists to diagnose her. In a sense, the Ada's madness is located within Western epistemology's attempts to completely supplant African ones. The Ogbanje thus immerse the Ada into this African cosmological world where the python assumes great relevance as god, and as earth herself. Eventually, the Ada understands herself correctly as the python egg and

her psychological distress heals with the recognition. I make the argument that *Freshwater* denies the universalising applications of Western epistemology by animating entities which do not fit any category in Western thought. Emezi's use of Ogbanje in this text is a critical framework which "counters the epistemicide that Africa has encountered through the dual processes of colonialism and Western modernity" (Borah & Sotunsa, 2020, p. xvi). The novel also confronts the horrendous histories of slavery and colonialism to reveal residual colonial modalities of thought which are unquestioned.

The Ogbanje in Nigerian literature

The Ogbanje concept is mainly found in Nigerian literature in texts such as Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1959) and Okri's *The Famished Road* (1991). In these, it is central to the religious beliefs of the community especially in the narration of the clash of the colonial culture and the indigenous cosmology. In both texts, the Ogbanje narrative is inextricably linked to its demonisation by an encroaching Christian religion. Ilechukwu defines Ogbanje as "a malignant form of reincarnation [of] a child or adolescent who is said to repeatedly die and be repeatedly born to the same mother [and] has ties with deities or agents of deities" (2017, pp. 239 - 240). Ilechukwu's characterisation of Ogbanje as malignant locates these spirits in the realm of both death and evil, and thus demonises this cosmology. Continuing with this line of thought, he claims that Ogbanje may "be understood as examples of personality (and psychopathology) constructs from Africa that impinges of modern medical practice" (p. 248). Evidently, this epitomises colonial mentality similar to the Ada's own which is demonstrated by her self-diagnosis attempts. As McFaul argues "*Freshwater* makes an important observation: that psychoanalysis' method of un-burying, or trying to excavate, aspects of African realities can mimic the colonial geo-logics of extraction" (2021, p. 55). In this reading, I acknowledge the Ogbanje as reincarnation, not malignant, but as a cultural pathway to access African cosmology, history and ways of being.

Neil Kortenaar (2007) equates Ogbanje to the oedipal complex to discuss West African literary depictions of transitions from colonial rule into early independence African nation-statehood. Kortenaar characterises the creation of independent African nation-states as a patriarchal one where the emerging leadership both desired and feared an oedipal succession of killing and psychically integrating European colonisers as fathers. Because the coloniser is not a filial father, continues Kortenaar, "it is almost impossible rebel protagonists of African novels to inherit from them" (2007, p. 183). Nevertheless, the colonising "father's" psychological

presence is feared by both authors and their younger African characters who then seek alternative sources of power that the colonising father cannot bequeath. Consequently, Kortenaar argues that *Things Fall Apart*'s (Achebe, 1959) use of Ogbanje serves as neither a "mere ethno-cultural background, [nor] part of the novel's encyclopaedic impulse", rather, "the ogbanje was an expression of that fear and an acknowledgement of the need for an alternative psychic identity" (2007, p. 198 & 202). To buttress this line of thought, he uses Ben Okri's *Famished Road* (1991) whose narrator, Azaro refers to Nigeria as "an abiku (Ogbanje) nation, spirit-child nation [who] keeps being reborn and after each birth come blood and betrayal" (p. 494). In Okri's text, Ogbanje is used as a narrative metaphor for the recurring Biafran conflicts and a departure from the Eurocentric Oedipal succession because the nation "does not correspond to the European model of the nation-state" (Kortenaar, 2007, p. 201). Although Kortenaar's synthesis of the two components to argue the patriarchal competition towards state power between African fathers and their sons in these texts is not very convincing, he does raise the important factor that "to understand a text we need not only consider what motifs and themes are available, but also what psychological and ideological needs their deployment serves" (2007, p. 202). Ogbanje is thus a vast narrative technique and belief system with political, ideological and psychological implications specific to a given (con)text.

Magaqa and Makombe (2021) and Eugenia Ossana (2021) have contributed immensely to the discussion of Emezi's use of the Ogbanje in *Freshwater*. The former read the trope of the Ogbanje in *Freshwater* within the purview of decolonizing queerness. They argue that the Ogbanje spirits "manifest different sexual orientations in her body" (2021, p. 24). They provide compelling insights into the established yet homophobic conceptualisations of gender and sexual identities which Africa inherited from Western cultures. In their reading, "Emezi dismantles not only the myth that queerness is 'unAfrican' but also prevailing Eurocentric dualisms that box humanity into fixed categories (sexual, cultural, economic, etc.)" (2021, p. 27). Queerness is agreeably a major issue from this text. While this is an insightful perspective on the text, I focus on its psychological aspects to read Emezi's representation of queerness as possibly more psychological than biologically innate and unchangeable. This is because despite the Ada's gender transitioning surgeries, while very significant external exhibitions of inner selves, their psychic anguish does not subside until they psychologically and consciously anchor themselves on Igbo cosmology. Similarly, Ossana (2021) listens to pre-colonial Igbo voices in her wide reading of topics including the Ada's psychology, queerness and a search for home (diasporic and African). Ossana's reading, however, reveals numerous

epistemologically ethnocentric sentiments in emphasising Western psychological perspectives and diagnostic frameworks that *Freshwater*'s concluding chapters completely disputes. I do not necessarily pitch my own reading against Ossana's, I however, regard her approach a recent example of colonial assumptions about African cultures.

Exhuming African psychology

The Ada is not necessarily a mentally disturbed individual though she exhibits categories of behaviours that would qualify as mental illness in Western psychology. For example, she is attracted to the sight of blood, cuts herself with broken glass and attempts suicide. Wary of the behaviours, the Ada herself attempts to diagnose herself using western medical concepts based on the assumption that the spiritual aspects of her being were insufficient as diagnostic categories. Critics such as Ossana (2021) have also picked up on such a train of thought and have literarily diagnosed Ada with Dissociative disorders. Contrary to Ossana's reading, I agree with Achebe that the Ogbanje "defies categorization in the strict western psychological sense" because it belongs in a "mysterious and supernatural aetiology" (1989, pp. 32 -33). Ogbanje belongs to the Igbo/Yoruba worldview which colonial epistemology dismisses as superstitious. While this dissociative disorder diagnosis eventually proves inadequate to explain the Ada's being, one might diagnose Africa with a dissociation from the ritual structures which explain their existence. The Ada's alienation from her cultural support system exemplifies this. What she takes for suicidal ideation and self-mutilation are the "intricacies of self-worship [which] were lost on her" (Emezi, 2018, p. 42) since the Ogbanje is born to die. This sits well within my broader reading of this text, and Mbue's, as revisits to African cosmology. In Western psychology, such ideation and acting upon it is to be cured through therapy while in Igbo culture these are worship cycles an Ogbanje must undergo. To cure this, African sages must find the Ogbanje's *iyi-uwa*, a ritual object that the Ogbanje carries from the metaphysical world as an oath to die in infancy. The Ada's desire for tattoos and incisions, and various acts of self-mutilations are ways of offering blood sacrifices to the gods since no rituals were done at birth to locate the *iyi-uwa*. As Zizek explains "sacrifice is a guarantee that 'the Other exists': that there is an Other who can be appeased by means of sacrifice" (2001, p. 56). For Emezi, I infer the principle is to recognise Ogbanje as a psycho-spiritual diagnostic framework, not as mental illness, but as a liminal dimension of existence.

While the Ada's Ogbanje temporalities should not be read as disorder, certain aspects of her behaviour emanating from traumatic human experiences certainly reveal aspects of

psychological distress. These experiences such as rape, molestation and parental abandonment are either directly caused by or animate one of the Ogbanje spirits. For example, Asughara is born in a traumatic moment in which the Ada is raped by a fellow university student named Soren. Asughara's subsequent manifestation hijacks the Ada's body leading to hypersexuality which is recognised as rape trauma syndrome in conventional medicine. This spirit takes the Ada to "Lagos, to Cape Town and Johannesburg, where Asụghara [takes] bodies in backseats and hostel beds and living room floors" (p. 134). The spiritual element does not preclude the human though there needs to be careful analysis so that the Ogbanje is not reduced to madness or to trauma. I titled this section exhuming African psychology because the Ada's first preference to diagnose and understand her state of mind are Western psychoanalytical models. This, as I will demonstrate in the section below, demonstrates that African cosmological theories have been supplanted hence the madness that the Ada suffers in attempting to dissociate from their renaissance.

Born with open gates - reanimating African gods

The narrative aspects of this text are of particular importance to contextualise its representations of madness. A text interspersing spiritual entities and human narrators assumes cosmological relevance that transcends humanity. Before I get to this aspect, it is important to discuss the author's use of prologues to every chapter. These prologues particularly display a narratological concern with Igbo cosmology. Some are written in the author's indigenous language, and make direct references to the Igbo python deity, Ala, the Ada's cosmological mother. Another epilogue is a direct quotation from Chukwuemeka Mbaegbu's PhD thesis, *The Ultimate Being in Igbo Ontology* (2018) which re-centres the Igbo's Ala based pre-modern belief system. In this epilogue to Chapter 7, Emezi uses Mbaegbu's conceptualisation that "*[The ọgbanje are] creatures of God with powers over mortals. … They are not subject to the laws of justice and have no moral scruples, causing harm without justification*" (p. 55). This prepares the reader not to apply human conceptions of morality to understand the Ogbanje's mischievous actions including Asughara's suicidal impulses. Western morality severely falls short in its characterisation of Igbo gods as "the Devil" (Thompson, 1983, p. 19). Although prologues generally contextualise chapters, Emezi's utilises them for specific ontological reference to stay within Igbo cosmology. *Freshwater*'s intertextuality also incorporates another fascinating Igbo proverb. The proverb demonstrates Emezi's dependence on the academic and cosmological ritual archive to (re)conceptualise madness, queerness and contemporary cultural amnesia.

Particularly fascinating is the prologue to Chapter twenty-one, a chapter I regard as the denouement of the text. The chapter's prologue: "*How can one tell the story of a rain that fell on him, when he is ignorant of where the rain started falling on him?*" (Emezi, 2018, p. 211), is an adaption of an Igbo adage also used by Achebe in his seminal article "The Role of the Writer in a New Nation" (Achebe, 1964), and as a title to Agballah's novel *Where The Rain Started Beating Us* (2018). Knowledge of the rain implies realising that "the perpetrators of that historical trauma (slavery and colonialism) have also produced terrifying familial and political tropes, and that these grim ideologies can still circulate in a culture long after this enemy has been vanquished" (Stone, 2017, pp. 271 - 2). This scenario is epitomised by both the Ada's self-diagnosis using Western medicinal terminology and her family's failure to conduct the required rituals. Alluding to the continued epistemological violence of slavery and colonial exploitation in Africa, this proverb (as prologue) presumes to destabilise colonially imposed epistemologies that continue to erode African cultures. The proverb thus requires authors, novelists, poets and historians to look further upstream and identify theories, perspectives and depictions which belong to African epistemology and utilize them to frame and package African experiences (Mudimbe, 1988). Thus, one identifies uncanny similarities in the conceptualisation of history and transmutation of cultural resources in the literary texts mentioned here. The intentionality of reverting to the Ogbanje narrative agrees with Chivaura's assertion that, "the white man had removed knowledge of history. He did not remove history" (Chivaura, 2018, p. 4). Additionally, Chivaura makes a paramount claim that shows how history has been preserved in in/tangibles; "History is in you" (ibid). The Ada reduces the evocative manifestation of African history and cosmology to psychopathological madness as shown in her virtual search for Western psychological frameworks such as "disruption of identity, self-damaging impulsivity, emotional instability and mood swings, self-mutilating behavior and recurrent suicidal behavior" (p. 140). As timeless beings, Ogbanje are both a culturally and politically privileged framework to articulate where the rain started beating us that we misconceptualise our religious experiences as madness. The proverb constitutes, as Vambe says, "a return-to-roots imaginative canvas" (2004, p. 79).

True to the objective, the novel draws on cultural narrative techniques to frame its portrayals from an Igbo cosmology. Narrative prominence is given to the spirit entities which reside inside the Ada's consciousness, occasionally borrow her body and block her memory. The spirit entities embodied within the Ada's person narrate twenty of the twenty-three chapters of the text. This is a significant amount of narration which allows the reader to have an in-depth view

of the spirit entities' individual personalities and the depths of this spirituality which goes beyond its demonization by colonial Christianity. I disagree with Magaqa and Makombe's assertion that "The Ada's minimal and short appearance in the text is an expression of the limited influence of human life in a universe filled with other non-human beings" (2021, p. 31), thus establishing a correlation between narrative precedence and the level of importance within the cosmology. Chapters narrated through the human voice, though they undeniably read like interjections, do not minimise the human side. For instance, chapter nine is only a page long and the first of the three chapters narrated in the Ada's voice as a human person begins, "I don't even have the mouth to tell this story…whatever they [Ogbanje] will say will be the truest version of it, since they are the truest version of me" (Emezi, 2018, p. 93). Ultimately, this is a composite being whose personality may not be separated into disparate hierarchical components. The human and spiritual components constitute an ambiguous coexistence, both collaborative and antagonistic yet indistinguishable. This being undoes the "spiritual aspects of the colonisation experience" (Mudimbe, 1988, p. 15). Continuing with giving precedence to the spirit beings, the Ada dissects the aspects of religious practices. She describes how "for millennia" people have cast idols for their gods, covering with gold and bronze the cracks that appear from accumulated years. In this narratological stance, a religion and its god have a symbiotic relationship with its practitioners. Gods, as articles of veneration, require constant rituals to remain significant.

Quite helpfully, these narratological aspects re/construct narratives and sensibilities which the protagonist is not capable of, for example when she is still yet to be born to her human body, and too young, and too traumatized to narrate her experiences. As already noted, the Ada initially misunderstands her spirituality as madness, therefore, these subterranean voices reliably formulate interpretations of spiritual reality which counteract the Ada's Western psychological theorisations. The Ogbanje wrestle monolithic misrepresentation of African cosmologies as simply irrational projections of primitive minds. Emezi lends "spiritual voices" to the text to "naturalise [its] ideological imperatives" and "to recover and preserve what is perceived as a pure or authentic concept of 'culture-nation' that seemed to have been trampled into oblivion by colonialism" (Vambe, 2004, p. 74). This recovery, however, is replete with psychological "problems" for the human vessel who struggles to reconcile the human to the spiritual, and her own personality to the mischievous deities'. According to the Ogbanje spirits "all the madnesses, each and every blinding one, they can all be traced back to the gates" (p. 29) because "the gates [were] left open, not closed against remembrance" (p. 5). The Ada's

memories of her pre-natal life, while significantly recovering pre-colonial modes of thinking, contribute to her apparent psychic fragmentation. Although the Ogbanje acknowledge this memory of another realm of existence as anomalous, their massive narratological role suggests a massive decolonial turn in the conceptualisation of knowledge and psychological concepts in Africa. In this ideological imperative, the Ogbanje clarifies "the unfinished business of African decolonization" (Stone, 2017, p. 268), unfinished because of a continuing "christ-induced amnesia" (Emezi, 2018, p. 9). African spirituality is symbiotic to decolonial intent. The Ada's psycho-spiritual disruption of this Christ-centred amnesia opens spaces for epistemological considerations to resituate African concepts in the centre of socio-cultural imagination. The Ogbanje narrative in *Freshwater* mobilises madness as "the ritualized integration of a marginalized culture's sacred knowledge into an individual's consciousness" (Brown, 2017, p. 227).

To upend this amnesia, it seems the gods recklessly leave the gate open. The gates in this text symbolize unfettered knowledge and memory of "things from the other side" (p. 33). Though the Ogbanje consider it reprehensible madness, leaving the gates open does not lack intentionality. Speculating of the possible reasons for Ala's negligence, the Ogbanje opine "perhaps she picked it [Saul's prayer for a daughter] on a whim, just to remind the world that she was still there, the owner of men. Since the corrupters broke her shrines and converted her children, how many of them were calling her name anymore?" (p. 35). Here, Emezi's text goes beyond similar sentiments raised in Marechera's *The House of Hunger* (1978) – another African literary text renowned for its depiction of madness – that "…where our heroes once danced there is nothing but a hideous stain. They stretched the wings of our race, stretched them against the candle-flame. There was nothing left but the genitals of senile gods." (Marechera, 1978, p. 60). These two passages are reminiscent of the cultural genocide, arson and corruption that historically accompanied colonialism and continue to sustain colonial epistemologies. Severing the religious connection between Africans and their gods through the desecration shrines, sacred places and rituals, and killing its practitioners was also accompanied by attempts at deicide. Emezi identifies this as one source of madness in Africa, thus deliberately flings open the portal between realms, letting loose the gods within a woman. While Marechera emphasises deicide, Emezi's text reopens the portal as a refusal to trivialise this consciousness in preference for Western modernity. Metaphorically, therefore, the open gates stand for a ritual archive to a resilient Igbo cosmology despite a determined assault though

the intertwined histories of colonisation, and slavery, and the practices of deicide and epistemicide. The Ada refers to this clarity as madness.

African deities have been subject to deicide and sacrilege as portrayed in Nigeria literature, specifically Ala, the Igbo deity who manifests through the python. The killing of the python as a god-animal features prominently in Nigerian literary texts, dating back to Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1959). The python was "addressed as "Our Father," and was allowed to go wherever it chose, even into people's beds" (Achebe, 1959, p. 146). Biblical rhetoric is clear in this claim to depict Ala as indigenous deity rather than the devil. The python, a personal god in Igbo cosmology, is killed deliberately in *Things Fall Apart* as an act of conversion and monotheistic "suppression of other forms of worship" (Mbembe, 2001, p. 214). Its killing in *Freshwater* is also deicidal, though motivated by Saul's "wintered fear" when he finds a python staring at the Ada before "hacking the python to bits" (p. 13). Due to this, "Ala (our mother) dissolved amid broken scales and pieces of flesh; she went back, she would not return" (ibid). Mbembe accurately observes that "conversion always involves an act of destruction and violence against an earlier state of affairs, an accustomed state for which one seeks to substitute something different" (2001, pp. 229 - 230). In Mbue's *How Beautiful We Were* (2021), a new convert violently burns his family's umbilical bundle, and by extension, eradicates symbols of his family history and ancestry. That this religious violence was coextensive with the colonising discourse has been noted (Mudimbe, 1988). Saul epitomises the amnesia that has gripped Africans leading to their denunciation of their ways and participation in symbolic deicide. Sacred symbols and animals which signify the presence of African gods morph into representations of death in Saul's borrowed modernity. He is not completely ignorant of his people's beliefs but does not believe in their sacredness thus, he regards cosmological narratives as "mumbo-jumbo" (p. 13). By killing the python instead of recognising it as a cue for a ritual in honour of Ala, Saul subjects the Ada to a lifelong psychological crisis of coming to terms with African cosmological reality on her own. This cultural crisis is a form of madness mirrored by the Ada's psychic crisis. Saul's killing of the python is equal to the Ada's continuous epistemological denial of the Ogbanje in her psyche who assert that "we're not the madness" (p. 155). The gods' madness of putting numerous deities into the Ada's body, causing her psychological crisis, is their way to reassert Igbo cosmological narratives as binding psycho-spiritual frameworks in African cultures.

The birth of the Ada which is accompanied by the open gates necessitates the ill-fated return of Ala and by extension, a re-imagination of an African cosmology. Unfortunately, the epistemic violence surrounding this cosmology exposes the Ada to a troubled adolescence punctuated by absent parents, sexual abuse and gender dysphoria. The parents' absence, especially the mother's emigration from Nigeria during the Ada's infancy, is one of the methods used by the Ogbanje to fragment the Ada's psyche thereby forcing her to turn to them. Emezi uses the Freudian notion of the infant experience through the Ogbanje's admission that "make the human mother leave. This…is how you break a child" (p. 21). While these contribute to the psychosomatic problems exhibited by the Ada, the situation is worsened by the unavailability of cultural support systems. The metaphor of the open gate thus emphasises the centrality of ritual in African thought because the family's disintegration in search of economic resources stems from the mischief of the Ogbanje. Ogbanje interferences manifest through the marital problems between Saul and Saachi and offering Saachi an international job as a way of successfully "chasing her away" (p. 27). Being born with open gates means that the Ogbanje freely interfere in the Ada's life destroying the family unit which is primary to the infant's psyche. The gates, therefore, represent madness as clarity of vision and unfettered access/knowledge of the spiritual realm as a way to cosmological recovery. Negligent as it is for the gods to expose a young human mind to continuous contact with the numinous, the act exposes the systemic ignorance gripping Africans in reducing their rituals to madness. Thus, as a prelude to the novel's Chapter Four, the Ogbanje narrates: "*In the old cultures, there would be rituals to help you control the gates. There were no rites or rituals done to help you to control the gates*" (p. 33, italics in the original). The death of her uncle who, "might have known what to do about the gates" (p. 9), removes the most immediate cultural precedent from her life. The cultural dislocation is emphasised in Saul's deicidal act. Saul is severely ill-equipped to perform the required rituals as underscored by his loose translation of his daughter's name into "precious" instead of "the egg of a python" (p. 9). These cultural inadequacies exhibited by Saul signify a defamiliarizing colonial presence. Emezi questions the world in which the dominant Eurocentric articulations diagnose human manifestations of African cultural/epistemological concepts as madness. The Ada's open gates as act of godly madness (re)opens pathways for the reconstruction of this mangled Igbo cosmology. *Freshwater* presents a world of lost gods, forgotten rituals and incomplete humanness.

An important step in the recovery of Igbo deities is thus to demote Yshwa, the Christian god, to the level of other deities. In her childhood, the Ada's childhood had imagined Yshwa (Christ)

as her saviour from the sinful life and psychological anguish caused by Asughara. As Yshwa points out to Asughara about the Ada's psychological pain, "you are the thing she's ashamed of" (p. 64). As the Ada grows up and Asughara's presence becomes less shameful, however, the Ada reimagines Yshwa from his omnipresent self as depicted in Christian narratives into a sibling or brothersister to the Ogbanje. Emezi poignantly equates Yshwa to the Ada in the manner of their birth, life and death. The Ada's "marble room", that is, her psyche, is inhabited by different deities who cannot be reduced to madness in a clinical sense. To support this, the Ogbanje retract their declaration that the Ada was going to go mad by stating that "when we said she went mad, we lied. She has always been sane" (p. 34). This does not discredit the Ada's psychic anguish resulting from these godly interferences but shows that the Igbo cosmological experience itself, while peculiar, is misconceptualised as madness in Westocentric clinical psychiatry. Such misdiagnosis reveals entrenched epistemological ethnocentrism even on the Ada's part because she does not imagine her experiences of Yshwa as madness as she does her Ogbanje experiences. Emezi therefore continues to reimagine the Christian deity into a compound being of both human and deity like the Ada.

In similar fashion to the Ada's birth, "Yshwa too was born with spread gates …was born of one [human], lived and died as one [human]…" (p. 37). In another sense, Emezi's depiction caricatures the origins of Christianity using the open gates metaphor of Jesus' birth as an act of madness. Yshwa's transformative life was a continuous comingling between the human and the divine. The novel suggests that the Ada's birth fulfils the same Messianic purpose as that of Yshwa's corporeal birth. When he morphed himself into a physical being, he was also victim to deicide thus, his reluctance to fully manifest in the Ada's person. As Asughara notes "He had endured that abomination of the physical once and it was enough, never again" (ibid). However, through such mad acts of birth, life and death, the deity inscribed himself into human history through these gate-portals. In these worship systems, cosmologies are sustained, and psychologies made. In the biblical narrative, Yshwa, morphs himself into a gate through which his sheep pass into the heavenly kingdom. The text uses this acknowledgement of Yshwa to dismantle his superiority to Igbo plural gods. Elevating the Ada to the level of deity reconciles her to her role as a cosmological bridge between Ala and the African world. The Ada's initial refusal of the reality of her bridging role, preferring to diagnose herself with madness instead, suggests her epistemological situatedness in a Christian "horizon – a horizon which paganism, in its horror, can no longer attain or recuperate" (Mbembe, 2001, p. 229). To borrow Brown's formulation about Caribbean literature's mad protagonists who do the same, it is "their

dissociation from their lived reality which reads specifically as "madness."" (2017, p. 233). It is this cosmological identity conflict which is the root of the Ada's supposed madness.

Demoting Yshwa is an important step in Emezi's caricature of other Western psychological models. For example, the text caricaturises a psychotherapy session in which the Ada as a patient is indifferent to her American psychologist's questions. Asughara, one of the Ada's spirit selves observes, "The therapist asked the same things over and over, rephrasing them as if the Ada wouldn't notice. But it didn't matter how many ways she twisted the questions, Ada had no answers" (p. 148). The therapist's repetitive questions are a futile attempt to probe the unconscious as if the gates are an inadequate framework to comprehend the Ada's psyche. While the Ada clearly fails to concentrate on her school because of her Ogbanje experiences, the Ogbanje are not her repressed unconscious fantasies in the Freudian sense as the therapists suggests. Asughara snaps when the Ada starts to regurgitate psychotherapeutic idioms such as "it's a good idea to get some help" (p. 149). Asughara emphasises Western psychopathology's desire to diagnose African cosmological realities as illogical, thus, mental illness. The therapist's tone concerning the Ada's spirit selves is contemptuous and borders on regarding them as hallucinations. Though ostensibly villainous, Asughara stops the Ada from telling the therapist about all the spirit-selves to protect the entire being "from doctors and diagnoses and the medications they surely would've shoved into Ada if they ever saw exactly what her mind looked like" (p. 150). My analysis here is in total contrast to Ossana's diagnosis that "a western medical diagnosis may have proved efficient in labelling the Ada's troubled predicament" (2021, p. 87). Ossana's reading doubts the veracity of Ogbanje as a diagnosis, places western frameworks beyond reproach and consequently falls into the very mentality that the text challenges. Though it is undeniable that the Ada's condition bears symptomatic similarities with established diagnostic models of Western psychology, attributing diagnostic efficiency to Western models in this instance falls squarely within what Chivaura calls "listening to the heartbeat of African with a [Western] stethoscope" (1998). Ogbanje as a narrative strategy deployed in the text actively challenges the supremacy of western epistemologies and "contains within itself the means to its own decoding" (Brown, 2017, p. 230).

As the Ogbanje themselves note, "many things start with a name" (Emezi, 2018, p. 7), thus, diagnosing the Ada with Dissociative Disorder as Ossana's reading does is an ideological stance that essentially denies "the reality of the African world while asserting [the Western world's] to the extent of inviting the African world to sublimate its existence in their own"

(Soyinka, 1978, p. x). Mudimbe calls this notion "epistemological ethnocentrism, the belief that scientifically there is nothing to be learned from "them" unless it is already "ours" or comes from us." (1988, p. 28). In such epistemological ethnocentric fashion, Ossana declares, "These possession identities are manifested through the conviction that a ghost, spirit, demon, deity or supernatural being has taken over the individual's personality and, thus, s/he starts behaving differently" (2021, p. 86). This formulation restricts Ogbanje to the grids of un/conscious delusion which subdues the actuality with which Emezi portrays Ogbanje possession. The undertones of delusion in the quote above are reminiscent of Gelfand's study of mental illness among the Shona. Gelfand locates spirit possession in the realm of delusion, terming it a "mental reaction" and "a good example of delusion" (1967, p. 41). These two variations of the same discourse reduce a whole cosmology to hallucination. Experience is further so distanced from its cultural model that it loses significance as an explanatory framework and western models subsist as advanced ways of thinking. The text places the Ada's condition beyond delusion by introducing Melena, "the Dominican girl…to whom it was normal…to be mounted and then left by saints, gods and spirits", and who without any background claims that "Santa Marta was Ada's mother" (pp. 88, 89 & 90). Melena makes spirituality a compelling framework through these cosmological points of contact between African and Caribbean spiritual spaces.

With the introduction of these cosmological contact points, the text opportunely articulates issues of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade through which versions of same gods (re)produced themselves in enslaved geographical spaces. Santa Marta or Filomena Lubana, an African diasporic deity, is introduced as one of "the godly stowaways that came along when the corrupters stole our people" (p. 87). Brown reads the narrativization of African "magico-religious traditions" in the African diaspora as a "manifestation of the cultural capacity not only to survive but to literally thrive in the face of tumult and adversity." (2017, p. 228). Similarly, Korternar argues that "the survival of the abiku-ogbanje myth in the African diaspora" signifies that "culture reasserts itself like a solid kernel across the vicissitudes of time" (2007, p. 202). The text attributes this survival to aspects of blood lineage:

> The stories that survived, the new names they took, the temper of old gods sweeping through new land, the music taken that is the same as the music left behind. And, of course, the humans who survived, those selected among them, the ones in white, the ones shaking shells and mineral deposits, the ones ridden, the ones chosen, the ones who follow, work, and serve because *calls pass through blood* no matter how many oceans you drop death into. (Emezi, 2018, p. 88, my emphasis).

Such a confluence with diasporic deities, though complicated, ostensibly reveals the construction and tapping into a ritual archive in this text. I agree with Brown's reading that madness comes to represent "discredited forms of knowledge…reconfigured and textually reinscribed" (2017, p. 228). Aligning African diasporic gods with Ogbanje creates an enclave of knowledge outside Western epistemologies. Essentially then, readings such as Ossana's attempt to neutralise the deployment of the Ogbanje as a mode of resisting Western psychological constructs.

Being "sixteen thousand years old" (Emezi, 2018, p. 223), Ogbanje occupy a privileged position with a panoramic view of history. Their mythopoetic reframing of pre–Trans-Atlantic slavery psychologies, and historical atrocities prove the limitations of articulating African political formulations using Western archival templates (Falola, 2017). Victoria Papa's reading of Toni Morison's *Beloved* that claims "the black female body is a site of traumatic memory able to enact radical forms of testimony unlike those which can be offered by conventional, discursively bound archives" (2017, p. 79) is also applicable to the Ada's scenario. Categories of thought evoked through the Ada as female spiritual being revisit moments of great spiritual contamination in her culture. Predicaments of suicide and self-mutilation in which we find this black female body are a painful representation of centuries-long processes of acculturation. The opening of the gates thus gives access to sixteen thousand years of African cosmological perspectives, episteme and history which circumvent the colonial structures of knowledge currently shaping thought in Africa. It is fascinating that both Melena, and the Nigeria historian/priest the Ada meet later in their life agree that "you need to know your roots" (p. 223). This is a clear ideological statement which resonates with Afrocentric ideologies. The reader is also asked to interrogate centuries of African tradition to understand the Ada, as the Ada admits that "after all the doctors and the diagnoses and the hospitals, this thing of being an ọgbanje, a child of Ala—that was the only path that brought me any peace" (p. 218). In challenging Western diagnoses which categorise Ogbanje as madness, the text ultimately challenges Western epistemologies.

Psychological rest is only attainable for the Ada the very first time they pray to their cosmological mother, Ala. Praying to any spiritual entity entails a belief in the existence of the same. Deliberately using the Igbo equivalent to Mother, "Nne" (2018, p. 224), Emezi acknowledges the Ada's liminality and invokes meanings "preserved in vernacular cultural forms" (Borah & Sotunsa, 2020, p. xix). In fact, "each language delineates in its own manner

concepts, systems of classification, and knowledge" (Mudimbe, 1988, p. 43). Language does play a central role in reconciling the Ada to their cosmology. Although the text warns "language is only a human thing" (p. 224), the invocation of Ala using Igbo language demonstrates the Ada's psychological and linguistic return to the ritual archive. The Ada's admitted lack of Igbo fluency can be understood in the wider context of her epistemological dissociation from African cosmology. As Ngugi wa Thiong'o illustrates, the African child's "disassociation, divorce, or alienation from the immediate environment becomes clearer when you look at colonial language as a carrier of culture (1986, p. 18). Through this linguistic acknowledgement of Ala as their mother, the Ada philosophically resituate themselves within their mother's belly, simultaneously "suspended and rocked" (p. 224). Additionally, language contains culture codes relevant to full self-articulation hence Emezi's constant relapse to Igbo terminology. 'Nne' functions as incantation that evokes the presence of Ala because it calls upon the spirit that "control the water entry port into the human world" (Ilechukwu, 2017, p. 240). Once the Ada's worldview realigns with who she is as an Ogbanje, more answers begin to emerge. To know one's own roots then, is to practice the rituals that interpret one's being. The roots are located in African geographical spaces as symbolised by the Ada's physical return from America to her ancestral Edo village in Southeast Nigeria. The Ada emphasises this geographical revisitation by stating that "some things must happen on home soil if they are to happen at all" (p. 153). Madness, then, is only a manifestation of the Ada's disconnection and estrangement from their own cosmology, from the "metaphysical entities to which one is bound" (Brown, 2017, p. 231).

Emezi's novel does not, however, dismiss Western epistemology and its technology out of hand, for instance, the Ada's "gender reassignment transitioning" (p. 136) surgeries suggest the opposite is true. While epistemology and technology are not interchangeable, I use the terms concurrently to depict the ways in which technology is used to attend to epistemological formulations and psychological diagnoses. Although the Ada uses the Ogbanje to interpret the medical "transgender" surgeries as a process of "molting" (p. 138), the python shedding off its skin, Western technology does provide the means for this transition. The Ogbanje provide more cosmological rationale for the transition by stating that the Ada's

> fertility [womanhood] was a pure and clear abomination…The ways of our brothersisters, of ọgbanje, were clear. Do not leave a human lineage, for you did not come from a human lineage. If you have no ancestors, you cannot become an ancestor (p. 135).

As already noted in my discussion of Mbue's *How Beautiful We Were* (2021), western technology may have ritual application. Are there perhaps some Western epistemologies which do not efface, and to which this cosmology is not inherently opposed? In this instance, while the terminology "gender reassignment transitioning" is insufficient to capture the spiritual dimensions involved in the Ada's procedure, the surgery itself fulfils a cosmological purpose. The outward bodily modifications (re)align the Ada to her Ogbanje inner selves. Interestingly, the Ada's human mother equates this surgery to madness. The Ogbanje narrate that "Saachi was against this surgery…she fought to have us seen as unstable, sick" (p. 136). Her discourse of madness itself points to the absence of the necessary rituals at birth which would have correctly explained the Ada's Ogbanje state of mind.

The above scenario also frames the ambiguous relationship between Ogbanje and the Christian God, Yshwa, whom the former simultaneously despise for "his sanctimonious nonsense", and "accept as an older sibling, a brothersister" (p. 128 & 196). Adversarial yet cordial, this relationship agrees with Brown's claim that "African-based systems of spiritual healing characteristically accommodate elements of modernity in their worldview rather than react to them competitively or with hostility" (2006, p. 3). Points of contact are simultaneously points of departure between these two creeds. Acknowledging and adopting foreign ways of being should not be in a manner that seems celebrant of, in Chivaura's terms, "defeat and acquiescence to European enslavement and cultural hypnotism" (1998, p. 108). In its appropriation of the Messianic narrative then, the text resituates the Ada in an African spiritual system. The novel calls this African spiritual system an "Ogbanje space [in which] we could wind back to our beginning" (p. 139), signalling a symbolic rebirth of African cosmologies.

Conclusion

Mbue and Emezi's texts harness traditional ritual structures, oral narrative techniques and spiritual voices in the representation of madness as a way of rethinking cosmologies, history and topics on psychology. Imbolo Mbue's *How Beautiful We Were* (2021) attempts to inculcate into a diasporic mindset its traditional thought patterns lost through the violence of environmental contamination, displacement and post/neo-colonial extraction. To rethink physical displacement and massacres as epistemic violence, the old generation's narrative revisits their own attempt to reconfigure their cosmology through ritual mothering. By extension ritual mothering is situated in the wider cultural space through a foundational mythology of Kosawa. Though there seems to be physical defeat and displacement at the end

of the text, it is not an epistemic one. The madman plays a central role in the representation of a possible reincarnation. Konga, the madman in Mbue's novel, is a cosmological kernel of memorialisation of his own ancestors' crimes. I read the ghosts who haunt him as ritual aspects of memory. Resultantly, he functions to return Kosawa to its colonially subjugated ritual epistemologies.

The Ogbanje is a central trope in Emezi's *Freshwater* (2018), not as madness but as discredited knowledge of other forms of existence. Ethnocentric interpretations of African spirituality as madness pervade in the contemporary African world and as a result, the Ogbanje being in the novel attempts to diagnose herself as a mad individual. Ossana's critical analyses of the novel does the same. By using the metaphor of the open gates, Emezi manages to recentre an African cosmology. The Ada, the central character manages a symbolic re-initiation and re-situation into her cosmological python mother, Ala's belly. Application of other diagnostic tools frame the Ada's shifting mental states as madness instead of a child of a god, thus a god herself. On a literary imaginative plain, African deities symbolize systems of thought and religious ideation that inform a way of writing and conceptualising the world. The Ada represents ancient African thought patterns which *Freshwater* metaphorically harnesses to resituate the African experience. The open gates are an epistemological invitation to deploy pre-colonial Africa's cosmological metaphors as imaginative and interpretive frameworks of the text in order to resituate discussions on mental illness. Their dual significance is that they acknowledge Ala's reality as a cultural ritual and acknowledge other traditions such as Christianity. In conclusion, both texts carefully avoid nativist tendencies of essentialising African rituals and totally excluding Christian narratives. Christian mythologies provide useful ritual grids for African cosmologies in both texts.

Chapter 3: Cultures of Madness: Interfacing Trauma, Politics and Bantu Cosmologies in Novuyo Tshuma's *Digging Stars* (2023)

Introduction

In the preceding chapter, I read madness as way of recovering African cosmologies which have been fragmented by the continued presence of colonial epistemology. Mbue and Emezi's novels provide a platform on which to reimagine madness outside Western psychological theories. In this chapter, I shift my focus to cosmological depictions of madness as a way of critiquing postcolonial political formulations by turning attention to Tshuma's *Digging Stars* (2023), which uses madness to metaphorically inscribe Zimbabwe's "trauma story" (p. 225). Through the psychological breakdown of its protagonist named Athandwa Siziba, the novel interrogates the terrors that reside within ZANU PF's self-serving formulations of Zimbabwean nationalism, and white Eurocentric/American settlerism on different geographical and other planetary bodies, within the wider historical context of the colonial invention of non-European worlds. All these different regimes politicise ethnocentric identities which are explained by Frank Siziba, the protagonist's father, as "the madness of who belongs where and who doesn't" (p. 40). Focused on Zimbabwe, this statement articulates Mugabe's "exclusive concept of citizenship and nationhood, reformulated around essentialised categories of indigeneity, race and ethnicity" (Muzondidya, 2004, p. 227). The novel depicts Zimbabwe as one postcolony where this madness is a political tool that has created recurring moments of terror aimed at enforcing ethnicised and racialised political belonging. To Frank Siziba (Siziba from here onwards), the Bantu mythologies about the Digging Stars archive precolonial knowledge to undo colonial ideas of belonging currently obtaining in Zimbabwe. Tshuma uses this mythology to reconstruct non-Western cosmologies as a way of challenging exclusionary nationalist vocabularies and discourses used in the contemporary global world.

In this novel, Zimbabwe's ethnocentric politics are a perpetuation of colonial racial ideologies. The novel also identifies the same ethnocentrism in the United States of America's contemporary ethnocentric immigration policies, models of policing "ethnic" Americans and its war on terror. Tshuma depicts the psychological fragmentation emanating from the disastrous political ideologies adopted by postcolonial Zimbabwean regimes while simultaneously circumnavigating 'othering' Zimbabweans and, by extension, Africans. Her use of madness as a metaphoric trope is aware of madness' negative connotations especially in

light of Africa's colonial history. The novel, therefore, fosters enriching conversations with scholars such as Mudimbe (1988) who speaks about the order of knowledge in Africa, and Veit-Wild (2006) who naturalises madness as symptomatic of African political structures. Whereas Veit-Wild perceives madness as the most suitable depiction of African political structures, Tshuma shows that it is ethnocentrism, as a form of madness, that is at the centre of colonial, postcolonial and global politics.

Centred on Zimbabwe, the novel depicts *Gukurahundi*[5], Fast Track Land Reform Program and Zimbabwe's Third Chimurenga[6] politico-economic collapse as consequences of ethnocentric madness of revising ideas of belonging for the benefit of a ZANU PF hegemony. The novel's characters, despite experiencing psychic breakdowns as a result, are depicted not as mere products of these madnesses, but as "fully human" with "ambitions or dreams [and capable of] falling in love" (Tshuma, 2023, p. 225). This deliberate emphasis on the human is essential to mitigate against the modern Western gaze "of [African] suffering" (ibid) and the colonial philosophy of reducing African "history to a series of setbacks" (Mbembe, 2001, p. 1). Thus, it harnesses historical African epistemologies, mythologies and cosmologies to depict madness in a way that unequivocally rebuts the stagnating nineteenth-century categories of 'primitive' and 'precolonial communities'. This balance makes for a critical depiction of the pitfalls of African nationalism while avoiding both a chauvinistic defence of African crises and repeating a Western voyeuristic perception of African suffering as evidence of signs of intellectual inferiority. These dimensions are vital for Tshuma to assert the humanness of her Zimbabwean characters despite their traumatic political experiences. The Digging Stars of the title of the novel, or *IsiLimela*, are a way of reimagining non-Western cosmologies and astronomies whose existence has been denied by colonialism, contrary to the Pleiades of conventional Greco-Western astronomy. Through a "Bantu geometries" (Tshuma, 2023, p. 16) treatise, Siziba, a

[5] *Gukurahundi* refers to the Zimbabwean genocide which occurred from 1982 – 87. The ZANU PF para-military wing called the 5th Brigade targeted Zimbabwe's Ndebele ethnic groups and killed approximately 20000 Ndebele people. The term *Gukurahundi* is a Shona word that translates to "the early rain that washes away the chaff".

[6] The Third Chimurenga – post-2000 – (third instalment of the war of liberation) "is named and conceived as a continuation of the nationalist struggle, which is preceded by two armed versions - the First Chimurenga (1896-1897) and the Second Chimurenga (1966-1979), which liberated Zimbabwe" (Nyambi, 2016, p. 218).

Zimbabwean astrophysicist and missile guidance engineer working for an American academic institute and military company, initiates an academic and mythological enquiry into the constellation. These personal ambitions, however, result in a fatal vehicular accident "on Bulawayo-Gweru Road" (p. 47) in Zimbabwe. This accident is orchestrated by the ZANU PF regime which imagines itself the rightful beneficiary of Siziba's expertise instead of the Americans. This causes the eruption of madness in Athandwa, Siziba's orphaned daughter. *Digging Stars* (2023) is a story of multiple and overlapping forms of madness, that are, Zimbabwean nationalism, America's relationship with blackness and coloniality. The nationalism depicted in the text is a ferocious political ideology that is at once ethno-centric, quasi-decolonial and ultra-patriotic. These aspects of Zimbabwean nationalism are interrogated using the mythology and coloniality surrounding the Digging Stars constellation.

Although *Digging Stars* primarily traverses two geographical spaces, Zimbabwe and America, the shared colonial/settler madness and terror that bind both spaces makes it possible to read both as spaces of madness. Athandwa's Afro-Choctaw friend named Shaniqua concisely states "we are created out of you, over there in Africa, and you are created out of us" (p. 182). As I will argue, these places are connected and created out of the same colonial model and have experienced approximately similar terror from colonial settlers. The central character, Athandwa, experiences a psychological breakdown she calls 'the terrors' which reveals numerous ethnocentric terrors that characterise American and Zimbabwean political history. I will read madness as an actual mental breakdown and a metaphor for these terrors. The metaphor of the terrors as a form of madness evokes the feeling of fear, apprehension and anxiety emanating from horrendous political models such as the French Revolution's Reign of Terror[7], the American War on Terror[8] and, what has been eponymously called 'Robert Mugabe's Reign of Terror'[9]. The novel directly evokes this political terror in its opening

[7] The French Revolution (5 September 1793 - 27 July 1794) institutionalized "the reign of terror" which implemented "a wave of executions" of supposed "enemies of the Revolution". According to the Encyclopedia Brittanica "at least 300,000 suspects were arrested, 17,000 were officially executed, and perhaps 10,000 died in prison or without trial." (Tikkanen, 2024)

[8] The American War on Terrorism began in 2001 after the 11 September attacks on American economic and military infrastructure. It estimated that 4 million have died as an indirect result (Hamourtziadou, 2021).

[9] See Godwin (2011)

paragraph that sets the narrative in the era post "2005, after the terror of 9/11" (p. 1). Praeg has theorised the contemporary as a world of terror where "death can happen at any moment" (2017, p. 668). 'Terrors' experienced by Athandwa are direct reference to Mugabe and his successor's presidencies which have converted Zimbabwe into a terrorscape where "death is so primary, so fundamental, that being alive, surviving yet another day—in short, *life*—has something miraculous about it" (ibid).

The primary plotline follows Frank Siziba and his daughter Athandwa Rosa Siziba's lives in Zimbabwe and America and their pursuit of professions in astrophysics. Both father and daughter, in different generations, enrolled into American space exploration programs through a scholarship known as The Program. Their relationship is complicated by the father's separation from Athandwa's mother to marry a Haitian academic named Candice. At first glance, the novel seems to primarily focus on the custody battle, with Siziba insisting that Athandwa should live with him in America instead of with her mother in Zimbabwe. Athandwa's brief prepubescent stint in America complicates the custody battle after she reveals her father's second family to her mother. Frank dies in a traffic accident in Zimbabwe after visiting to solve the custody crisis. The accident has all the characteristics of a Second Street accident, which is a euphemism for the notorious State engineered traffic accidents through which the ZANU PF regime eliminates its opponents and friends alike (Muchemwa, 2007). Traffic accidents involving political figures are regarded as an institutionalised method of political assassination in Zimbabwean nationalist politics dating as far back as Josiah Tongogara[10]'s death (Fontein, 2018). The profiles of the victims and the inconclusive nature of these accidents make them a political topic that thrives in unofficial oral channels. Tshuma uses the same trope to depict Siziba's death. The truth of the death as an assassination emerges from different oral sources. His death not only has economic implications on his family but also psycho-political dimensions for Athandwa whose life stalls because of the resulting poverty. Underlying this is a plot depicting the violence of Zimbabwean nationalism, migrancy and the colonial structures that Siziba's cosmological cum astrophysical explorations discursively contest.

[10] Josiah Tongogara was the highest ranking ZANLA commander during Zimbabwe's Liberation Struggle.

As a metaphor on madness, the name Athandwa translates to Beloved, thus, it has a literary relationship with Tony Morrison's novel *Beloved* (2004). Beyond these onomastic similarities, however, these texts are structured around the same aesthetics of haunting and madness. While Morrison's novel depicts the memories of American slavery through the ghostly manifestation of the dead Beloved to her mother, Sethe, as a form of madness, Tshuma's novel depicts the tragedies of Zimbabwean history and politics in a more subtle way. Tshuma reverses the roles as Athandwa is the one haunted by her dead father's ghostly appearances. Athandwa's experiences of madness permits her visions of the metaphysical as it does to Sethe. Her traumatogenic reaction to her father's murder escalates from episodic pseudo-seizures to illogical dream-visions of her father's childhood. In these dreams, she becomes a single subject with her father as exemplified by the conflation of pronouns in the following statement

> he raises his long face to the sun, which shines flame hot and eggshell colored, and *I imagine he imagines we imagine I can taste he can taste we can taste those plump berries bursting warm and wet in my his our mouths* (p. 223, my emphasis).

These dream recollections about her father's childhood, which she chooses not to disclose to her White psychiatrist during her spell in the "institution for the insane" (p. 213), represent ghostly appearances in Bantu cosmology. *Digging Stars* shares this aspect with NoViolet Bulawayo's *Glory* (2023) where the novel's central character, Destiny, experiences a manifestation of her dead ancestors as discussed in the following chapter. These scenarios are not horrific haunting like the one I discussed in Mbue's Konga in the preceding chapter, rather, it makes Athandwa see her father as a child. These experiences disrupt her idealisation of her father. Her grandmother, a victim of the *Gukurahundi* is also brought back in these lifelike dreams.

Athandwa's terrors and experiences of lucid dreams are tropes Tshuma uses to confront Zimbabwean nationalism, especially, the histories of the Gukurahundi and The Third Chimurenga in which Athandwa's paternal families perish. After Athandwa's final episode of the terrors that gets her admitted into the psychiatric hospital, she questions her father's friend, a Zimbabwean government spy named Mr C, "Did you kill my father?" (p. 229). This question goes beyond the individual's role, thus, launching an unofficial enquiry into the institutions and ideologies sustaining this system of terror. It 'exhumes' corpses buried beneath the discourse of Zimbabwean nationalism and patriotism represented by such shady characters as Mr C. Since Mr C is a symbol of, and a resource within the state's violence machinery, his implication in his friend's death reveals the madness of ZANU PF nationalism. In "The Sins

of the Father" (2005) by Charles Mungoshi depicts the tragic results of this narrowly conceptualised nationalism which leads to a Shona grandfather orchestrating a 'Second Street' accident that claims his grandchildren whom he considered products of Shona and Ndebele ethnic 'miscegenation'. Like Mr. C, Rwafa, the grandfather depicted in Mungoshi's short story is an ex-Minister of State Security, thus a component in the Zimbabwean State Security apparatus. Both examples portray the insanity of the political system that conceives the nation in such ultra-nationalist terms that have reduced Zimbabwe to another trauma story.

Siziba's surveilled life and eventual death, and the novel's references to the *Gukurahundi* epitomise both ultra-nationalism and trauma that characterise Zimbabwe. Imagined and real surveillance are common tactics ZANU PF uses as constant sources of psychological terror to many Zimbabweans. Athandwa explains that life in Zimbabwe is "punctuated by the increasingly chilly understanding that those who didn't know how to control their thoughts or their vocal chords would be disappeared, just like that, as though they had never existed" (p. 64). This political insecurity is also accompanied by socioeconomic precarity from hyperinflation, starvation and general lack of resources. The terrors denote a psychological and emotional "postcolonial condition characterized by consciousness as having-always-already-been-violated by the anticipation of death" (Praeg, 2017, p. 669). The novel ends on an ambiguous note where we now know the truth of Siziba's death, yet we are not certain of the completeness of his daughter Athandwa's recovery from her terrors and madness. It also concludes at a place where she is resigned to the colonial and military ambitions of The Program as exemplified by the sentiment that "they're going to cut into the moon whether I'm there or not" (p. 232). Cultures of madness therefore denote sociopolitical structures which are based on the colonially invented ideas of racial and ethnic identity. The protagonist's psychological breakdown originates in such a political environment in Zimbabwe, which as I will demonstrate, is also global.

Stars and colonial madness

In this chapter, the term colonial madness denotes conceptions of belonging informed by European racism and ethnocentrism that still characterise postcolonial spaces such as Zimbabwe. In his discussion of "the development of colonial psychiatry" in North Africa, Richard Keller defines colonial madness as Europe's conversion of African geographical space into "a blank slate for the inscription of European will" (2007, p. 2). These ideas historically effected Europe's violent dispersal of colonised people out of their ancestral geographical

spaces into colonial reserves, and their fragmentation into hierarchised ethnic categories. This displacement was simultaneous with the delegitimation of the colonised people's cosmologies and rituals as sources of knowledge. Mudimbe argues that the epistemological and physical displacement achieved "the invention of a primitive Africa" (1988). In the domain of astrology, for instance, Mudimbe (1988) addresses Carl Sagan's attempts to delegitimise Dogon astronomy by attributing it to European explorers. According to Mudimbe, Sagan subscribed to the 'Africans as primitive hypothesis' thus, he is so offended by the Dogon's astrological prowess which predates European scientific discoveries, that he speculates that the Dogon may have hosted an early European anthropologist and fashioned their astrology after him. In the novel, there are various intersections between colonial madness and astronomy, therefore, the novel depicts the Digging Stars to reassert African and other precolonial epistemologies through astronomy.

Throughout human history, stars have generally functioned as religious symbols, chronometric and navigational tools, thus, they create an evocative metaphor for different cultures in this novel. For Tshuma, the stars, constellations and other celestial bodies can function as either colonial objects or may articulate histories beyond colonial presences. To demonstrate these functions, Tshuma depicts colonial madness through the Program's use of the portrait of Amerigo Vespucci[11] as its symbol of astronomical discovery. It is worth noting that the Americas, formerly Turtle Island to the native inhabitants, are eponymously named after Amerigo who is considered their discoverer. This eponymic renaming demonstrates the re-invention of a pre-existing geography and its indigenous inhabitants to reflect European colonial configurations. A significant part of his 'discovery' of the Americas are the stars he used as navigational tools and named ""the Four Stars" [later] dubbed "the Southern Cross" by subsequent European explorers" (p. 196). The image of Amerigo used by the Program in the novel invokes historical colonial ideas of belonging. In the portrait, Amerigo,

> stood with a brass astrolabe in one hand and a banner of the Southern Cross constellation in the other. Before him, a bare-breasted woman in a feather headdress and a matching skirt sat on a hammock. Her right hand rested on the net for support,

[11] Amerigo Vespucci (1454 – 1512) was an Italian "explorer-navigator who took part in early voyages to the New World (1499–1500 and 1501–02) and occupied the influential post of *piloto mayor* ("master navigator") in Sevilla (1508–12). The name for the Americas is derived from his given name" (Almagia, 2024).

> while her left was raised toward Amerigo. The inscription *A M E R I C A* curved toward her from behind a tree, written back to front (p. 82).

The feather headdress stereotypes Native American cultures which are, in this portrait, gendered and projected as primitive as symbolised by the nudity. In this instance, the gendering of America as a female entity sexualises colonial conquest as an assertion of European masculinity. The Native American female and the associated regalia become symbols of subjugation of indigenous cultures. In the same vein, these metaphors designate where and how Native Americans belong within the contemporary United States of America as a conquered race. As the novel shows, Native Americans have been relegated to reservations, hence Siziba imagines postcolonial identities as bastardised concepts.

These connotations of Amerigo's portrait show the colonial ideology that informs The Program's space ambitions and America's sociopolitical identity. The naming of the constellation as the Southern Cross reflects "Catholic sensibilities" (p. 196), and thus is an inscription of the power of global colonial hegemonies. In this sense, the Southern Cross constellation easily invokes the colonisation of the Americas. Tshuma's depiction of stars in this novel articulates significant alterations of human identities and cosmologies in a way that bastardises what existed before colonisation. In the context of Zimbabwe's contemporary ethnic crisis, Siziba asks, "who were we before the British bastardized us?" (p. 40). Answering this question involves using stars as archives and navigational tools to rediscover precolonial identities. The question is, therefore, how these stars, as ritual archives, function to challenge what has been termed colonial madness? Siziba does not simply imagine that renaming the stars to their Bantu names is enough to undo colonial impositions but suggests that these names contain historical information into the nature of precolonial identities. The Digging Stars occupy a central role in the novel's reimagination of Bantu identities.

The Digging Stars have various mythologies in different European and non-European cosmologies which reveal their potential to challenge colonial impositions. The name Pleiades is a Greek version of the Digging Stars or "isiLimela" (p. 6) in the Ndebele language. In Greek mythology, the Pleiades are recognised as "the children of Pleione, goddess-nymph of the ocean" (p. 32). As we read in the novel, their Greek name is the colonially and scientifically conventional name, thus, Athandwa's reference to the Pleiades as *isiLimela* should be read as subversion of colonial conventions. In other words, it re-activates Ndebele astrology, and by extension, Bantu philosophy as way of life. Using Ndebele names for the constellations instead

of “their conventional Latin and Greek names” (p. 55) articulates African cosmologies and other intercultural marginalities whose existence is continuously denied in colonial ir/rationality. These ostensible philosophical connotations clarify Athandwa’s preference for *umThala*, *indonsakusa* and *inyanga* instead of the milky way, Jupiter, and the moon, respectively. *Indonsakusa* articulates the social mythology which the Ndebele associate with the star, that is, it heralds the appearance of the morning and provides light for bachelors on their way home from nocturnal quests for eligible women. Various cultures clearly inscribe and memorialise their cosmologies and mythologies in the naming of the stars. Religious symbolisms, deities, rituals and calendrical cycles are enshrined in the constellations, and in turn, these mythologies furnish historical and scientific curiosities. Metaphorically, these Bantu astronomies are an archival return to a “time when the skies belonged to all mankind” (p. 33), that is, precolonial times before the Bantu were written out of history by colonialism. Reclaiming a part of the skies becomes a part of claiming part of the earth, thus challenging colonial madness.

Besides this traditional mythology, *isiLimela* as used in the novel evoke meanings of the *Gukurahundi*, and thus, have historical relevance in Zimbabwe’s ethnic composition. The chronometric value of these stars in “heralding spring rains” and signifying “time to prepare the fields for the planting season” (p. 6 & 42) creates an irony which echoes the *Gukurahundi*, a Zimbabwean genocide named after the rains preceding the same season in Shona cosmology. The *Gukurahundi* genocide has been referred to as a moment of madness as I will discuss in detail in the next chapter which discusses NoViolet Bulawayo’s historic fiction in the novel *Glory* (2023). Maintaining the farming trope, the early years of Zimbabwe’s independence were a signal for ZANU PF to cultivate a Bantu national identity instead of constructing an ethnocentric national identity and rigidifying how the “British bastardised us” (p. 40). A Bantu national identity would also include different races because the *isiLimela* shows that the skies and the earth belong to everyone. Tshuma uses these mythologies to arrive at complimentary issues within the world and Zimbabwean colonial, astrological and ethnical history. A perspective that the author seems to share with her characters is that “we don’t study history enough [and] Zimbabwe is already learning the lessons of turning its back on history. Look how divided the country is, how it’s going down the drain.” (p. 33). Zimbabwean historian Terrence Ranger (2005) similarly suggests that Zimbabwean regimes deliberately bastardise history to construct a singular patriotic historical nation. The ZANU PF regime deliberately refuses to construct a nation that transcends ethnicity, instead, it marshals ethnicity as an

immovable precolonial identity as I shall argue later in this chapter. In postcolonial Zimbabwe, "nationalism tend[s] to be re-tribalised African identities, like colonialism, its bedfellow" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009, p. 147). To correct these deliberate anomalies, the Digging Stars (Bantu geometries) offer a philosophical, political and moral compass utilisable to rediscover African identities beyond the ethnicised boundaries and colonial inventions.

Madness, terror and the Zimbabwean post-colonial "terrorscape"

In her biography which overlaps with crucial parts of Zimbabwe's postcolonial political events, Athandwa experiences 'terrors' at the age of twelve as a response to her father's assassination by ZANU PF. Different medical professionals struggle to accurately diagnose these terrors and their origins. One of the doctors she is taken to in Zimbabwe attributes these terrors "to the travails of puberty or hormonal imbalances caused by my menstrual cycle, or something I might have been allergic to" (p. 96). A traditional healer cryptically attributes this affliction to youthful love by stating that "there's a boy" (ibid), and to witchcraft within the family. When Athandwa later migrates to America, her white psychiatrist is similarly baffled by the condition's unusual characteristics. The psychiatrist whom Athandwa calls Meredith Grey, after the fictional character from American TV Series, *Grey's Anatomy*, diagnoses Athandwa with "pseudodementia" and tells Athandwa that "you are consciously entering into the fantasy world and are aware, at least to some degree, of the boundaries between reality and fantasy" (p. 217 & 218). Athandwa struggles to describe the condition, only likening these episodic pseudo seizures to "ecstatic moments of pain…a feeling of death" (p. 218). This condition is a facet of psychological breakdown that I primarily read in this chapter as a metaphor for various aspects of ethnocentric political madness. While her father's death initially appears to be random, we later discover, through the terrors, the hidden dimensions which are themselves the madness of national belonging in Zimbabwe. Through these terrors, Athandwa comments on the specific moments of Zimbabwe's politico-economic disintegration, narrates the controversies surrounding her father's assassination and his perspective about Zimbabwe's ethnic problem, and her experience as an immigrant in America. This pseudodementia, semi-conscious self-emersion into the world of fantasy is also a metaphoric commentary on the contradictions posed by the Zimbabwe's self-glorifying Third Chimurenga discourses despite evident socio-economic crisis. The terrors reveal the fantasies and realities of Zimbabwean postcoloniality.

The concept of terror, as already noted, evokes multiple meanings which go beyond the aspects of psychological breakdown and mental illness. It evokes the French Revolution's Reign of Terror and the American War on Terror which are but examples of many historical moments of violence, bloodletting and citizens' psychological fear emanating from such political pursuits. Befittingly, Mugabe's regime in which the novel is set has been analytically packaged by Godwin (2011) as a reign of terror in reference to the French Revolution. In all these historical circumstances, terror, is both an infliction of, and a response to institutionalised (political) violence. Athandwa's terrors are both a descriptor and a response to postcolonial madness in Zimbabwe. I discuss the Zimbabwean postcolony as a socio-historical moment characterised by various mutations of terror that morph into cultural, psychological and political terrorscapes. According to Praeg, "a terrorscape" is a socio-political terrain characterised by a confluence of "fear, alarm, dread and terror" (2017, p. 659). Because of Africa's history of the "trans-Atlantic slave trade, then colonialism, apartheid, anti-liberation terror, the rubber terror", Praeg argues that "Africa, both as a continent and a number of peoples, has for at least 400 years known little else but terror" (pp. 660 - 61).

Praeg simultaneously critiques "the dictatorial terror of its post-independence Big Men" (ibid). Tshuma metaphorises this latter epoch of the terrorscape through the complex psychological experience similarly conceptualised as "the terrors". Thus, in this section I discuss various manifestations of terror and fear in postcolonial Zimbabwe in relation to my central concern with the cosmology of madness. I argue that these terrors are both cosmological and clinical in that they involve dream/visions of the dead who, as I established in the first chapter, are capable of returning and haunting the living. Being haunted by ghosts is itself a form of terror. Conceptualising Zimbabwe as a terrorscape is useful to characterise forms of Zimbabwean nationalism that appear in forms of atrocious political programs such as the *Gukurahundi*, the Fast Track Land Reform and the Third Chimurenga; the contextual setting of the fictional death of Frank Siziba. To be precise, Siziba is assassinated in 2006, which is both during Mugabe's fierce standoff against the West and Zimbabwe's humanitarian crisis. Athandwa's terrors reflect what Butler calls precarity, that is, a political culture in which suffering arbitrary violence is "accepted as a norm of political life" (2004, p. xiv). The above examples comprise what I read as cultures of madness in *Digging Stars*.

The central theme of Athandwa's terrors is her father's death which is ruled accidental by the ZANU PF regime, yet it is in fact, an assassination. Her father's death creates a narrative which

interconnects his professional, ethnic identity and anti-ZANU PF politics. Siziba's professional expertise as an astrophysicist and missile guidance systems engineer invites surveillance from the Zimbabwean government which he refuses to work for, choosing the American military instead. Ironically, the Zimbabwean state agent who is sent to coerce him is his former university classmate and friend, only referred to as Mr. C. This Mr. C figure is a government intelligence agent who eventually contributes to his assassination and attempts to confiscate his research. I read this figure as the personification of ZANU PF's nationalist imaginary which is a form of terror and the literal origins of Athandwa's terrors. In line with my analysis here, Hodgkinson comments that the nationalism espoused by Mugabe was "a discursive legitimation not only for ZANU's governance but also for the brutal use of force against the party's perceived enemies" (2019, p. S42). This nationalism conflates party and state and coerces allegiance to ZANU PF authoritarianism to create a "patriotic citizenry" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009, p. 3). Since Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, this form of nationalism has used terror to thwart opposing nationalist imaginaries represented by groups such as White farmers, opposition parties and ethnic minorities. The novel's historical setting locates madness within Mugabe's hegemonic nationalism which is "systematically deployed to suppress alternative forms of nationalism" (p. 10). Ndlovu-Gatsheni further explains that it is "a violent phenomenon bent on ethnic cleansing" and that it also claims to seek to "defeat colonialism and imperialism through a resolution of the national and agrarian questions" (p. 240). Athandwa's psychological breakdown maps these state fictions that masquerade as nationalism and are reliant on unleashing terror to exclude other ethnicities, races and dissenting nationalist imaginaries.

Mr. C represents the terror of abductions, murder and surveillance that the pro-ZANU PF Zimbabwean security establishment is infamous for. Tshuma uses trauma/terrors/madness to contest ZANU PF's ethnic prejudices, the self-deceiving projections of 'Zimbabwean' nationalism, Athandwa's father's complex legacy, and ultimately, to reinsert African humanity outside the damaging dimensions of colonial and postcolonial rationale. The terrors are a loss of innocence and a confrontation of established political cultures of madness. In Athandwa's psychic afflictions, literal and figurative meanings of madness intertwine, as personal and national history intersect and interpret each other.

All these complementary forms of madness can be reconciled through exploration of the cosmological Digging Stars which archive Bantu identities. The various dimensions of

Athandwa's life make it possible to conceptualise terror as a tool used by ZANU PF to forge and enforce an unhealthy and narrow Shona-ethnonational identity. However, we can also deductively see in Athandwa, the tragedy of confronting an equally racialised migrant space in America while carrying unresolved psychological tensions of her father's death. Through the recurring episodes of psychological breakdown, Athandwa confronts the truth about her father as a complex cog in the American terror machine, the truth about the American race problem, and reconfigures how she perceives blackness while concomitantly refusing to become "another trauma story" (p. 225). Herein lies the political complexity of her psychological condition, that is, the contradictions attendant to inscribing African experiences of trauma without perpetuating poverty porn (Clough, et al., 2023). Athandwa's concern with the general African identity in western psychology reminisces Mbembe's observation that "Africa stands out as the supreme receptacle of the West's obsession with, and circular discourse about, the facts of "absence," "lack," and "non-being," of identity and difference, of negativeness – in short, of nothingness" (2001, p. 4). She worries about unintentionally assisting international media's voyeuristic fetishisation of African suffering in a way that reduces Africa to "a perpetual film of suffering" (p. 225). In those mediated representations, African humanity is blurred in preference for the monologic picture of "fly-infested faces gouged out by famine and swollen, ribbed toddlers gazing expressionless at the camera, branded by WHO and Red Cross T-shirts" (ibid). This consciousness brings into perspective the centrality of astronomy as a method to disrupt this monomaniacal representation by recovering complex pre-colonial Bantu psychologies and identities. Bantu geometries are, therefore, a concept to transcend the niche of African trauma stories. The text ostensibly enters the category of African self-writing which reasserts "loudly and forcefully their [African] alterity, [an] alterity that must be preserved at all costs" (Mbembe, 2001, p. 4). To avoid effacing the humanity of Zimbabweans, their 'trauma story' is thus portrayed concurrent with the ingenuity represented by cultural mathematical and astrophysical prowess.

Athandwa's feelings that her psychiatrist's "questions about the things I had suffered [were] flattening me into a trauma story" (p. 225), can also be read in juxtaposition to ZANU PF patriotic sensibilities that she exhibits in her childhood. Her uneasiness with trauma stories at this stage, as a twenty-four-year-old, is contrary to her childhood denialism of Zimbabwean crises. Her denialism is symbolised by her angry outburst, as an eleven-year-old, that "we are not going down the drain…we are better than any place…better than this America of yours," when her father explains that Zimbabwe "is going down the drain" (p. 33). Such denialism is

typical of Zimbabwean hegemonic rhetoric that "glosses over the economic dystopia of the post-colonial state" (Mungoshi, 2005, p. 9). Tshuma's use of the child narrator's voice to inscribe ZANU PF hegemonic politics satirises this bizarre status quo and caricaturises the Zimbabwean education system which has been converted into a ZANU PF echo chamber. Athandwa admits that she was taught such rhetoric in school. Tshuma therefore satirises the bizarre self-flattering discourses ZANU PF indulges to palimpsest its terror. Athandwa's later reluctance is politically mature and self-critical. For instance, as a young adult she admits to "feeling a guilty sense of retribution" (p. 62) when Mugabe's Fast Track Land Reform Program evicted the Rogerses, the white farming family of her ex-boyfriend, Rufus Rogers, who "dumped" (ibid) her for her terrors. Her ambivalence partially emanates from the traumas of first love as correctly observed by the traditional healer. These contradictory emotions are also because one government minister and his family "moved into the farm, sweeping up two other farms in the area in the process" (ibid). Athandwa's incoherent response to the land reform programme – itself an evidently self-contradictory process which the Zimbabwean government televised as successful decolonial story – shows the need for further enquiry into the farm as a terrorscape. The terrors impede both Athandwa's personal relationship and her formulation of a coherent political opinion about this nationally crucial event. The personal and political dimensions notwithstanding, Athandwa reveals aspects of personal growth in depicting traumatic aspects of the land reform that the regime has excluded from its national narrative.

To Athandwa, the Rogers' farm represents deep systematic and cultural incoherencies, and racial and ethnic dimensions within Zimbabwe's postcolonial nationhood project. It is also an archetype of the incomplete nation-project in Zimbabwean literature. As Manase notes "the[se] post-2000 land invasions…can be traced to the ZANU PF government's failure to redistribute land after 1980" (2006, p. 3). This failure was, however, connected to Mugabe's early post-independence reconciliation rhetoric that sought to forge a nation out of former colonisers and the colonised while retaining the colonial land ownership imbalances. These post-2000 revisions of white belonging and 'Zimbabwean-ness' after a twenty-year hiatus betray ethnocentrism in ZANU PF Chimurenga. Mugabe's revision of white farmers' belonging through the land invasions aimed to defeat what he thought was "a broad political front forged within the country's farming-industrial-commercial complex" which had "created and controlled the MDC" (Meredith, 2002, p. 193). Mugabe used state media to project white

farmers and their supposed creation, the MDC (Movement for Democratic Change)[12], as archnemeses of Zimbabwean decolonisation and sovereignty. Nyambi argues that

> As the Third Chimurenga had inevitable racial implications, its embodiment in the phenomenon and person of Mugabe and his nativist land discourse made it a crucial dynamic in what became urgent processes of re-imagining and reconstituting the nation, nationality and liberation (2022, p. 105).

Nyambi's argument aligns with the ideas depicted by Siziba as the "madness of who belongs where and who doesn't", (p.40) thus, contesting the very ideologies that have historically informed Mugabe's violent revisions of national belonging. To this Mugabeist imaginary, race and ethnicity are primary markers of Zimbabwean-ness. Considering the *Gukurahundi* genocide against the Ndebele in the 1980s, the Third Chimurenga against White farmers and the consistent suppressions of dissenting political parties, it is clear that Zimbabwe's postcoloniality has been consistently plagued by ZANU PF terror and fictions of belonging challenged here as madness and as responsible for Athandwa's psychological breakdown.

The Rogers' farm's location in Empandeni, however, is a site of continuous trauma. Athandwa recalls her first encounter with the Rogers farm as a seven-year-old while accompanying her father to his rural home. This revisit, her father's only one from the United States, has historical pilgrimage dimensions as I will explain. Through this visit, her father recounts the history of colonial displacement inflicted on the pastoral Bantu by Cecil John Rhodes's British South Africa Company in search of "gold which he never found" (p. 61). Thus, it stands as a colonial relic and an articulation of traumatic personal loss, compounded histories of dispossession and an epitome of racialised nationalism projects. These contradictory dimensions represented by the farm are captured by Athandwa. Athandwa acknowledges being "overwhelmed" by her father's "nostalgia, by this mysterious grief he carried for a past he had not lived", Mrs Rogers' palpable grief and Rufus' farm photographs which expressed "something that was now irretrievably lost [that is] the things that gave them meaning and without which they lost their sense of being" (p. 61 & 62). Interestingly, the Zimbabwean minister's land grabbing terror is portrayed by his government as an unproblematic act of correcting colonial injustices.

[12] The MDC, led by Morgan Tsvangirai (1952 -2018), was formidable political party that seriously challenged Mugabe's one-party hegemony from the late 1990s onwards. Mugabe had enjoyed unchallenged political hegemony since he used the Gukurahundi genocide to subdue Joshua Nkomo's (1917 – 1999) PF ZAPU.

Similarly, the BBC and CNN's repetitive mediatisation of Mrs Rogers' "oversized grief" until her name became a colloquial referent "for any person who had ever been torn from their home" (ibid) provides a simplistic tale of white victimhood resulting from Mugabe's dictatorship. The West's ill-informed centralisation of the racial component provided Mugabe with decolonial and cultural ammunition that eventually overlooked the traumas emanating from this moment in history. Mugabe, being a demagogue, utilised such race-based monolithic representations of his contempt for human rights as evidence of decolonial success (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009). By inscribing these contradictory dimensions of the land, Tshuma subverts both narratives and depicts the complexities of the personal and collective terror experienced by both races. The farm morphs into a site where scandalous ethnocentric and racial madness recurs under colonial and postcolonial nation-building projects. Instead of restoring the land to the people displaced into the arid areas, ZANU PF parceled the land to its cronies effectually retaining the colonial-reserve model.

Through the heartaches of first love lost because of the terrors, Athandwa articulates the intertwined terrors of dispossession that repeat themselves on the Rogers Farm and its vicinity; the second time Athandwa would lose her "innocence about the world" (p. 61). Rufus' rejection of Athandwa after she confesses consulting a *n'anga* to cure her terrors, is simultaneously a rejection of her culture. Rufus ends their relationship because "he didn't want any part in [my] African voodoo or whatever the hell was wrong with me" (p. 62). Though Athandwa imagines Rufus's motivations to be genuine fear of her condition and the resultant cultural elements, his statement reflects colonial attitudes that belittle African identities, cultures and cosmologies of madness. Consulting a traditional healer is a way towards cultural healing which belongs to the same category as the cosmological epistemologies of the Digging Stars. Rufus, through the colonial superiority lens, imagines this as a return to a 'primitive' culture. Consequently, he dismisses an entire cosmology as voodoo. However, the traditional healer's place in contemporary Africa is also complex and contradictory among 'modern' black Africans themselves. The moral controversies and the cynical authenticity tests surrounding the abilities of traditional healers makes these healers symbols of cultural dis/continuity within the modern Black consciousness. Resultantly, Athandwa's grandfather recommends enlisting the services of the traditional healer and yet admittedly cannot vouch for him, while her mother condemns it as a divisive witch-hunting exercise and Athandwa sees it as one that upends her "cultured games" (p. 100). These cultured games of hers refer to practices of English etiquette such as "letting the tea seep silently between their lips" (ibid). Evidently, Athandwa's family are not

ardent believers in the power of the traditional healer. Rufus' rejection involves personal, cultural and political dimensions which consequently forces Athandwa's reluctant support of the land reform "as though Rufus's rejection and the national theft now playing out were somehow correlated" (p. 62). Athandwa is completely aware of the colonial template on which the land reform is based hence she packages it as national theft.

The terrors are, thus, Athandwa's psychological re-inscriptions of disavowed colonial histories and postcolonial state terrors, that are, the *Gukurahundi*, the land reform violence, and the murder of her father. These terrorising dimensions of ZANU PF ethno-nationalism are an underlying madness indirectly articulated through Athandwa's psychological breakdown. As already noted, the farm is a site for the intertwined histories of land-related terror and the *Gukurahundi*. Its Empandeni locale, a district in Matebeleland, is one the of sites of the Zimbabwean genocide. In the mentioned visit to her father's rural home, she revisits the *Gukurahundi* genocide through which the Zimbabwean government exterminated Ndebele populations in Matebeleland and Midlands provinces. In the genocide, "terror presents as the political performance of a differentiation of irreducible otherness *in a way that is sudden, absolute, and inhumane*" (Praeg, 2017, p. 661).This genocide may, therefore, be interpreted as ZANU PF's nation and national identity forging process which relegated non-Shona identities to irreducible otherness. This, to Frank Siziba, is madness as epitomised by his daughter's consequent mental breakdown. Such dangerous pre-occupations with a Shona-centric national identity makes the rediscovery of pre-colonial identities through Bantu cosmologies an urgent matter. Athandwa and her father's revisit to the trauma site becomes the first initiative in memorialising the victims (his parents) of Shona-centric ethno-national identity politics. Athandwa's father articulates the terror of Shona ethnonationalism through wishing,

> he'd known in which mass graves lurking somewhere on this land his parents had been buried, if they'd been buried at all, or if the government soldiers had come in the '80s and done what they'd done and then left their bodies out in the open to be picked at by vultures (p. 193).

This passage uses mass graves and non-burials as forensic descriptors of the dehumanising terror that ZANU PF unleashed as its first act of postcolonial nation building in the early 1980s. Both descriptors reveal violence that poses cosmological threats to both the dead and the living. Non-burial and mass burial render impossible the funeral rituals that would grant the dead entrance into the family and national ancestral pantheon. Earlier in the novel, Siziba recalls begging his friend, Mr C, for the exact site of his parents' death during the *Gukurahundi* so

that he "could perform the ancestral rites for them" (p. 39). This expresses trauma as cosmological rupture resulting from ZANU PF's genocide and subsequent erasures of the genocide's memory. Tshuma's text completely avoids using the word *Gukurahundi*, using references such as 'what happened in the 80s'. This avoidance expresses the grief that the term still evokes and expresses the humanity of Ndebele people and their ancestors who are reduced to chaff in the use of the name. It is also a refusal to utilise a name that bastardises a useful Bantu cosmology whose Ndebele version is the powerful *isiLimela* mythology.

In this novel, Siziba's Empandeni home and its vicinity are generic sites of the *Gukurahundi* where Ndebele people were murdered without the dignity of a proper burial, thus, creating hosts of haunting spirits who are excluded from both the ancestral realm and the realm of the living. This explains Athandwa's psychological rupture as perhaps a revisit of her father. The ZANU PF regime's erasure of *Gukurahundi* memory, while motivated by avoidance of self-recrimination, simultaneously hides evidence of its refusal "to provide sites for the creation of a multi-ethnic, post-colonial national identity" (Muchemwa, 2005, p. 195). Siziba traces this to the colonial "madness of who belongs where and who doesn't" (p. 40). He interrogates precolonial Shona and Ndebele identities and relations prior their colonial bastardisation and yearns for that pre-colonial identity, though at the risk of idealising this pre-colonial identity. According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni, historians provide clues of these precolonial identities arguing that these identities were characterised by "fluidity and flexibility" and "colonialism had the negative effect not of inventing identities from scratch, but reinventing existing ones, rigidifying and politicising them in a number of ways" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011, p. 23). Ndlovu-Gatsheni discusses the economic application of ethnic-citizenship in colonial Rhodesia and the resultant formulation of an "ethnicised wage differential system within which 'native' workers were ethnically differentiated for specific jobs" (ibid p.24). Continuing, Ndlovu-Gatsheni explains that "Shangani were stereotyped as the 'best workers above and below ground,' the Ndebele were said to be the best 'foremen' and the Manyika were said to be 'best house servants.'" (ibid). Ethnicity, thus became, a political and economic determinant which solidified ethnic citizenship and prepared ground for the genocides that occurred across post-colonial Africa (Falola, 2022).

While the ethnic wage system is not currently obvious as it was in the Rhodesian colony, the political system that systematically reserves top political posts to Shona ethnicities shows a manipulation of the pre-existing system. From this perspective, ZANU PF's ethnonationalism

is indeed madness in its acceptance of colonial political bastardisation of pre-colonial Bantu identities. While these colonial re-inventions are decried in Tshuma's novel, the Zimbabwean tragedy is that "we don't study history enough" (p. 33). This points to the unsustainability of national identity forged out of terror. The Zimbabwean tragedy is the regime's deliberate compounding of colonial distortions with its own and the adoption of colonial terror and "propaganda to stem the tide of history and to create and sustain a monolithic, racist [ethnic], and privileged but unsustainable collective identity" (Muchemwa, 2005, p. 199). Tshuma makes this unsustainability clear through the self-adulatory and parochial post-colonial education's fabrication of the notion of Shona and national superiority.

The irony of such parochialism is portrayed when the young Athandwa regurgitates hegemonic rhetoric of Zimbabwe's political superiority to any place despite the "never-ending food and money queues" (p. 33). These queues symbolise a floundering economy and are another form of terror to which Athandwa is fully exposed after her father's assassination. One of Athandwa's earliest terror episodes occurs while she is standing "in the longest bread queue known to man" (p. 96). Tshuma creates a direct link between Athandwa's psychological breakdown and the breakdown of the Zimbabwean economy after "the government sanctioned the War Veterans to invade the white-owned farms and claim back the land" (p. 33). Tshuma's characterisation can be explained using Manase's argument that

> the way the ruling ZANU-PF government handled the historically justified need to redistribute land to the majority of land-hungry Zimbabweans created fertile ground for the gradual economic decline between 2000 and 2004 (2006, p. 24).

Not only was the Fast Track Land Reformchaotic and destabilised Zimbabwe's agrarian economy, but it was also a performance of "ZANU PF's racialised, ethnicised and politicised Chimurenga nationalism" (Nyambi, 2022, p. 107) in that most of its beneficiaries were ZANU PF supporters. Athandwa's anxiety emanates from the resulting "humiliations of poverty" which threaten to reduce her entire life into a trauma story of "days spent in riotous queues" (p. 64). Through this terror episode, Athandwa interrogates Zimbabwe's unprecedented economic deterioration punctuated by hyperinflation, starvation and a failed healthcare system. Athandwa admits to becoming "increasingly afraid of The Terrors, afraid for myself but also for Mama, who was a civil servant and got paid in the local, useless currency, and couldn't afford a hospital stay should I need to be admitted" (p. 97). Her terrors, as a strictly psychological condition, are subsumed within the terrifying affects about the nation and its uncertain future. Here, personal pathology morphs into a narrative about the nation

characterised by economic deficits, political violence and Shona ethnocentrism. Athandwa describes the terrors' escalation in a similar manner, observing that "the Terrors began to mutate, and like a bad omen things really went south in the country, the shortages escalating, becoming so severe as to morph into a permanent feature of our lives" (p. 96). This is indeed a madness-inducing socioeconomic situation.

This environment of unbridled fear also reveals itself in Siziba's life as a Zimbabwean expatriate in America being surveilled by his friend and Zimbabwean regime phantom, Mr. C. It is not an exaggeration to say that the politics of terror involve massive levels of surveillance to in/accurately identify and assert otherness. In Siziba's case, this surveillance is occasioned by his professional expertise as a missile guidance systems engineer who refuses to work for Zimbabwe in preference to the United States of America. To globalise the ideas of psychological terror, Tshuma depicts Siziba as a component in the American terror machine through his work for the American military industrial complex. He simultaneously works at the University as an academic and for Xylus, an American military contractor, as a designer of a

> multispectral detector that could capture distant celestial objects in the sky at a more refined spectrum – and also distant military targets on the ground. The heat sensor technology had been used to build the Sativat V satellite and the Habar drone, which had been used in military strikes in Afghanistan and Iraq and, more recently, by the Assad regime in Syria (p. 191).

Athandwa discovers that to fund his Bantu geometries and ethno-astronomies research, her father had willingly perverted his multispectral detector into a usable instrument in America's nomadic War on Terror's limitless migration from one Middle Eastern nation to the next. The American War on Terror itself is an assertion of the American ultra-nationalistic political culture that "authorises limitless aggression against targets which may or may not be related to the source of one's own suffering" (Butler, 2004, p. 4). Eventually, it becomes a permanent infliction of terror in the name of foreclosing terror from "terrorist" others. Terror designates those who should be surveilled and legitimates distinctions between "freedom fighters and terrorists" (Praeg, 2017, p. 661). Besides the magnitude the violent attacks conceptualised as terror, specifically America's War on Terror and the *Gukurahundi*, all forms of terror are expression of absolute differentiation premised on ethnicity, race or political affiliation. Absolute differentiating frameworks such as terrorists, dissidents or sellouts precede the infliction of terror. Such terminology evokes ethnical or "racial hysteria" (Butler, 2004, p. 39). While American democracy is negotiated through indefinite violence against the Arab world,

ZANU PF's hegemonic nationalism seeks to destabilise the spectres of neocolonialism supposedly backing local dissenting voices. These differentiations are used to justify the performance of irreducible otherness in such acts as drone strikes or shallow mass graves used during the *Gukurahundi*.

This culture provides an accurate framework on the surveillance and terror through which Zimbabwe's acts of nation-building are asserted. *Digging Stars* ostensibly depicts the Zimbabwean postcolony as a terrorscape. In *Glory*, this terror is personified by the Sisterhood of the Disappeared, a pressure group memorialising countless victims of ZANU PF abductions. Athandwa similarly observes that "those who didn't know how to control their thoughts or their vocal chords would be disappeared, just like that, as though they had never existed" (p. 64). Terror has clearly morphed into a governmentalised culture effecting ethnical, racial and political frameworks of differential belonging that Siziba depicts as madness. The "madness of who belong where and who doesn't" (p.40) denotes ZANU PF's attempts to dispense with challenges to its nationalism by ethnic and racial retracing of Ndebele people and White Zimbabweans to their precolonial 'alien' origins. The ejection from the national body politic was not only limited to Ndebele and White people but also to "residents of the working class suburb of Mbare for supporting the opposition MDC, and [whom Mugabe] referred to as 'undisciplined, totemless elements of alien origin'" (Muzondidya, 2004, p. 227). The violence/terror that these urban dwellers were subjected to visualises their absolute differentiation and otherness as 'aliens' to the nation. The terrors in their pathological form are certainly the undiagnosed apprehension, anxiety and paranoia psychologically and verbally expressed by many Zimbabweans who endure life under an authoritarian regime. Tshuma's portrayal of Athandwa's psychological breakdown as a result of this political culture serves to unravel the psychological and emotional toll of Mugabe's ethnocentric terror.

Siziba's expertise is clearly a much-coveted ability in a dictatorship hence the security-establishment's coercive attempts to recruit him and the eventual assassination. His refusal to work for the Zimbabwean government is however complicated on several levels. Firstly, it indicates the incoherences within ZANU PF nationalism that attempts to recruit him despite murdering his parents during the *Gukurahundi* and their eventual attempts to erase genocide memory. The *Gukurahundi* is an assertion of Ndebele non-citizenship in postcolonial Zimbabwe hence the irony. Secondly, his seeming allegiance to America does not align with ZANU PF's geopolitical defiance against Western nations which necessitates its categorisation

of its opponents as sellouts worthy of elimination. Siziba is categorised as such hence the encounters with Mr C in America threatening that "we know about your work for the Americans" (p. 39). This long arm of Zimbabwean nationalism diminishes Athandwa's hope after her father's death that "I HAD BEEN so sure The Terrors couldn't follow me across an ocean" (p. 101). The terror trope simultaneously frames Athandwa's pathology and her father's encounter with a coercive nationalist regime that defies distance and geopolitical boundaries. This coercive nationalism gone wrong results in an assassination of Siziba on his second visit to Zimbabwe. The official designation of his death as a vehicular accident is deconstructed through oral channels which reveal the hand of terror. Athandwa recalls that her father's death certificate,

> says, under *Cause of death* that he died of *Head Injuries*…but the truth of the matter—whether I overheard this from Mama or some other person or whether someone actually told me I can no longer recall—is that his car was forced off the road by a truck. There were even whispers that it hadn't been an accident. (p. 47).

The official autopsy report quoted here absolves ZANU PF of its madness. While head injuries were the visible and legible cause of death on the death certificate, the wider political calculus in which this death occurs is made legible through Athandwa's psychological breakdown. The actual cause of death can only be verified from piecing together the scattered socio-political occurrences prior and after the accident. Oral channels and the terrors counteract the reductive documentation of Siziba's death. The veracity of these channels can be ascertained through the memory of different characters. For instance, Athandwa remembers when Mr C threatened her father to "watch your back" (p. 39). Additionally, Mr C had known of Siziba's death before the family and had tried to claim his "research" from his second wife Candice in New York (p. 201). It is this disclosure from Candice that finally culminates in Athandwa's admittance into the psychiatric hospital where she finally comes to terms with the traumas of the Zimbabwean terrorscape.

While Athandwa had overhead or had been told that her father's death was not accidental, she had not known the role her father's friend and thereafter, her benefactor Mr. C, had played in her father's death. Upon her discharge from the psychiatric hospital, Athandwa finally writes Mr. C a letter asking if he had killed her father, although she knew intuitively that she "would never hear from Mr. C again" (p. 229). Through this act of letter writing, Athandwa extricates herself from Mr. C's guilty benevolence which saw him write her letters about her father and annually sending her astronomy related gifts. Initially, she could not accept Candice's disclosure because of Mr. C's benevolence and his memorialisation of her father through his

annual epistolary eulogies. He had also gifted her a state-of-the-art telescope and other sentimental gifts. This manipulative relationship represents the madness of Zimbabwean nationalism. It is based on such illusions that make it difficult for some of the recipients of its 'gifts' to critically analyse it.

This relationship symbolises the Mnangagwa regime's disingenuous attempts to dictate the terms of the genocide's memorialisation despite him being a key figure in orchestrating the genocide. Such memorialisation of the genocide based on selective hegemonic memory is dramatized in *Glory*'s (2023) depiction of the continuous bombing of *Gukurahundi* memorial plaques and whitewashing of murals sketched by survivors and inhabitants of the region. Ncube argues that "whitewashing represents a move towards memory-forgetting on the first level and memory-erasure at the ultimate level" (2024, p. 119). From an African cosmological perspective, the destruction of monuments functions to neutralise the ghostly power of the dead whereas victims' memorialisation rituals contain the ability to re-animate the dead to haunt the perpetrators. In the following chapter, I analyse *Glory*'s depiction of memorialisation of the dead on plaques as a cosmological act that transforms ZANU PF's victims into butterflies that haunt Mugabe's dreams and make him mad. In controlling acts of memorialisation, therefore, the ZANU PF regime attempts to pre-emptively neutralise these African cosmological elements and the counter hegemonic truths they offer. To apply Fontein's conceptualisation elsewhere, *Gukurahundi* "corporeal substances are themselves potent and dangerous, and in need of being contained" (2020, p. 11). I locate Mnangagwa's current *Gukurahundi* Community Outreach Program launched in Matebeleland and Midlands provinces using pro-regime traditional leaders as an attempt to contain potentially dangerous memories. On the launch of the programme on 14 July 2024, Mnangagwa expressed such thinking in categorising the *Gukurahundi* as "the post-independence-conflict in this region" (Bhebhe, 2024). This categorisation aligns with the current Zimbabwean chief of chiefs, Fortune Charumbira, who told the media fraternity before the launch that "it's not a genocide and it should not be classified as such until the whole processes are concluded" (Mukondera, 2024). Such statements reveal ethnocentric ideas that still inform ZANU PF's treatment of Ndebele people in Zimbabwe.

By remembering *Gukurahundi*, we remember that ZANU PF has accepted how the British bastardised us. The ethnocentric nation of Zimbabwe is not an expression of authentic Bantu identities hence ZANU PF constantly safeguards this inauthenticity through terror. Here terror

operates on the level of memory functioning to distort how the genocide and other traumatic events should be re-membered. Terror is to be understood as an ongoing process of identity making in Zimbabwe in this context. Siziba's Zimbabwean identity, historically denied through the *Gukurahundi* terror is, in this instance, conveniently manipulated through nationalist constructions that consider themselves legitimate beneficiaries of his expertise despite the horrendous history. Here is also the irony of Siziba's Digging Stars, which mutated from the ambitions of space exploration to dangerous weaponry, placing him at the epicentre of a conflict between two hegemonic establishments. Forcing Siziba to work for Zimbabwe typifies the contradictions where ZANU PF patriotic constructions thwart the right to govern by consent.

These pitfalls of Zimbabwean nationalism and the consequent afflictions of orphanhood cause a twelve year-long deferment of Athandwa's American diasporic dream. These immediate dimensions of her father's death are significant in the diagnosis of her psychological breakdown. In this dimension, the terrors are manifestations of the traumatic economic deficits which she had not experienced because of her diasporic father. Her father's sudden death, unexplainable due to its political nature, causes her to spend "inordinate amounts of time hunched over the computers at school, away from Mama's censorious gaze, googling death" (p. 226). Such obsessive inquiries, which may have invited the terrors, emanate from the family's inability to express the political dimensions of this death to a twelve-year-old. Athandwa's initial reaction to her father's death is a complicated conflation of his death and the looming impossibility of migrating to America. In a way that is reminiscent of Langston Hughs's poem, Athandwa eponymously imagines this delay of her diasporic ambitions as a "dream deferred" (p. 89). Although Hughes's poetry anthology *Montage of a Deferred Dream* (1951) primarily focuses on the impediments faced by African Americans in their racialised society, its reference provides a philosophical insight into the despair that characterises the deferment of Athandwa's ambitions. It also forces us to return to the Zimbabwean crisis which Athandwa experiences as a result. She describes this deferment period as "years of crippling food shortages and fuel shortages and money shortages and a shortage of air, metaphorically speaking, [felt] like the future was slowly being squeezed out of us" (p. 88). This is the traumatic Zimbabwean socioeconomic and political reality Athandwa explains by likening the terrors to a "feeling of death" (p. 228). Zimbabwe is thus a deferred dream and a postcolonial terrorscape where the concept of "home [becomes] a terror on its own" (p. 225). Zimbabwe's postcolonial ethnocentric politics is thus depicted as a form of madness.

IsiLimela unbound: Intercultural disruptions of colonial ethnicised epistemological madness

In this section, I discuss the *Digging Stars*' unconventional intercultural cosmologies to explore the philosophical insights they proffer to disrupt global colonial psychology. During their brief stay together, Siziba instructs his daughter to "question your habits of thought" (p. 53 & 194). Since *Digging Stars* memorialises the *Gukurahundi*, Zimbabwean patriotic history, astrophysics and United States of America as a geopolitical space, Athandwa must confront the numerous standardised Westocentric political and epistemological 'inventions' in these constructionsfor her to finally regain her sanity. By political and epistemological 'inventions' I read Siziba's claim that "we're colonial inventions" (p. 40), speaking of postcolonial identities and nations as colonial fabrications in the manner theorised by Mudimbe in *The Invention of Africa* (1988). These colonial inventions, the madness reproduced by Zimbabwe's postcolonial hegemony for example, are produced from displacing foundational mythologies and replacing them with white hierarchies, epistemologies and geographical/cosmological renaming. In this section, I conceptualise madness as a condition of alienation experienced by postcolonial subjects-nations in spaces designed to justify colonial hegemony. Tshuma uses the interculturality of the Digging Stars mythologies to explore these geographical and epistemological colonial inventions and, perhaps, to reinvent these geographies.

Siziba is an example of this inquisitiveness into the established ways of seeing the world; ways which are colonial ideas of identity. He recentres his universe on a Bantu cosmological axis and brings his childhood astronomy to his adult occupation. He realises that Western, and indeed all space exploration are based on the Greco-Roman mythologies which he has been forced to adopt through a colonial education. This is exemplified in his unpublished academic paper titled "BANTU GEOMETRIES: AGAINST EUCLIDEAN AUSTERITY OR THE WORLD IS A POEM: I CAN'T THINK IN STRAIGHT LINES!" (p. 42). This rejection of Euclidean geometry is one of the several contact points between Tshuma's novel and Mudimbe's *The Invention of Africa* (1988). As Mudimbe argues about epistemological ethnocentrism that operates within coloniality; "a theorist who is enclosed in Euclidean geometry thinks about, believes in, and writes on the impossibility of non-Euclidean systems" (1988, p. 28). By using Bantu geometries, he challenges ethnocentric ideologies within Westocentric astrology disciplines which have historically viewed African epistemology "as primitive, simple, childish, and nonsensical" (ibid p. 23). This rejection of Euclidean geometry

also fulfils Falola's encouragement "to revalidate ritual archives in Western-derived academies" (2017, p. 706). Siziba's treatise is thus an assertion of the existence and usefulness of non-Euclidean concepts especially as a way of displacing Westocentric frameworks. Mudimbe proceeds to claim that non-Western societies were and are geometrically knowledgeable as exemplified by the Dogon mythologies which accurately ritualised the Sirius star's orbit-cycle. Tshuma's novel seems to be aware of Mudimbe's hypothesis and shares its ideological implications hence the mythology of the Digging Stars.

The Digging Stars are the guiding principle of Siziba's Bantu geometries thesis. In a way, Siziba's paper is a ritual archive and decolonial thesis reasserting the insights from Bantu cosmologies which have been continuously excluded from academia and space exploration. Bantu geometries and cosmologies are not simply excluded, but their existence is entirely denied as Mudimbe correctly posits. This is exemplified by Athandwa's white Zimbabwean teacher's response that "there's no such thing" when Athandwa proposes that "we should learn Bantu geometries" (p. 60). This response is characteristic of the Euclidean ethnocentric monopoly, which Mudimbe refutes by stating that "as we know, there are such things as non-Euclidean geometries" (1988, p. 28). That a postcolonial curriculum in a Zimbabwean school still maintains Euclidean monopoly exemplifies the pervasive nature of colonial rationale and the reluctance of postcolonial regimes to transform epistemological enquiry. Tshuma uses this depiction to identify colonial ideologies in Zimbabwean colonial and postcolonial curricula. Echoing her rejection by Rufus, Athandwa describes her high school "encounter with Euclid" as the first time she lost her "innocence about the world" (p. 59). The discovery of the continued systemic racial discrimination in a postcolonial nation robs her of her innocence. She loses her innocence after discovering that coloniality denies the validity of father's life work and her people's knowledge.

The novel's title thus reinstates African cosmologies within epistemological enquiry. Unfortunately, Siziba's research seems a futile endeavour on two complimentary accounts. Firstly, he is aware, and Candice agrees with him that "the science board was never going to publish that" (p. 42). Secondly, the only person who takes his ethno-scientific research seriously is his friend, Thomas Long, a man whom Candice accuses of treating Siziba as a safari and describes as a vampire. Candice's accusation aligns with Kai Horsthemke's argument that "indigenous science or "ethnoscience" has traditionally and historically been victimized, marginalized, or exploited for the sake of colonialist promotion of occidental

science" (2017, p. 588). The image of the vampire denotes an exploitative relationship. Both accounts reveal global hierarchisation of knowledge to justify the madness of hierarchising humanity on the basis of ethnic and racial identity.

In a comment that highlights the hierarchization of knowledge Siziba writes a letter to his daughter reminiscing of his youthful clash about the name of these constellations with a Catholic priest at his high school. He explains: "Father Pius wouldn't hear talk of the Digging Stars. 'Pleiades!' he would shout. 'It's Pleiades!'" (p. 33). The Catholic priest's insistent use of the Greek name of the constellation is evidence of both colonial psychological intolerance to other forms of knowledge and a refusal to rethink the world's cosmology outside Western conceptions. As Athandwa is to later discover, "to know a constellation…was to know the vista that participated in its membering…was to know its story" (p. 43). Stories of this constellation reveal religious and scientific dimensions of Bantu cosmologies. Quoting the famed South African astrophysicist, Thebe Medupe, Horsthemke writes, "'astronomy' has never just been a science in these cultures (ancient African civilisations). For them, it is an "intimate tapestry merging into their prayers, their lives, their dreams and their deaths"" (2017, p. 586). The mythologies and chronometric functions of this constellation vary according to civilisation and inspire various socio-religious and economic patterns. Medupe, is therefore correct to claim that in Africa, these celestial bodies harbour socio-religious belief systems. To effectively deny these systems of thought and of knowing the world, Father Pius gifted a youthful Siziba "an alarm clock, a red, plastic, screeching thing" instead of him "rising with the Digging Stars to latch a pair of oxen to the plough" (p. 6). By gifting Siziba an alarm clock and by denying the existence of Bantu geometries through Eurocentric education, the priest attempts to displace *isiLimela* with Pleiades and to essentially restructure African ways of knowing. This restructuring simultaneously denies Africans of their life-affirming rituals as they adopt Eurocentric religion and ethnocentric epistemology.

It is from this that Siziba points towards the madness of colonial inventions. He is, with the aid of Father Pius's gadgets and corporal punishment, forced to adapt to Greek mythology in a way that reinforces the Bantu's supposed racial and thus intellectual inferiority. It should be noted here that the Catholic priest is an archetype of the colonial missionary rationale in African literature. Using western-based education and the Christian religion, he facilitates the acculturation of Africans and their annexation to Western ethnocentric philosophies. When Siziba attempts to point out the historical similarities and cross-cultural borrowings that

occurred between the Greeks and "The Egyptian and Mesopotamian astronomers" – what he calls a "wonderful promiscuity" – Father Pius declares that "those infidels didn't help the Greeks with anything" (pp. 33 - 43). This is despite the fact that there are self-evident cosmological networks between these cultures as exemplified by some stars retaining their Arabic names, for example, Betelgeuse which is now conventionally part of the Orion constellation. Evidence of Greek mythology borrowing Arabic mythology ruptures Father Pius' ethnocentric claim and the "right to colonise" (Mudimbe, 1988, p. 150). The right to colonise denotes European expansionism's doctrine of its racial and moral superiority to "intervene in the "sleeping regions" of Africa and to exploit the wealth meant by God for all humanity" (ibid). Contemporary United States of America in the novel, for instance, is a geopolitical expression of this colonial doctrine contextually termed "Manifest Destiny" (p. 181). In the Manifest Destiny mythology, the geographies now known as the USA were conceptualised by the immigrant Europeans as their divine right. a conception that is challenged by exploring the Digging Stars or *Bagonegiizhig* in Native American mythology as I will show below. These mythologies legitimise colonial cultures of madness in the contemporary global world where non-Western people are dehumanised.

Father Pius' declaration of Arabs as infidels borrows from the historical classification of non-Europeans/Christian people as pagans. His use of infidels as a way of disproving Siziba's argument for the existence of the *isiLimela* and Bantu geometries shares Weber's indignation with the idea that "the history of the Bantus could be studied as much as that of the Greeks" (Veyne, 1984, p. 62). Such attempts to naturalise colonial power relations are conceptualised by Siziba as madness which he therefore challenges in rethinking Bantu cosmologies. Thus, in his Bantu geometries treatise, Siziba begins

> by sharing the memory of communing with the Digging Stars as a child, tracking their trajectory across the sky with the help of the lone marula tree on the flat Savannah horizon. He never tired of observing the cosmic dance between the Digging Stars and the *umThala* [milky way], the stars shadowing the crescent arc of the sugar crusted galaxy like children trailing their mother (Tshuma, 2023, p. 42).

Siziba's Bantu treatise harmonises the geometric and religious aspects of stars in Ndebele culture. The word "communing" has religious connotations emphasising close spiritual contact. This communion denotes the ways through which the Bantu decode existence, organise their calendars, organise their religions and encode their own epistemologies. Medupe's observation as cited in Horsthemke (2017) that astronomy has never been simply a science in African

cultures is vindicated in these depictions. Siziba's communion with the stars refuses to restrict this cosmology by "compressing [these] social behaviours and human cultures into 'scientific paradigms'" (Mudimbe, 1988, p. 30).

Bantu geometries clearly seek to challenge colonially ethnicised identities by "retrieving ancient traditions that are older than imperialist impositions" (Muchemwa, 2005, p. 197). Mythologies of the Digging Stars reveal their depths across cultures when Shaniqua, Athandwa's Native American friend, goes on a star-gazing excursion with Athandwa and her stepbrother Peralte. Shaniqua "pointed at the Digging Stars and called them Bagonegiizhig, 'the Hole in the Sky'" (p. 180), thus, sharing her Native American foundational mythology memorialised in the constellation. The Ojibwe foundational mythology, which can be equated to the Biblical creation story, constructs American history before Manifest Destiny and the arrival of the famed Mayflower ship which brought the earliest European settlers. According to the mythology "Sky Woman fell through Bagonegiizhig and brought the first humans to Turtle Island (What the Europeans named America)" (p. 181). Mythology thus archives the constellation's historical and epistemological significance which goes beyond Occidental scientism and settlerism. For the sub-Saharan Khoisan, for instance, the stars get the name the Wildebeest stars because they coincide with the Wildebeest calving season as "though they had colluded, eight months before, in a spectacular orgy" (p.180). For the Taino (Indigenous Caribbean people), the stars signify the end of the rain season. From these mythologies, the stars' names bear significance to each culture's calendrical cycles, "daily and seasonal activities, routines, and customs" (Horsthemke, 2017, p. 587). It is from these exchanges that Athandwa, Shaniqua and Peralte discover that the "Digging Stars formed some sort of portal [and] how each of our people had always made use of the stars" (p.180). Through these stars, they epistemologically reclaim geographical spaces from which they are now excluded in globalised ethnocentric madness.

By privileging its own names of these constellations in African and American post/colonial geographies, the West simultaneously denies the existence of indigenous epistemologies that predate its arrival but also legitimises its imperialistic version of history of those spaces. As the novel shows, space exploration is itself an extension of "settler colonial dreams of world domination [and] space domination." (p. 164). The Program scholarship itself has as its symbol of discovery, a portrait of "a bare-breasted woman in a feather headdress" (p. 82) which stereotypes Native American cultures and projects a colonial template for future 'discoveries'.

The novel's depiction is congruent to Mudimbe's claim that "the explorer's text is not epistemologically inventive. It follows a path prescribed by a tradition." (1988, p. 29). Therefore, Athandwa's black colleagues' fears that space colonies would require new methods of terror and enslaving black people to make them viable are not unfounded. In their debates, Shaniqua cynically argues that "Who's gonna farm them little space plantations? 'Cause it sure hell wasn't masser who worked them here." (p. 164). The use of the American colloquial 'masser' refers to the American Plantation Slave masters who were referred to through the Master title by their slaves. Seemingly applying Mudimbe's deconstruction of the novelty of the colonial explorer's text on Africa, Peralte dismisses the idea of space novelty stating that, "there'd be nothing new in space" (ibid). Although Peralte dismisses the novelty of space settlements on the pragmatic difficulties and the madness of artificially reproducing earth's natural resources to make space liveable, his dismissal fundamentally tackles the inevitable desire for black people's labour that motivated slavery and colonisation. Though there is no consensus on this topic in the group, the author sets us up to agree with Peralte and Shaniqua because of their political and racial awareness as compared to Athandwa's naivety. It also demonstrates that the contemporary world is a terrorscape for black people who have been historically reduced to slaves, to the Other.

Tshuma's cast of Athandwa's close friends, consisting of racial minorities, is a necessary one to demonstrate the variety of scientific expertise and epistemological possibilities emanating from their respective non-Western cosmologies in interrogating colonial ambitions. Shaniqua, for example, is of Native American descent, with a Choctaw mother and an Ojibwe father. Peralte is Haitian American and a computer science expert. His mother, Candice, is a Haitian woman who looks at the "the stars [as] her ancestors and said something about them being androgynous or Indigenous or something like that." (p. 29). The nationalities used by Tshuma have significantly horrendous experiences of colonialism. The Native American nations have sustained terrible loss of life through settler genocide, colonial related disease, slavery and displacement that amounts to an unacknowledged holocaust (Thornton, 1987). Shaniqua explains the continued deliberate erasure of her father's Ojibwe ethnic group through American census and Federal laws that continue "shrinking the Native nations" (p. 78). Such reconfigurations of geographical spaces translate to economic exclusion, unbelonging and erasure of cultural symbols leading to complex and ethnicised relationships between the Native American ethnic nations. For instance, the Choctaw nation refused to enrol Shaniqua into their nation because of her Afro-Ojibwe pigmentation, in short, blackness. Thus, Shaniqua

historicises a continuing alienation subjected on native American nations by the United State Federal government and their own absorption of colonial psychology to determine belonging. Haiti is also a complex narrative of coloniality, resistance and a quotidian "culture of violence" (Munro, 2012, p. 218). Historically, Haiti is the "first and only successful revolution of the enslaved in the Western hemisphere…a site of freedom that has been violently resisted by much of the Atlantic world from the Revolution to the present day" (Garvey, 2017, p. 103). However, these political landscapes and their people are not singularly defined by colonial victimhood and a sense of alienation, rather, they are narratives of resistance to colonial inventions. Both Shaniqua and Peralte facilitate Athandwa's discovery of the quotidian forms of violence that Black people are subjected to in America, thus contextualising her ethnic identity in Zimbabwe. Through them, Athandwa's illusions about both America, and Zimbabwe are disrupted which leads to her final episode of the terrors.

Shaniqua specifically articulates traumatic dimensions of blackness that Athandwa had been oblivious to in Zimbabwe. Her research project, for example, centres on the presence of melanin in mushrooms. She does not simply treat the mushrooms as experimental objects or edible fungi, but as "non-human beings" (p. 75). She communes with them according to her Choctaw culture. Her study is an important contribution not only to science but also to the pigmentation issues that coloniality depends on to enforce boundaries of belonging. Her fascination with melanin is a portrayal of the text's concern with the issues of blackness and racism as she explains that "by learning about melanin, I get to learn about my own skin. Like, I get to love myself. Well, most of the time" (p. 138). Shaniqua refuses to participate in The Program's experimental tests for melanin's capabilities in shielding astronauts from space radiation. She refuses to help "folk wear *black face* just so they can go to space" (p. 186 my emphasis). Black face refers to white people's use of "burned coke and grease paint to blacken their faces to entertain audiences" (Williams, 2007, p. 182). These grotesque racial parodies and distorted mimicries were prominent in 19th Century American popular culture. This black face ministrelsy emphasised the White perception of black people as lazy, sleazy and unscrupulous. Black face and its cross-racial masquarades such as the one condemned by Shaniqua "rely upon strategies of commodification that have historically been used by whites to subordinate people of color" (Gubar, 1997, p. 41). For Shaniqua, learning about melanin is a way to reject "how the British bastardised us" (p. 40). By rejecting colonial scripts of black identity, she rejects the ethnocentric madness intrinsic to colonialism and rejects this colonial madness that caused other Native American nations to reject her for her blackness.

Cognisant of this black face history, the disturbing racial and ethical underpinnings of experimenting melanin's capabilities to shield white people from radiation become apparent. This history of white people's commodification of blackness/black people vindicates Shaniqua's evocation of blackface in her imagination of this experiment as the latest attempt at accessorising blackness. However, for Shaniqua, black face is not simply a white act of distorting black people. She sees it in black people who appropriate African American social behaviours without a full appreciation of the racial bigotry that it attracts. For example, she condemns Athandwa's ignorance that she is black in America rather than Ndebele. When Athandwa appropriates African-American colloquial use of the slur "negro please" (p. 181) despite her limited understanding of its sociopolitical gravity in this culture, Shaniqua retorts that "everyone wants to be Black America cool, but nobody wants to be an ally, and remember actually being Black" (p. 187). While this statement disregards different experiences of blackness, it precisely captures the offense she takes with the use of melanin as simply a shield against radiation and thus a revision of colonial subordination and unbelonging of black people. But also, for Shaniqua, this American culture signifies a world invented through "Manifest Destiny", thus she "wonders what kind of America an origin story born of the Sky Woman would have birthed" (p. 181). Shaniqua's approach to blackness articulates the marginalisation of black people in global colonial cultures of madness that are internalised and reproduced in different postcolonial political spaces. The racial, ethnic and political exclusionary culture in Zimbabwe, as discussed in the preceding subsection, and Shaniqua's own predicament as a rejected black person demonstrates the erasure of non-Western cosmologies leading to various manifestations of ethnocentrism.

Scientific advancement is thus not isolated from the ideological and psychological dimensions that influenced colonial exploration. In fact, such ideological dimensions have been retained. Consequently, Shaniqua's refusal is aligned to her racial consciousness that "do they got (sic) respect for the melanin right here on Earth, first and foremost, that's the damn question" (p. 186). Indeed, she is justified in her refusal to convert melanin/blackness into an accessory that white people can conveniently exploit and cast off when, according to Gubar, "the lives of so many African-American men and women are so [deliberately] imperiled" (1997, p. xviii). Black people's lives are imperilled through ideologies of violence and racism which are "built into [sociopolitical] structures and institutions" (Mbembe, 2001, p. 176). This is precisely what Siziba perceives as colonising madness. For instance, Peralte shares his traumatic experience of police brutality, which has become a mainstay in contemporary American society, through

invoking numerous black people who have been recently murdered or brutalised by the American police such as "*Michael Brown…Eric Garner…Charlemagne*" (p. 172). This evocation of America's immediate present is an account of systematic dehumanisation of 'blackness' in American culture. These apparent discriminatory and racial profiling scenarios buttress Shaniqua's perception of America's contempt for actual black people and non-white ethnicities. It is insulting that the humanity of black people is denied in this racialised society, yet their attributes are perpetually harvested and converted into scientific objects as has been their bodies. She also shows that despite its ethno-sciences branch, The Program's categorisation of melanin as simply a scientific element is racial contempt for actual black people. Participating in this aspect of the program would be akin to converting oneself into a "house nigger" (p.187). The attempt to treat melanin as a strict scientific element is disingenuous considering the pervasive historical brutalisation of black people based on skin colour. It treats melanin as merely an extractable element in a way similar to slavery's extraction of labour from black bodies. Though Shaniqua is cynical and ultra-race conscious, she challenges the vampirish subordination of ritual archives into so-called ethnosciences by Europeans.

Through her discussion with Shaniqua, Athandwa learns the political depths of colonial vocabulary in seemingly mundane terms such as 'The Reserves/Tribal Trust Lands/Reservations'. In their race-themed conversations, both discover that the colonial models used in Southern Rhodesia were perfected from the American settler prototype. According to Shaniqua's reading,

> In 1910, the apartheid government in South Africa had sent a delegation to the USA and Canada to study the North American reservation. They must have liked what they saw, because they borrowed this settler technology and went back to South Africa and created their own reserves (p. 181).

This passage shows how technologies/terminologies of colonial ethnocentric madness are borrowed across space and time. The variations in the terminologies of segregation on the American Reservation system and the Rhodesian Reserve system reveal a history of domination that Shaniqua sees in the ambitions for space colonies. Such a knowledge reveals the careful systematisation of the ethnocentric thought in colonial enterprise, hence, the need to question the madness in colonial thought. Discovering these interlinkages in the colonial system is important to formulate a historical perspective on contemporary mutations of colonial epistemologies in postcolonial worlds. Hence, Shaniqua emphasises that the book she

discovered the interconnections between the reserves system in "hadn't been opened since 1979" (ibid). Shaniqua's research into the similarities between colonial models across space and time demonstrates the interconnectedness and globality of ethnocentric thinking. In this manner, she exposes the colonial inventions that characterise Zimbabwean nationhood through its nativistic ideologies.

Siziba claims that his Bantu geometries thesis is a refusal "to be a relic of history…to be [written] out of history… [to be] stagnant… [and to be] something eternally primitive, a people of the past" (p. 24). This reveals contemporary rehearsals of Hegelian discourses that imagined non-European worlds as "motionless substance and tragic disorder of creation" (Mbembe, 2001, p. 176). Shaniqua observes such imaginaries in references to non-Western cultures as "pre-historic Natives" (p. 140). To Shaniqua, such terminologies imply that "we have gone extinct" (ibid). The notion of pre-historic natives belongs to what I have established as madness in this chapter; the colonial "episteme of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that invented the concept of a static and prehistoric tradition" (Mudimbe, 1988, p. 202). These are precisely the Westocentric distortions that an African cosmological exploration of madness in African literature addresses. While these terminologies negate black/African people's humanity, pathologising it as aberration, monstrosity and madness, an analysis of precolonial conceptions in this study postulates that "cosmology justifies and explains its own internal procedures of interpreting the universe" (Mudimbe, 1988, p. 207). Most importantly, this cosmology offers a different archive from which to (re)interpret African humanity and cosmology of madness, and thus reinvent the world we inhabit.

Digging Stars resists eurocentrism's relegation of non-Western worlds to pre-historic relics and the 'othering' of these human communities into tourist attractions and anthropological subjects for European curiosities. To resist such notions, Shaniqua's Grandmother serves "tea and biscuits on her Neiman Marcus China set" to tourists who come to the Native American Reservations expecting to see "teepees and the cedar canoes and maybe even a feather headdress" (p. 140). This is her own way of disrupting their colonial curiosities to see supposedly stagnant prehistories. The problematic use of tea, biscuits and porcelain tea sets as symbols of progress can be overlooked since these are symbols Westerners understand as representing progress. To Shaniqua, the non-extinction of non-Western so-called Natives is not because colonial enterprises did not try, but rather is survival in spite of the incessant genocide and ethnocentric economics in the United States. Despite documented genocides, the so called

pre-historic communities have continued to survive European madness through their mythologies such as the *isiLimela* mythology. There is neither a complete halt, nor epistemological extinction as suggested by the term pre-history. Interestingly, Siziba' treatise is further developed by Peralte into a videogame combination of Bantu, Ojibwe and Taino cosmologies. This digitisation of Bantu cosmologies accomplishes Siziba's desire to "bring my people into the future" (p. 24). It is a way to claim space in the virtual world and move Zimbabwe out of madness.

This invention of a virtual world based on non-colonial epistemologies is particularly important considering the text's constant reference to Mudimbe's *The Invention of Africa*. It is essentially a cosmological and epistemological re-invention of former African colonies outside the categories of psychological inferiority established during the colonial century. Similarly, Frank Siziba encourages his daughter to navigate Zimbabwe's ethnic problem as "a colonial invention" (p. 40). This mythology is the guiding star towards a rediscovery of 'precolonial' Bantu identities which are useful to undo Zimbabwean ethnonationalism and its attendant politico-economic crises as symbolised by Athandwa's psychological breakdown. The madness that runs through the text depicts global epistemological ethnocentrism that also grips Zimbabwean politics. The perversion of constellations as a basis for missile guidance systems may be correctly deployed to navigate ways out of the ethno-political madness embraced by ZANU PF. Tshuma's use of madness as metaphor for imperial expressions of power which can be epistemologically challenged through intercultural astronomy resonates with Falola's (2017) theorisation of ritual archives. The *isiLimela* as a ritual archive from this discussion contains "decolonizing paradigms based on indigenous knowledge systems" (Falola, 2017, p. 714).

Conclusion

Tshuma's *Digging Stars* is a depiction of the damaging effects of an unquestioning implementation of colonial inventions. The text uses madness to depict injurious political and epistemological systems in Zimbabwe and America. Using a form of psychological fracturing that her central character calls "the terrors of being human" (p. 62), Tshuma's novel discusses the violent political systems used in Zimbabwe and the ethnocentrism that characterises global colonial paradigms. The terrors that Athandwa suffers are unresolved psychological tensions emanating from the Zimbabwean postcolonial terrorscape. Athandwa's childhood, which was punctuated by an idealised American dream conflated with an idealised father is brought to a

halt by the assassination of her father by the Zimbabwean regime. This death, a result of terror tactics by the Zimbabwean government, exposes Athandwa and her mother to the full brunt of Zimbabwe's continuous economic and political dysfunction. The result is that Zimbabwe is depicted as a form of terror/madness. The mythology of the Digging Stars reveals methods of enquiry that disengage from modes of colonial domination hence Athandwa and her friends' construction of a digital cosmology based on the Digging Stars. The constellation reveals different pre-colonial cosmologies and non-Euclidean geometries which have not gone extinct as implied by certain colonial vocabularies. For Athandwa's father, the redefinition of the cosmos from the Bantu positionality is also a quest for self-definition outside colonially invented cultures of madness. It is insightful however to investigate the (dis)continuities of cultures of madness in Zimbabwe's contemporary moment of transition from Mugabe to Mnangagwa as will explore in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: Madness and Historical Fictional Caricature of Zimbabwean Politics in NoViolet Bulawayo's *Glory* (2023)

Introduction

Like Chapter three, this chapter is based on another novel by a Zimbabwean author, NoViolet Bulawayo's *Glory* (2003). *Glory* is a historical fictional novel that uses animal fable in the *Animal Farm* (Orwell, 1945) tradition to bring an interesting perspective to discuss the historical weaponisation of madness in Zimbabwean politics. Bulawayo's *Glor*y is a literary unpacking of the historical names "New Dispensation" and "Second Republic" which the Emmerson Mnangagwa (current president of Zimbabwe) regime used to legitimise the post-Mugabe assumption of power through a coup de tat. This coup was packaged through the name Operation Restore Legacy to portray it as a way to restore the revolutionary legacy that the Grace Mugabe faction, codenamed criminals around Mugabe, were destroying. Using caricature and a cosmology of madness, Bulawayo inverts these palimpsestic imaginaries used by Mnangagwa to legitimise his presidency after his 2017 coup against former Zimbabwean president, the late Robert Mugabe. Caricature provides Bulawayo a deliberately unsubtle way to fictionalise ostensibly identifiable Zimbabwean political figures. While the novel uses an animal fable narrative, the Zimbabwean politicians as well as the events depicted are readily identifiable. Madness is depicted as a manifestation of ZANU PF political delinquency, a reference to the Zimbabwean genocide; the *Gukurahundi* and a signifier of the psychic scars of political violence. On Mugabe, madness is depicted as a mental state haunted by the unsettled dead combined with Mugabe's senility in the years leading to the coup. These nuances speak back to the cosmology of madness as conceptualised by various Zimbabwean ethnic groups. Bulawayo implicates the caricatured New Dispensation in these manifestations of madness thereby exposing its authoritarian and violent "legacy". Madness becomes a trope through which the novel re-inscribes Mnangagwa's political footprint in Zimbabwean history and subvert his re-christened regime. Ultimately, this chapter proffers a reading of both Mugabe's and Mnangagwa's regimes as dispensations of madness.

Glory caricatures the events preceding, and the aftermath of the November 2017 coup in Zimbabwe. In certain aspects, it retrieves early independence pasts and electoral cycles that define the present. The unceremonious pre-coup dismissal of Zimbabwe's then Vice-President,

Emmerson Mnangagwa, required justification through a plethora of discourses; equally, his eventual coup also required salvaging through the same or through similar discourses. The inevitable political jostling and conspiring invited and, perhaps encouraged by Mugabe's overstay and vague succession plan, generated various discourses, power plays and narratives of assassination attempts. The two factions which emerged and were at the centre of these contestations are captured in this text as "the Revolutionaries" (Bulawayo, 2023, p. 61) and "Future Circle" (p. 26) led by a horse named Tuvius Delight "Tuvy" Shasha and a donkey named Marvelous, respectively; Mnangagwa and Grace Mugabe. These fictionalisations accurately portray the two factions, namely, Team Lacoste, led by Mnangagwa and predominantly comprising people with "war credentials" (p. 37) and the latter denotes the G40 faction which consisted of "young Comrades who, like her [Grace], hadn't fought in the Liberation War but who didn't have the patience to wait for the elder Liberators to die out before they could have their own turn at ruling" (p. 45). Both faction leaders attempted to legitimise themselves as the heir apparent to an aging, and possibly dementia-afflicted Mugabe whom the novel portrays as The Old Horse.

Mugabe's wife, Grace thought Mnangagwa's presidential bid was madness, and went on to deconstruct his liberation war credentials, private sexual (im)morality and political conspiracy. For instance, in February 2016 at a ZANU PF "Meet the People" Rally in Chiweshe, Grace Mugabe exposed Mnangagwa's alleged attempts to bomb her farm, saying;

> *kuda kutyisidzira VaMugabe na Mai Mugabe, kuti tikavatyisidzira takunobhomba ku dairy kwavo, vanozotipa zvigaro. Unopenga! Unopenga!*
>
> you are trying to intimidate me and my husband into giving you the presidency. You think if you try to bomb my dairy farm we will give you presidency. You are insane! Insane! (NewsDay Zimbabwe, 2016).

Grace Mugabe used party platforms to publicly humiliate Mnangagwa and his numerous co-conspirators by threatening to publicise their most secret lives, particularly, their prostitution. As the above quote shows, she sadistically used madness to portray Mnangagwa's presidential ambitions as a form of insanity because he sought to dislodge Mugabe whom she and the entire ZANU PF had historically projected as the centre of power despite his declining physiological faculties. In fact, ZANU PF claimed that Mugabe could even run the country as a corpse. Bulawayo does not simply transcribe Grace's speech but captures its elements in the following: "those who swallow all manner of rocks…very soon it shall be seen just how wide your asshole is when those very rocks will need to be shat" (p. 26). Grace Mugabe's speeches and general

sociopolitical conduct were similarly interpreted as madness primarily because she was both female and had not participated in Zimbabwe's Liberation struggle. After the coup for example, ZANU PF's current Spokesperson, Christopher Mutsvangwa, labelled her "a mad woman with no brains" and quickly proceeded to identify the fledging Mnangagwa regime as "revolutionaries" (Dlamini, 2017). Her rowdy political persona was chauvinistically interpreted as sluttish behaviour instead of it being a manifestation of ZANU PF's procedural crisis (Mudiwa, 2017).

However, in the novel, Marvelous's [Grace Mugabe] presidential ambitions were motivated by the Old Horse's [Mugabe] madness resulting from his declining mental faculties due to old age and being haunted by *Ngozi* spirits of his countless victims of political assassinations and murder. Bulawayo's depiction of Mugabe as an old horse uses *Ngozi* and senility to depict Mugabe's loss of control of not only his political party and nation but also of his mind. Grace Mugabe's conflation of party roles and marital duties thus worked, sometimes with Mugabe's blessing, to both conceal and capitalise on numerous of Mugabe's rhetorical blunders such as delivering a repeated parliamentary address[13] and his sloganeering against his own party; "*pasi ne* ZANU PF (down with ZANU PF)"[14]. Just before the latter blunder, for instance, Mugabe jokingly informed the audience that his wife had earlier instructed him to end his speech and that he is treated the same way at home. This domestic dimension which was mostly absent from the public eye is fictionalised in Bulawayo's novel depicting a Mugabe whose wife kept him on double doses of Xanax to keep him asleep. In his sleep, The Old Horse confesses to personal and his accomplices' moral inadequacies which then motivates his wife to usurp his national duties. This way, *Glory* portrays a private and psychological dimension of various public events and shows the fictional Grace Mugabe's comprehensive knowledge of her husband, ZANU PF and all its presidential aspirants' moral inadequacies. While she publicly deployed morality as a weapon against Mugabe's challengers, she privately considered Mugabe equally immoral and thus disparages ZANU PF's phallocratic hegemonic title "Father of the Nation" by stating that they were "fathers as much as heaps of dried turds could ever be fathers of anything." (p. 38). Such inadequacies are depicted through the sardonic names the author gives hegemonic characters.

---

[13] Mugabe delivers wrong speech in Zimbabwe Parliament (aljazeera.com/news/2015/9/15/mugabe-delivers-wrong-speech-in-zimbabwe-parliament)

[14] At the 6th National People's Congress in Harare, 2014 (youtube.com/watch?v=BND1XCd-wGY).

Mnangagwa's perceived "madness" came to fruition through a coup, and it has generated numerous self-referential terminologies, legitimising discourses and names such as "The Second Republic", "The New Dispensation", "Restore Legacy", "*tichingotonga*", "soft as wool", to mention a few. Additionally, these discourses and names revise certain biographies and encourage amnesia of certain historical facts. In *Glory*, the two foundational pillars of Tuvy's legitimising discourses are the absurd christening of his government as the Second Republic and New Dispensation and the equally absurd christening of the coup as Restore Legacy. These names and terminologies obscure negative historical developments and the actual tyrannical nature of Tuvy, which the populace would soon be aware of in the early days of his rule. The name Tuvy invokes scatological imagery in Ndebele language and is therefore a way the novel mocks the New Dispensation and its leader. *Glory* parallels this realistic obfuscation with the dietary conversion of a carnivorous crocodile[15] to vegetarianism and making it claim to be "as soft as wool" (p. 317). The idea behind this discourse is to present a picture of dismantling an old model of governance, disentangling himself from the biographies allotted to him prior to his dismissal and to counter the legitimacy deficits generated by the coup (Nyambi, et al., 2022). Bulawayo inverts the tropes used by Mnangagwa to relaunch his career after the coup. For instance, she depicts the *Gukurahundi* as one of Mnangagwa's legacies. Bulawayo carries out a different version of touring Tuvy's legacies by portraying him as a confessed "*Gukurahundist*". The *Gukurahundi* narrative reveals the Second Republic's ethnocentric socio-political legacy which implicates it and its predecessor. Bulawayo borrows and deconstructs Mugabe's "moment of madness" non-acknowledgement and depersonalization of his role in the Zimbabwean genocide by depicting dead spirits haunting and subjecting Mugabe to a lifetime of madness. Bulawayo deconstructs this rhetoric through a vivid portrayal of the genocide's archive; a disfigured Nehanda as a metaphysical vehicle for *Gukurahundi* victims, the bloodied rain and red butterflies (spirits of the dead) that cause Mugabe's nightmares. Besides these cosmological archives, the novel depicts one *Gukurahundi* survivor's body as a living archive that bears "terrible scars, the angry lines,

[15] The name became part of Mnangagwa's political arsenal, with roots in the Liberation Struggle through his political career in which he gained a notorious reputation for ruthless cunning and conspiracy. The numerous resonances make direct refence to Mnangagwa. The name Crocodile is originally attributed to a liberation war outfit called The Crocodile Gang to which Mnangagwa was a junior member (Tavuyanago, 2013). However, others have doubted the veracity of this claim (Helliker & Murisa, 2020).

furrows that cross and uncross all over [her] long back" (p. 242). In the process, ZANU PF's ethnocentric ideology is examined using names, terminologies and recurrent discourses.

The proliferation of madness lexicon to describe certain political dynamics reveals a cultural undercurrent of madness within the "party of power" (p. 4). Social media participated heavily in the circulation of these discourses in the form of memes and thus comprise a very unique plot dynamic of this text. Madness assumes various political applications in Zimbabwean literature and its parody of political discourse. In *Glory*, this leads to a nuanced discussion of the state of affairs post-2017. In some instances, madness reveals itself as delusional ambition towards presidential self-nomination, while in others it is social media meme and a tragic memorialisation of Zimbabwean genocide. Perhaps memorialisation is not the sufficient noun considering the vivid images portrayed by NoViolet Bulawayo in *Glory*. Despite its wealth of satire, *Glory* is a critical portrait of cruelty, but what Bulawayo manages to show is the transgenerational nature of genocides; how they persist since the ethnic lines that initially inspire them never completely disappear. Bulawayo undresses and lays naked the bodies which are "an important archive of the Seat of Power's cruelty" (p. 242). It is thus possible to investigate the ideological inclinations revealed in madness as well as their culture bound interpretations by closely examining names and discourses used, or satirised by, NoViolet Bulawayo, and how these are related to the 'madness' of the state and what influences the state.

The textualisation of political discourse through the cosmology of madness performs a counter-stenographic representation of the hegemonic narratives and naming strategies deployed by Mnangagwa's government. The discourse of madness functions to contextualise events around Mnangagwa's post-independence political career which is dominated by a seeming dispensation of madness. Though not strictly culture bound, conceptualisations of madness were directly referenced in these hegemonic discourses, and they lead to culture bound framings of the party's culture of madness. By culture bound, I refer to African "traditional ways of conceptualising, studying, writing, about the social world and the individuals and cultural artefacts that inhabit this world" (Gordon, 2008, p. 9). Since, Bulawayo's caricatures feature madness as a central thematic undercurrent, I will discuss cosmological epistemologies harnessed to depict this madness.

Socio-literary versions of madness; *ibotso*, *ngozi*, *kupenga*, etc

In *Glory* Bulawayo textualises various political speeches which entered the zeitgeist of Zimbabwean popular discourses. Early in the novel she caricatures Grace Mugabe's most viral speech delivered at the aforementioned Chiweshe rally. Grace Mugabe is satirically named Dr Sweet Mother,[16]and her "*unopenga*!" speech's virality is depicted with historical accuracy that it went "viral—Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, you name it, tholukuthi everywhere, she's there, everywhere, she's trending, everywhere, ruling" (p. 32). Indeed, the speech became a meme, an object of popular humour and a colloquial neologism[17]. The memeification of her speeches became a national pastime in citizens' caricatures of power which further elevated *kupenga* (madness) into a subversive concept of sociopolitical commentary in Zimbabwe. These caricatures mocked Grace Mugabe, the targets of her madness speech as well as individuals who were not necessarily the original targets. Describing Dr Sweet Mother's rowdy personality and general conduct during the speech, the novel uses a Shona adage to mock her that she "went forth like a baboon that'd found a whistle" (*kufara segudo ranhonga pito*) (p. 43).

The name Dr. Sweet Mother itself caricatures attempts to catapult Grace Mugabe into something approximating a national matriarch; what Umali Saidi (2022) conceptualises as "Amaihood". This Amaihood gives the Zimbabwean First Lady political and cultural currency to treat party members and citizens as actual children and even articulate national positions on the president's behalf. It is also buttressed by conjuring PhDs to signify academic excellence and recognition for the Amaihood. The title Dr. *Amai* resonates with Mbembe's argument that "the enumeration of the slightest educational achievement is one of the postcolonial codes of prestige [and] a way of claiming honor, glory, attention" (Mbembe, 2001, p. 130).

Consequently, Grace Mugabe demanded reverence as both Mugabe's wife and an academic adorning the title Dr. *Amai* Mugabe, a feat that Auxilia Mnangagwa, Mnangagwa's wife, has dared to both replicate and surpass through her reception of two honorary Doctorate degrees. This replication exemplifies numerous ideological overlaps between the two regimes which calls for discussion of these two dispensations within the same framework. Bulawayo thus fictionalises the Dr. *Amai* title into Dr. Sweet Mother to create historical resonance. For her

[16] This was obviously in reference to Grace Mugabe's fraudulently acquired PhD.

[17] (www.youtube.com/watch?v=x84BTjUEIcw)

efforts in exposing Mnangagwa, however, Grace Mugabe did not escape the madness rhetoric labelling her as "that mad woman" (Chigumadzi, 2018, p. 128). As noted above, Mutsvangwa also labelled her a brainless woman. In the novel, Tuvy also secretly addresses her as "this mad donkey" (p. 51) Bulawayo's depiction similarly uses interpretations of Dr. Sweet Mother's conduct within the discourse of madness. The novel belittles Dr. Sweet Mother's intellectual abilities and thus mocks the PhD title by saying that her presidential ambitions

> occurred to her one day as she lay in the shade of an apple tree touching up on her mathematics by counting apples—32 of them already ripe, 12 of them almost ripe, 21 of them half ripe, and 12 of them unripe for a total of 32 ripe apples in the tree and 45 unripe apples in the tree counting those that could be counted as eatable (p. 40).

Madness here goes beyond Grace Mugabe's temperament and the fictionalised intellectual deficiency, but rather depicts the political delinquency which allows the First Lady's unprocedural involvement in, and usurpation of government prerogatives. The political veneration of 'Amaihood' is one spectacle of ZANU PF delinquency through which dispensations are mobilised. It is necessary to note that the Mnangagwa regime depicted Grace Mugabe's *Amaihood* as a delinquent form of politics that sought to subvert an entrenched masculine hegemony hence various references to her as a mad woman. Saidi explains that, after his inauguration, "Mnangagwa urged Auxilia (his wife) and Mary (General Chiwenga's[18] wife) to stay off from their husband's duties" (2022, p. 243). The fictionalised Grace attempts to subvert hegemony calling it "Jidada's patriarchal organism" (p. 44) because it reserves power for only those who possess "a fine, weighty set of testicles, [and are] inclined to use those testicles to literally father the nation" (p. 44). This phallocratic system actualises Mbembe's observation that the postcolonial "male ruler's pride in possessing an active penis has to be dramatized, through sexual rights over subordinates, the keeping of concubines, and so on" (2001, p. 110).The possession of PhD titles by both women, Grace Mugabe and Auxilia Mnangagwa, may be understood as a way to compensate for the lack of this masculine anatomic feature. Grace's ascendancy did not only epitomise the usurpation of political power, a male domain, but also symbolised the subversion of these male politicians and, consequentially, the nation's masculinity. *Glory* however refuses to endorse neither of these competing patriarchal

[18] Constantino Dominic Guveya Chiwenga (1956 –) is a retired general of the Zimbabwe National Army and currently one of the two of Mnangagwa's Vice Presidents. He spearheaded Operation Restore Legacy that deposed Mugabe and installed Mnangagwa. He is caricatured as General Goodness Reza in this novel.

constructions because, like her opponents, Dr. Sweet Mother sought to both subvert and mobilise the Patriarchal Organism in her ascendancy. By Operation Restore Legacy, Tuvy's regime was also restoring its usurped masculinity (the nation's masculinity), and thus used madness not to denote actual psychological instability but to emphasise Marvelous' femaleness. In this sense, the discourse of madness functions the way conceptualised by Gilbert and Gubar in that it is used to disparage women who challenge patriarchal hegemonies as the "Eves who fall and thus condemn men to death" (2020, p. 344).

Other socio-literary concepts of madness which Zimbabwean literary and cultural texts have used to make sense of the Zimbabwean crisis are the concepts of *kutanda botso* and *ngozi*. In Shona cultural practice the concepts of *kutanda botso* and *ngozi* are psycho-spiritual manifestations of guilt, and communal healing through the penance of madness (Musanga, 2015). *Ngozi* social discourses package the ongoing Zimbabwean socio-political crisis as spiritual destitution and penance insanity resulting from the leadership's sacrilegious political engagements (Musiyiwa, 2022). Such political engagements include the government's abscondence of its prerogative of commissioning liberation struggle-ending cleansing rituals which has resulted in the madness of numerous ex-combatants as depicted in *Echoing Silences* (1997) (Mangena, et al., 2006). By incorporating *ngozi* related madness as a possible cause of Zimbabwe's political destitution and economic stagnation, Bulawayo's novel renders past and present political leadership fraudulent. I read the socio-literary deployment of the madness discourse as a refusal to "share its (ZANU PF's) political ideology and alibis for the economic and political meltdown" (Nyambi, 2016). The potency of *botso* as a spiritual exercise and a subversive political framework has been discussed in Tagwira's *The Uncertainty of Hope* (2009). For instance, Musanga (2015) reads Tagwira's deployment of *botso* to discuss the mobility and uprootedness of Zimbabweans.

The deployment of madness continues to garner so much political attention in Zimbabwe, with the most recent example being the unofficial censorship of Winky D and Holy Ten's song *Ibotso* (2023)[19]. Immediately after the song's release, reports the Zimbabwean newspaper, the NewsDay, "a Zanu PF-aligned pressure group, Economic Empowerment Group (EEG) led by

[19] Winky D and Holy Ten (music monikers for Wallace Chirimuko and Mukudzei Chitsama, respectively), had a falling out after the critical reception of the song. Holy Ten took to X (then Twitter) to issue an instant apology saying he was tricked into the collaboration.

Mike Chimombe demanded that Winky D's music be banned from all radio stations and the artiste be blocked from performing live" (Dube, 2023). The song's lyrics draw the listener's attention to issues such as corruption, prostitution and misgovernance that characterise Zimbabwe as the spirit of *botso*. In a way, ZANU PF is attracting this spirit on the nation hence the call to ban the artist. In his analysis of the song, Chitando applauds the fact that, "like a traditional healer…Winky D would have deciphered Zimbabwe's multiple challenges as the botso experience" (2023, p. 126). Literally then, the silent unofficial censorship revealing itself in lack of airplay and the 'subversive' hullabaloo from parastate channels towards the song as well as the artist align with the poignancy of madness. The categorisation of the crisis within madness's spiritual lens is reiterated in social statements such as "*takanokorwa tsoka*" (someone cursed our footprints/future) or "*takaroiwa nevakafa*" (we were bewitched by the dead) which thousands use to describe the political, economic and cultural crisis in Zimbabwe.

Glory's deployment of madness exhibits close awareness of the general stigma of being labelled mad and the psycho-spiritual perspectives evoked by the appellations of madness in Zimbabwe. It destabilises the discourses, naming practices and the cosmological pillars the Mnangagwa regime invests in. The resurfacing of the discourse of madness from political leaders is almost prophetic. The text itself offers different readings of madness, that is, discoursal and non-discoursal madness. *Glory* caricaturises Mnangagwa's ongoing hunt for legitimacy. In the following discussion, I explore Bulawayo's use of madness to dismantle the discourse of madness associated with the *Gukurahundi* genocide. I argue that her dismantling of that discourse brings into being a cosmological understanding of the locations of power in the Zimbabwean culture. In the following sub-section, the "vernacular idioms" (Borah & Sotunsa, 2017, p. xvi) of madness comprise an epistemological framework to recreate historical accounts and unlock ritual avenues. I discuss the intersections of madness as political discourse and as spiritual psycho-political framework. *Ngozi* and *kutanda botso* and the madness, ghosts and invisible forces they evoke are aspects of haunting which should be regarded "neither [as] pre-modern superstition nor individual psychosis [but] social phenomena of great import" (Gordon, 2008, p. 7).

Dispensations of Madness: Cosmological Reconsiderations

Glory is steeped into the *Gukurahundi* narrative, the Zimbabwean genocide with a Shona meteorological appellation. Regardless of the differences in names between Mugabe's regime and Mnangagwa's (named Old Dispensation and New Dispensation), Bulawayo demonstrates how *Gukurahundism* straddles the two dissimilarly named but similar dispensations. With the Gukurahundi as its philosophical and historical backdrop, the literary text engages in the numerous histories and personalities whose roles in the genocide have remained insinuations in other literary texts. Even though new names that mimic animals are used, the personalities they represent are right there in the open for any Zimbabwean reader to know. The term *Gukurahundi* refers to "the early rain that washes away the chaff before the spring rains" (p. 116). This genocide is naturalised by assigning to it Shona cosmological resonance. Bulawayo uses the same cosmology to reverse the meanings of the genocide. For instance, the textual construction of The Old Horse's (Mugabe) biography awards rainmaking abilities to his grandmother, thus, his familiarity with the rain that eventually washes him away. The Old Horse has recurring semi-lucid visions of the rain, "only this rain was bloody" (p. 180). Seeking shelter from the rain, The Old Horse sees the "anthill before him split open" (like a grave), which portals him to the world beneath, a world where he is confronted by

> blood-drenched bodies, yes, injured bodies, mutilated bodies, chopped bodies…burned bodies, beaten bodies, raped bodies, bleeding bodies…bodies of pregnant females with bellies cut open, fetuses dangling. In open mass graves he saw bullet riddled bodies. (ibid)

Senility, haunting and madness combine in this bloodied rain dream-walking to invert the *Gukurahundi* trope to rehumanise the Ndebele who were denigrated as chaff. This eerie assortment of corpses is a forensic catalogue of sanctioned and indiscriminate rape, torture, murder and infanticide inflicted during the *Gukurahundi*. This psychological crisis also resonates with rumours of Mugabe being haunted, as it is for instance "often rumoured that Mugabe is haunted by Tongogara's[20] ghost, implying that he had a hand in the guerrilla commander's death" (Fontein, 2018, p. 52). My pursuit of the cosmological aspects of the

[20] Josiah Magama Tongogara (1938 – 1979) was a popular commander of ZANLA (Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army). He died in Mozambique in a car accident which typifies the Second Street Accidents highlighted in Chapter 3.

genocide leads to the discovery of cultural envisioning of various forms of madness. Bulawayo enacts Shona/Ndebele concepts of *ngozi*/*uzimu* which means the return of an unrested dead soul to haunt those responsible for its death. A returning unsettled dead soul sometimes uses "madness to register its presence" (Musanga, 2017, p. 783). The meanings of madness evoked in this text lead to ritual sites and thus "lead us to non-Western meanings, ideas of the cosmos, and alternate philosophies" (Falola, 2017, p. 716).

Together with this portrayal of The Old Horse as a figure haunted by ghosts from the *Gukurahundi*, the novel depicts that in the few years preceding the coup, "it was now very common for the Old Horse to misspeak" (p. 23). While the novel depicts these "misspeaks" as "honest, astute insights", Tuvy and his faction perceive them as evidence that his "head's not working properly" (ibid). Thus, Mugabe's famed blunders in which he sloganeered "*pasi* ne ZANU PF", transcribed in the novel as "there's need for another war of Independence, yes, a new Liberation War" (p. 22), signify madness to Tuvy. Marvelous [Grace Mugabe] shares Tuvy's assessment and thus she keeps The Old Horse on double doses of Xanax and even suggests "something stronger" (p. 42). The moniker The Old Horse depicts Mugabe as a dementia afflicted geriatric whose phases of lucidity are punctuated by misspeaks and confessions of being haunted by butterflies. *Glory* explains that "the Father of the Nation succumbed to a mild case of dementia" (p. 37). These literary references to Xanax and dementia inscribe historical "accusations of dementia, and that he [Mugabe] was generally too old for office" (de Saugy, 2022, p 606). As a geriatric, he is accosted by embarrassing verbal blunders, hypersomnia and nightmarish confessions through which the text reinscribes the ethnocentric ideologies within ZANU PF. His age is a ploy used by the novelist to depict the *Gukurahundi* from the perpetrator's perspective.

The *Gukurahundi* has often been portrayed from the perspective of victims who exhibit various aspects of psychological breakdown. Texts such as Vera's *The Stone Virgins* (2002) and Tshuma's *House of Stone* (2019) have depicted the unprecedented torture endured by the people of Matabeleland during the genocide. As such, their narratives centre the survivors. Bulawayo, on the other hand, portrays the genocide from both the side of the perpetrator as well as the victims to view the issue from a wider vantage point. Bulawayo's representations of the perpetrator's version of the Gukurahundi dispense with the classification of the genocide as a moment of madness. The New Dispensations' desire to dispense with old yet

overshadowing Mugabe narratives is a subject of interrogation of volumes[21] which offer insights into the systemic overhaul implied by the names and discourses contained in New Dispensation, Second Republic and Restore Legacy terminologies. In other words, it could be classified as dispensing with Mugabe's cultural presence. I argue that the nation has degenerated into cultures of madness, therefore, dispensing with the madness simultaneously represents Tuvy's attempt to dispense with the discourse of madness surrounding the *Gukurahundi* and the text's direction towards the removal of the architects of the madness. ZANU PF's political practices are predicated around a conceptual framework of conservation and restoration of some skewed legacies; ethnic, political/ideological and factional. Together, the most notable of its military-led operations such as *Gukurahundi*, *Murambatsvina*, Restore Legacy and the 2008 run-off electoral violence betray that philosophy. Similar to *Gukurahundi*, Restore Legacy is an operation which has undertones of purging those who were deemed to be outside ZANU PF's narrow *Gwara remusangano* (party protocol). These were dubbed "the criminals surrounding Mugabe". By invoking the revolutionary code, Mnangagwa evokes the spirit of Nehanda which can only be located within "Revolutionary Party" (p. 26). *Murambatsvina*, which Bulawayo examines in her debut novel, *We Need New Names* (2013), lies along the continuum of violent purging that characterises *Gukurahundi* and Restore Legacy. This purging, sometimes, or many times, turns bloody!

Though unsparingly critical of all political actors of that era, Bulawayo's main target of scorn is Mnangagwa's coup government which self-baptised by naming itself the Second Republic and New Dispensation, and its attempts at re-invention using such ornaments and adornments as the "Scarf of the Nation" (p. 117). The symbolism of the scarf shows attempts to disengage certain Mugabeist representations and personalities considered madness, while re-engaging selected legacies of the revolution and of Mnangagwa's person. While arguably Mnangagwa uses the scarf clearly differentiate his dispensation from that of a dementia-afflicted and *Ngozi* haunted Mugabe, Zimbabweans have associated the scarf with witchcraft. According to Mlambo and Chitando, "there are specific rumours or stories that depict Mnangagwa's scarf as a snake" and "an amulet that threaten[s] the health and well-being of the country and its

[21] *Cultures of Change in Contemporary Zimbabwe: Socio-Political Transition from Mugabe to Mnangagwa* (Nyambi, et al., 2022)*, The Zimbabwean Crisis After Mugabe: Multi-Disciplinary Perspectives* (Mangena, at al., 2021) and *The History of Transition in Zimbabwe: From Mugabe to Mnangagwa* (Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Ruhanya, 2020).

citizens" (2022, p. 40 & 49). In a manner that resonates with such rumour, Bulawayo depicts that Tuvy was given the scarf by his sorcerer, Jolijo, as "the kind of protection you can safely wear at all times and without calling attention to yourself, being that a talisman that is out in the open is more powerful" (p. 118). This speaks back to the social imagination of the Zimbabwean crisis/madness as signifying national bewitchment. Bulawayo thus soils these New Dispensation symbols and names with the stains of ethnic intolerance, violence, witchcraft and madness which characterised the old regime. The parodies constructed in the text portray Mnangagwa as President "Tuvy" Shasha, a despotic horse whose assumption of Jidada's Seat of Power is spectacularly similar to Mnangagwa's own assumption of Zimbabwe's. As noted in this chapter's introduction, the name Tuvy is an adaptation of the Ndebele word for faeces, thus, it functions to depict Mnangagwa and his regime through scatological aesthetics. This is where Bulawayo's naming strategies are meant to hide things in plain sight.

The fictionalisation of Mnangagwa in the text is not very subtle. Furthermore, there are deliberate transcriptions of Mnangagwa's infamous "ruling, ruling and ruling (*tichingotonga*, *tigotonga*, *tigotonga*)" (p. 23) speech as a way of depicting his despotism and the general "postcolonial leaders' struggle to make themselves leaders for life or icons" (Falola, 2017, p. 705). Indeed, as was historically the case with Mugabe, pro-Mnangagwa ZANU PF party organs have begun to push for a third presidential term, beyond his current and constitutionally allowed second term ending in 2028. Mnangagwa's 2019 mantra that "2030 *ndenge ndic*hipo" (I will still be president in 2030) has emerged as the slogan of choice for Mnangagwa's unconstitutional ambitions. While Mnangagwa has assured the nation that he is a constitutionalist and would step down after his two terms, some party figures such as Masvingo Provincial Minister, Ezra Chadzamira, have called for the amendment of the constitution to allow Mnangagwa to continue (Nyathi, 2024). The Herald, a pro-ZANU PF newspaper, has on separate occasions published that many Zimbabwean provinces had endorsed Mnangagwa to continue beyond his second term (Herald Reporters, 2024). There are various perversions of the national constitution such as extending the retirement age of Constitutional and Supreme Court judges to 75 from 70 in 2021 to allow the pro-ZANU PF Luke Malaba another term as Zimbabwe's Chief Justice. *Glory* caricatures Luke Malaba as Chief Justice Captured Kiyakiya Manikiniki as I will discuss later in this subsection. This illegal capture of the Chief Justice signifies Mnangagwa's desire to entrench his authoritarianism. In the novel, Tuvy asks his virtual assistant "Yeyi Siri, Siri, how exactly do I make myself a government?" to which Siri

replies, “just look within, you know it’s in you already” (p. 266). Bulawayo’s transcription of *tichingotonga* represents these authoritarian ambitions and the procedural crisis of the bygone dispensation.

The voyeuristic humour of ruling without electoral consent communicated in Mnangagwa’s original speeches is not lost but rather caricaturised in folkloric narrative and quasi–*Animal Farm* (Orwell, 1945) traditions. *Glory* (2023) is a political fable using animal representations to immediately evoke Orwellian readings of the coup’s aftermath (Moyo & Mavengano, 2022). Yet, its folkloric elements ostensibly “draw upon vernacular speech patterns and exploit[s] the rich rhetorical devices of the living African oral tradition” (Vambe, 2004, p. 13) such as the refrain “tholukuthi”[22] and, the phrase “when those who know about things told it, they said…” (p. 49). Vambe calls this technique reportage in that it inscribes multiple voices to construct a “narrative that cannot be uttered from one side or position” (2004, p. 106). By inscribing narratives of “those who know about things”, Bulawayo challenges the hegemonic conceptualisations of a coup as legacy restoration, and Mnangagwa’s brutal regime as a New Dispensation. To demonstrate these multiple voices, Bulawayo’s introduction of Tuvy’s alter ego, the crocodile, is also arguably influenced by Maskiri and Shastro’s *ngano* song “*Garwe Ngaridzokere Mumvura*”.[23] The text acknowledges the musicians, fictionalised as “Jah Taks” (p. 317). Maskiri and Shastro’s folkloric song means that the crocodile should return to the water which is a way of directly contesting Mnangagwa’s newly acquired political space. Bulawayo, and Maskiri and Shastro make no serious attempt to circumvent official surveillance in these productions. Both artistic productions share thematic constructs of Gukurahundi *ngozi* hauntings and the crocodile’s eventual ousting. The *Animal Farm*-style narrative amalgamates with the *ngano* (African folklore tradition) to use Mnangagwa’s pre-existing ‘crocodile’

[22] This is an adaptation of a song named Tholukhuti Hey (2017) by South African musicians Killer Kau featuring Mbali (real names – Sakhile Hlatshwayo 1998 – 2021 and Mbali Mthimukhulu). Various reviews of the novel explain that the word translates to “only to discover that” (Manyika, 2022).

[23] Maskiri, born Alishias Musimbe and Shastro, born Shadreck Mburai are Zimbabwean Urban Grooves musicians. They combined to produce this song in (Maskiri & Shastro, 2018), which uses the ngano technique to decry the poverty and tyranny that characterizes Mnangagwa’s presidency. In its cosmology, the end of the crocodile’s chieftaincy brought an end to the poverty, hunger and droughts which symbolizes a change in economic fortunes of the country.

appellation. The text also creates a parallel in the crocodile's and Tuvy's fortunes. The crocodile personifies Mnangagwa's political legacy, and his ZANU PF factional outfit popularly known as Team Lacoste, a direct reference to the crocodile.

Tuvy's atrocious political biography is given through the prodding attention of his sycophant Minister of Propaganda, Elegy Mudidi (*Mudidi* is a Shona colloquial term borrowed from the Ndebele word "*umdidi*" which translates to arsehole) who cajoles, worships and bootlicks him into contextualising and contesting Mugabe's self-exonerating labelling of the genocide as "a moment of madness". Eager to prove his tactical nuance and war credentials – and thus sanity – Tuvy self-incriminates by disagreeing with the reduction of his deliberate and calculated genocide to "a pointless orgy of violence, a mere moment of madness" (p. 118). He characterises the genocide as "Defending the Revolution" from the dissidents whom he notes as "whole entire [Ndebele] tribe itself" (p. 120). Consequently, he applauds the Fifth Brigade[24] which carried out the defending as "proper artists of killing! Pure angels of death! True prophets of terror!" (p. 121). His description of the fifth brigade as "prophets of terror" resonates with Tshuma's conceptualisation of the *Gukurahundi* as terror of absolute differentiation in the previous chapter. This is a necessary confession to both identify the orchestrators of the genocide and their socio-political motivations. Tuvy is identified as the main architect of the 'war', hence his ill-informed deconstruction of Mugabe's version of events is meant to portray him as an unrepentant *Gukurahundist* despite his public attempts to portray himself differently. Tuvy's deconstruction of madness, therefore, ultimately makes ZANU PF challenge its own claims and admit that "the war was planned, atrocious but purposeful" (Vambe, 2004, p. 104). It is beyond coincidence that the text selects hegemonic deployment of madness as the major narrative which defines Mnangagwa and his Second Republic's legacy. In *Glory*, the Second Republic is an extension of *Gukurahundi* and a restoration of ethnocentric ideologies. The resituating of the Second Republic in the discourse of madness is a very important ploy used to deprive it of its supposed newness. Through this deconstruction of the discourses of madness, we witness ZANU PF ethnic politics.

Among the litany of titles (self)assigned to Tuvy by his Minister of Corruption (such as "Dispenser of the New Dispensation"), he also dispenses with the discourse of madness surrounding the *Gukurahundi*. Bulawayo's inventiveness with titles such as the Minister of

[24] A military Unit which was trained by the North Koreans in 1980.

Corruption functions to make official corruption one of the methods through which the New Dispensation is sustained, while the other is through Tuvy's insatiable phallus: "the AIDS dispenser" (p. 175)! Tuvy and his rechristened Party of Power (ZANU PF) faction called the New Dispensation are not a way out of but deeper into crisis. Rebranding of the nation and repackaging Tuvy as the legitimate heir apparent to defend revolutionary legacies betrayed by The Old Horse take hilarious turns. The Old Horse is a direct reference to old Mugabe whose age, as implied by Tuvy and his sycophants, made him forget to defend the legacy, or even recount it in proper terms. Such failure is apparent in stigmatising a moment of "defending the revolution" through madness. Therefore, Tuvy defies The Old Horse's characterisation that the genocide was a moment of madness because it implies that "we weren't thinking" and because "no moment lasts that long!" (p. 119). Tuvy's dispensing with The Old Horse's narratives parodies *Animal Farm* (1945), particularly the selling of Boxer to the gluemaker when he got old. As Boxer's age, like The Old Horse, Mugabe's old age meant that he was no longer useful to the revolution leave for some of his material remains.

Consequently, Bulawayo's first representation of the genocide comes under the subtitle; "THE GUKURAHUNDI: MOST DEFINITELY, ABSOLUTELY NOT A MOMENT OF MADNESS" (p. 118). Unlike the old horse's' reticent "moment of madness" framing of the genocide, Tuvy proudly claims it as his own "war", "deliberated, calculated, planned, organised, [a] meticulously orchestrated campaign guided by clear goals and deliberate goals and objectives" (ibid). Mugabe's reticence was a denial of the politicisation of ethnicity within ZANU PF whereas Mnangagwa frames the Gukurahundi as service to the nation and defending the revolution. Similar sentiments can be read in the New Dispensation's Operation Restore Legacy. Bulawayo exposes the ZANU PF ideological bankruptcy exhibited in desperate verbal normalisation of the so-called defence of the revolution, which (revolution) is "defended not on any battlefield but on the bodies of the children of the nation" (p. 185). One of the children is Destiny who, having her body turned into a battlefield on which the defending took place, becomes a wandering vagrant leading to her neighbours wondering "if it could be related to the mother's madness because don't they say that kind of thing sometimes runs in the blood?" (p. 184). In their genetic interpretations of both mother and daughter's versions of madness, the neighbours inadvertently frame the multiple layers of trauma experienced within this family's genealogy. Destiny's name, then, exemplifies numerous Zimbabwean individuals whose numerous families were wiped out, and for whom living under a *Gukurahundist* regime is a destiny. This *Gukurahundi* parentage does inflict madness through its traumas and

inadequacies. Bulawayo intends an honest approach to historical events, thereby deploying terminologies and naming strategies that bring everything to light.

Bulawayo's Tuvy unequivocally exhibits intrinsic ethnocentrism, naming the Ndebele ethnic group a, "Dissident Party of nonentities…descendants of that violent, murderous criminal king…who invaded and essentially colonized us before the white colonizers, spilling the blood of our ancestors and seizing territory and our femals[25]" (p. 119). While the Ndebele were indeed the later migrants to settle on the Zimbabwean plateau and their relations with the Shona were fructuous, Tuvy's conceptualisation borrows from the colonial historical depiction of Ndebele brutality to "justify the conquest of the Ndebele by the British South Africa Company in 1893" (Beach, 1974, p. 633). Tuvy thus contextualises Ndebele history through the colonial lens of precolonial brutality to articulate perspectives that Mugabe attempted to hide in the discourse of madness. Correcting pre-colonial injustices in the postcolony is however insufficient justification, thus Tuvy adds, "those very descendants, were now busy planning mayhem and rebellion, not unlike their savage ancestors!" (p.107). Eppel describes the dissident problem as follows:

> There were those 300 or so ex-Zipras who eventually became a loose association of dissidents…ex-Rhodesian agents who undermined the new Zimbabwe and the South African apartheid government, which sponsored a small group of 'Super Zapu' dissidents in order to inflame an already volatile situation (2004, p. 44).

Tuvy provides allegations of sabotage during and after the Liberation struggle, possession of arms caches and plots of coups as "the fundamental facts that informed our strategy – a proper, thorough, calculated strategy, and most definitely not some miserable 'moment' of madness!" (p.118). Although Eppel corroborates the existence of dissidents in Matebeleland and Midlands provinces, she disagrees with the genocide's effective standpoint that "all Ndebeles supported Zapu, and all Zapu supporters were dissidents" (2004, p. 45) as articulated by Tuvy that "even the femals, even the little babies, even the grandmothers, had dissident tendencies!" (p. 120). Other scholars argue that "the plans to form this unit were mentioned by the then Prime Minister [Mugabe] as early as October 1980, way before so-called dissidents 'mayhem' and the abduction of six foreign tourist in July 1982" (Ndlovu & Dube, 2013, p. 357). From the foregoing, it is clear that there were ethnic and political objectives to Tuvy's *Gukurahundi*.

[25] Bulawayo uses the terms femals and mals instead of females and males.

The linguistic violence in Tuvy's narrative and name-calling manages to dispense with the momentariness of genocidal tendencies and reveals deep seated ethnic intolerance. Reading through Tuvy's narrative reveals attempts to sell his Shona ethno-nationalism as the nation's authentic history. Essentially then, these disclosures of the causes of the genocide through hegemonic discourse reveal ZANU PF rationalisations and sets the text for further counter-hegemonic discourses when Destiny's grandfather, a ZIPRA ex-combatant, writes a memoir of the war and its aftermath. One can say that both accounts, Tuvy's and Destiny's grandfather's, practically rupture the discourse of madness by resonating with historical arguments that the "atrocities as they unfolded were clearly systematic and orchestrated and not the acts of a few 'mad' individuals" (Eppel, 2004, p. 47). The importance of such an undertaking is realised by Vambe's analysis of Vera's depiction of the *Gukurahundi* in the novel *The Stone Virgins* (2002). According to Vambe, the "refusal by Yvonne Vera to dwell on the 'historical causes' of the civil war in post-independence Zimbabwe in ***The Stone Virgins*** does mean that Vera runs the risk of dehistoricising the dissident war" (2004, p. 103, bold and italics in the original). Vambe's framing of the Gukurahundi as a "civil war" and a dissident war" is akin to sanitising the genocide through hegemonic historicisation. Bulawayo, on the other hand, historicises the genocide through Tuvy's ethnocentrism and challenges the existence of any dissidents in Matabeleland. This theme of conceptualising political opponents as dissidents and criminals is a continuing strategy that Tuvy uses by portraying his Second Republic as a way of removing imagined 'criminals around Mugabe'. As Vambe also notes of the Operation *Murambatsvina* "the government ordered the police to arrest black women walking alone at night…perceived as prostitutes even though the government did not have proof in all cases" (2004, p. 103). Thus, these mentioned ZANU PF's clean-up operations lacked enough evidence beyond the projected narratives.

This historical deconstruction is buttressed by *Glory*'s portrayal of ritual eruptions as political protest by the innocent civilians who perished in these cycles of violence. To question the deployment of the madness discourse, the text introduces the "Red Butterflies of Jidada" which transpose Mugabe's private chimeric experiences of these butterflies (unsettled dead spirits) into public eruptions. The red butterflies of Jidada emerge on an Election afternoon, seeming to question Tuvy's re-election in the absence of public accountability for his role in the massacres. The flight of the butterflies leads the residents of Lozikeyi suburb to their medium's house where they land on the mythic Nehanda tree. Bulawayo eponymously names the suburb Lozikeyi to bring into Zimbabwean history the historical Queen Regent Lozikeyi Dlodlo,

"King Lobengula's senior queen, and after his death Queen Regent of the Ndebele" (Pinford, 2010, p. 73). Queen Lozikeyi was also an influential figure in the Ndebele's First *Umvukelela* in 1896 – 7[26]. Her counterpart, *Mbuya* Nehanda, named Charwe, was similarly an influential figure behind both the mostly Shona launched First *Chimurenga* 1896 – 7[27] and the national Second *Chimurenga* of 1966 – 79. Bulawayo's conceptualisation of Lozikeyi and Nehanda together as the mediums on whom Zimbabwe is spiritually anchored is a way to undercut Tuvy's Shona ethnonationalism in past and present dispensations. Such an approach addresses, to borrow Vambe's formulation, "the hegemonic but delinquent Shona cultural nationalism that has been allowed to suppress other cultural memories," through Nehanda narratives, and ascertains that the Ndebele and the Shona share the nation's "spiritual anchorage" (2004, p. 105).

To achieve this, the novel depicts a mythology in which the Nehanda tree in Lozikeyi suburb was planted by the medium, Gogo Nomadlozi, from the seeds of the tree on which the spirit medium, Nehanda, was hanged by the Settler government. It is a significant reminder of the unfinished struggle against all forms of tyranny in that it bears bone shaped pods. These mytho-historical "objects speak and communicate without words" (Falola, 2017, p. 707). Bones evoke Nehanda's valedictory prophecy of her bones' reincarnation (Lan, 1985), and may also function as divination ornaments (*hakata*) for traditional healers. Both historical figures (that is, Lozikeyi and Nehanda), whose names are not fictionalised, are meant to hide the real identity of the country of Jidada in plain sight: Bulawayo is narrating Zimbabwe! It is important to remember that the first red butterfly encountered is when the Old Horse (Mugabe) dreams of the liberation comrades accompanying Nehanda who "didn't have her head, and at the end of her neck, where her head should have been, was an opening, and from out of that opening flew these butterflies" (p. 41). The Old Horse and his wife's inability to recognise and decipher a nationally significant vision, relegating it to senility and dementia instead, explains Nehanda's eventual manifestation to Gogo Nomadlozi and Destiny. Ritual practitioners such as Gogo Nomadlozi are of great importance to interpret nationally significant supernatural phenomena. Tuvy himself realises the importance of mediums hence his co-option of the sorcerer Jolijo to

[26] The first *Umvukelela* refers to the first installment of the Zimbabwe liberation struggle which was launched by the remaining formations of the Ndebele Kingdom.

[27] The first *Chimurenga*, like its *Umvukelela* counterpart, was the first war of liberation launched by Shona ethnic groups against the white settler government.

provide him with talismans, ornaments and adornments that ward off evil and maintain his hegemony. The name Jolijo does not translate to anything as compared to the usual names of ritual practitioners such as Nomadlozi (with the ancestors). Nkunzemnyama – Lozikeyi's black bull[28] ancestral spirit channelled through Gogo Nomadlozi– explains that "the butterflies were once animal beings like us, who once walked Jidada like us until they were massacred just a couple of years after Jidada's independence" (p. 211). Therefore, the Red Butterflies of Jidada names all the victims of Gukurahundi, with the 'red' implying blood.

Thus, we enter into the section of the novel in which modern political action translates into cosmological inspiration and vice versa. Such an interdependent understanding of life sees these returning butterflies as a supernatural challenge to the dispensability of human life, of the legacies of those who were massacred and of the histories of the nation. Tuvy's election is interpreted in the purview of dispensability of the dead hence the dead spirits' angry demand

> to know where justice is, these decades and decades later…what has become of their murderers these decades and decades later…to know when they will be appropriately buried…to know when we shall hold proper ceremonies for their appeasement…to know when their survivors will be compensated for their pain, their losses. (ibid).

This uninvoked metaphysical eruption "registers the harm inflicted or the loss sustained by a social violence done in the past or in the present," (Gordon, 2008, p. xvi) symbolised by Tuvy's escalating power consolidation machinations. It widens the intellectual sphere to critically interrogate both the genocide and its packaging as a "moment of madness" from a cosmological angle. The unrest characterised by the above quote, within African ontology, leads to the disintegration of the cosmology, including but not limited to madness. Withholding funeral rites for murder victims is a cosmic violation which attracts *ngozi* (Chigwedere & Choto, 2018). Although this is usually applicable at family and clan level, the Nehanda mythology reveals its national applicability in that the Second Chimurenga has already been interpreted as the rising

[28] The black bull spirit is a reference to Joshua Mqabuko Nyongolo Nkomo (1917 – 1999) who was the second vice president of Zimbabwe from 1990 to 1999. He was also a nationalist of Ndebele ethnicity who founded various black nationalist movements to fight for Zimbabwe's independence. His PF ZAPU (Patriotic Front, Zimbabwe African People's Union) has a military wing (ZIPRA) which was instrumental in the Liberation struggle until it was subsumed into ZANU PF after the Gukurahundi genocide.

of her bones. Thus, the *ngozi* phenomenon commands interpretive implications to Zimbabwean politics (Musiyiwa, 2022). Nehanda is regarded as the spiritual entity whose cosmic force actuated the Liberation Struggle (Lan, 1985). The implications of a decapitated Nehanda are, thus, politically uncomfortable. As will become clear in the following section, *Glory* inscribes Zimbabwean nationhood's affective anchorage on Nehanda's ritual return. The implications of Nehanda as the vehicle of dead, yet restless *Gukurahundi* victims is nationally significant. As such, Zimbabwe is conceptualised as a culture-nation within a cosmological framework. Metz is right to postulate that "African philosophy has had the most influence on thought in politics and law [in Africa], with one of its most unique contributions concerning the proper distribution of political power" (2017, p. 796). It is in this framework that the seat of power's delinquency can be understood as a rogue political outfit defying both its cultural political formulations and modern conceptualisations of democracy, indeed a dispensation of madness. This builds towards the text's conclusion in which the solution to the Zimbabwean crisis is both cosmological and concerted political action.

Because Tuvy's Second Republic is *Gukurahundist*, conceived through a coup, and thus unpopular with the electorate, it is inaugurated through what Butler elsewhere argues as, "a law that is no law, court that is no court, process that is no process" (2004, p. 62). *Glory* discredits all legal and electoral processes co-opted to legitimise it by caricaturising the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission as the Jidada Electoral Cookhouse, and Zimbabwe's Chief Justice Luke Malaba as "Chief Justice Kiyakiya Captured Manikiniki" (p. 251). These names connote the total corrosion of national democratic structures, perfunctory electoral cycles, and implicit "perversion of bureaucratic procedures" (Mbembe, 2001, p. 85). While *kukiyakiya*[29] is a colloquial neologism often evoking "seeking desperate solutions to economic hardships" (Mareva, 2014, p. 182), it should be understood as both a response to and the organising principle behind the crisis. Essentially, it is an entrenched political crisis model which abandons all rules of engagement in favour of con, conjuring and improvisation. *Kiyakiya* encapsulates the constitutional legitimation of glaringly fraudulent and criminal electoral exercises. In the state of *kukiyakiya*, constitutional discrepancies are ameliorated by fabricated laws and predetermined verdicts that hardly aspire for the threshold of credibility. Negating certainty and stability guaranteed by local, regional and international legal and electoral processes, the Second Republic continues to mobilise a 'making it up as we go' model. *Kiyakiya* and Captured

[29] See Jones (2010).

are names with massive implications on Zimbabwe's illegal extensions of state power. These names symbolise ZANU PF's institutionalisation and governmentalisation of black-market tactical formulae "for ruling and ruling and ruling absolutely" (Bulawayo, 2023, p. 38). Mbembe accurately sums up a similar political crisis thus:

> In this situation, proper procedures are frequently by-passed, rules chopped and changed, and then usually bent, and actions are structurally unpredictable – a combination of situations in which nothing gets done, and sudden, erratic, accelerated movements, unforeseen consequences, and paradoxical outcomes (Mbembe, 2001, p. 80).

This is evidently the tactic which has been institutionalised in Zimbabwe for the crisis ridden years. Bulawayo thus problematises ZANU PF's Operation Restore legacy for its reliance on the suspension and violation of electoral procedure.

Legacy Quests: Madness as Legacy

The question of legacy is multi-layered. It involves nationally disavowed histories and family legacies which cannot be articulated without confronting the former. The Old Horse, after his removal, embarks on a "Legacy Tour" only to discover a dysfunctional economy, *Gukurahundi* and significant political carnage. But the Old Horse's tour is characterised by alternating mental states, one in which he is lucid and the other, a haunted mental state from which he wakes up with a "horrified cry" from discovering "that all around him were dead, blabbering babies" (p. 182). On another hand, Destiny, whose entire ancestry is decimated in the *Gukurahundi*, only discovers her family history and legacies after confronting her mother's madness. She simultaneously discovers her cosmological destiny. And finally, these legacy quests invoke and caricaturise the military operation through which the so-called new dispensation came to be. Suffice to say madness is an immutable legacy of the Second Republic and its predecessor. Using the name Second Republic is in itself a manifestation of madness, yet, when one gets the feeling that maybe, after all, 'Second' does not mean 'coming after', but 'worse than,' then the madness becomes even more apparent.

Interpretations of madness as hereditary in this text convey a sense of literal and metaphoric genetic inheritance. Explorations of the legacy overlaps between the First and the Second Republic rob the latter of its epoch-splitting claim. The text's representation of non-discoursal madness embroils Mnangagwa's political footpath in Mugabeism and its attendant crimes such as the exaction of bodily harm, utter disregard of democratic structures and undermining of

electoral will (Ncube, et al., 2021). The text introduces a goat named Simiso or MaDestiny (Mother of Destiny) whose life and suffering from madness belies the cosmetic effect of discourses of madness. MaDestiny, who lost her entire family in the genocide, succumbs to visible madness when her daughter disappears in the aftermath of the 2008 elections. Bulawayo returns to the past to explore the re-christened New Dispensation's postcolonial legacy and challenge its selective memory. Through the old goat's madness, *Gukurahundi* legacies are perpetual hauntings rather than a single moment of excusable barbarism. Survivors of genocide battle life-long psychological problems. MaDestiny's peculiar behavioural patterns only make sense to her daughter after she provides her biography. Through her daughter, we understand MaDestiny's nocturnal chores such as ironing as a coping mechanism employed to conceal and repress the recurring nightmares of the *Gukurahundi*. Destiny later learns that her mother's nocturnal ironing and re-ironing of already ironed clothes "wasn't really ironing clothes or material but was rather ironing some parts of herself. Yes, it was her therapy, Destiny, the only way she knew to deal with her trauma" (p. 270). Her ironing is an outward manifestation of a psychic crisis characterised by a verbal irrepresentability of the genocide. In this psychic crisis, *Glory* simultaneously critiques the economic crisis that necessitates nocturnal chore-doing as a strategy to counter chronic electricity cuts and water cuts that sometimes last the whole day. This re-configuration of life to align with the politico-economic deficits must not be read in the frame of normal human behaviour but as dormant madness. Such are the legacies ignored in the ironically named New Dispensation with its legacy restoration narrative that I read above as a way of restoring a patrimonial succession.

MaDestiny's madnesses epitomise the interwoven episodes of political violence in Jidada's history. Destiny's intertextual novel, *The Red Butterflies of Jidada*, which "she writes from the present into her past, into her mother's and family's pasts, which is also Jidada's past" (p. 351), explains this perspective. MaDestiny succumbs to madness after her daughter's sudden disappearance which evoked fears of the routine abductions characterising Jidadan politics. Her daughter's unannounced decade-long (self)exile is an instrumental layer to MaDestiny's recollections of the gory experiences of *Gukurahundi* murder, torture, rape and arson. Such unbridled violence characterising Destiny's infancy is completely concealed from her until she accidentally walks in on her naked mother to witness horrific *Gukurahundi* scars on her back. Destiny's reciprocal nudity to reveal her own scars to her mother creates a taboo spectacle that intimately exposes "both bodies [as] an important archive of the Seat of Power's cruelty" (p. 243). This revelatory nudity and final confrontation of each other's horrific scars reads the

"body as a site of traumatic memory" (Papa, 2017, p. 78). Similar to Henderson's reading of Seth's slavery scars in Morrison's *Beloved* (2004), scars are, "traces of the past that Sethe represses…the scars function as an archaeological site or memory trace" (1999, p. 86). The meaning of the name, Seat of Power becomes clear: it is necropolitan power over human bodies. I concur with Caronina's assertion that, "madness, whether locally, nationally, or globally controlled, resides not within black women's psyches but is palpably expressed in, on, and about her body" (2017, p. 28). The perceived hereditary madness in this family is on the concealed legacy scars inflicted upon these women's bodies; scars to be "caressed" and "kissed", to be "named" and whose names are to be learnt to establish rapport between mother and daughter (Bulawayo, 2023). An intimate review of the archives of madness is proffered to counter what can be read as Mnangagwa's "insatiable desire to consign meaning to history through hegemonic discourse" (Papa, 2017, p. 78). With her body as a receptacle of Tuvy's horrific legacy, MaDestiny's madness both deters and facilitates Destiny's discovery of intertwined family and national histories. It reveals Destiny's own mental instability steeped in the 2008 electoral violence in Zimbabwe.

The portrayal of the state sponsored 2008 run-off election violence in Zimbabwe as a cause of Destiny's psychological breakdown and exile functions to expose the Seat of Power's criminalisation of political difference that dates back to the *Gukurahundi* in postcolonial Zimbabwe. Destiny's scars from the electoral violence are similar to her mother's *Gukurahundi* scars as if the perpetrators "had taken meticulous directives from the Defenders that mutilated Simiso's body more than twenty-five years before that" (p. 243). The scars' physical similarities signify both their psychological resemblance and the same ideological and military training of the perpetrators. *Glory* uses these depictions of scars to memorialise the political violence against opposition parties which was "code-named Operation *Mavhotera Papi* (who did you vote for)" (Chipanga & Mude, 2015, p. 303). The militaristic terminology of "operations" creates a continuum of state violence that Bulawayo suggests is archived on these women's bodies and psyches. To correctly document ZANU PF legacy is to interrogate these bodily archives. Because of such a legacy, state violence in Zimbabwe "must be analysed not as episodic but rather a continuum" (Benyera & Nyere, 2015, p. 6522) which aligns with my conceptualisation of both Mugabe and Mnangagwa's regimes as dispensations of madness. Bulawayo further depicts this continuum to the present dispensation through an unnamed character who narrates that she was raped by the same Seat of Power agent in 2008 and 2018 electoral violence. This namelessness is a way to depict this character as potentially anyone in

Zimbabwe. For Destiny, exile was an attempt to create a space for "forgetting, [and] not looking back" (p. 243) which is equivalent to her mother's nocturnal ironing. Madness here are ZANU PF legacies which refuse even willful amnesia.

In depicting Destiny's exilic insanity, Bulawayo revisits migrancy, a familiar trope from her debut novel, *We Need New Names* (2013). In *We Need New Names*, Bulawayo depicts Prince, a Zimbabwean asylee whose experiences of violence result in psychological regression to infancy. We also encounter a familiar figure in *Harare North* (Chikwava, 2009), a nameless psychologically unhinged narrator who is a perpetrator of violence and is simultaneously haunted by *ngozi* and an unfulfilled *umbuyiso*[30] ceremony. Chikwava's text aptly addresses the cosmological consequences and interpretations of Zimbabwean crisis (Musanga, 2017). These texts depict madness emanating from institutional violence that defines Zimbabwe as a nation. As a result, the characters attempt to escape this madness through going into exile making migrancy a key component of the Zimbabwean crises (Manase, 2014). Destiny is an archetype intergenerational subjection to and recruitment to the perpetration of violence and the consequential traumas, madness and exile. However, this exilic existence contributes to further psychological deterioration as noted by Brand that exile is, "not only physical departure but psychic renting" (2002, p. 20) in the sense that these characters are dislocated from both their home nation and migrant spaces. Literally, in the case of the above-mentioned characters, it also creates more psychic fissures in those who are left clueless of their relatives' whereabouts. For instance, after her daughter's disappearance, MaDestiny,

> "couldn't really hold on to all of her mind…in her worst days she'd wander all over Lozikeyi – singing, crying, laughing, shrieking, depending on the shape of her madness that day…she'd sometimes go through each and every dustbin within her reach, digging for Destiny in the trash" (p. 153).

It is this sense of abandonment and, "the mother's inability to protect her fetus, infant, or child from harm that gives rise to expressions of madness" (Kennon, 2017, p. 172). Clinical madness experienced here signals anguish and psychic breakdown experienced from losing a child to political violence. Tuvy's regime compounds *Gukurahundi* traumas with many other traumatic years such as, "1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 2005, 2008, 2013, 2018, 2019" (p. 358).

[30] *Umbuyiso* refers to a Ndebele "ritual which is conducted a year after a person is dead whereby people visit a dead person's grave, to invite their spirit home, to look after their children" (Moyo, 2021, p. 77)..

Bulawayo mentions these years specifically as historical moments of violence along the longer continuum of the Seat of Power's legacy of psychologically breaking its citizens.

To implicate the so-called New Dispensation in a legacy of stolen and violent elections, *Glory* unequivocally locates Tuvy at the centre of the 2008 electoral violence. It depicts the evaporation of national euphoria for change, "like urine on hot sand when the Old Horse and the Seat of Power, with Tuvy, then vice president, at the fore, had simply refused to honor the vote" (p. 185). It was the time when Mugabe issued his infamous 'change never by the pen' speech (Wasosa, 2023). Versions of this speech were continuously repeated by ZANU PF Spokesperson, Christopher Mutsvangwa in the run-up to the 2023 Zimbabwean elections (Munhende, 2023). Due to the similarity of the political template, Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Ruhanya correctly argue that "the Mnangagwa regime is a direct child of Mugabeism" (2020, p. 4). The shared ingredients are not only inherited but have been avidly practiced by Tuvy himself. When Mugabeism faltered or intended to capitulate, it was Tuvy who threw it a lifeline suffice to say that Mugabeism is Mnangagwa's ideological playbook. Essentially, the three exilic characters introduced above, Prince, Chikwava's nameless narrator and Destiny, and their kinds of madness are products of Tuvy's characteristic 'service to the nation' and "defending the revolution" (p. 215). Zimbabwean elections are envisioned in the text as a nervous moment because they are not simply a contestation of political ideologies but a moment that evokes the archives of pain and psychic wounds meted out by the Seat of Power.

Destiny's legacy quests are not only epistemological but cosmological as well. Her mother's *Gukurahundi* scars instigate her legacy tour to the abandoned ancestral village. What she discovers is "a ruin. A place of slaughter. Of massacre. Of devastation and despair. Of blood and tears. Of disruption. Of the annihilation of families and family lines" (p. 335). In the ruins, however, are spirits of the dead awaiting reassemblage. Her conversation with the dead propels the text into its cosmological denouement. Among metaphysical occurrences of her visit, "she looks up to find herself bathed in the baptismal red rain of a thousand fluttering butterflies, in the soft waterfall of their whispering wings" (p. 347). On her return, Destiny discovers that her prospective boyfriend has painted and gifted her portraits of Mbuya Nehanda, Regent Queen Lozikeyi and "Yvonne Vera, and below it, a quote from her first novel, *Nehanda*: 'The dead are not dead'" (p. 348). Vera's inclusion iterates an ideological dislocation of the Nehanda mythology from ZANU PF historical constructionism (Bertho, 2018) because her eponymously named novel subverts the masculinised projection of Nehanda hegemonic nationalist texts.

Bulawayo endorses Vera's Nehanda as a being and symbol of inclusion hence her coexistence with Lozikeyi in Nomadlozi's garden and in Maseko's art. These portraits are not only an attempt to win over Destiny but may be read as "philosophical expressions, connected with thought and life" (Falola, 2017, p. 708). Their cultural as well as feminist philosophical insights can be surmised from the accompanying quote from Yvonne Vera's *Nehanda* (Vera, 1993). Musanga succinctly puts it that "Yvonne Vera's *Nehanda* (1994) exemplifies this symbiotic and dialogical relationship between the world of the living and the spirits" (2017, p. 777). These portraits artistically reassemble the decapitated Nehanda of The Old Horse's vision, thus, actualising Destiny's possession by her dead Grandfather, Lozikeyi, Nehanda and scores of massacred ancestors.

Destiny's discovery of her genealogy and family legacies reintegrates the genocide into the corpus of national history. Destiny's grandfather, "Butholezwe Henry Vulindlela Khumalo" is remembered by Tuvy's Vice President, General Goodness Reza, as a "fierce fighter who'd also saved his life when they found themselves in an ambush at the close of the war" (p. 124). General Goodness Reza is a fictional representation of Zimbabwe's current Vice President, Constantino Chiwenga, thus, his memory of Destiny's grandfather represents correct liberation war legacies which he "had stuffed all…deep, deep, deep in the dustbin of the past" (ibid). Bulawayo uses the Ndebele cosmological idea of spirit possession to inscribe the repressed contributions of the Ndebele to the independence of Zimbabwe. Simiso observes that Destiny displays all of her grandfather's mannerisms, the grandfather who named her Destiny and in Biblical rhetoric christens her to, "WRITE IN A BOOK ALL THE WORDS THAT I HAVE SPOKEN TO YOU" (p. 351). This connotes divine authority which counters Tuvy's hubristic slogan, "the voice of the masses is the voice of God" (p. 382). In this slogan, Tuvy establishes himself as the human manifestation of both God's and the people's will. For the writing of Destiny's novel, Bulawayo creates a ritual scene with "Queen Lozikeyi and Yvonne Vera and Mbuya Nehanda looking on from Golden Maseko's paintings, Destiny, write[s] with her grandfather's black Parker pen the story Simiso told her about April 18, 1983…" (p. 351). These portraits, as Falola argues of African cultural productions, "cannot be read in an interpretive singularity" (2017, p. 712). The phrase "looking on" evokes a ritual re-animation of the dead and their endorsement of Destiny's novel as Zimbabwean historical account. Considering that Destiny herself is Queen Lozikeyi's namesake, these portraits are a superimposition of cosmological matrilineal figures, and artefacts that approve of Destiny's undertaking.

The ancestral retrieval performed by Destiny's legacy quest in the *Gukurahundi* ruins strengthens her resolve in Lozikeyi's protest of another bout of contested election results. Destiny fits into the category of women protagonists whose "madness activates them – as an adaptive coping strategy, to resist, to revise, to reimagine, to re-enact, and ultimately, to heal" (Kennon, 2017, p. 168). Her mother's madness does not only activate a legacy quest but also a reanimation of the dead. Necessarily, Destiny's discovery and revolutionary zeal leads to her murder by Tuvy's defenders, thus revealing the similarities between the Old Dispensation/ First Republic and the New Dispensation/ Second Republic. Consequences of Destiny's death are feats of necrology in which:

> Simiso called for Golden Maseko, in *silence*, to come with a thing of red paint and brush, and Golden Maseko[31] *silently* came with a thing of red paint and a brush…
> And when Golden Maseko finally stepped away from the wall, it was to reveal a red butterfly, and under it, the name Destiny Lozikeyi Khumalo…
> Before Golden Maseko's paint had dried, animals came and *silently* painted a red butterfly, and beneath it wrote a name of a loved one murdered by the Seat of Power ever since Jidada was Jidada with a -da and another -da…
> First it was just locals from Lozikeyi, but with social media being what it is…very soon animals were arriving from places near and far. They came in *silence*. And painted red butterflies in *silence* and wrote the names of their dead in *silence*. (pp. 361, my emphasis).[32]

This long extract communicates telepathic abilities attributable to metaphysical choreography. Silence creates a ritual moment in which national agony is communicated and in which, "a strange communal reverence begins…a rite of consecration in which we honor the souls of the [African] dead" (Douglass-Chin, 2017, p. 60). Its ritual significance of acknowledging the dead at national level integrates the cosmological into the physical, thus propagating the direct intervention of the dead in national politics. After this homage, these red butterflies eventually descend on the House of Power (State House) to overpower Tuvy, and the menacing crocodile is killed by the ex-combatant, Cde Nevermiss Nzinga, a name directly borrowed from Queen Nzinga Mbandi who was instrumental in Angolan nationalist resistance against the Portuguese. "Nevermiss" plays with the naming patterns of Zimbabweans where English names must mean

[31] This character bears uncanny resonance with Owen Maseko (1975 -), an international artist who made an exhibit of Gukurahundi in 2010 (Ndakaripa, 2014).

[32] Here Bulawayo textualizes the Bhalagwe Camp monument erected in memory of Gukurahundi victims. The site's repeated destruction through explosives has been suspected to be a ZANU PF security forces operation (Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, 2022).

something (Chidora, 2018). The parameters of the re-incarnation of Nehanda's bones evoke a nationalised and ethnically inclusive Nehanda. The Wall of the Dead is, thus, not simply an ethnic political landmark, but rather a national ancestral shrine where the Zimbabwean dead are reincarnated to undo the dispensations of madness. It can be simultaneously read as an archival documentation of Tuvy's legacy and, as textual immersion into the ritual archive. The portrait of butterflies leads to a proper restoration of a national revolutionary legacy. This way, Bulawayo's text uses the invocation of the metaphysical in Zimbabwean politics to challenge hegemonic discourses. She harmonises cosmological models, for instance, Nehanda and Lozikeyi, to revise the discourse of madness. Madness is deployed to unlock cosmological "ways of reading, engaging, and understanding history as both ancient past and active present" (Brown, 2017, p. 9).

The text's conclusion concurs with Ikuenobe's observation that, "Traditional African systems of governance and the underlying moral structures have not been carried over to modern African states," but are rather, "exploited by many African leaders as a basis for justifying their totalitarian rule" (2017, pp. 581 - 2). This is confirmed by a spectral Nehanda's haunting of the Old Horse. Legacy quests involve acknowledging the roles of different cosmic figures in the national narrative. *Glory*'s success is in its ability to expose the cosmological manipulations in Mnangagwa's restore legacy narratives, including 'New Dispensation' and 'Second Republic'. *Glory* suggests that Zimbabwe's political fortunes, represented through the lens and discourses of madness, have cosmological origins. Deployments of cosmological models are not necessarily an abdication of tangible political action but a harmonised socio-cultural approach to politics (Wiredu, 1996). Political action taken in the text is buttressed by metaphysical personnel evoked through name inscription. This cultural understanding of the world is an appeal to "those of us who aren't Christians, or who have one foot in Christianity and the other in our indigenous religions because we know what we know" (pp. 208 - 209). The butterflies are a cultural cleansing; consequently, the *new* Jidadan flag has as its iconography the butterfly and the bones of Nehanda. This new flag and its new iconography convey an ancestrally sanctioned New Dispensation which is contrary to Tuvy's!

Conclusion

Glory caricatures hegemonic discourses and characters through the cosmology of madness. Among the discourses in *Glory*'s focus are the discourses of "Legacy", "Second Republic" and "The New Dispensation". These contradictory terms then are given sufficient

cosmological/historical contextualisation absent in their hegemonic source. According to *Glory*, the legacy restored by the so-called New Dispensation of the Second Republic is steeped in the "moment of madness," a genocide which the text attributes to a fictitious character named Tuvius Shasha, a representation of Mnangagwa. Bulawayo caricatures the Messianic self/representation of Mnangagwa in discourses of the Second Republic and inscribes similar titles such as "The Saviour of the Nation," titles that Mnangagwa used to undo the illegitimacy narratives which the Mugabes and the wider Zimbabwean society had associated him with. This caricature reveals the ideological defects hidden beneath these discourses. These caricatures deconstruct hegemonic discourses, reminiscent of Kanengoni's fictionalised ghost of Chitepo condemning post-colonial leadership for "expend[ing] their energy coining high sounding words with which they silence the people forever" (1997p. 87). We can discover ZANU PF's ideological arsenal in this discourse of madness.

Cultural cognizance is vital in readings of representations of madness in African literary texts. The deconstruction of the discourse of madness has two functions; that is, to portray both the Old Horse's and Tuvy's governments as criminal enterprises and to open avenues for a redress of the *Gukurahundi*. It also leads to cosmological derivations of legitimacy. Tuvy's legitimacy deficits are not entirely hinged on the manner of his ascendancy to power but on the cosmological aspect of Jidadan politics. He is not endorsed by the historical figures and national mediums such as Nehanda and Lozikeyi. In fact, these historical figures create a cosmological vehicle for Jidada's dead who are victims of The Old Horse and Tuvy's intertwined legacies. While Tuvy is physically hounded by butterflies for his contributions to the *Gukurahundi*, The Old Horse is haunted by *Ngozi* spirits in form of butterflies, bloodied rain and a headless image of Nehanda. Though certainly pivotal, modern political structures need to cohere with the cosmological aspect that transcends the cosmetics of rhetoric. Thus, the caricatures here intend to undo the cultures of madness necessitated by dispensations of madness.

The specific ritual archives invoked by the novelist here function to formulate subversive concepts to understand multiple issues bedevilling contemporary Zimbabwe. Significantly, the use of the cosmology of madness poignantly refutes hegemonic imaginaries, which is also the effect of the use of the Igbo reincarnation ritual and madness in Emezi's *The death of Vivek Oji* (2020) as read in the following chapter. In the following chapter, I discuss aspects of madness, reincarnation and queerness (sexuality) in Emezi's novel. I will argue that Emezi's use of

madness addresses the Eurocentric bio-logical ideologies entrenched within dominant African sociopolitical and heterosexual cultures that depict queer sexual expression as mental illness.

Chapter 5: Madness, Reincarnation or Queerness? Queer Sexuality and National Identity in Emezi's *The Death of Vivek Oji* (2020)

Introduction

Akwaeke Emezi's *The Death of Vivek Oji* (2020), like *Freshwater*, the other novel studied in this thesis, deals with the intersections between Igbo cosmology, psychology, and sexuality. While my reading of *Freshwater* in Chapter 2 focused on the psychological, decolonial and philosophical aspects of African cosmology, in this chapter I read *The Death of Vivek Oji*'s portrayal of the intertwined issues of sexuality, nationality and ways of being. In this novel, Emezi contests the African heterosexual monologue about queerness as a pathology and as Western cultural imperialism by relocating queerness within the intersecting spaces of African cosmology, erotic desire, and nonconformity. While sexuality and sexual identity is a globally contested subject, where LGBTQ+ communities are radically pushing for an inclusive reimagination and reframing of gender and sexual identities, Emezi does so from an African cosmological perspective. This departure from globalised templates denotes Emezi's awareness of the global epistemological inequalities which are similarly contested in the novel. Emezi specifically pushes for a reimagination of identity within the Nigerian political and cultural context by invoking Igbo ritual archives such as the figure of mammy-water and using reincarnation. They assert Vivek's fluid cosmological and sexual identity as a metaphor through which Nigeria's precariously fragmented and rigidified sexual, ethnic and national identities can be reimagined. I make these connections based on the depicted coincidence of Vivek's death with an ethnic riot and the death of Nigeria's former military dictator, Sani Abacha.

In this text, Emezi uses an Igbo reincarnation narrative to problematise the existing monologue about African LGBTQ+ people and sexualities in contemporary Nigeria, Africa, and the World in general. In various African political cultures, this monologue includes Christian constructions of nonconforming sexualities as demonic, contemporary African culture-based interpretations of queerness as Western cultural imperialism, and heterosexual masculine constructs of queer sexualities as unmasculine. These intertwined regulatory fictions are conceptualised as madness and as the cause of the protagonist's psychological breakdown in the novel. As the text portrays, through the death of Vivek Oji who is a queer young (wo)man in contemporary Nigeria, these heterosexual demonisations of queerness are injurious to queer

beings and may result in unnecessary loss of life. Tragically, lives are lost, modes of sexual self-expression are denied through these heterosexual regulations of human sexuality and African cosmological experiences are simultaneously excluded from these constructions of normativity. In the text, discourses of madness and mental illness become useful tools in the hands of heterosexuality to deny the existence of queerness and therefore, to justify its surveillance and the policing of sexuality. The text's depiction of a grandmother reincarnating through her grandson and reliving as a coexisting consciousness and personality destabilises the oppositional heterosexual dichotomisation of the male and female sexualities. Emezi uses the intolerance subjected to queer identities to highlight the similar fragmentation of Nigerian identity into various oppositional ethnicities. Through the interchangeable coexistence of the sexual and metaphysical in Vivek's person, Emezi both aligns with and contests the contemporary global definitions of sexual fluidity which contemporary cultural, religious, and heteronormative hegemonies often deny. The cosmological aspects focalise queerness from an African perspective. Emezi, thus, uses the Igbo reincarnation narrative to reimagine sexuality in African cultures and to recover authentic African conceptions of being.

Emezi further subverts contemporary conceptualisation of sexual desire by depicting an incestual sexual relationship between the novel's protagonist, Vivek Oji, and his gay cousin-cum-lover, Osita. The two, and their clique of female friends, Juju, Elisabeth, Somto and Olunne, conceal this relationship from their parents. This concealed relationship and Osita's secret about inadvertently killing Vivek are the novel's crucial plotlines. It is worth explaining here that Osita accidentally kills Vivek/Nnemdi while attempting to rescue him/her from an ethnic riot that had coincided with Vivek going out in a dress. Vivek hits his head onto a pavement while trying to pull away from Osita's grip. After a failed attempt to admit Vivek in a local hospital, Osita carries Vivek to his house where he leaves him on the veranda after removing his dress and his family pendant. While Osita removes Vivek's dress to conceal Vivek's queer and cosmological identity, the act creates an ambiguous case where the sexual, political and cosmological causes of Vivek's death intertwine. Emezi similarly creates this ambiguity by opening the novel with the single-statement chapter, "They burned down the market on the day Vivek Oji died" (2020, p. 1). Through this linkage, Emezi demonstrates that the heterosexual ideologies which we encounter in Vivek's family are pervasive in the national culture hence the riot ends up as the convenient yet inaccurate explanation for Vivek's death. With this culture in mind, Vivek and Osita's incestuous relationship challenges the national heterosexual ideologies of shame and taboo that govern sexual desire. Emezi's reincarnation

narrative of queerness transgresses the rigidified ethnic, sexual, and cosmological boundaries to discursively create a more habitable cultural space for the existence of queerness in Africa. However, Emezi does not exclusively mythologise queerness but also portrays various persons who consciously opt to explore queer love and sexuality or to explore both heterosexuality and queerness. These plural ways of being queer offer a wider reading of the avenue of queerness which heterosexual institutions imagine as madness in the text.

Madness in this text primarily refers to the following: a discourse used to suppress, govern, and regulate queerness, and the tragedy of Africans destroying their ritual archives and cosmological ideas of being by uncritically following colonial constructs of natural or normal identity. As I will argue, the death of Vivek is dually tragic in that his family fails to recognise him as a reincarnation of their family matriarch and that he is denied "the opportunity to express it [queerness]" (Emezi, 2020, p. 217). Emezi uses Igbo cosmology to challenge the limitedness of contemporary imaginings of human identity, sexuality and knowledge within the confines of the physical and West-centric psychology. Vivek's birth and death symbolise Nigeria's complicated political transitions which are pervaded by death and violence. Vivek, therefore, personifies Nigeria's cyclical reincarnation because of its failure to harmonise its disparate sexual, ethnic and political identities. For Nigeria to survive and then break its regressive cycles of birth and death, its political leadership need to heed Vivek's desires that "I wanted to be as whole as that word" (p. 49). Here, Vivek references the word "beautyful" "in *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* by Ayi Kwei Armah" (p. 47). To Vivek, the fact that Armah preserves the root word in his reimagination of the *beautyful* symbolises that various identities and ways of being should not be "swallowed and killed off" (p. 49) in the pursuit of national identity. Inclusivity therefore gives birth to beauty. Emezi suggests a recognition of the metaphysical in contemporary pursuits of national identity. However, Emezi is pessimistic about the Nigerian political elite's willingness to create a unified national identity out of its various sexual, ethnic, religious and sociopolitical identities, because Vivek's family only posthumously recognise him as a living ritual and a metaphysical being.

Reframing queerness; Reincarnation or Madness?

In many African societies, the idea of queer sexuality is largely resisted by political and cultural hegemonies. Various contemporary nations have resisted the contemporary discourses of sexuality by locating it within the dimensions of cultural imperialism, spaces of animality and madness. For example, Zimbabwe's former president, Robert Mugabe in/famously delivered a

speech at the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 in which he announced "we are not gays" (de Saugy, 2022). As de Saugy observes, "associating homosexuality with "white culture" [constructs] it as an outside force threatening the local sovereignty, culture, and values" (p. 595). Similar sentiments are expressed in Uganda's 2023 criminalisation of homosexuality[33] and the 2014 Nigerian criminalisation of the same[34]. In these state-led forms of intolerance, resisting queerness is equated to "asserting moral authority and national autonomy against a neo-colonial West" (Awondo, et al., 2012, p. 154). Asante's Afrocentric imaginary shares the same sentiment. Asante declares that Afrocentric thought, "recognizes its existence but homosexuality cannot be condoned or accepted as good for the national development of a strong people" (1988, p. 57). Locating homosexuality outside of African cultures, he continues, "We can no longer allow our social lives to be controlled by European decadence" (ibid). Asante's formulations present queerness as symptomatic of ideological, psychological and consciousness deficiency which can be corrected by adhering to Afrocentric thought. This is the framework in which queerness is largely cast by various African cultural and political hegemonies as depicted in Emezi's text. Emezi's *The Death of Vivek Oji* uses African, specifically, Igbo cultural narratives to locate queerness within Afro-cosmological thought and therefore to destabilise these established frameworks. Emezi's depiction reveals how heterosexual, and these Afrocentric frameworks are implicated in Westocentric thought in their use of the discourses of madness to construct queer sexualities as un-African, deficient and as manifestations of psychological illness.

The Death of Vivek Oji is a tragic novel narrated from multiple characters' perspectives to reflect the multiple aspects of Vivek's queer being and to capture the precarious socio-religious responses in contemporary Nigeria. Through multiple narratorial characters, the novel reflects the demographical, cultural, religious and social groups whose different attitudes to Vivek's sexuality denigrate his being and, in the process, miss his African cosmological aspects. The tragedy is that Vivek is his parents' only son and they restrictively enforce heterosexual masculinity ideologies on him which completely ignore the clear cosmological characteristics

[33] In March 2023, Uganda passed an Anti-Homosexuality bill which "imposes a life sentence on consensual same-sex conduct among adults, which is already criminalized, and adds the death penalty for so-called "aggravated homosexuality"" (Shaw, 2023, p. 1).

[34] On 7 January 2014, Nigeria's former president, Goodluck Jonathan signed The Same-Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Bill which criminalises homosexuality.

of his birth. Vivek is born on the same day that his grandmother dies, and he carries an identical scarring on his foot. While Vivek's uncle refuses to classify this as purely coincidental and suggests naming him Nnemdi after his grandmother, Vivek's father, Chika, refuses to give his son an effeminate name. The text portrays Chika's response to the cosmological markers of Vivek's birth thus:

> "Superstition," he said. It was a coincidence, the marks on their feet—and besides, Vivek was a boy and not a girl, so how can?(sic) Still. His mother was dead and their family was bereft, and in the middle of all this was a new baby (Emezi, 2020, p. 13).

Chika's reductive categorisation of African metaphysical realities to superstition and coincidence reflects his perceptions of reality which are adopted from colonial epistemology and Eurocentric modernity. Thus, from the moment of Vivek's birth, Chika's colonial versions of heterosexuality determine Vivek's naming and upbringing by suppressing Vivek's incarnate and queer identity as this chapter will show. Despite these heterosexual interventions, however, Vivek's reality as his grandmother's reincarnation manifests through Vivek's expression of both the feminine and the masculine affects and sexualities encapsulated in his cosmological reality. Although Vivek initially imagines his grandmother's manifestation as blackouts, he later appreciates his plurality and reconciles these disparate aspects of his being into a harmonised and fluid identity. Vivek's reconciliation of disparate entities and genders is a crucial metaphor in the interrogation of heterosexual African cultures whose characters insist on disaggregating human identity to its sexual, ethnic and cultural components and imagine queerness as mental illness. Thus, the novel confronts us with the question of how Vivek's family can adequately understand sexuality when they fail to understand personhood. Emezi challenges the limitedness of heteronormative frameworks and suggests an Afro-cosmological conceptualisation of Vivek's identity.

Further illustrating this tragedy, Vivek's parents struggle to celebrate his birthday because it coincided with his grandmother's death. Because Vivek is a reincarnated being, his youth is characterised by spiritual surfacing of his grandmother who overtakes his physical being and presents it as "fugues" (p. 90 & 141). Webster's dictionary defines a fugue state as "a rare psychiatric disorder characterised by reversible amnesia for personal identity, including memories, personality and other identifying characteristics of individuality". Vivek experiences such interruptive states in which he "hadn't known what was happening…he couldn't even remember it" (p. 141). His cousin, Osita, describes one of Vivek's fugue experiences in which "he was walking as if he was drunk, staggering and stumbling, his lips

moving slowly and soundlessly" (p. 24). His parents, Kavita and Chika, assume that these incarnation states are quiet spells emanating from exhaustion and they always suggest that he should go to sleep. His Aunt, Mary, encourages Vivek's parents to "check if he was anemic" (p. 25). These "small-small blackouts" (p. 23), as Vivek calls them, are momentary surfacings through which his grandmother informs him to "*hold my life for me*" (p. 160, italics in the original). Providing further evidence of his reincarnation, Vivek explains to Osita that "I dreamt that I was our grandmother. I looked in a mirror and she was there, just like the pictures, and she spoke to me in Igbo" (ibid). This illustrates the different conceptualisation of humanhood in Western based epistemology and African cosmology. Emezi uses the term fugues not to evoke psychiatric disorder but to emphasise the pathological framework used by Vivek's family. The family's Westocentric framework, starting from refusing to give him his grandmother's name, is revealed through their continued pathologisation of Vivek's cosmological identity.

This pathologisation of Vivek's spiritual states signifies the cultural ignorance that creates the discourse of madness to justify contemporary African cultures' failure to comprehend African spirituality and queerness. That Vivek remains inaudible demonstrates the lack of what Douglas-Chin (2017), in reading the fugue state in SourbeNe Philip's *Zong!* (2008), terms translation. Douglas-Chin uses the term translation to discuss Philip's poetic textualization of "the historic 1783 case of the slave ship *Zong*, underpinned by the labelling of between 130 and 150 deliberately drowned Africans as lost "cargo"" (2017, p. 51). Besides Philip's conversion of a legal document into a literary text, on a metaphoric level, Douglas-Chin uses translation to describe the "persistence of haunting and fugue-like black women's voices" and the reconstruction of "fatally savaged and silenced African bodies from death on the sea-bottom to life in the written *African* word" (ibid, p. 52). While Emezi's text does not feature numerous voices, it demonstrates the absence of the ritual of translation to make audible Vivek's seemingly quiet spells, drunken states and incoherent speeches. Vivek's inaudible messages, therefore, require ritual translation into audible ritual text which the family fails to perform by privileging the conceptualisation of personhood as purely physical. The translation of cosmological messages is not unusual in African cultures where mediums, healers and other intermediaries occupy a special social position because of their ability to perform tasks of translating ancestral messages into human language. What happens in this text can be termed mistranslation because ancestral messages and presences are interpreted as madness.

Osita, the only person in Vivek's family who is partially aware of the cosmological nature of Vivek's fugue experiences is not capable of translating these ancestral voices, thus, Vivek's experiences remain incoherent to the family. I argue that Osita is partially aware because of the continued occurrence of Vivek's fugue states in his presence. For instance, Osita recalls one fugue experience when "Vivek's voice broke into the silence, low and rusty" and said "the wall is falling down. I knew we should have fixed the roof after it rained last time. And we just brought the yams inside" (pp. 22 - 23). Osita's response to Vivek that "there's no rain" (ibid) illustrates the cultural disconnect which fails to recognise the ancestral voice channelling through Vivek. That Osita vividly describes Vivek's tonal shift demonstrates his partial awareness that something else was speaking through Vivek. His failure to recognise the significance of the yams and rain on the other hand demonstrates the mistranslation. In various Nigerian literary texts in English, yams are culturally significant food, and the harvest of yams is especially linked to deities, ancestral spirits and the cycles of time (Okpanachi & Idachaba, 2014). For example, in *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe writes that "new yams could not be eaten until some had been offered to these powers (earth goddess and the ancestral spirits of the clan)" (p.38). In Achebe's later novel, *Arrow of God*, Ezeulu the Chief Priest of Umuaro refuses to announce the New Yam festival causing a cultural furore. Falola explains that "offerings, comprising food, are identified with specific deities, as in boiled yams and snails for Òrìṣàńlá" (2017, p. 707). The fact that the only time Vivek's fugue state is audible in this text is the time he talks of yams and rain makes this instance particularly important. This fugue experience links directly to Vivek's grandmother's untranslated past life experiences which are useful to understand Vivek's and Nigeria's contemporary crisis. While the yams represent the earth goddess and the clan's ancestral spirit, the rain represents mammy-water as I will argue later in this chapter. Vivek's fugue experiences therefore link directly to African metaphysics, thoughts about the afterlife, and offers perspectives on what comprises African culture and challenges the family's diagnosis of Vivek as being mentally ill. It offers insights into Igbo ideas of human sexuality which accommodate queerness as a form of African spirituality as shown through the ideas of Ogbanje which I analysed in Chapter 2, as well as reincarnation, discussed in this present chapter. Emezi aims to expand the reader's understanding of queer sexuality through an Igbo cosmological perspective.

Using the discourse of mental illness, Vivek's parents disguise their disapproval of their son's affect, physical sexual expression, and their refusal to acknowledge his sexuality. Chika's heterosexual masculinity ideation causes him to send Vivek to "some military academy"

because he “wanted him to toughen up and stop being soft and sensitive” (p. 15 & 16). To Chika, Vivek’s softness and sensitivity are feminine constitutions which could be exorcized by regimented, military-like education. By enrolling Vivek into a military academy, Chika demonstrates ideas of heterosexual masculinity which dictate that male genitalia should unproblematically correspond with performative acts of aggression, militancy and the heterosexual desires. These masculinity constructions reduce Vivek to his corporeal reality, thus, disrupting the paranormal aspects of his being which are essential to his psychological, emotional and physical wellbeing and to the reconstruction of African cultural perspectives. At the military academy he encounters various versions of normative masculinity which, while pretending to loath queerness, often deviated from the norm, and forced themselves onto Vivek in one-sided acts of gay intercourse. Vivek explains that these boys “believed themselves to be: boys who could not be broken, boys who broke other boys and were no less for it” (p. 115). The rhetoric of breaking the other denotes violence and depicts the unhealthy collisions between heterosexuality and queer sexuality which ranges from silence to outright violence. It represents a power dynamic of phallic authority which the text’s heterosexual males assert by violating, assaulting, or raping those who they construe to be lesser men and women. I concur with Butler and Athanasiou’s argument that such imaginaries “render the phallus as an invariably proper, fixed, and inalienable possession of male anatomy” (2013, p. 49). Vivek’s sexual orientation, therefore, challenges and deconstructs this normative imaginary in that he refuses to be a man as defined by heterosexual norms and thus displaces the phallus’ imagined hegemonic status. As a result, his schoolmates’ sexual advances onto him are violent attempts to maintain the established heteronormative hegemony to which Vivek is seen as a threat. His experiences with his high school boys demonstrate their weaponisation of the phallus as an object usable to subjugate queer men, in this case, Vivek. These unhealthy intersections culminate in Vivek suffering psychological fragmentation while domiciled at the military academy and on his return home.

At this point of Vivek’s life, his parents begin to mobilise the discourse of mental illness to explain and justify pulling him out of the military academy. Certainly, various aspects of Vivek’s behaviour after his removal from the military academy are evident of psychological instability which the text traces back to the unhealthy contact between heterosexuality and other sexual identities. His psychological breakdown has sexual intolerance as an underlying marker. Vivek’s single and brief reflection on his experiences at the military academy alerts us to the contradictory intolerance encapsulated in the heterosexual language of breaking the other

through same-gender sexual acts. He remembers how the boys at the academy subjected him to a "threatening" "assurance that it was well and right for me to provide them with pleasure" (p. 115). The text does not prefix queer or heterosexuality to pleasure to portray the indiscriminate nature of sexual pleasure in its multiple forms. However, this should not distract us from the (non)consensual nature of these experiences for Vivek. Consequently, Vivek returns from the military academy a psychologically fragmented queer man yet also consciously negotiating intimate and public spaces for healthier sexual self-expression. To portray his psychological fragmentation, his parents narrate to their extended family that he

> doesn't even sleep there [in his bed] anymore. He wanders around the house. He goes and lies down on the veranda with the dogs. Sometimes he climbs the tree in the backyard and just stays there (p. 54).

Other times he would sleep in the chicken run and in the morning, he would be "covered in mosquito bites and yellow white chicken shit" (p. 93). Vivek's actions here signify both his psychological breakdown and the inhumane spaces of sexual subjugation from which he attempts to escape. Vivek's opting to inhabit animal spaces is a critical indictment of the inhumanity of the contemporary heterosexual ideology that locates queerness beyond bestiality.

While Vivek is definitely psychologically unwell at this point of his life, his parents indiscriminately use the discourse of madness not to correctly specify his psychological condition but also to specifically stigmatise and denigrate his sexual orientation. When Vivek returns from the military academy with long hair which clearly causes discomfort in the family and attracts his uncle's suggestion that he should be chased away, his mother explains that "I am not turning him away, especially not when he's sick" (p. 60). Vivek himself regurgitates the idea of sickness to his cousin despite that he was visibly wearing lipstick. After Vivek's death and photographic evidence of him expressing his queer sexuality by wearing dresses and makeup emerges, his father dismissively retorts; "that wasn't Vivek. He was sick, Kavita. He was mentally unwell. That's why he was dressing like that" (p. 225). Similarly, Kavita responds to these photographs by berating Vivek's groups of female friends that "you dressed him up—you took advantage of him! You knew he was sick!" (p. 217). These attempts to govern Vivek's sexuality even in death reveals the madness of heterosexual culture as personified by Vivek's parents. The truth about Vivek's queerness poses a significant threat to the sexual order they subscribe to hence these attempts to posthumously remember him as simply mentally unwell.

Such unrelenting attempts to govern human sexuality significantly contribute to Vivek's psychological breakdown.

In the novel, the heterosexual monologue about queerness is characterised by silences, physical and sexual violence and the discourse of madness. Heterosexual attempts to govern sexuality make queer sexualities a taboo subject. Because Vivek's identity is deliberately reduced to his sexuality, the homophobic silences surrounding him also apply to his cosmological being. Vivek's upbringing is characterised by such silences. The text depicts his family's incomplete conversations and refusal to directly address queerness, for instance, in the following conversation between Vivek's parents:

> "She said Vivek's not safe, that he looks—" She paused. "That people might try to hurt him." Her voice warped hesitant, unwilling to say out loud the possibility of worse. Her husband sighed and dropped the newspaper into his lap before turning his head to her. "Well," he said, "is he?" (p. 72).

Chika and Kavita's fears for Vivek's safety illustrate their own intolerance and the precarity of queer bodies in contemporary Nigerian culture. On another occasion, Osita comments about Vivek's hair that "you know it makes you look—," to which Vivek responds, "like a fag? Like a woman?" (p. 120). There are various other scenarios of such incomplete insinuations and of nudging each other to stop directly addressing Vivek's sexuality. The heterosexual ideologies that pervade this text obfuscate rather than explain human sexuality, let alone African sexuality and identity.

Underlying this heterosexual labelling of queer masculinities as deficient and therefore, effeminate, are Eurocentric gender ideologies which perceive women as an inferior gender. Vivek argues that the contemporary African society labels "men who allow other men to penetrate them…ugly things; ugly words. Calling them women, as if that's supposed to be ugly, too" (p. 131). Firstly, in this heterosexual imaginary, sexes, genders and sexualities other than male and masculine are deformed and inferior. Heterosexual men are therefore imagined as standard beings. This deliberately justifies legal and illegal surveillance of other sexualities. Secondly, it positions sex/gender as organising principles of African societies. Both positions, according to Oyewumi, "are a consequence of the bio-logic of Western culture" (1997, p. 122). This bio-logic, continues Oyewumi, creates four hierarchical dichotomies of humanness delineated and ranked through both race and gender. It perceives white men as superior to white women and ranks the white race as superior to black men and women. This is the context in which white women and non-White races are pathologised as psychologically deformed. The

intertwined labelling of Vivek as a fag, woman and mentally ill directly borrows from the colonial and Victorian patriarchal hegemonies' constructions of white women and African people as antithesis to white men and therefore irrational. The nexus between his expressions of female sexuality and the discourse of mental illness used by his parents signifies the latent colonial biological dualisms that are embedded in their (mis)conceptualisation of what they consider authentic African sexuality.

Prior to their contact with the colonial and Victorian morality, various African cultures permitted what is classified today as queer sexuality. Tamale provides numerous examples of these sexual activities, citing that there were

> male diviners who were believed to carry powerful female spirits that they would pass on to fellow men through anal sex; woman-to-woman marriages entered into for reproductive, economic, and diplomatic reasons - for example, among the Nandi and Kiisi of Kenya, the Igbo of Nigeria, the Nuer of Sudan, and the Kuria of Tanzania; and anal sex between married partners as a method to avoid pregnancy (2013, p. 36).

These examples explain Vivek's queer sexuality since he is a man carrying his grandmother's reincarnated spirit. In the same article, Tamale (2013) also gives various examples of homosexual practices and relationships in Africa which were not linked to rituals and spirituality. She notes that "[a]mong the Langi of northern Uganda, the *mudoko dako*, or effeminate males, were treated as women and could marry men" (ibid, p.35). The treatment of these effeminate males as women in precolonial Africa is markedly different from the treatment of Vivek as a woman because in the latter case, a woman is regarded as weak and an inferior category of humanity. In the novel, the term woman is used to describe Vivek's sexuality in a way that connotes ugliness as discussed in the preceding paragraph. Femininity is regarded as something to be dominated or even hurt if it is found in a man. This contemporary criminalisation and pathologisation of homosexuality in Africa, argue Murray and Roscoe, is linked to "Western disapproval (for example, that such behaviour is a sin, a crime, or a sickness)" (1998, p. 15). Chika and Kavita's refusal to recognise their son's sexuality adheres to this "dominant, colonizing, metaphysical, Western sexual imaginary" (du Toit & Cooetze, 2017, p. 335).

What causes Vivek's psychological breakdown is, therefore, the contemporary African heterosexual misconceptualisation of sexuality which equates queerness to womanhood and locates both as inferior, irrational and un-African. As I have already noted in this chapter, this heterosexual misconceptualisation plays a crucial role in Vivek's naming in a way that denies

the cosmological aspects of his being. Vivek's grandmother's name, Nnemdi, translates to "mother lives or mother is alive"[35] which denotes the reincarnation aspects of traditional Igbo culture. However, Vivek is not given the name Nnemdi at birth because of its gendered implications in contemporary culture. Unlike Nnemdi, Vivek is a masculine name from his mother's Indian heritage meaning "wisdom"[36]. His mother's Indian heritage also provides the text's admixture of reincarnation narratives from Hindu mythology and the already noted Igbo version. One of the text's central plots is Kavita's fixated search for Vivek's "Ganesh pendant" after finding it missing from Vivek's corpse. We are made aware that Vivek never took off the pendant ever since his mother gave it to him as a gift from his Indian Uncle, Dr Khatri. In fact, Dr Khatri gives the pendant to Vivek's mother during Vivek's infancy and exhorts her to "give it to your son…[n]ever let him take it off" (p. 39). Ganesh[37] is a Hindu deity with the unique attributes of being and incarnate being and possessing a unique embodiment of a human body "reborn with an elephant head" (Viswanath, 2023, p. 1077). Dr Khatri's gifting of the pendant maybe read as his way of trying to impress Hindu culture onto Vivek or as evidence of his awareness of his nephew's metaphysical reality. "Ganesha", continues Viswanath "occupies a liminal space… as he is neither human nor elephant, adult nor child [and] raises important questions about what it means to be different in any society" (p. 1055). Despite that Vivek wears a symbol of difference according to his mother's original Hindu culture, his mother fails to recognise such sexual and incarnate difference because she "had converted to Catholicism" (p. 39). Thus, both Igbo and Hindu reincarnation narratives challenge Chika and Kavita's modern and Catholic imaginaries of human sexuality.

The various incarnation and possession narratives in the novels selected for this study challenge such an imaginary. In Mbue's *How Beautiful We Were*, for example, the communal ancestral Spirit manifests through both Konga and Thula who are respectively male and female. That the communal ancestral Spirit manifests in either individual demonstrates that gender is not the organising principle of the community. Further, the perpetually reincarnating twin mediums in Mbue' novel are accepted, albeit silently, by their community as possibly queer which does not diminish their spiritual role in the community. The novel depicts that their Kosawan community imagined it, "possible [that] the twins slept on the same bed, Jakani on the right, Sakani on the

[35] (https://www.names.org/n/nnemdi/about)

[36] https://www.names.org/n/vivek/about

[37] Interchangeable with Ganesha.

left, arms around each other" (Mbue, 2021, p. 37). Here, sexuality is similarly not at the core of social imaginary. As established in the above paragraph, such gendering is Westocentric which as Oyewumi also argues, "believes in the absolute superiority of the human over the nonhuman and the subhuman…and the modern or progressive over the traditional or the savage" (1997, p. 121). By refusing to name their child Nnemdi, Chika and Kavita are participating in what Walter Mignolo (2011) termed coloniality of being which transfigures their understanding of life, death and sexuality to Westocentric standards. Born to this colonial gender imaginary, Vivek's realities are all marginalised. The authentic reincarnation of Igbo culture is imagined as superstitious. Vivek's existence demonstrates that the female and the male can coexist in a single corporeal entity similar to how the cosmological can seamlessly co-exist with the human.

Emezi therefore uses Igbo ritual archives to reframe the contemporary thought on queerness to disrupt the pathological discourse used in the text. The use of the Igbo reincarnation narrative locates queerness within African culture as opposed to it being purely a Western form of cultural imperialism and being a form of mental illness. The idea of queerness as mental illness is itself a residue of Western medicine (Rowe & Chavez, 2011). Pilling (2022) explains that homosexuality was included in the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical of Manual Mental Disorders) as a psychiatric disorder until 1973. In his monograph, *Queer and Trans Madness: Struggles for Social Justice* (2022), Pilling argues that queer sexualities continue to be pathologised in contemporary Western biomedical language. While not precluding that queer people, like everyone else, experience psychological distress which is sometimes directly linked to the sociopolitical responses to their sexual identity, Pilling demonstrates how contemporary biomedical language such as gender dysphoria naturalises equations of transgenderism to mental illness. Vivek's mother imagines sexuality in a similar manner when she asks her husband "What if it's something we did, Chika? What if we made a mistake somewhere and that's why he ended up like this?" (p. 73). This thinking conceptualises queerness as a psychological problem in which parenting is negatively implicated. It links directly to Freudian oedipal theories of human psychological and sexual development (Freidman, 2008). In Freud's oedipal theorisations, homosexuality was a result of arrested sexual development in which the child developed libidinal attraction to the parent of his/her sex. According to Flanders et al, Freud theorised that "the move toward the homosexual object choice is understood as a solution to an experience of being psychically overwhelmed, either by too much love, or by too much hate" (2016, p. 947). Kavita's question about possible

parenting mistakes as the cause of homosexuality gestures towards this psychoanalytical conceptualisation of sexuality. It reaffirms her and her husband's attempts to "fix" Vivek throughout his childhood as demonstrated through enrolling him to a military school, sending him to Mary's church and cutting his hair. Emezi's reincarnation narrative challenges such imaginaries by providing a cosmological explanation to Vivek's particular queer sexuality. As Vivek says about being relegated from the category of men in the heterosexual power matrix, "I was never one to begin with, anyway" (p. 131). Since Vivek is neither man nor woman since before their (his/her) birth, their sexuality cannot therefore be explained in Freudian terms

The discourse of madness persists in Chika's attempts to 'cure' Vivek of his sexuality. For instance, when enlisting the help of Mary, his sister-in-law, he complains that "Do you know he stopped cutting his hair? If you see him now, just looking like a madman . . ." (p. 53). As already noted, Chika is aware of Vivek's sexuality as illustrated by enrolling him into a military academy to enforce his masculinity. By equating Vivek's long hair to a madman's, Chika actively attempts to repress Vivek's sexuality since he is fully aware of its function as Vivek's visible symbol of queer sexual expression. This and various persistent attempts to cut Vivek's hair are heterosexual acts of repression as accurately argued by Nenadovic that his hair is "one of [his] the most important symbols of resistance and defiant love" (2023, p. 292). Equating his hair to that of a madman is a deliberate attempt to deny the queer identity that he projects by the hair aesthetics that he adopts. As Rowe (2019) argues, hair aesthetics are an important identity marker. Banks (2000) also makes insightful observations about the political utility of hair and hairstyles especially in the political relationship and beauty standards between white and African American worlds. Banks' observations about Afro hairstyles and dreadlocks as assertion of African-based identities are applicable to the contact between heterosexuality and queerness where some hair styles adorned by queer individuals function to transgress heterosexual ideologies of proper sexuality and to signify what has been termed "outness" (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013, p. 48). In keeping lengthy hair, Vivek therefore, does not approximate madness, rather, he expresses his femininity and queerness hence his family's resistance. Additionally, his hair is a cosmological space in the sense that it visualises his grandmother's reincarnation. This is symbolised by Vivek's insistence to his friends on being addressed by the name Nnemdi after he starts keeping lengthy hair.

In their attempts to cure Vivek of his queerness/mental illness, his parents send him to his aunt's Christian church where he is brutalised in the name of exorcism and "deliverance [from]

a demon" (p. 75). In Christian rhetoric, Vivek's identity is interpreted in the framework of possession "by a very, very wicked spirit, a strong demon…causing all of this, the long-hair thing, the wasting away of his physical body" (p. 76). To exorcise this demon which suck Vivek's energy through his hair, the pastor and deacons at Mary's church flog him to inflict pain on the demon and attempt to cut his hair to cut this connection. Ironically, Vivek's resistance to being beaten and being shaved is perceived as the demon resisting to leave him. While the Chistian church is correct in its claim to identifying a metaphysical presence in Vivek, the metaphysical presence is neither "demonic" nor "feeding on him" (ibid). It is an ancestral presence which reimagines African culture by revealing those African spiritual aspects which are demonised and uncritically labelled by Western cultural imperialism. Such an ancestral presence is equally demonised in Christian logic. Instead of reading Vivek's weight loss as demonic, a correct reading perceives it as a result of the lack of space for cultural and sexual self-expression at home and the homophobic violence that characterises the fictionalised Nigerian national sociopolitical sphere. The church, school, the nation-state and the home are all characterised by homophobic silence, violence and assault which makes Vivek's life a precarious one. After making these connections, Vivek's angry outburst to his mother to "stop trying to fix me!" (p. 75) reads like Emezi's appeal to the whole cultural framework to stop pathologizing queerness and imagining it as something to be cured.

Emezi's text uses Igbo cosmology to reframe queerness as an undeniable African human reality. Linked to the pathological discourses used by Vivek's family in the novel are attempts to regulate and deny the existence of queer sexuality in African culture. The discourse of mental illness as used in the novel is a precursor to violent intervention and a cause of physical and mental anguish for Vivek. While Vivek's life does not successfully subvert the use of the discourse of madness by his parents, his photographs which surface posthumously subvert his parents' perspective by demonstrating his secret sexual and cosmological life. While the photographs of Vivek wearing dresses and lipstick emerge as a way to resolve the puzzle of Vivek's death, they simultaneously introduce Chika and Kavita to Nnemdi, their queer son and incarnation of his grandmother, thereby subverting Chika's colonial worldview and Kavita's pathological discourse. Through the photographs, Vivek's friends portray a counter-narrative where Vivek publicly, albeit against their advice, performed his cosmological and sexual reality. In this sense, Vivek breaks the monologue from beyond the grave giving more metaphysical meaning to his posthumous statement that "you see, in the river of time, I am already alive" (p. 245).

Subverting madness: photographing cosmological/queer corporeality

One of the most subversive tropes in *The Death of Vivek Oji* are the photographs of Vivek wearing dresses and lipstick which were in the custody of Vivek's queer friends named Juju and Elisabeth. While all viewers of the photographs interpret them as Vivek's queer expressions, Chika and Kavita's arguments that the dress and lipstick wearing Vivek was not who their son was, further cements my argument that it is queer corporeality itself that is pathologised. In Kavita's contestation of the narrative produced from the photographs, we see the connotations of mental illness as absence of agency hence Chika and Kavita imagine identity on Vivek's behalf. Kavita's thinking that Vivek's friends took advantage of his mental illness to dress him like a woman demonstrates how the mental illness patient/queer body is an object to be acted upon by others. She demands from Vivek's friends that "He was sick! And you people all knew this was going on, and it didn't occur to any of you to tell me or his father? We could have helped him!" (p. 216). As defiantly as the photographs, Vivek's friend Elisabeth rudely retorts that "he didn't need help" (ibid), thereby demonstrating Vivek's sanity and self-authorising agency. The photographs reconfigure relationships in irrevocable ways by empowering Vivek's friends to push back on the mental illness narrative. Somto, another of Vivek's friends, rebuffs Kavita's mental illness narrative by rudely asserting that "you keep talking as if he belonged to you, just because you were his mother, but he didn't. He didn't belong to anybody but himself" (p. 218). Here, Kavita's parental authority and justificatory narrative of mental illness over Vivek and his friends capsizes. Through the photographs, we witness Vivek's multilayered subversive transformation into Nnemdi as he insisted on being addressed as such. I say multilayered because, on a sexual level, they portray Vivek/Nnemdi happily performing a sexual identity his mother imagines to be "unnatural" (ibid). Cosmologically, it disrupts his parents' worldview by answering the question; "How did he know? That that was almost his name?" (pp. 223 - 224).

These photographs create subversive narratives about Vivek's queer corporeality, his sociosexual transformation into Nnemdi, his death and the final reconciliation between the physical and the cosmological. Self-transforming into Nnemdi, Vivek freely expresses her sexuality by wearing different ill-fitting dresses, lipstick, plaiting his hair and in one, "spinning so the skirt of the dress was just a blur, like splashed water, and his hair was vague in the air"

(p. 215). Another photograph captures Vivek and Osita's incestuous relationship. According to Osita's description of this specific photograph

> He [Vivek] was sitting in my lap with his legs crossed, the dress riding high on his thighs, his torso leaning forward as he laughed into the camera. One arm was around my neck and I was looking at his face (p. 232).

Osita removes this particular photograph from the envelop which they finally hand over to Kavita after Vivek's death to conceal the transgressive aspects of their relationship and as an act of his own self-censorship. Altogether, these photographs emphasise Vivek's transition into Nnemdi and how the transition made him/her happy. As his friends point out, "he was happy, it made him happy" (p. 216). These photographs are mnemonic tools which disrupt the mental illness and heterosexual narrative preferred by Vivek's parents. Elisabeth emphasises that Vivek's mood and psychological wellbeing was visibly improving with these subversive acts of wearing dresses. In a sense, he did not have to kill off parts of himself anymore, thus, incarnating the whole and *beautyful* as implied by Emezi's allusion to Armah's *The Beautyful One Are Not Yet Born*. They similarly disrupt the ideas of mental illness and colonial conceptualisation of being. On the other hand, these photographs function to create an incorrect yet convenient resolution to Vivek's death as having resulted from the riot. As I will show in the following section of this chapter, Kavika and Vivek's friends, except Osita, believe that he was killed by rioters when they discovered that he was a "man" wearing dresses.

While these photographs initially evoke the discourse of mental illness from Vivek's parents, they eventually subvert these parents' perceptions of Vivek and their ideas of being. They portray Vivek's secret life as Nnemdi and give identity to the beautiful and anonymous woman who continuously yet briefly appears in the plotline. The irony is that the woman (Nnemdi/Vivek) is an object of fixation of various men who are especially mesmerised by her hair. This irony shows how blurry the constructed boundaries between the feminine and the masculine are since Nnemdi is imagined by various men as seductively beautiful. In these men's imaginations, "she was tall with long mammy-water hair in two plaits down her back, wearing a flowered dress that cut off at her calves" (p. 149) which shows that they imagined her precisely as a woman. Two of the men, an unnamed banker and a vulcanizer named Ebenezer, seek to have a romantic relationship with her. While Nnemdi's long hair is obviously a biological trait from his mother's Indian heritage, it is interesting that the lengthy hair evokes the image of mammy-water, a powerful symbol of a water goddess in Igbo cosmology. According to Jell-Bahlsen, "Mammywater, *Ogbuide*, or *Uhammiri*…transcends gender. It is

equally applied to male and female water deities, and also to divine pairs" (1995, p. 30). The invocation of mammy-water through Vivek's self-presentation as Nnemdi transforms her into a possible manifestation of this metaphysical, divine and ungendered entity. In this sense, Nnemdi is mammy-water herself. Therefore, when Vivek instructs his friends to address him as "either he or she, that he was both" (p. 217), he is referring to the intersection between his sexuality and this cosmological state which includes mammy-water and Nnemdi, his grandmother. Here, I locate the cosmological causes of Vivek's death and psychological breakdown in his parents' denial of this aspect of him both in life and in death. I follow Jell-Bahlsen's assertion that if this state is

> not recognized on time, or if the person so assisted by the goddess before birth later refuses her calling, then the goddess can cause madness, misfortune, or premature death, either of the individual or beloved ones (1995, p. 31).

His parents' failure to recognise this aspect of him is implicated in both his lack of physical and psychological wellbeing as well as his spiritual wellbeing and eventual untimely death. Chika and Kavita's imagined African identity is a severely confined space characterised by this suffocating and tragic intolerance to sexual difference that it fails to recognise authentic African rituals. This is the tragedy to which I refer in the introduction to this chapter.

In Emezi's reincarnation narrative and Igbo cosmology, the photographs of Vivek as Nnemdi expressing his cosmological and sexual realities do not signify mental illness as his parents assume. That Nnemdi and mammy-water are intertwined within each other, even in photographic form, explains my reading of these photographs as subversive. Clearly, these images subvert the dominant memory of Vivek as presented by his parents, thereby, disrupting modern ideological viewpoints concerning ways of being, ways of expressing sexual desire and ways of re-membering. This reincarnation narrative operates in what du Toit and Coetzee conceptualised as "pre- or meta-modern times [which] emphasize mythical origins that are forever reactivated and remembered in the present" (2017, p. 336). This returns us to Vivek's only audible fugue experience depicted in the novel as a site of reactivating mythological memory. When Vivek speaks of the rain and the yams, he is expressing his reality as both an earthly and metaphysical being. The rain symbolises his reality as a manifestation of mammy-water which is why when Osita interrupts this surfacing, Vivek's "eyes rolled up into white and his body flopped sideways, falling against the mattress. When his cheek hit the foam, he jerked as if he was waking and scrabbled his arms and legs" (p. 23). This description reads like the receding presence of mammy-water hence Vivek wakes up enquiring "What? What had

happened?" (ibid). The fugue speech itself generates multiple sociopolitical meanings because it is fraught with the symbolic language of the ancestors. When Vivek, in his fugue trance, states that "the wall is falling, we should have fixed the roof after it rained last time" (ibid), he possibly alludes to the continued assumption of colonial templates in postcolonial Africa. Such templates fragment African ways of being to only the physical, thus, removing the protective roof of the metaphysical. Thus, unlike these experiences in which different aspects of Vivek's reality compete, surface and recede in different moments and are sometimes hidden, the photographs depict the final moments of Vivek's life where all the disparate aspects are visibly equally represented. This disrupts Kavita and Chika's attempts to remember Vivek as simply their male child who suffered from mental illness.

Symbolically admitting that Vivek's photographed moments disrupt their socioreligious ideation, Chika and Kavita finally conclude "we can't keep insisting he was who we thought he was, when he wanted to be someone else and *he died being that person*" (p. 225, italics in the original). This partial posthumous acknowledgement of Vivek's identities is a significant moment which is punctuated by grief, guilt and acceptance. Most importantly, it puts an end to the imagining of an African cosmological occurrence as madness. Kavita's act of posthumously adding the Nnemdi to Vivek's tombstone is crucial in that it discursively (re)locates queerness within Igbo sexual imaginary. It acknowledges Nnemdi, Vivek's queer representation and the coexistence of grandmother and grandson in the physical entity of Vivek hence, instead of the original tombstone engraving "Vivek Oji, Beloved Son" (p. 162), the revised tombstone reads "Vivek Nnemdi Oji, Beloved Son" (p. 244). Although the revised tombstone retains the word son, it does not emphasise Vivek's maleness. This cosmological act finally acknowledges the reincarnation narrative that destabilises the conceptualisation of queerness as mental illness. It also destabilises suppositions of biology and genitalia as immutable bases for sexuality and legitimates queerness and cosmological identities as sufficient rather than deficient masculinities, (human) beings and identities. Vivek's tombstone gestures towards a framework shift which can now recognise the cosmological aspects of African being. To demonstrate this, Kavita finally includes Vivek's dress-wearing photographs in the family album and imagines "Vivek's grandmother reaching out from her grave next to his, through her casket, through the soil, splintering the wood of his to take his hand" (pp. 224 - 225).

At its end, *The Death of Vivek* makes significant strides towards locating queerness within African spirituality, thereby subverting the colonial template that Chika and Kavita initially

emphasise in their discourse of mental illness. Emezi depicts African mediumship and reincarnation as queer spaces in nature because they call for the coexistence of different beings in a single body. This reincarnation narrative does complicate contemporary conceptualisation of sexuality and attempts to designate a fixed sexual identity to a being who is cosmologically both man and woman yet possesses only male genitalia. Emezi's text, through Vivek's photographs, subverts contemporary imagination which assumes that genitalia should unproblematically align with sexual expression and identity performance. Ultimately, Vivek does not fit within the oppositional sexual binary demonstrating his ability to transcend gender categories formulated on principles of Eurocentric bio-logic hierarchies. Vivek's ability to expand identity, both a metaphysical and physical entity that cannot be locked within these frameworks, becomes Emezi's metaphor for Nigeria's national identity. By reconciling different aspects, Vivek re-members this national identity on a cosmological template to undo fragmentation of identity in colonial imaginaries.

The Death of Vivek Oji as a metaphor for Nigeria's national identity

The psychological anguish suffered by various characters in the novel after Vivek's death may also be read as Emezi's metaphoric vision of Nigeria' psychological and political state. Similarly, Vivek's birth, life and death coincide with significant political landmarks in the nation's history. As I have already established, however, the coincidences in a reincarnation narrative are deliberate and they bear significant cultural meanings. Therefore, Vivek's psychological breakdown parallels the constricted national culture and psyche which is characterised by intertwined intolerance to sexual and ethnic differences. Political and sexual spaces clash and alter each other in significant ways as symbolised by my description of various African political regimes' criminalisation of queer sexuality. Therefore, the text's deliberate fictionalisation of Vivek's death being immediately preceded by the death of Sani Abacha[38] merges the events in Vivek's life and those in Nigerian politics. Emezi fictionally situates Vivek's sudden death in this crucial political moment to depict the fragmentariness of Vivek's being as symbolic of the complex transitional moment initiated by Abacha's sudden death from a heart attack. Abacha's death alters the nation's political space in dramatic ways which affect the fictive Vivek's negotiation for sexual space. Vivek's resulting psychological rupture therefore mirrors the fissures occurring within the national body politic such as euphoric

[38] Sani Abacha is former military dictator of Nigeria who died in 1998.

celebrations, curfews, ethnic clashes, and police versus vigilante group clashes. Vivek's confinement in the house coincides with the national curfew and the grief after his death parallels the sociopolitical experiences expressed in the burning of the market. Through these interconnections, Emezi's text "address[es] the persistent problems of Nigerian statehood and national identity" (Williams, 2017, p. 142). In this section, I interrogate the various psychological experiences and political meanings emanating from the intertwined deaths of Vivek and Abacha and the burning of the market.

After Vivek's death, his parents and Osita's grief borders on psychological fragmentation. In fact, some of their experiences are depicted using psychological jargon to highlight this. Both Chika and Kavita's experiences of grief are described as "fixation" (p. 202). Chika fixates on repainting his mother's house in preparation for Vivek's burial. The text vividly illustrates Chika's fixation by stating that he repainted the house "through the night, dust layered over his skin" and "rattled on about the burial plans" (p. 197). Similarly, Kavita fixates on locating Vivek's missing pendant and finding out the cause of death to the degree that other characters think she had "gone mad" (p. 14). In attempts to locate the pendant, she harasses everyone especially Vivek's friends. She has nightmares where there is a widening pool of blood on the veranda where she discovered Vivek's body. Also, she dreams of his head "dissolving into dust in her hands" (p. 205). Similarly, Osita runs away from home to Port Harcourt where he spends a few weeks in drunken stupors and sex orgies. Kavita envies Osita for having "run away and fallen apart like this" (p. 42), that is, Osita's ability to fully grieve over his dead cousin and lover. This grief charged atmosphere coincides with the political tensions which start after Abacha's death. The metaphor of "falling apart" also signals Nigeria's sociopolitical disintegration following its president's, and Vivek's deaths. Signs of sociopolitical disintegration include the arson described by the novel's opening sentence that "They burned down the market on the day Vivek Oji died" (p. 1).

In fact, this psychological anguish is offered as the major descriptor of Vivek's life as explained in the text that "his whole life was a mourning: a house thrown into wailing the day he left it, restored to the way it was when he entered" (p. 14). The aftermaths of Vivek's birth and death, and his grandmother's death, "birthdays and deathdays all tangled up in each other" (p. 92), are characterised by both his parents' psychological breakdown. They had "fall[en] apart" (p. 86) with grief, meaning that they had psychologically deteriorated due to mourning. However, here we are also made aware of how the tangled birth/deathday metaphor of Vivek's birth also

applies to the tangled-up death of Soni Abacha (and his military dictatorship) and the birth of "civilian rule" (p. 91). Soni Abacha was a military dictator and president of Nigeria from his 1993 coup on Moshmood Abiola[39] until his sudden death in 1998. In the text, Abacha's death, which coincides with Vivek's withdrawal from the military academy, is described by Chika as "a new day for Nigeria. A new day. For all of us" (p. 92). Vivek's birth is thus a precursory metaphor of the Nigerian nation's political transition in which death, birth and blood coincide to create a reincarnation narrative. Notably, Okri's *The Famished Road* (1991) also metaphorised Nigeria as a spirit child/nation who cyclically "keeps being reborn and after each birth come blood and betrayals" (1991, p.494). According to Okri's text, Nigeria is a nation plagued by transitional cycles of political violence in the form of civil war, military coups and terror attacks. Similarly, Emezi's text draws psychological and cosmological parallels between the events in Nigeria and in Vivek's life. Thus, Nigeria's new day, the death of Abacha as military dictator, is succeeded by curfews and bloody clashes between "the police and vigilante groups" and Vivek's complaints that his parents are "keeping me in a cage" (p. 92) by confining him indoors for his safety. Here, the heterosexual and political dimensions of the national curfew intermingle, and the political and sexual spaces subsume each other. Vivek's psychological anguish manifesting through loss of weight and isolation reveals the psychological dimensions of this political curfew.

Foreshadowing Vivek's eventual death, as well as the political moment of Abacha's death and its subsequent curfews, riots and arson, the text points out that Chika should have known, since "everyone knew that death entered with the upcoming elections" (p. 91). This gives Vivek's accidental death political connotations as a critique of the cyclical violent regime changes in Nigeria. The death of Vivek itself coincides with the burning of the market because of an ethnic riot which emphasises issues of national identity. On this particular day, Vivek had gone out in a dress, and his cousin fearing that Vivek would be caught in a crossfire and his male identity discovered, tracks him down to rescue him from grim potentialities. Ironically, in trying to rescue Vivek, Osita inadvertently kills him which also parallels how political claims of rescuing Nigeria from any preceding regime end in what Abiodun Adeniji has termed "the "progressive-recessive cycle of banalities", as one era of progress seems to usher in a counter-era of regression and vice versa ad infinitum" (2018, p. 137). Elections and various regime changes in Nigeria have indeed been fatal. Chika's imagined new day for Nigeria is not only implicated

[39] Moshmood Abiola (1937 – 1998).

in the death of the dictator but also the death of his only child plunging him into grief and madness. The new day is thus short-lived and soon evolves into psychological turmoil for both the family and the nation. For instance, Vivek's death day reveals the psychological anguish in the national body politic as symbolised by one vendor, Ebenezer, who braves the riots in an attempt to locate his wife within the chaos. Ebenezer's stream of consciousness is punctuated by imaginations of his wife being "raped" or being "burned to death, or just burned enough to survive, horribly disfigured, her face peeling off like those women up North who'd been attacked with acid" (p. 156). In his frantic search for his wife, Ebenezer witnesses Vivek's death which focalises Vivek's centrality as a political allegory.

Vivek, is in this sense a symbol of uniting Nigeria's disparate people, ethnic groups and political regimes into a single harmonised entity. Vivek is a conglomeration of different physical, metaphysical, sexual and demographical beings which becomes a crucial metaphor to uniting Nigeria's sharply divided ethnic groups. Just as the failure to recognise the presence of Mammywater may cause premature death or madness, Nigeria's successive regimes' failure to reimagine Nigeria as more than a geography but also a cosmology causes the cyclical power grabs, coups and elections punctuated by violence. These parochial geographical imaginaries are demonstrated in a conversation between two vendors attempting to determine the cause of the riots. One character, Ebenezer, suggests that "Maybe [its] the Muslim thing again. You know how people can get about the Northerners" (p. 153). This alludes to the persistent political, ethnic and xenophobic conflicts between the Hausa-Fulani (Northern/Muslims) and the Biafrans (Southerners) which dates back to the early days of Nigerian independence. Falola (2022) traces Nigeria's problematic nationhood to colonialism. He argues:

> Not only did the nationalism and nationalists that forged the Nigeria nation work from divisive angles and espoused divisive rhetoric that encouraged the mobilisation of identities along ethnic divisions, but it also invented a nation forged from, anchored in and preserving these same schisms – divisions that had roots traceable to the colonialist formation and administration of the region (p. 9).

To counter Ebenezer, the resonant colonial and postcolonial ethnocentric schisms, Mama Ben suggests a purely socioeconomic imaginary that "They're just people who came here to work, make small money for their families. Why must they always go and disturb them?" (pp. 153 - 154). Ebenezer's response illustrates the deep-seated ethnic resentment, and the historical and geographical divisions that haunt contemporary Nigeria. He counters: "Are we supposed to just fold our hands and watch how they're treating our brothers and sisters?" (ibid). Therefore, what

is portrayed in Vivek's town is widespread across the nation. It is important to remember that neither of these characters know for certain the cause of these particular riots at this point, yet they imagine the cause to be the North/South ethnic divide that characterises Nigeria. The above conversation demonstrates the psychic spectres of the Biafran civil war.

Later in the novel, Ebenezer ascertains the cause of the riots as an individual conflict "between a Hausa trader and an Igbo customer, a prominent shop owner, [which] had escalated until the Hausa trader slapped the shop owner" (p. 157). Epitomising the regionalised psychopolitical imaginary pervading Nigeria since independence, "in moments a crowd had gathered, coiled and furious, ready to make every other Northerner pay for that one man and his impertinence" (ibid). This crowd interprets this slap as an affront to a whole ethnicity hence the need to reassert their ethnic hegemony. This makes apparent the regionalised and ethnicised psychology that underlies the imagination of national identity in Nigeria. Consequently, an individual conflict readily escalates into a violent ethnic and national conflict. This is a result of the hierarchised dichotomisation of African communities into gender, ethnic and sexual categories. Here ethnic identity destructively takes precedence over national identity. This does not mean that citizens should shed off their ethnic and sexual identities to adorn a national identity, rather, it castigates the pursuit of any singular identity in a way that violently kills off those who are different. In this sense, this imaginary subscribes to Western bio-logic hence it offers a convenient scapegoat for Vivek's death.

Interestingly, Kavita's friend observes that, although Vivek is Igbo, he looks like a "Hausa. Or even Fulani…[and] doesn't even hear Igbo like that" (p. 96). In Vivek, no single sexual or ethnic identity takes precedence over the other. Sexually, he engages in intercourse with his cousin Osita and with his female friend, Juju. *The Death of Vivek Oji* therefore signifies Nigeria's failure to formulate a more habitable political and cultural nation. Emezi suggests that reimagining nationhood on its cosmological basis would fundamentally break Nigeria's birth/death cycles. While Emezi suggests this inclusive reimagination and symbolises it through the revised tombstone, there are ambiguities about the prospects of Nigeria as a nation. Of the revised tombstone, Vivek/Nnemdi comments from beyond the grave that "it was a lie. Love and guilt sometimes taste the same" (p. 244). This input from beyond the grave epitomises the Igbo cosmological belief in the continuity of life or reincarnation of beings after bodily death, hence Vivek/Nnemdi explains that "I was born and I died. I will come back. Somewhere, you see, in the river of time, I am already alive" (p. 245). Returning to sexuality, Emezi uses

Vivek/Nnemdi's perception of the revised tombstone as motivated by guilt to suggest a template motivated by actual recognition of difference not one based on the guilt of political correctness or fashionableness. The discourse of madness, therefore, symbolises the contemporary imaginary in which racial, gender, sexual and ethnic difference denotes deficiency and invites designation of harmful pathologies. The failure to recognise difference is as much a sexual as it is a political issue. Vivek's observation that "some people can't see softness without wanting to hurt it" (p. 113) epitomises the lack of recognition for difference without the violence of pathologizing it. The question of sexual identity is thus inseparable from that of national identity.

Conclusion

In Emezi's *The Death of Vivek Oji*, sexual and political tropes are woven into each other creating an insightful perspective on contemporary Nigeria. Although the sexual easily takes centre stage and the political acts as an unrelated background, we later see that these two aspects are intricately connected and invariable comingle. Therefore, the madness and mental illness discourses that collocate with heterosexual attempts to construct nonconforming sexualities as psychological anomalies also provide commentary on how the queer is more representative of Nigeria's national identity than heterosexuality. I have argued that while queerness is perceived as mental illness by various characters in the novel, Emezi illustrates how Vivek's queer harmonisation of disparate sexual and metaphysical aspects is an evocative metaphor of how Nigeria can harmonise its various cultural, sexual, political and ethnic identities. The text complicates contemporary African heterosexual cultures' attempts to locate queerness within the categories of Western cultural imperialism and lack of masculinity by depicting an African cosmological being who is queer. By using a reincarnation narrative, Emezi reasserts the cosmological in the African imagination of life, humanity, sexuality and gender which destabilises contemporary conceptualisations of queerness through the lens of mental illness. This reframing simultaneously interrogates Western sexual imaginaries within African cultures.

The death of Vivek Oji and his being labelled mentally ill demonstrate both the fate of queerness and the fate of Nigeria as a political construct. Nigeria's fate as a nation is connected to those individuals and social groups whom dominant imaginaries label as mentally unstable because of their sexuality or politics or ethnicity. The final act of the novel in which the female Igbo name, Nnemdi, is added to Vivek's tombstone suggests the marrying of the physical into

the cosmological to recuperate authentic African cultural perspectives on culture, nationhood and sexuality. As Vivek/Nnemdi's various identities demonstrate, there are various ways of being. What is being pathologised as mental illness by Nigeria's heterosexual cultures is, therefore, the embodiment of what Nigeria's national identity should be, that is, an equilibrium between sexual, ethnic, political and cultural identities. It collapses the sociopolitical valuation of these identities. In other words, this is an Igbo cosmological solution to Nigeria's cyclical political transitions and national identity.

Chapter 6: 'State of Mind': Politics, Culture and Postcolonial Psychiatry in two Contemporary African Documentaries

Introduction

Documentary film representations of madness in Africa are not entirely divorced from the cosmology of madness discussed in written African literary texts. Though the documentary as an artform "asserts – in the very process of its representing – an authoritative claim to "truth" premised on a very specific "fidelity to the real" (Cross, 2004, p. 203), it is an artistic production with a particular focus. As such, the selected documentary films use lived realities of psychiatric care in Africa harnessing different epistemological components to artistically construct a visual narrative that focalises psychiatric crisis and the required re-imagination of psychiatric care in postcolonial Africa. This warrants a reading of documentary films as visual texts. They, however, differ from written literary texts in their emphasis on psychiatric and mental health crisis in different African postcolonies. One discovers that their primary portrayal of madness as a medical condition and mental illness also doubles as a metaphorical critique of the political and social systems which organise the world of madness. A literary reading of the depiction of traditional and modern psychiatric institutions, psychiatric patients and conceptualisations of mental illness in African postcolonies shows the relevance of Foucault's theorisations in *Madness and Civilisation; A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (Foucault, 1965). This seminal work offers a historical framework to discuss the overlaps in discourses of authority and psychology and how madness acquires different meanings in different epochs. Closer to home, the volume *The Culture of Mental Illness and Psychiatric Practice in Africa* (Akyeampong, et al., 2015) significantly highlights the cosmological, colonial and postcolonial conceptualisations of psychiatry in Africa. Focusing on the postcolonial epoch, this chapter discusses the deployment of psychopolitical constructions in the documentaries to simultaneously contest cultural and sociomedical constructions of madness and visualise an ongoing socio-medical crisis in postcolonial Africa. I pay particular attention to the deployment of cosmological components as semiotic frameworks to package this state of crisis.

Writing of the history of psychiatry in colonial and postcolonial Zimbabwe, Jackson (1999) explains that psychiatry occupies a special place in different models of civilisation. Jackson accurately argues that

> the discipline of psychiatry and the place of the asylum are important sites of struggle and contestation over space (the body, the hospital, and the nation) and meaning (What is mental illness/disorder anyway? What does it mean to recover?) (1999, p. 38).

What Jackson means is that psychiatry is ostensibly ideological and is susceptible to ideological conscription. The history of psychiatry in Africa demonstrates its intricate relationship with coloniality and the enforcement of the colonial social order (Jackson, 2005). Psychiatric practice in colonial Africa complied with hegemonic desires to establish a social order that negated African people, epistemologies and cosmologies. The psychiatric hospital, once the insane asylum, occupied a complex place in European civilisation. For instance, it had evolved from a residence of lepers to a space for the (in)discriminate confinement of "poor vagabonds, criminals, and "deranged minds"" (Foucault, 1965, p. 7) as a way to establish social order. These attitudes did not evolve with time, instead, "such modalities of European power were imported, in some cases wholesale, into its former colonial domains" (Hook, 2014, p. 213). Built on a cache of exclusionary attitudes, the colonial African social order was further ideologically "raced and gendered" (Papa, 2017, p. 77). Since the "negro" is constructed as a defective "human" in colonial order (Mbembe, 2001), he was therefore assigned the place of stigma once occupied by the leper in Europe. Colonial establishments used the same technology and tactics to incarcerate black people in poorly equipped and overcrowded psychiatric wards. Psychiatric care, argues Parker, came to Africa "structured by the history of racism in Europe" (2014, p. 161). In its colonial application, psychiatry participated in the arbitrary incarceration of black people. This brief history of psychiatric practice reveals its direct linkage to state ideologies and attitudes in different epochs. In the colonial epoch, psychiatry served the advancement of Empire through incarcerating 'problematic' black bodies (Cohen, 2016). My reading pays attention to the Zimbabwean and West African state ideologies and attitudes as visualised through the state of their postcolonial psychiatric practice.

Apart from the racialised and gendered psychiatric practices, colonial psychology also criminalised traditional methods of treatment as witchcraft. For example, the Witchcraft Suppression Act of 1899 and 1957 in Rhodesia and South Africa, respectively, functioned to outlaw all forms of traditional medicine (Jackson, 1999). This epitomises the delegitimation of African cosmologies through colonial medical imperialism (Cohen, 2018). Despite, "having been written out of modern religious and (post/colonial) medical legitimacy, [spirit mediums] continue to address madness in their consultations and ritual repertoires" (Ng, 2020, p. 149). Their place in postcolonial Africa is still a heavily contested one, and they are often consulted

clandestinely which points to both their resilience and stigmatisation. Traditional cosmological perspectives of the world and of madness though not encountering a complete halt, have undeniably accumulated stigma as a result of colonial delegitimation. Ambivalence and scepticism about the veracity of these traditional treatment methods is still evident as argued in my analysis of Tshuma's *Digging Stars* (2023) where the traditional healer is consulted as a last resort. However, efforts are being made in several postcolonial medical care and psychological practices to re-integrate cultural frameworks, personnel and concepts into mainstream practices to re-craft a distinct critical psychology beneficial in contemporary postcolonial African psychiatric practice (Hook, 2014). This background is vital in my approach of madness because these attitudes and infrastructure largely inform contemporary psychiatric care in Africa. The documentaries are situated in these postcolonial milieus of delegitimated yet still operational cosmologies. I take special interest in the place of African cosmologies in the visualised postcolonies' psychiatric practice.

Clearly, psychiatry is a contested space that is subject to socio-political production. Psychiatric practice in postcolonial Africa is characterised by its own set of political and cultural issues. These issues include policy frameworks, the place of culture in psychiatric practice and the decolonisation of psychiatric practice (Akyeampong, et al., 2015). In this chapter, I discuss the various socio-political, cosmological and psychological orientations which are examined through representations of madness in these documentaries. I simultaneously interrogate the distinctive and sometimes intertwined political and cosmological frameworks which inform psychiatric practice in Africa and the documentary representations themselves. Since Cohen (2019) has already discussed the International Empirical forces' impact on healthcare provision in postcolonies, my study will centralise the local political forces. This is also because these aspects of healthcare provision are not explicitly visualised in the documentaries. In the following analysis of Hopewell Rugoho-Chin'ono's *State of Mind* (2018) and Virgine Berda's *Crazy Hope* (2015), I discuss how the documentaries use madness to construct and contest the statuses of specific African postcolonial nations and subjectivities. In my analysis of the state ideologies as visualised by the documentarists, I also analyse the documentaries' ideological inclinations. Since both documentaries visualise the socio-medical state of crisis of postcolonial psychiatry, I read Rugoho-Chin'ono's documentary as a visual representation of Zimbabwean postcoloniality as a purveyor of mental illness and Berda's as a portrayal of the interface between culture and politics in detrimentally (mis)conceptualising mental illness. In reference to Berda's documentary, I discuss how in the visualisation of mentally ill patients,

West African postcolonial governments' negligence of psychiatry is focalised. Although these documentaries have a divergent relationship with African cosmologies, the ostensible overlaps on the tropes of crisis and the role of politics and culture in the causation and (mis)conceptualisation of mental illness motivate my selection. Both documentary films portray psychiatry and mentally ill patients as casualties of politico-cultural forces in postcolonial Africa.

Representations of the Zimbabwean Mental Health Crisis in Hopewell Rugoho-Chin'ono's State of Mind (2018).

Hopewell Rugoho-Chin'ono's documentary is "for awareness" as it highlights in the introduction to the video footage. It also claims that it is the "first feature documentary film made in Africa looking at mental illness disorders and how they are treated" (State of Mind, 2018). It follows Zimbabwean psychologist, Dixon Chibanda's[40] work to bridge the treatment gap in Zimbabwe's mental healthcare system which is starkly visualised by the statistical ratio of "fourteen psychiatrists for a population of 15 million" (State of Mind, 2018). According to Dr Chibanda, mental illness in Zimbabwe is a "social problem" meaning that its prevalence can be traced back to the dysfunctional sociopolitical situation currently prevailing in Zimbabwe. Biomedical diagnosis, in this milieu, is therefore inadequate. The documentary reveals the crisis within the healthcare system which Dr Chibanda has tried to bridge through a psycho-social program called the "Friendship Bench". The Friendship Bench is a community-based healthcare system which equips elderly community women, known as *Mbuya Utano*, to provide psychological assistance to psychiatric patients through counselling and provision of self-sustaining entrepreneurial economic programs such as poultry projects and bag weaving. Through his X page, formerly Twitter, Hopewell Chin'ono[41] alerts us to the Zimbabwean crisis and that "the documentary is a political metaphor of life in Zimbabwe which includes drugs, unemployment, lack of rule of law, looting of public funds, failed hospital institutions and lack

[40] Dixon Chibanda is a psychiatrist and a "professor of psychiatry and global mental health at the University of Zimbabwe and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. [He] is the Founder of the Friendship Bench and the recipient of the 2023 McNulty Prize" (Chibanda, 2024). In this research I will address him as Dr Chibanda as he is addressed in the documentary.

[41] Hopewell Rugoho-Chin'ono's X handle excludes Rugoho from the biographic information, therefore, my references to his social media handle exclude the name.

of medication" (Chin'ono, 2023). Therein lies Chin'ono's socio-political hermeneutic which I similarly consider usable in my analysis. Dr Chibanda's enterprise to diagnose the social origins of madness effectually diagnoses Zimbabwe's state of mind. This background crystalises the political and economic circumstances that function to produce the madness and mental disruptions encountered in the documentary and in Zimbabwean psychiatry.

In the documentary, poverty and violence are some of the dire ramifications of the ruling ZANU PF party's misgovernance which contribute to the pervasive mental health crisis in the country. Therefore, I simultaneously discuss the patient's and the "prepatient's [postcolonial] subjectivity" (Jackson, 2005, p. 187). This is a way of mapping how the depicted patients' lives intersect with the sociopolitical and economic realities prevailing in Zimbabwe. I particularly pay attention to their life narratives to discuss what their experiences prior the onset of mental illness and experiences of mental illness reveal about postcolonial Zimbabwe.

'State of mind' – metaphors and realities

State of mind is a pun that points towards the overlapping experiential realities of mental illness, the contemporary psychodynamics of Zimbabwean authoritarianism, and the rethinking of madness through Dr Chibanda's critical psychology paradigm. Chibanda argues that in Zimbabwe, poverty, HIV and AIDS pandemic related psychic traumas and drug and substance abuse comprise the principal causes of mental illness. Suicide ideation is a major result of these experiences. Thus, in this film we are dealing with a sociopolitical mindset that has become a fertile ground for state neglected mental illness. The documentary opens with Tafadzwa's case who is verbally challenged hence his story is quickly dropped after visualising the psychiatric inadequacies within the Zimbabwean health care system and the social stigma surrounding mental illness. In the scene which shows an interview between Tafadzwa's guardian and Dr Chibanda, the former explains that she has resorted to keeping Tafadzwa locked inside the house because neighbours consider him an inconvenience. She continues to highlight the lack of day centres to cater for people with Tafadzwa's disability. The scene instantly alerts us to the infrastructural inadequacies in Zimbabwe's psychiatric health provision. Zimbabwe's neglect and abandonment of its "biopolitical obligations" (Biehl, 2005, p. 21) are Chin'ono's particular journalistic concerns as shown in the documentary and in his constant social media criticism of the Zimbabwe regime over maternal mortality and lack of oncological equipment. This documentary fits within this journalistic oeuvre and may be regarded a critique of Zimbabwe's neglected and outdated mental health policy as I will show in the following

paragraphs. Though Tafadzwa features briefly, his condition articulates the endangered place of mental illness in postcolonial Zimbabwe and the documentarist's journalistic concerns.

Consequently, the plot follows three patients whose recoveries, and in one case, death after visible psychological and physical recovery, opens possibilities to represent madness as a signifier of Zimbabwe's politically related socioeconomic woes. These stories of mental illness signify Zimbabwe's barren economic landscape that foils not only personal ambitions but inevitably, citizens' psychological health. They also expose the government's negligence of mental illness patients. Chin'ono deliberately shifts the camera from Tafadzwa to the Hospital's signposts brandishing Zimbabwe's postcolonial insignias to draw attention to the political establishment represented by the structural deficits. Together with these insignia, the Hospital was, in 2019, renamed from Harare Central Hospital to Sally Mugabe[42] Hospital to honour Zimbabwe's former president, Robert Mugabe's wife. Although the name change occurred after the documentary's release, it provides an interesting angle to think through the postcolonial semiotics that the Zimbabwean state uses to self-authorise its postcoloniality. In relation to the documentary, it visualises the distinctly postcolonial state of mind that Chin'ono wanted to focalise through the hospital's insignia. These symbols do not only signify periodisation but also function to signal towards the psychiatry dimensions as a narrative that contests the state's self-authoring discourses. Actually, this onomastic construction palimpsests an ongoing sociomedical crisis which Chin'ono explores. I am going to discuss these issues within the theoretical and cosmological framework of abandonment as symbolised by the documentary's sonic motifs. Thus, the Zimbabwean state's sociopolitical mindset is revealed through its relationship to psychiatry and through the documentary's central characters' (patients') states of mind.

The documentary pursues Dr Chibanda's three primary patients – Rumbi Ndoro, Cloudious Mukoki and Evans Maredza – all admitted at the now Sally Mugabe Hospital psychiatric ward. Rumbi Ndoro is a young mother diagnosed with bipolar disorder, while Evans and Cloudious' mental disorders are related to drug and substance abuse. These three belong to the same socioeconomic category as non-professionals who are among populations most affected by the socio-economic realities obtaining in Zimbabwe. To conceptualise the psychiatric reality in Zimbabwe through the hospital, Chin'ono uses two aesthetical values. Firstly, apart from these

[42] Sally Mugabe 1931 – 1992.

central characters, Chin'ono's documentary creates a spectacle of a night scene of bodies strewn along the semi-dark concrete pavements surrounding the ward's entrance. These bodies are immediately recognizable as psychiatric patients through their blue uniform. Secondly, the anonymity and absence of dialogue in the visualisation of these secondary characters is aesthetically covered by a chilling soundtrack of Oliver Mtukudzi's[43] song; *Sarawoga* (2012). *Sarawoga* translates to abandonment, thus, creating an overall aesthetic of abandonment that reminisces Biehl's (2005) theorisation of 'zones of social abandonment' and Agamben's (1998) 'bare life'. Biehl's work tours Brazil's "Vita, an asylum in Porto Alegre" which housed

> "people who had been cut off from family life – the mentally ill and the sick, the unemployed and the homeless – were left there by relatives, neighbors, hospitals, and the police … where the abandoned waited *with* death" (2005, p. 1).

Although the Vita arguably operates in an extreme form of abandonment, Biehl's conceptualisation of abandonment agrees with Mtukudzi's *Sarawoga*. It offers insights into an abandoned Zimbabwean healthcare system that requires Dr Chibanda's intervention. The epitome of this state of abandonment are the faceless and nameless madmen and women strewn along the psychiatric hospital's pavements. Such vulnerability and exposure to weatherelements is symbolic of Zimbabwe's contemporary socio-economic situation which is characterised by unrelenting exposure to poverty and destitution. While in Zimbabwe's postcolonial infancy, there was a "genuine state-directed commitment to revolutionizing health care" (Jackson, 2005, p. 179), the current government has completely neglected public health. In their mental health systems analysis, Kidia et al (2017) argue that the Zimbabwean mental health care policy is outdated, having been last updated in 1996. What we are dealing with, therefore, are forms of economic and political abandonment that are especially glaring in the psychiatric hospital. It is worth noting, however, that the abandonment of psychiatry in Zimbabwe started

> In the early 1990s when Zimbabwe adopted the Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP) and was advised by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank to cut its health and education budgets and to pass the costs of these and other services over to the consumers (Jackson, 2005, p. 190).

[43] Oliver Mtukudzi (1952 – 2019) is an internationally acclaimed Zimbabwean musician who is now late. He is credited for the documentary's music productions and arrangement.

The *Sarawoga* concept extends to political, social and cosmological terrains thus offering a culture-bound theoretical point of departure. It is necessary to note here that these terrains overlap significantly in the conceptualisation of abandonment.

Sarawoga is a vernacular sociocultural concept that evokes communal and moral dimensions. The song provides a soundtrack to Evans' state of physical abandonment visualised through sitting alone on a visitors' bench while the image of his cursing, threatening and sobbing mother quickly recedes from the footage frame. The song continues through visualisations of Evans being led by the hand back to his ward by a health practitioner to whom he is abandoned. It is this scene which is harmonised with the anonymous pavement-strewn spectres discussed in the preceding paragraph. Mtukudzi's *Sarawoga* is a seven-word track that adds a socio-spiritual dimension to Evans' mental illness. Excluding its four-worded refrain, the song lyrics proceed,

> *Sarawoga* (abandoned),
> *kaverevere wegani* (vagabond) (Mtukudzi, 2012).

Given that the composition is utilised to capture a specific scene in which Evans is momentarily abandoned in the hospital and threatened with permanent abandonment by his mother for insulting her, it is necessary to first engage the family's social account preceding his admittance into the psychiatric hospital. Through his mother's threats, the viewer is informed of Evans' violent conduct which, at one point, culminated in him publicly assaulting her. This public embarrassment was accompanied by his allegations of his mother's promiscuity and coercing her to vacate 'his father's house' so that he could convert it into a sublet. Apparent in these skirmishes are "current economic changes facing Africans and their devastating effects on the traditional family" (Collignon, 2015, p. 172). The metaphor of abandonment here immediately lends itself to a cosmological conceptual framework of Evans' predicament because of his violation of his filial responsibility. Evans' mother interprets her son' accusations in the morally deplorable context of incest and asks him, "Is that what is stopping you from you from getting married? You want to take me as your wife?" (State of Mind, 2018). Shona culture interprets such disruptions in filial relationships in the context of incestuous inclinations as implied here. Evans' actions are a breach of social and moral taboos enacted to maintain the sacrality of filial relationships thus, he exposes himself to the wrathful maternal spirits known as *Kutanda Botso*. The sacrality of women (mothers) in this culture is exemplified in the gender dynamics of the social support system surrounding these patients. Mothers, wives and other

female relatives are a constant presence in the documentary hence the socio-cultural implications of Evans' abandonment.

These disturbed relations have visible implications on the social sphere and incur the wrath of the spirits causing madness to bring back the harmony enshrined in the social taboos surrounding motherhood. Thus, when Evans' mother returns to visit him after an unspecified number of days, he prostates himself at her feet begging for forgiveness showing an awareness of sociocultural implications of his mother's wrath. Possibilities of this being simply a negotiation tactic for release from the hospital cannot be dismissed. This action, however, resolves our foremost encounter with Evans when he denies ever assaulting his mother. To his mother, such a denial signals lack of recovery on Evans' part. Here, Jackson's (2005) position of the contested meaning of recovery is revisited. Recovery in this case implies admission of guilty which is procedural in *Kutanda Botso* traditions as highlighted in Chapter 4. Understanding recovery in non-biomedical conceptualisations therefore underscores *Sarawoga*'s cosmological aspects. Mtukudzi's soundtrack aesthetically creates a confluence of socio-economic and cosmological interpretations for Evans' mental illness and abandonment. Aspects of cosmological abandonment by protective familial spirits is a possible explanation considering his abandonment of his cultural responsibility towards his mother. This understanding of cosmological angles to Evans' madness does not, however, preclude the physiological origins articulated in the documentary, that is, the abuse of illicit alcoholic substances. The biomedical interpretation is equally crucial in that it points to the political. It reveals a nation primarily characterised by politico-economic fissures which, to Patel and Stein (2015), significantly contribute to the prevalence of mental illness in developing countries. Dr. Chibanda, Evans' mother and Evans himself similarly attest that alcohol abuse is linked to quests for temporary stress relief from Zimbabwe's chronic economic anxieties. Dr Chibanda's psychiatric diagnosis reveals that Evans' latent mental illness is exacerbated by using illicit drugs. This diagnosis, shared between Evans and Cloudious, gestures towards a fragmented politico-economic cosmology providing fertile ground for the consumption of such substances as *mbanje* (marijuana) and illicit brews imported from Mozambique such as *Kachasu*. Like its colonial predecessor, the Zimbabwean postcolony has already taken "on the aspect of a fertile purveyor for psychiatric hospitals" (Fanon, 1963, p. 249) as these two cases demonstrate. Zimbabwe incarnates metaphors of madness like its colonial predecessor.

Zimbabwe is a prime example of a failing postcolonial nation with attendant economic and psychopolitical problems demonstrated in Cloudious' case. The hostile political and economic environment produces people like Cloudious who are economically marooned. Cloudious is an aspiring musician whose diagnosis, similar to Evans', reveals substance abuse as an accelerating factor to his mental health crisis. His background of suffering the first episode of mental breakdown while working in South Africa invokes a familiar political trope of the Zimbabwe crisis. Migrancy is one of the most precarious realities of being Zimbabwean. South Africa, despite being the most favoured destination for many Zimbabwean il/legal immigrants, is not simply a socially welcoming space. Although Zimbabweans migrate for different reasons, Evans' case in the documentary is an example of the economic precarity of Zimbabwe as a major cause of migration. Though the political complexity of migrant subjectivity is not discussed, the condition of the general postcolonial Zimbabwean as a potentially precarious one is inferable. Cloudious' characterisation of his first experience in 2013 reminisces *Digging Stars*' depiction of Athandwa's experience of psychological breakdown as discussed in Chapter 3. He narrates: "I experienced something like death, I felt like I was dying, I thought of all the people in Zimbabwe" (State of Mind, 2018). This motif of equating the onset of mental illness to death in these literary and filmic texts characterises ongoing traumas of poverty and the terror resulting from significantly bleak personal and national futures. Cloudious' condition is a culmination of substance abuse, itself a result of regimes of poverty and political intolerance. Thus, both Cloudious and Evans are mentally ill prior to the onset of substance abuse.

Cloudious' songs which he rehearses in the psychiatric hospital convey critical socio-economic agency through articulations of disgust towards poverty. I take the cue from Mpofu and Nenjerama who conceptualise music as a relay to "a people's experiences and aspirations…a place to archive history and experiences" (2018, p. 4) to discuss the sociopolitical value enshrined in Cloudious' two musical rehearsals. Due to varying degrees of availability of music to hegemonic conscription, other scholars see, in certain contemporary genres of Zimbabwean music, generational consciousness and emergent cultures (Chidora, et al., 2024). The cosmological value of music to the thematic packaging of this documentary has already been theorised above through the case of Oliver Mtukudzi's *Sarawoga*. Due to the embattled nature of artistic production in Zimbabwe, Cloudious' compositions should neither be simply treated as ramblings of a madman nor display of talent to the psychiatrist but as socio-economic commentary revealing the state of mind of a marooned subject. He is not simply a reproduction of the political spaces and forces prevailing in Zimbabwe and South Africa. His migration to

South Africa practically epitomises this state of mind of actively contesting the poverty-stricken spaces that are inseparable from Zimbabwean citizenship. Spaces of entrepreneurial pursuit and poverty such as Mbare form a central metaphor in his songs. For instance,

> *Amai ndafunga zvandave chigondora* (Dear Mother, now that I am an adult)
> *Ndakumbonovhima, kupinda musango iro rinehondo* (I am going hunting, I am going into the jungles where there are wars)
> *Ndirege kupemha* (so that I don't become a beggar)
> *KuMarimuka kunorima ndima* (I am departing for the diaspora, for greener pastures)
> *Musika weMbare, kutamba chiMbare* (Or to hustle at the Mbare informal market) (State of Mind, 2018).

These lyrics portray an uncapped commitment to improving personal economic fortunes through hustling, working and entrepreneurial pursuits which are embodied in his use of the metaphors; *chiMbare* and *Marimuka*. Mbare, an urban township located in Harare, is a space for an informal market economy upon which many Zimbabweans rely, while *marimuka* is reminiscent of the diasporic and migrant economies of Southern Rhodesia, thus, mobilising such metaphors here creates a narrative of national socio-economic distress. The economic etymology of these words communicates desperate pursuit of economic wellbeing amid a disabling milieu. Discussing Thomas Mapfumo's[44] song of the same title, Musiyiwa clarifies that "'Marimuka' ("Hunting grounds") expresses the feelings of many Zimbabweans – to find an opportunity to leave the country to search for a better life" (2013, p. 83). Cloudious sees these spaces of struggle as possible avenues for self-improvement which, ironically, he considers foreclosed by his commitment in the psychiatric hospital. The documentary's overall musical aesthetic, however, demonstrates that these spaces have already been foreclosed to him prior his admission.

Similarly, Evans claims to be a musician and, instead of furnishing Dr Chibanda with original compositions, he offers discordant renditions of Bob Marley's popular songs. Evans is an interesting case who demonstrates the impact of the Reggae music genre in the modes of political expression, mindset and psychology of many Zimbabweans. He is introduced repeating the Ras Tafari chant verbatim. His demeanour is consistent with the typical

[44] Thomas Mapfumo is an internationally acclaimed Zimbabwean musician who went into self-imposed exile in 2000 citing intimidation by the Zimbabwean regime. He artistically contributed to the Zimbabwean Liberation Struggle through his genre of music called Chimurenga music (Liberation Music).

misconceptualisation of Rastafarianism by some sectors of Zimbabweans as a politico-religious movement that encourages drug and substance abuse. His subsequent chaotic rendition of Bob Marley and the Wailers' *One Drop* (1979) and *War* (1976) signals the influence of this culture. Reggae music and its Afrocentric thematical emphasis is a culture similarly born out of the pain and anguish experienced the Jamaican post/colony. Bob Marley's music is very important to many Zimbabweans, "especially given that the country's independence on 18 April 1980 was ushered in to the sound of Bob Marley's reggae performance" (Chidora, et al., 2024, p. 9). The reggae genre has influenced the rise of contemporary and popular music genres such as Zimdancehall and reggae. It significantly resonates with Zimbabwe's marginal communities; hence they consequently co-opt it to articulate their own socio-political experiences under colonial and subsequent postcolonial regimes. Consequently, the compositions performed 'out of sync' by Evans express resistance against systems of oppression. These songs are politically evocative productions and usually provide soundtracks to many 'chill-spots' where illegal substances are peddled. As Chidora et al argue, such and other spaces as "informal barbershops and kombis[…] allow ghetto youths to perform their agency by employing bodies and voices rebellious against those who deny them political and economic dialogues" (2024, p. 16 & 17). Evans' chronic substance abuse, visible in his delayed articulation and posture, maybe thus understood in the context of a subculture that clandestinely contests cultural, economic and political impositions of the regime through music and illegal economic manoeuvres. Evans' renditions of Bob Marley's songs signify politico-spatial contestation against ignoble systems of oppression like the ones in Zimbabwe. They point to the political set-up that informs these songs. There are numerous ideological and economic components resident in Bob Marley's music hence its influence.

Systems of oppression are exemplified through Evans's self-censorship in his articulation of the conditions that fuel his drug-binging. He utilises depersonalising linguistic constructs, for example, the statement "some people are saying that the economic situation in the country is tough" (State of Mind, 2018). His mother specifically notices this evasive response and exhorts him to openly discuss the harsh economic situation and high unemployment rate prevailing in the country. Despite this prevalence, the political establishment maintains the fallacy of economic sufficiency and criminalises articulation of opposing views hence Evans' self-censorship. The uncomfortable laughter ensuing Evans' mother's intervention is indicative of the political situation produced through "lies and double speak" and "close surveillance and repression" of all "verbal dissidence" (Mbembe, 2001, p. 118). Evans' self-gagging should be

understood within the politics of survival that governs Zimbabwean citizens' discursive avoidance of all politically charged discourses. Despite his madness, Evans retains this state of mind which signifies a deeply engrained psychic template. Inhabiting these zones of social abandonment, thus, involves a series of reflexive behaviours to avoid direct confrontation with the authoritarian regime. Foucault (1977) coins the term "effective subjection" to describe the crystallisation of coercion within political subjects' psyches. Evans cautiously navigates the political space in Zimbabwe revealing the psychic tensions and reflexes it fosters. These dimensions of drug abuse reveal an unhealthy subculture informed by the psychodynamics of oppression and surveillance.

Cloudious and Evans' musical compositions and renditions reveal the socio-economic dimensions to their illnesses. These dimensions are shared by their parents who acknowledge the economic deficits which provide fertile ground for drug and substance abuse. The drug and illegal beverage binges are fueled by desires for temporary stress relief. They are routine social activities originating from the foreclosure of economic spaces in Zimbabwe. The socio-recreational consumption of illicit and sometimes fatal alcoholic substances, to which consumers demonstrate diverse degrees of intolerance, is a direct consequence of political failure of Zimbabwean postcolonial regimes. I say intolerance because, according to Evans, several of his acquaintances have died while others like him are admitted to psychiatric hospitals. To Dr Chibanda, there are many cases of undiagnosed mental illnesses revealing themselves through the vagabondage immediately following substance use. Drug abuse is presented as a manifestation of underlying psychological anguish emanating from postcolonial misgovernance. This is the message Chin'ono also continuously reiterates in his social media revisits to the documentary. Dr Chibanda's intervention, however, seeks to empower his patients with the agency that they have been robbed of by the regime. He does not specifically address the political riptides inspiring these forms of mental ills but rather encourages his subjects to succeed regardless of these harsh realities. Through these two patients, Chin'ono visualises the predicament of Zimbabwe's postcolonial subjectivities.

Dr Chibanda's third central patient, Rumbi, acquires fame and 'celebrity' status at the hospital due to the intensity of her bi-polar disorder. She is chaotic, agitative and displays limited control of her faculties which is visualised through wetting herself, drooling and a dangling left wrist. These are side-effects of different medications taken over a fifteen-year period. She seems to be the worst case of all the portrayed patients. There are heart wrenching depictions

of her running away from cradling her infant son and there are signs of extreme disorientation which she confirms during her brief recovery.

Rumbi's case reveals Dr Chibanda's ambivalence concerning consulting traditional and alternative religious sects to treat what he deems a curable ailment. Rumbi's mother admits to conscripting traditional healers who diagnose her of evil spirits (*mamhepo*), Walter Magaya's prophetic and miraculous healing services[45] and an apostolic faith sect which required their conversion to sufficiently help Rumbi. She also gravitates towards letting Rumbi's father consult his ancestors for clarity hence she comes to decommit Rumbi from the hospital. Despite the apparent failures of these organisations, Dr Chibanda neither encourages nor invalidates such approaches to Rumbi's health although he emphasises the possibilities of curing Rumbi through clinical psychiatry. Tragically, and after extensively visible improvement due to Dr Chibanda's intervention, Rumbi dies "from lithium toxicity due to a prescription error at Parirenyatwa Hospital" (State of Mind, 2018). Rumbi's case profoundly exemplifies the simultaneous disjunct and comingling of clinical psychiatry and traditional medicine; the "modern rift between the religious and the non-religious" (Ng, 2020, p. 146) interpretational frameworks. With neighbours conceptualising her mental illness as evidence of wealth-acquisition magic using Rumbi as the sacrificial lamb, her mother exploring various traditional and modern routes and Dr Chibanda emphasising the medical aspect, a variety of conceptualisations of mental illness that comprise a cosmology of madness are evoked. Clearly, these multiple realities can co-exist outside clinical psychology although, in Africa, health professionals occasionally clandestinely advise patients to consult traditional healers for cases that appear to be beyond Western medicine (Mkhize, 2014, p. 39). It should not be overlooked that these conceptualisations sometimes bear vocabularies of witchcraft which should not, however, be misconstrued as a sign of primitivity. The consultation of various religious and prophetic personnel points to the spiritual understanding of the world by Rumbi's family thereby contesting the diagnostic finality of clinical psychiatry. Similarly, the hospital's accession to Rumbi's family's consultation of traditional medicine signals a significant attitudinal shift in psychiatry as practiced in postcolonial Zimbabwe. Rhodesian colonial psychiatry was unrelenting to such interventions despite its own shortcomings (Jackson, 1999).

[45] Walter Magaya is the founder and self-proclaimed Prophet of the of Prophetic Healing and Deliverance (P.H.D) Ministries, a famous prophetic and charismatic religious sect headquartered in Zimbabwe.

Dr Chibanda's "Friendship Bench" is a critical psychology model that seeks to rehabilitate patients based on the socio-economic challenges they continue to experience in postcolonial Zimbabwe. It systematises pre-existing indigenous traditional models which include the use of elderly community women as significant counsellors. This model is cognisant of the fact that "Western models of psychiatric care are too resource intensive to be rolled out across the world, particularly in Africa and South Asia" (Chibanda, 2024). This is worsened by high levels of corruption in Zimbabwe which result in a disproportionate patient to clinical psychologist ratio. Zimbabwe, according to Chibanda, "despite being a country of 16 million, it just has 13 psychiatrists and 20 clinical psychologists" (ibid). Psychiatric hospitals and wards are even fewer; "there are six public institutions with psychiatric beds…three facilities [which] provide forensic psychiatry services" (Mangezi & Chibanda, 2010, p. 93). This statistical disparity, apart from emphasising the economic abandonment of health care by the Zimbabwean government, alerts us to an urgent psychosocial crisis. Dr Chibanda approximates that "90 percent of people requiring to see a psychiatrist will not see one" (State of Mind, 2018) leaving a precarious treatment gap which he attempts to bridge using the Friendship Bench.

However, the Friendship Bench's dynamics do not only critique western models for the costs. The integration of community grandmothers into psychiatric care is itself a critical utilisation of the cultural symbolism elderly women bear in Zimbabwe and many African cultures. Dr Chibanda conceptualises these grandmothers as "culturally appropriate" tools due to their cultural position as "custodians of local culture, wisdom and knowledge which makes them perfect therapists" (Aspen Global Leadership Network, 2023). Their cultural capital is often regarded highly by community members other than their direct progeny. Their titles, *Ambuya* and *Sekuru* (grandmother and grandfather), are also applied to traditional healers and modern scientific clinicians who are referred through such titles despite their individual ages. Grandmother thus operates as a social, cultural and traditional/medical title hence its use here. Therapy conducted by these lay health workers is claimed to forego the alienating pathological labels that are obediently used in clinical psychology. Although the methodologies used are structured, the understanding and conceptualisation of psychological care is cultural and experiential. Through its nomenclature and social media posts, the Friendship Bench emphasises communal friendship and harmony as a possible solution to some of the social traumas and depressive mental states emanating from Zimbabwe's turbulent history. The documentary concurs with Patel and Stein (2015) about the ignored prevalence of depression (*kufungisisa*) in Zimbabwe. The professionalisation of this cultural component, simultaneously

helping these grandmothers with a source of income, provides a therapeutic outlet for the excessive worry that comes with a harsh economic and political environment. The Friendship Bench is an archival retrieval and conversion of grandmotherhood into a socio-scientific paradigm capacitated with modalities of clinical psychology to meet pervasive psychological disorders claiming lives in Zimbabwe. Critical psychology in this case refashions Afro-cosmological psychiatric models and integrates them into mainstream psychology to suit the demands of contemporary Africa's mental health crisis.

Lastly, Dr. Chibanda's approach to mental health seeks to economically empower his patients through various socioeconomic enterprises. Regardless of their limitations, these economic projects such as Z-bag (a bag weaving project that uses recycled plastic) offer some economic relief to the weavers who are mostly former patients. It should also be noted that these projects offer a critique to the government's complete failure which encompasses economic, social and political spheres. The Friendship Bench and its ensuing socioeconomic projects discourages resignation to poverty related mental illness and dissuades suicide ideation. It should be acknowledged here that these models have had considerable impact on mental health in Zimbabwe. Both Cloudious and Evans finally recover from their illness with the former managing to record some of the musical renditions we see during his admittance. The end of the documentary, however, places emphasis on the 90% of Zimbabweans who encounter difficulties accessing mental health services. Chino'no's documentary visualises a menacing crisis that the Zimbabwean government has turned a blind eye to. An emphasis on aspects of abandonment is ostensibly visible in the concluding soundtrack provided by Oliver Mtukudzi's song *Seiko?* (Mtukudzi, 2004). The song is an open-ended question: Why me?

The preceding discussion has shown that *State of Mind* depicts the Zimbabwean government's neglect of mental health services, and all health services in general. In a country that prioritises the political and considers sociomedical concerns expendable, casualties include the people and the economy. Foster accurately observes that "among those who have the least resources and who face the greatest hardships of daily living, the rate of mental health problems is likely to be elevated" (2013, p. 588). In the Zimbabwean case, this is compounded by an oppressive political structure which expects its citizens to survive in the zone of political abandonment. Mtukudzi's *Sarawoga* (2005) provides a framework to view mental illness patients are inhabiting spaces of abandonment. The soundtrack adds a cosmological point of departure to understand various states of mind and political abandonment of the economic and health sectors

in Zimbabwe. Two of the patients visualised articulate this state of existence through their music. To mitigate against the prevalence of mental illness, Dr Chibanda implements various psychiatric frameworks which include African traditional systems of psychotherapy and counselling.

Visualising Madness: Crisis, Contestations and Constructions of Madness in Virginie Berda's A Crazy Hope (2015)

This documentary is another portrayal of a mental health crisis in French speaking West Africa. It features Grégoire Ahongbonon who founded Saint Camille de' Lellis association to cater for the mentally ill in, so far, four West African countries (Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Burkina Faso and Togo). The first of these centres was opened in 1994 in Côte d'Ivoire's city of Bouake. The naming after a Catholic patron saint of the ill reveals the founder's religious persuasion which possibly influences his conceptualisation of madness and representation of African cosmological perspectives as misconceptualisation. Saint Camille de' Lellis (1550 – 1614) is a Catholic saint who devoted his service to the sick and was canonised by the church in recognition of his charity work. Similarly, Ahongbonon views his devotion to the marginalised mentally ill as a divine mission, thus, his centres are populated by both nuns and psychiatrists. He packages his own experience with mental illness as a wakeup call to cater for this historically ostracised social group. Using the metaphor of invisibility, the documentary focalises the ostracism and abandonment suffered by madmen because of traditional conceptualisations of madmen as possessed, and the under-resourcing of psychiatric care in the aforementioned West African countries. The latter is considered the product of West African cultural conceptualisation of madness. It is from this invisibility that society constructs a status of the madman's (in)humanity and, therefore, conveniently ostracises him from medical care, human companionship and compassion. This refusal to accord the madman his human rights and privileges takes us into the realm of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952). This is purportedly the root of the psychiatric crisis in West Africa. Ahongbonon's Catholic religious convictions are clear throughout the documentary, and he utilises them to contest the social constructs of madness in West African cosmology.

After a brief overview of the mentally ill, the documentary provides a statistic that "around the world 10% of the people have been, are or will be affected by mental illness" (A Crazy Hope,

2015). West Africa's situation, however, is also considered an "enormous field of psycho-trauma" (ibid) considering the pervading sociopolitical causes such as forced marriage, rape, poverty and various forms of postcolonial conflict. Dr William Alarcon, a key contributor to Ahongbonon and the documentary's foremost psychiatrist, argues that this field of trauma is under-documented because of a preference for the idea of postcolonial political conflict as the source of trauma in Africa. Evidently, there are invisible epistemological pockets within the discussion of mental illness in postcolonial Africa. The documentary acknowledges the complexity of the social aspect of this psycho-trauma which is evidently guarded by taboo within these communities and largely ignored in discourses of trauma in the African context. This statistic is made worse by a combination of governmental abandonment of mental illness and the traditional belief system's stigmatisation of mental illness in the portrayed West African countries and the rest of postcolonial Africa. In the early scenes of the documentary, Ahongbonon emphasises this abandonment in the statement; "The mentally ill are forgotten in all our African countries. They are abandoned by everyone" (A Crazy Hope, 2015). The documentary then portrays the abandoned mad on the street sides and those under the dehumanising care of a traditional healer to place a spotlight on the infrastructural and systemic abandonment of both psychiatric care and mental illness patients in African countries. Mental illness is thus regarded an existential threat given African countries' unpreparedness and reluctance to deal with the worsening mental health crisis across the continent. According to the documentary, marginalisation and exclusion of the mentally ill is a core part of the African cultural conceptualisation of madness. We still see a contestation for authority over madness between modern neurological diagnoses and traditional medical interventions.

The documentary revisits the connotations of developmental stages of human societies from primitivity to civilisation. It focalises not only the rescue of psychiatric patients from the chains used to control them by traditional societies, but also of African societies from the metaphoric chains of ignorance, stigmatising mental illness and the silences surrounding the causes and evidence of psycho-trauma. In this instance, the psychiatrist Dr Alarcon, likens Ahongbonon to Phillipe Pinel who is largely regarded the "saviour of the mentally ill" (Foucault, 1968, p. vii) for reforming psychiatric care in nineteenth century Europe. Pinel is especially famed for unchaining mental illness patients and encouraging a humane treatment of madness. Ahongbonon, therefore, fits into the category of Catholic sainthood and in the Pinel tradition of humanist reimagination of mental illness. Dr Alacorn perceives European psychiatric practices before Pinel's intervention as largely similar to the current state of psychiatry in

Africa. He states that the Pinel and the Age of Enlightenment "brought in moral treatment. Gregoire is doing exactly that" (A Crazy Hope, 2015). This documentary's juxtaposition of Ahongbonon's psychiatric intervention with the Age of Enlightenment is problematic especially considering the racist beliefs which were inherent in this epoch. Such symbolisms presented by the documentary justify the postcolonial theoretical argument that

> with the mythical 'unchaining of the mad' in the colonies, Western psychiatry is again forwarding a moral argument that it is in the 'best interests' of the colonized to impose 'progressive' Western methods on these societies (Cohen, 2019, p. 40).

From this background, psychiatric patients' admission to traditional healers is regarded as another form of social abandonment. I read this documentary as a visualisation of the contested constructions of madness and the multiple aspects of psychiatric crisis in the concerned West African nations. The documentary contests the West African sociopolitical superstructure and African traditional cosmological institutions' convergent construction of mental illness as a taboo and an embarrassment hence the lack of funding for psychiatric services. I argue that this documentary uses madness to construct West African cultures as ignorant and backward and the source of psychiatric crisis. My argument on construction is not that "mental illnesses are not real diseases" (White, 2018, p. 25) but to articulate how the representations of these illness and their treatment functions to construct certain narratives.

(Mis)conceptualising mental illness

This documentary depicts two markedly different methods of conceptualising madness and mental illness in West Africa, which are the African traditional medicinal institution on one hand and Western derived psychiatric conceptualisations on the other. Ahongbonon streamlines psychiatric care to 'free' mental illness patients who are visualised chained to trees and other immovable objects in the traditional healer's compound in the documentary's inaugural scenes. These attempts to subdue the mentally ill by using makeshift chains, from a Western perspective, symbolise a backward culture to which the African traditional medical institution belongs. Ahongbonon's approach is thus described using discourses of "freeing" the patients. Juxtaposed to this, the traditional healer's compound visualises the stigma of madness in African traditional cosmology which invites torturous approaches that are symbolised by the chains. In this documentary, chains are not simply physical restraints used on the mentally ill but are also evidence and a metaphor for the social restrictions and psychological veils emanating from West African traditional conceptualisations of madness. Ahongbonon does not necessarily emphasise the African traditional healer's treatment methods but focalises the

chains as the overall indicator of the abjection, primitivity and the attendant social injustices of the African psychiatric practice. We are shown that the fear that motivates these restrictions is not only a fear of the madman's unpredictability but also a dread of contagion and incurring the wrath of spiritual entities troubling the mad. This fear also pervades mainstream psychiatric care. The restraints and the fear of/for the madmen has multiple socio-political dimensions which I will explore. I can pre-emptively say that Ahongbonon's tour of the traditional healer's compound is meant to visualise the documentary's argued misconceptualisation of mental illness and the abject location of madness in West African culture. Using this as the inaugural scene arguably constructs African culture in relation to chains and locates this culture as a philosophic undercurrent to the state's medical non-intervention.

The depicted traditional healer's compound is an overcrowded and unsanitary collection of dilapidated mud huts which creates an outlook of infrastructural crisis. The psychiatric 'wards' in which he houses his patients are unfurnished substandard structures. We are given a glimpse of the shared female and children ward which seems to double as a storage room. Its dusty floors and general uncleanliness visualise a state of crisis. The documentary contests the African traditional institution and its medical authority over mental illness. Ahongbonon is unequivocal about the African traditional system's inefficacy and disapprovingly remarks to an accompanying female religious figure; "it is often said they treat people better, but you've seen how they are treated" (A Crazy Hope, 2015). Two divergent connotations of treatment are evoked which emphasise the physical over the medical. One of the most notable visual of both madness and the supposed inefficacy of traditional medical treatment is the footage of an agitated woman who is chained naked to a tree in the middle of a compound populated by children, male and female patients and visitors. Her nudity and visibly swollen feet from struggling to get free from the chains creates a spectacle of the dehumanising (mis)conceptualisation of madness in West African cosmology. Ahongbonon hyperbolises the abjection that "she's the image of my own mother and all women in the world" and despairs, "Why? Why in the third millennium?" (A Crazy Hope, 2015). The juxtaposition of chained nudity and the millennial epoch creates a disjunction between the conceptualisation of madness in these communities vis-à-vis what should be the evolutionary power of the passage of time. This hyperbole elicits an affective viewership of mental illness' abject location in West African cosmology and thus, validates Ahongbonon's intervention to restore female, and by extension, human dignity of mentally ill patients which traditional conceptualisations continue to erode. Thus, the documentary's blurring of the woman's nudity serves a more fundamental purpose

beyond ethical considerations. It serves as a reconceptualization of mental illness that adheres to standardised millennial diagnostic models.

Ahongbonon represents the contrary modernised conceptualisation of madness as a variety of psychopathologies requiring a Christological ideation to remove the restraints. His projects are packaged as a convergence of Christian religious sensibilities and the Pinel liberatory tradition as I will argue below. First, his Christian motivations emanate from having suffered from depression and suicide ideation. Proffering this personal testimony about his own affliction with depression is an evocative concept. He claims to have known "real suffering to such an extent that I almost killed myself. And it is from this suffering that I returned to the church" (A Crazy Hope, 2015). His input into the documentary largely occurs in what is clearly a Catholic Cathedral which denotes his spiritual return to the church, dimensions of saviourhood and the documentary's overall Christian messaging. The St Camille signpost comprises the semiology of a berobed religious functionary, possibly a portrait of St Camille de Lellis, cradling a visibly sick man in white linen. Together with the crucifixes furnishing the church's walls, this semiotic emblem creates a background of self-sacrifice, empathy and the abolition of the social chasm between the mentally healthy and the ill. Though Dr Alarcon is quick to disclaim his agnostic practice of psychiatry, his discourse in the documentary reiterates the systemic deficits within African cultural medicine which necessitate Ahongbonon's Christological approach. His medical approach intertwines with Ahongbonon's religious approach, which he argues is a way of "going back to the basics of what psychiatric and care in general is about" (A Crazy Hope, 2015). He agrees with Ahongbonon's depiction of the nunnery as a "religious community that already has love for the sick" (ibid), implying that African traditional systems lack this capacity. This is one of the several instances where Ahongbonon conflates Christianity with Western medicine as panaceas to the mental health crisis in West Africa.

Conceptualising madness through Christological metaphysics perceives, in human suffering, the need to "clothe, feed and heal" and thus inevitably privileges Western medical care. Narrating an encounter with a mentally ill patient rummaging through the refuse, Ahongbonon envisions; "the one who gave his life, who sacrificed himself for my sake: Christ" (A Crazy Hope, 2015). His Christian lens motivates his 'humane' treatment of the mentally ill and contests the traditional West African construction of mad people as outcasts and/or objects of dread. Ahongbonon's is thus a Christ-like mission to "loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free" (Isaiah 58: 6 – 8, NIV). His portrayal of literally

removing various forms of restraints used on the mentally ill thus symbolises the Christian breaking of the chains of an oppressive African cultural system. This is unsurprising given the fact that his own experience and recovery from depression is packaged in a Christian reconversion discourse. Ahongbonon's St Camille centres are primarily informed by this Christian thought which reminisces colonial Christianity's antagonistic conceptualisation of African healing systems and "African healers as the epitome of evil, chaos, and unreason" (Jackson, 2005, p. 10).

The documentary depicts both Ahongbonon's Christian charity and Dr Alarcon's agnostic modern approaches to psychiatry as sole solutions to the welfare of the West African psychiatric patient while cultural methods are depicted as detrimental. This epistemological reconceptualization of madness emphasises the neurological aspect of mental illness which modern medicine is presumed most equipped to cure compared to cultural interventions. The narrative combines what Keller calls modern psychiatry's "foundational myth, Philippe Pinel's liberation of the insane in Paris's Bicêtre and Salpêtrière hospitals" (2007, p. 21) with the Christian theology of liberating Africans from their primitive traditions. Such perceptions of backwardness echo Hegel's (1900) argument of Africans as unconscious as cited in Chapter 1. The argued 'misdiagnoses' of epileptic seizures as spiritual possession in African traditional frameworks is provided as an example of the breaking of the chains of ignorance which worsen such conditions. Through the portrayal of a young epileptic woman experiencing a seizure, the documentary navigates the religious conceptualisation of epilepsy that forbids contact in belief that, according to one participant, "even God won't touch her" (A Crazy Hope, 2015) in that condition. Ahongbonon dismisses the presence of witchcraft and possession in mental illness and uses the professional presence of white psychiatrists as evidence of the universality of mental illness. While mental illness is accurately a universal experience, this uncritical preclusion and invalidation of cosmological aetiological categories is epistemologically colonial in nature which then invalidates the traditional healer's intervention.

The Christian aspect also intertwines with the Pinel tradition of the moral treatment of the mentally ill. However, Foucault deconstructs Europe's construction of Pinel as having "delivered" (1968, p. 39) the mad as a non-medical intervention, but a reversal of a French social order which imprisoned various social groups such as petty criminals and poor vagabonds. For the mad themselves, Foucault maintains that the "ability of the insane to endure, like animals, the worst inclemencies was still a medical dogma for Pinel" (1968, p. 74).

He continues that Pinel still thought of madness in terms of "ferocious animality" (ibid). White corroborates Foucault's position, claiming that "Pinel was not a breakthrough in the humane treatment of the mentally ill that progressive historians presented it as. Rather it was the refinement of the incarceration of the mentally ill" (2018, pp. 24 - 25). Thus, Dr Alarcon's evocation of the liberatory side of Pinel's psychiatric intervention functions to mould a similar aspect of Ahongbonon's project. It connotes the idea of the West African mental illness patient whose unchaining brings about the Age of Enlightenment to West Africa, as it contestably did to "late eighteenth-century Europe" (Jackson, 2005, p. 185). The aestheticization of Ahongbonon's efforts through the historical person of Pinel betrays an Occidental imaginary within the project. The liberatory rhetoric used by Dr Alarcon to describe Ahongbonon's ability to subdue and calm agitated mental patients simply through his disposition harks back at Foucault's description of Tuke's self-claimed effect on the ill in nineteenth century Europe. According to Foucault, "Tuke tells how he received at the Retreat a maniac…who caused panic… he had no sooner arrived than all his shackles were removed, and he was permitted to dine with the keepers" (1968, p. 246). In a similar tone, Dr Alarcon explains of Ahongbonon that, "I've seen him with patients who are agitated, breaking things and he arrived and said, "That's enough", and the guy goes off like a little boy" (A Crazy Hope, 2015). A nun similarly claims, "it is a gift that God has given him" (ibid). Unlike Tuke's liberatory reputation which relied on the establishment of authority over psychiatric patients, however, Ahongbonon's ability gestures towards his initiation of a relationship punctuated by human compassion rather than by fear.

To visualise this liberation rhetoric, Ahongbonon is portrayed leading recalcitrant mental illness patients by hand and delivering them to the St Camille de Lellis association centres. This tactile contact with mental illness patients represents the removal of the traditional African taboos which discourage physical contact with the afflicted. He places his hand around their shoulders and casually addresses them with the colloquial prefix "Big" to emphasise brotherly contact and the removal of social barriers. This contact is a reconfiguration of the social relationship between madness and sanity. It can be read as the removal of the exclusionary dimensions that "silently organise the [African traditional/postcolonial] world of the asylum, the methods of cure, and at the same time the concrete experience of madness" (Foucault, 1968, p. 243) as an invisible world. The paradox in the title *A Crazy Hope* refers to Gregoire Ahongbonon's objective to transform the West African social organisation, to point the political authorities to this social injustice, to reimagine the perception of madness as a medical

condition rather than a spiritual occurrence and an embarrassment, and to evolve this dated state of mind into the third millennium. In this regard, his project simulates Pinel's which simultaneously transformed the conceptualisation of madness and evolved nineteenth century Europe's psychology.

Given Ahongbonon's Catholic roots, he considers African cultural conceptualisations of mental illness harmful to patients and projects Western medicine and Catholic dogma as incontestable medical authority to (humanely) cater for the sick. He argues that a traditional African mindset is influencing political authorities' neglect of mental illness patients, conversely, a Catholic mindset would transform these supposed backwards perceptions. And this, Ahongbonon considers to be "his mission, he believes God gave him a mission" (A Crazy Hope, 2015).

Visualising an invisible crisis, abjection and invisibility

The voice-over narrator gratefully claims that Ahongbonon's own experience with mental illness "opened his eyes to an invisible world" (A Crazy Hope, 2015) meaning it made him aware of an obscure sociomedical category. Tropes of madness as invisibility collocate in several scholarly volumes as highlighted in the literature review in Chapter 1. The invisible categories metaphorised by madness include womanhood (Caminero-Santangelo, 1998), blackness (Fanon, 1968), and black womanhood (Veit-Wild, 2006). Black womanhood interestingly conceptualises its use of madness to contest "raced and sexed" hegemonic constructions of whiteness (coloniality, slavery) and patriarchy (Brown 2017, p 7). To speak of madness as an invisible world is, therefore, to mobilise an enduring metaphor in literature. Though focalising diverse marginalised categories, the commonality between these studies is that the invisibility of the categories metaphorised through madness is constructed through various socio-political systems. Poignantly, Brown (2017) discusses her analysis of the metaphor in diasporic black women's fiction as, similarly, a construction. Picking from this cue, this section discusses Berda's documentary constructions of the West African sociopolitical systems that construct this invisibility, and the semiotics used to make a compelling argument for the state of crisis. What is visualised is not necessarily the image of psychopathology but the socio-political systems that render the mental illness invisible through subjecting patients to abandonment, abjection and chains. What is visualised is the systematic endangering of mental patients' lives and wellbeing due to the cultural (mis)conception of their condition.

Ahongbonon considers his mental illness a revelatory experience into his prior ignorance of the normative abandonment of mental illness patients that testifies to an apparent yet completely ignored horrifying social injustice of conceptualising madness as inhuman and thus, discardable. The scarcity of psychiatric personnel, medical resources and infrastructure are the statistical aspects of this injustice. This injustice is compounded by the human and organ trafficking economy of West Africa which preys on vulnerable populations including abandoned mentally ill patients. This human trafficking market provides a socio-political context to the use of chains. As Read et al observe about West Africa,

> [though] maltreatment, such as keeping a person in chains, is common both at shrines and Christian healing centers, as well as at home…it is a last resort by family members who must deal with symptoms of aggression, agitation, or wandering. (2015, p. 100).

While the use of chains is indeed dehumanising, their use is not primarily cultural but precautionary protection of worst cases. Neither does it specifically signal the invisible status of madness, but rather, its protectiveness functions in a precarious political economy. It is in this perspective that I argue that the documentary's conceptualisation of mental illness' obscurity in Africa through the trope of chains as an African cultural phenomenon is linked to the colonial view of Africa's supposedly primitive medical methods. What is inarguable, however, is that the government's complete disavowal of socio-medical responsibility towards mental illness exposes mental illness patients to trafficking which in turn encourages the use of restraints. Given the statistical possibility of suffering from mental illness, West African governments' negligence of psychiatric care is a social injustice. For the documentarist, the chains and restraints are a culmination of intertwined forms of exclusion, abandonment and the fear of the madmen which pervades families, politics, culture and even in medical care. According to the documentary, restraints are also used in some psychiatric hospitals which symbolises the systematisation of sociocultural taboos.

Like the Zimbabwean crisis, this documentary focalises the statistical disparity in the psychiatrist to patient ratio in Benin. For instance, according to the documentary, "Benin has just one psychiatric hospital in the south and about 15 psychiatrists almost all clustered in the capital" (A Crazy Hope, 2015). With such a statistic, Ahongbonon sheds light on the invisible world of madness. In this documentary, madness is a paradox of ubiquitous yet invisible visibility. The invisibility of madness is despite its prevalence in shared urban and familial spaces. Several mental illness patients are visualised in threadbare clothes, half-naked if not completely naked, dirty and exposed to the elements on the streetside while the 'normal' world

continues unabated. This homelessness iconography visualises both their madness and the consequent complete socio-economic disengagement from the surrounding world (Gilman, 1988). The scene is set in Cotonou – "the Economic capital of Benin" (A Crazy Hope, 2015) – to visualise a vibrant socio-economic environment in which the madmen are completely invisible despite their unmistakable presence. Their immobility, anonymity and proximity to refuse disposal areas (they are part of the refuse themselves) portrays their relegation from the visible world and makes their madness apparent to the viewer. Whatever spots of destitution and vagabondage madmen and women occupy become invisible. The camera frame, thus, juxtaposes two co-existing worlds yet completely oblivious and invisible to each other; one epitomising normalcy and sanity, and the other, "a negation of itself: spectral, ghostly" (Brown, 2017, p 2). These spectacles of madness simultaneously confront the invisible forces which deliberately relocate mentally ill patients to the streets and perhaps answers Brown's (2017) question following an encounter with a madwoman on the American streets; "How did she come to sit on that corner?" (ibid). This documentary answers this question specifically about the madmen and madwomen in Cotonou who are often abandoned on the streets by their families. The humanity of those inhabiting the world of madness is represented as invisible to the family, the government and the traditional belief system of these West African countries. The documentary, therefore, visualises an invisible world and emphasises its humanity. My analysis appreciates this motif and uses it to also account for the documentary's own assumptions and resultant blind spots.

The documentary maker's protagonist explains that his own blindness to this profound topic was removed through depression and suicide ideation which resulted in his reconversion to Catholicism. Ahongbonon sees this invisibility of madness as a consequent of "human ignorance [that] has kept other humans outside society for centuries" (A Crazy Hope, 2015). This open-ended statement categorises the socio-medical exclusion of mental illness from the national body politic and unintentionally evokes Africa's colonial history. It evokes racialised, gendered and religion-based categories of social injustice that were constructed to exclude other humans from enjoying their inalienable rights. However, Ahongbonon does not refer to colonial psychiatry's exclusionary practice given that he and Dr Alarcon completely ignore its role in their representations. Their depiction of madness' invisibility as solely a result of cultural psychiatry glosses over colonial medical and political issues that are also responsible for the perceived sociomedical exclusion of mental illness.

Through the re-imagination of madness through the Christian lens, the documentarist singularly castigates West African tradition for this state of affairs. This supposedly "ignorant" traditional consciousness is argued to be visible in the attitudes of families and the government towards mental health in contemporary West Africa. Ahongbonon depicts the consultation of traditional healers for mental illness as a regressive belief in witchcraft. His perception resonates with French colonial administration in West Africa, especially the various legal frameworks to suppress "witchcraft" which had traditional medicine as one of the major casualties (Akyeampong, et al., 2015). Ruth Ginio argues that French colonial authorities equated witchcraft and traditional African medicine to cannibalism which was "imperative for some colonial officials because it reinforced the perception of a barbaric African society" (2011, p. 61). Robert Baum corroborates this view in his discussion of "the French trials of Diola witches in Senegal" stating that "when Diola elders used the term "witch" (*kusaye*) … the French regarded them as cannibals" (2004, p. 216). This is the way that traditional beliefs were governed in French West Africa. A more accurate assessment of the West African situation acknowledges that, for the concerned governments, the invisibility of the world of madness is an intersection of various sociopolitical issues including tradition, negligence, poverty and the ignored colonial heritage. The unjustifiable treatment gap in African psychiatry highlights political and economic decay which grips many contemporary African nations. The motif of invisibility thus becomes an evocative lens through which the documentary analyses the sociopolitical systems which do not only neglect madness but frames it as an inconsequential aspect of humanity and therefore, underfunds it.

However, Ahongbonon fails to appreciate that the traditional healer recognises the African world of madness. His ascription of the social abandonment of mental illness to cosmological conceptualisation uncritically ignores the argument that "80 percent of Africans use traditional healers, and traditional medicine provides a major source of health care for more than 66 percent of the world's population" (Okello & Musisi, 2015, p. 249). The centrality of the traditional healer in the construction of the invisibility culture is historically inaccurate considering that, in French Speaking West Africa,

> both French citizens and colonial subjects – were initially evacuated to mental asylums in France [where] mortality was high among African mental patients in France, who not only endured the alienation of being relocated far from their homes but also suffered high mortality rates from tuberculosis and exposure (Akyeampong, 2015, p. 30).

After the construction of a psychiatric hospital in the 1950s, “At Aro [Nigeria]”, for instance, continues Akyeampong, “there were eight times as many patients in the compounds of traditional healers than at Aro” (ibid, p.33 - 34). These statistical arguments prove the traditional healer’s recognition of mental illness, and its causes as understood in African cosmology. In the documentary, the availability of the traditional healer’s compound arguably confirms the traditional healer’s medical and humane ability to recognise/see mental illness and patients. The traditional healer lets families visit and spend time with their relatives admitted to his care. This maintenance of social connections is considered an important part of the traditional healer’s medical procedure (Okello & Musisi, 2015) because it “minimizes the patient’s sense of alienation” (Akyeampong, 2015, p. 34). The documentary portrays one of the healer’s patients conversing with his wife and ten children.

The traditional healer in the documentary does not claim to have metaphysical authority over madness, rather, he claims medical authority symbolised by his claim of singularly using medicinal “tree bark” (A Crazy Hope, 2015). In his compound, patients inhale the steam from or have their heads washed with the potions made from an unspecified tree bark. That the tree bark is not specified should not be treated as evidence of the traditional healer’s fraudulent medicinal expertise because it is not unusual for traditional healers to not publicly divulge certain medicinal herbs. What we see are contestations of medical authority over madness between traditional frameworks and a Christian backed modernity which considers “the institution of psychiatry fundamentally progressive” (Cohen, 2019, p. 35). What is jarring is the lack of categorisation of mental illness by the traditional healer. All patients are restrained despite apparent different mental health problems. This indiscriminatory use of restraints, especially the crude leg-irons, creates an overall impression of a dehumanisation of all mental health patients.

Towards the end, the documentary portrays the social consequences of the misconceptualisation of mental illness in a family. One family is portrayed experiencing social fragmentation due to the mental illness of their family member. The patient, a middle generation woman is accompanied by her father and daughter to the St Camille centre to seek for help. Her daughter, Dieka, is clearly embarrassed of her mother who Dr Alarcon diagnoses as schizophrenic. The woman however claims that she ‘hears’ voices telling her to go outside and undress. In her narration, which is significantly interrupted by her daughter’s angry interjections, she explains the origins of her illness that “I gave favours [to a man] so that he’d

sleep with me properly. The voices say the sons [his] will sleep with me." (A Crazy Hope, 2015). This situation causes her insomnia. Due to the embarrassing narration, Dieka aggressively accuses her mother of lying, attempts to speak over her and eventually abandons her, though momentarily, in Dr Alarcon's consultation room. The act of storming out in the middle of a diagnostic assessment semiotically reiterates the discourse of socio-medical abandonment of patients upon which the documentary and Ahongbonon's intervention are anchored. The scene conveys the consequential loss of social agency and abandonment of the patient by her daughter as a way to explain the cultural ignorance. This reality of the madwoman is discoursed by Caminero-Santangelo's critique of the use of madness as a literary trope in her book *The Madwoman Can't Speak: Or Why Madness is not Subversive* (1998). The madman or madwoman's invisibility collocates with loss of socio-political agency as she argues. Despite the depicted patient's apparent coherence, her daughter's actions convey her failure to acknowledge her mother's humanity and gesture towards confiscating her agency. The interruptions signal the tragic construction of mental illness patients as unreliable speakers.

One of the most interesting points of the documentary is Dr Alarcon's claim of the blind spots within the metanarrative of trauma in postcolonial Africa. According to him, the social aetiology of trauma is underexplored due to the preoccupation with postcolonial political conflicts. He explains the social dimension of psychotrauma in Africa by saying that,

> I think something that's very underestimated in Africa is the impact of psychological trauma. We often think of trauma linked to war, but I think there is an enormous field of psychotrauma linked to rape, forced marriages, and things like that, which don't emerge because these things aren't talked about yet, but it's striking how many young women have delusional episodes after pregnancies or after marriage (A Crazy Hope, 2015).

The aestheticization of madness as a political metaphor perhaps overshadows its social aspects. These gendered traumatic aspects are, not only governed by normalising taboos which make them invisible but are also social problems often marginalised in discourses of trauma and madness in West Africa. Brown's question about how 'the woman came to sit on that corner' is simultaneously an enquiry into the routes by which madness comes to occupy an anonymous space and, also a biographical enquiry into the sociopolitical aetiology of the mental state. Dieka's mother discussed in the above paragraph focalises the psychotrauma emanating from social occurrences such as sexual intercourse. The 'absence' of violence in the narrated sexual encounter reveals the complexity of social and gendered aspects of trauma which cannot be fixed using chains. Her use of the phrase "gave favours" implies a transactional aspect to the

engagement. This would therefore require a complex approach that appreciates the psychological impact of normative gendered socio-economic power relations in West Africa. Jean-Charles has coined the term "rape culture of violence" (2014, p. 59) to characterise such a normative cultural organisation that ignores social violence against women. However, this is not to say that West African culture is primarily a rape culture of silence, rather, the idea is to map its specific gendered aspects which result in psychotrauma.

Another facet of psychotrauma is visualised through two youthful patients. For instance, one former patient and now State Nurse working with Ahongbonon, Richard Aggossa, attributes his episode of depression to "studying too hard" (A Crazy Hope, 2015). He claims to have been top of his class. Richard's experience is similar to one of the traditional healer's patients, only self-introduced as Magloire, who narrates of experiencing memory problems while studying for a management degree at a university. Although he attributes his psychological problems to a powerful and dangerous fetish, signalling possibly an internalisation of the traditional healer's diagnosis and his own cosmological conceptualisation, his condition highlights the impact of social traumas in West Africa. These combined experiences articulate social categories of trauma which go beyond the often-cited postcolonial political conflict modalities of psychotrauma in Africa. These accounts reveal the epistemological and socio-medical institutional crisis that Ahongbonon seeks to address in West Africa. The complexities of these accounts reveal the need to reimagine mental illness and the need to have inbuilt psychiatric departments in various social organisations. This speaks to Ahongbonon's concern with the treatment gap represented by the scarcity of mental hospitals and psychiatric personnel. In these African states characterised by various postcolonial economic and political problems, social agendas and worse, mental health provision appears one of the most (in)visible casualties (Okello & Musisi, 2015). In this documentary, invisibility is a metaphor used to portray a synchronicity between sociopolitical and medical attitudes towards madness in West Africa. The deplorable state of mental health care in West Africa is attributed to these institutions.

There are also economic aspects to Ahongbonon's psychiatric intervention which see recovered patients being trained for trades at "Work Centres". The documentary portrays a bakery which is operated by former patients. The centre's instructor, Raymond Madou, is a former patient who suffered from mental illness for over a five-year period. Another former patient, Richard Aggossa, is portrayed as a qualified State Nurse who now works with Ahongbonon in one of the centres. Dr Alarcon, though avoiding idealising the Centres' economic intervention,

explains that the centre paid for Richard's nursing training and depicts him as one of the centre's success stories. In this sense, Berda's documentary strikes a similar code with Chin'ono's documentary discussed in the first section of this chapter that poverty is a determinant factor to psychological breakdown in the represented African countries hence the need to empower former patients with entrepreneurial skills for their post recovery sustenance.

The foregoing shows that Berda's *A Crazy Hope* (2015) clearly holds an evolutionary view which depicts African medical interventions as archaic. Using enlightenment metaphors, the documentary emphasises the convergence of African cosmological conceptualisations of madness and the modern political and institutionalised negligence of mental health to construct the invisibility of mental illness in West African postcolonies. Through his positionality as a reconverted Catholic, Ahongbonon reduces African cosmologies to the trope of witchcraft and chains that are used by the portrayed traditional healer. In invoking Pinel and the Age of Enlightenment, the documentary revises what Keller conceives as "the framing of the nascent psychiatric profession in the language of emancipation [which] highlights a victory of science and civilization over ignorance and tyranny" (Keller, 2007, p. 21). African cultures are thus portrayed as ignorant and a harmful influence behind the continuing mental health crisis in postcolonial West Africa. The documentary purports that the invisibility of madness, signified by the chains and the traditional healer, in these West African postcolonies emanates directly from this cultural conceptualisation. The African traditional healer's institutionalisation of restraints on the mentally ill is presented as the provocative evidence of the abject place of madness in West African culture. Berda attempts to make visible the invisible and silent operations by which mental illness patients find themselves abandoned in the anonymous urban spaces, chained to trees in their nudity and systematically unprioritized in national medical institutions. Gregoire Ahongbonon is depicted as a representation of the modernised neurological conceptualisation of mental illness, albeit tempered by his Catholicism, which is critical to restructure and recentre access to medical care. His *crazy hope* as documentarised by Berda is not simply to liberate all patients from their various circumstances of abandonment and abjection, rather, it is to overhaul the perception of mental illness in West/Africa. The idea is to change the *state of mind* in its literal and metaphoric forms as discussed in Chin'ono's documentary.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on the visualisation of the state of mental health care in Africa in two documentary films, Chin'ono's *State of Mind* (2018) and Berda's *A Crazy Hope* (2015). In the focalised African postcolonial nations, it remains true that "mental health services are the least developed and most poorly funded of all health services" (Okello & Musisi, 2015, p. 249). Through the lived realities of mental illness patients, we witness the various mindsets that silently construct the obscurity of madness with the main culprits being political superstructures and cosmological conceptualisations. Within the representations of the realities of the state of mind are also contestations of the place of African cosmological thought in modern medical interventions. Berda especially visualises the detrimental impact of traditional thought in exacerbating the state of crisis in West Africa where mentally ill patients are resultantly chained. This is a contrasting representation to Chin'ono's documentary which shows that some traditional institutions can be leveraged to ameliorate this undeniable crisis. Chin'ono effectively uses cosmological aesthetics such as Oliver Mtukudzi's music to frame his project. His documentary recognises its protagonist's psychiatric intervention's use of pre-existing cultural models to offset the financial and diagnostic challenges posed by modern psychiatry.

Despite their ostensible philosophical differences, these documentaries share a similar thematic concern about the negligence of mental health care in postcolonial Africa. Chin'ono attributes this negligence to corruption and incompetence within the Zimbabwean government while Berda constructs an intersection of African cosmology and postcolonial West African politics. The documentaries convey poor institutional and conceptual frameworks in postcolonial Africa where this important aspect of human life has been relegated to obscurity. We are primed towards this conclusion in Berda's film through the visual of crude restrains used by the traditional healer. Neurological conceptualisations are consequently proffered as liberating frameworks in the tradition of Pinel and nineteenth century Europe. A Christological viewpoint is similarly emphasised for its liberatory metaphors and symbolisms. I have therefore titled this chapter *State of Mind* in recognition of its figurative connotation as used by Chin'ono to conceptualise psychological and sociopolitical orientations of postcolonial governments as reflected in their constructions of psychiatry. In French speaking West Africa, the state of mind is arguably traditional and overdue for reimagination. Both documentaries, despite diverse aesthetics, ideologically converge on the desperate need for critical intervention in the mental

health sector in postcolonial Africa. Overall, I have discussed the visualisation of various aspects of crisis.

Chapter 7: Conclusion: Afro-cosmologies of Madness

African Cosmologies of Madness: A Recap

The foregoing chapters have discussed the different meanings and conceptualisations of madness in African cultures as depicted in selected literary and filmic texts. These cultural ideas fictionalised in these texts comprise what I have termed an African cosmology of madness. The selected literary texts offer a cartograph of critical metaphorizations of madness to articulate contemporary African sociopolitical, intellectual, cultural issues and the condition of psychiatric care in different African postcolonial nations. As discussed in the preceding chapters, the depiction of madness from a ritual perspective extends to different social and political terrains offering evocative perspectives of an African cosmology. What emerged from my reading of these texts using Falola's *Ritual Archives* (2017) and Hook et al's *Critical Psychology* (2013), is that ritual archives are a philosophical return to the African cosmos to search for cultural answers to contemporary socio and geopolitical quandaries facing different African postcolonies. Another issue that emerged from Hook's theorisation is the pertinence of using theories generated by those whom traditional Eurocentric psychology has historically written away, written off or made invisible. While the return is not simplistic in that several African characters in Emezi's novels misconceive African cosmologies as madness, it certainly offers a wider understanding of the question of African ways of being, conceptualisation of madness and mental illness. The reading of African cosmologies is itself a very productive literary endeavour that foregrounds African conceptualisations and re-opens various pathways to colonially discredited knowledges from various pre-colonies. I concur with Borah and Sotunsa's observation that "the idea [Falola's] of ritual archives has ushered in some possibilities of rescuing African indigenous epistemic formations from the long-sustained practices of epistemicide" (2017, p. xii). My reading counteracts Westocentric formulations and some African cultural claims that effectively assume that African experiences cannot be adequately explained using African *Weltanschauungen*, thus, answering Mudimbe's (1988) question cited in Chapter 1. Mudimbe interrogates the dominance of Western epistemology in discussing African concepts, asking: "Does this mean that African *Weltanschauungen* and African traditional systems of thought are unthinkable and cannot be made explicit within the framework of their own rationality?" (Mudimbe, 1988, p. 10). My answer is no, and my use of African cosmologies sought to demonstrate this.

Chapter 1 borrows Tonya Haynes's term, "Westocentric frameworks" to evaluate Eurocentric and western generated literary epistemologies used by scholars such as Veit-Wild (2006) and Chigwedere (2013) in the analysis of metaphors of madness in African literary texts. The chapter demonstrates the epistemological gap left by these frameworks. Admittedly, though these scholars have contributed immensely to the study of writing madness in African literature, and I therefore find some of their conceptions crucial, other ideas on the subject are presented in a problematic way. Chief among the problematic issues is the lack of theorising African cosmological concepts they encounter in their selected texts. In Chigwedere's thesis, for instance, there is insufficient theorisation of the *Ngozi* concept which is treated as synonymous to traumatic memory. She analyses these cosmological concepts using Eurocentric psychological theories which I find detrimental to the adequate understanding and critique of the forms of madness used in the analysed texts. Brown and Garvey's (2017) volume which analyses literary madness in black women's diasporic fictions encourages the use of knowledge from areas geographically and epistemologically excluded from the West. A similar motivation influences my foregrounding of literary madness within the African cosmology to learn meanings that are not accommodated in Westocentric frameworks. By *Ritual Archives*, one of the two theoretical frameworks I used in this study, Falola thinks radically of Africa generating its own theories to accord legitimacy to "indigenous epistemologies, and … reduce our energy in borrowings and adaptations" (2017, p. 725). My study closely analyses African cosmological formulations of madness depicted in the selected texts, and other epistemologies they link to. As I argued in the literary background to this study, the focal texts' commitment to African cosmological epistemologies, with the exception of Berda's *A Crazy Hope* (2015) is a way of reasserting African humanity outside the damaging categories of Eurocentric logic.

My second chapter explores processes through which Mbue's *How Beautiful We Were* (2020) and Emezi's *Freshwater* (2018) return to the ritual archive as a way of achieving what Garvey calls "undoing of Western epistemologies rooted in colonization" (2017, p. 294). Both novels resituate the reader in a ritual world where metaphysical beings are invoked or deliberately resurface to remind humanity of their existence. In these texts, thematic representations of rebirths of metaphysical beings are paralleled to discourses of madness to demonstrate the resurgence of African ritual archives in the conception of Afrocentric ways of resisting colonial (self)definitions of the African world. In Mbue's novel, Konga, a madman haunted by ghosts of crimes committed before his birth is the decisive figure in resisting neocolonial presence and epistemology by kidnapping colonial agents and inviting his community to revisit their

cosmology for inspiration. I read the ghosts who haunt the madman as disruptive ancestral memory which leads to the madman's disruptive actions. Mbue crafts madness into a site of active ancestral memory that outlives the madman himself. The narrative that develops from the madman's interventions leads to invocations of radically transformative rituals, the most evocative of which I termed ritual mothering. Ritual mothering denotes the ritual/artificial insemination of a young woman with the sperm of one of the village's young men in order to facilitate the ritual rebirth of the community's deity. This principle depicts the regenerative dramaturgy of ritual archives as opposed to the bloodletting and death that results from colonial conceptualisation of the world as depicted in the novel. I argue that Mbue's narrative creates an eschatological narrative of a rebirth of a deity who would return to Africa her stolen heritage. The rituals in *How Beautiful We Were* attempt to reconfigure the depicted Kosawan community's cosmological roots in a way that will renew Africans' political and spiritual consciousness.

This eschatological narrative is largely similar to Emezi's depiction of the *Ogbanje* in *Freshwater* which is an amalgamation of the human and the numinous. In Igbo cosmology, the *Ogbanje* are spirit children who are born to die unless rituals are carried out to break their death oath (Achebe, 1989). Those children who refuse to die, like Ada in the novel, display features of mental instability and suicidal intuition which can be easily misunderstood as madness. Achebe (1989), as already cited in Chapter 2, explains that the *Ogbanje* refuses categorisation in Western psychology because of its supernatural origins. In *Freshwater*, the protagonist is a human-born *Ogbanje* daughter/son/egg of the Igbo python deity, Ala. Unfortunately, this godly entity is born in the contemporary African space inhabited by people suffering from amnesia as a result of the colonial encounter. Instead of being revered as the offspring of a deity, this child erroneously assumes that its spirituality is a form of madness. She also misconstrues her acts of cutting herself with sharp objects as self-mutilation instead of understanding such actions as acts of self-worship. The human father similarly deems various cosmological realities as mumbo-jumbo and therefore commits an act of sacrilege by killing the sacred python manifestation of Ala. This novel depicts the misconceptualisation of African cosmology as madness and elevates this child as someone who would reclaim the Igbo's lost, corrupted and colonially discredited knowledge. At the end of the narrative, this child eventually completes the geographical, psychological and spiritual return to African cosmology where the madness is healed. What the protagonist and her western psychotherapists assume to be madness is a portal to the African metaphysical space. In these two novels, as read in my

Chapter 2, the authors use madness as a metaphor that initiates and fulfils a revisit to African cosmologies.

In Chapter 3 a reading of Tshuma's *Digging Stars* (2023) demonstrates that the concept of the *IsiLimela* is a potential guiding principle for the novel's protagonist to "bring my people into the future" (Tshuma, 2023, p 24). The novel uses madness to depict the weaponisation of ethnicity and belonging in postcolonial Zimbabwe. The novel depicts the contemporary rigidified ethnonational identities in Zimbabwe as colonial inventions and as the philosophy behind Athandwa, the central character's psychological breakdown. Commenting on the race and ethnic relations in colonial Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009) explains that colonial hegemony involved the hierarchisation of ethnicities in the formations of unsustainable colonial nations. The unsustainability of these conceptions of nation becomes obvious in the postcolony where the question of ethnicity turns into genocide and terror. At its supposed departure, coloniality had significantly altered and reorganised social relations between the existing precolonial ethnicities. Zimbabwe's postcolonial hegemony retained these colonial inventions because of their political utility in the governance of supposed minority ethnicities. The novel utilises madness to describe the sole post-independence ruling party ZANU PF's retention of these colonial schemes and its deceptive projecting of these identities as precolonial truths. Historical events such as the Zimbabwean genocide, the *Gukurahundi*, and the Fast Track Land Reform program are outward expressions of such madness. The protagonist's psychological breakdown directly results from ZANU PF regime's assassination of Athandwa's father in an attempt to recruit him for a military project despite having killed his parents during the *Gukurahundi* ethnic cleansing. Tshuma conceptualises this psychological breakdown as "the terrors" to capture the psychological response of fear of Zimbabwe's perpetual sociopolitical and economic crisis. These terrors/pseudo seizures mimic emotions of death and are also a psychological reprieve for the protagonist since they offer her a world of fantasy. By immersing herself into the world of fantasy, the protagonist momentarily escapes the Zimbabwean terrorscape. Essentially, madness functions in this novel to depict the ZANU PF regime as a terror.

While the primary geographical focus of the novel is Zimbabwe, other parts, which focus on the protagonist's immigrant diasporic experiences in America and the socioeconomic and political exclusion of her Native American friends, portray the contemporary as a "World of Terror" (Praeg, 2017, p. 660) where ethnocentrism still pervades. The experiences of Native

Americans in the contemporary United States of America, as symbolised by the character Shaniqua, signify the continued economic exclusion of the Native American nations that dates back to the arrival of Amerigo Vespucci. The text's evocation of Amerigo Vespucci, from whom the continent's current name America originates, is a way of showing how the renaming itself is an originary act of exclusion. Similar experiences are shared by a young immigrant Haitian man named Peralte. Through these characters, Tshuma demonstrates the terror-inducing policing of black bodies entrenched in contemporary American politics. The novel invokes various names of black men who have experienced police brutality in America to locate these experiences in the nation's immediate pasts. Chapter 3 argues that madness as colonial ethnocentrism has created cultures of madness which I discuss using Praeg's (2017) terminology of terrorscapes. The nation states such as Zimbabwe, Haiti and Native American nations focalise the historical and contemporary cultures of madness configured on colonial ideologies. I consider these cultures of madness because of the embeddedness of ethnocentrism in their politics and epistemology. The psychological breakdown suffered by the protagonist challenges global colonial ideologies that inform contemporary politics.

Concluding their co-edited volume with Brown; *Madness in Black Women's Diasporic Fictions: An Aesthetics of Resistance* (2017), Garvey admits that "missing in this collection of essays are…diasporic fiction[s] reflecting the LGBT experience" (2017, p. 305). The same is true for Veit-Wild's *Writing Madness: Borderlines of the Body in African Literature* (2006) and Chigwedere's (2015) PhD thesis. My Chapter 5 and some parts of Chapter 2 engaged in a fruitful discussion of this LGBTQIA+ angle missing from these major literary works constituting my review of selected African and Afrodiasporic literature. Emezi's (re)imagination of queerness in Igbo cosmology in the novel *The Death of Vivek Oji* (2020) constitutes an insightful perspective into African cosmologies vis a vis discourses of madness surrounding queer sexuality. From my reading of the novel, dominant cultural perceptions of these non-conforming sexualities as madness are imaginaries steeped in Western pathological categorisations and Afrocentric ultra-masculinity. I cited Asante, Mugabe and legal criminalisation of queerness in Nigeria and Uganda as examples of purported Afrocentric perceptions of queerness challenged by a reading of Emezi's texts. Emezi challenges their allegations that queerness is un-African and is a transgressive desire 'curable' by returning to the African cosmos. In her version of returning to the African cosmos, Emezi locates queerness in the Igbo reincarnation belief system, thus making queerness African. The reincarnation narrative depicted by Emezi portrays a grandmother incarnating in her male grandson thus

explaining his embodiment of queer sexual desires and self-expression. The text also suggests the presence of mammy-water, thus, constructing a compound identity of three beings in one physical embodiment. Early manifestations of these other incarnate beings mimic fugues. Consequently, the protagonist, Vivek/Nnemdi is misunderstood by his family as psychologically ill.

Vivek's parents opportunely manipulate his actual mental breakdown, not to invoke the necessary rituals, but to conceptualise queerness as mental illness. His Christian aunt and her church view queerness as demon possession. Vivek's outward expressions of reincarnation/queerness using lengthy hair, cosmetics and wearing dresses also attracts pathological labelling from his parents. I argued that their problematic understanding of gender and sexuality reflects Eurocentric bio-logic which imagines gender as the organising principle of identity (Oyewumi, 1997) and uses such constructions "to perpetuate the domination of women as well as justifying the oppression of homosexuals and transgender persons" (Oyeleye, 2017, p. 357). In this bio-logic, white women and black races are perceived as psychologically inferior to white men. The discourse of madness is at the heart of the Western imaginary which Gibert and Guba (2020) address in their discussion of madness in Victorian women's literature. Gilbert and Guba (2020) demonstrate that the discourse of madness was invented by white patriarchy to enforce its ideologies on the inferiority of white women, and McCulloch (1995) similarly argues that the discourse of Africans as naturally mad was a colonial invention. Pilling (2022) adds that in the West, queerness was categorised as mental illness until 1973. He also argues that sexuality terminologies such as gender dysphoria reveal an intrinsic pathological conceptualisation of sexuality in Western thought. With acknowledgement of these various examples, I argue that Vivek's parents' use of the mental illness discourse to classify Vivek's sexuality is inherently Western. Contrary to these imaginaries, Emezi's reincarnation narrative locates queerness within African spirituality. To avoid a singular interpretation of queerness as spirituality, however, Emezi depicts other characters who opt for queerness experimentally, or as a result of disappointments from heterosexual relationships.

Queerness, understood from Emezi's African cosmological point of view is a fluid amalgamation of different sexual beings, the numinous and the human and the experimental. This conceptualisation provides an evocative metaphor for Nigeria's national identity in *The Death of Vivek Oji*. Nigeria's national identity, similar to Zimbabwe's in *Digging Stars* and *Glory*, is largely ethnocentric and an insincere attempt at postcolonial nation building. It is

fragmented into antagonistic ethnic groups similar to how pathological discourses of queerness perceive masculinity and femininity as antagonistic categories. In his book, *Nigerian Literary Imagination and the Nationhood Project* (2022), Falola argues that "Nigeria's fragmentary national identities spread around multiple cleavages are significantly reflective of its [Nigerian nationhood] beginnings as an invention" (p. 9). If ethnocentrism is understood as a Western invention, and according to Tshuma's *Digging Stars*, "the madness of who belongs where and who doesn't" (2023, p. 40), the solution to this predicament would be the fluidity demonstrated by Vivek's cosmological embodiment and queer sexual identity. That Emezi espouses a cosmological vision for Nigeria's invented fragmentariness is obvious in the parallels occurring in Vivek's life and Nigerian internal politics. The parallels are so much that Vivek's death coincides with the ethnic riot that conveniently becomes the explanation for his death, despite that his cousin inadvertently kills him. Vivek's psychological anguish preceding his death also parallels the general national unrest gripping the country after its former president, Sani Abacha's death. As a reincarnated being, Vivek also symbolises Nigeria as *Ogbanje* trope that is also used in Okri's *The Famished Road* (1991). Due to these parallels, Vivek's madness as actual psychological breakdown mirrors the political breakdown of Nigeria which can be solved by cosmological knowledge and fluidity of sexual, political and ethnic identity.

The inclusion of LGBTQIA+ texts and topics in this discussion of cosmologies of madness in African literature offers useful conceptual lenses through which to examine the nexus between ideas of sexuality, ethnicity and nationhood. Emezi's cosmology demonstrates how erroneous hegemonic perceptions of queerness as a threat to the nation and the continent's supposed heterosexual identity signify narrow and bio-logic conceptualisation of human identity. Contrary to Asante and Mugabe's homophobic remarks, and the cited nations' criminalisation of homosexuality as un-African, Igbo cosmology provides a wider space for sexual ways of being. It is interesting that many African cultures share this Igbo belief in possession and reincarnation. African spirituality's ability to accommodate male/female embodiments in seemingly opposing bodily forms is a form of the fluidity of its ways of being. The challenge, therefore, is for contemporary African cultures to reimagine themselves to accommodate diverse sexual, ethnic, political and ethnic identities. Considering the contemporary "culture wars" (de Saugy, 2022, p. 606), in which African leaders generate anti-homosexuality narratives as anti-imperialism, the achievability of Emezi's cosmological visions remains unlikely. Emezi realises this and portrays the resultant picture of death in *The Death of Vivek Oji*.

Chapter 6 also ventures into territory not yet charted in previous studies on madness in African literary texts. In this chapter, I discussed two African documentary representations of madness as mental illness and a contemporary psychiatric crisis. Reading Rugoho-Chin'ono's *State of Mind* (2018) and Berda's *A Crazy Hope* (2015), I argued that there is an ongoing mental health crisis in the focalised nations; Zimbabwe, Burkina Faso, Togo, Benin and Cote d'Ivoire. According to these documentaries, the sociomedical crisis which is statistically illustrated through a massive treatment gap, emanates from political and cultural influences on national policy making. These treatment gaps force concerned citizens, in their private capacity, to intervene and help patients access the psychological medical care they require. Nonetheless, these interventions are inadequate to quell the ongoing crisis if incumbent governments continue to neglect mental health at policy level. While Chin'ono's protagonist, Dr Chibanda, finds some ideas of African cosmology usable to deal with the crisis, Berda's Ahongbonon considers West African cultures detrimental to the overall perception of mental health in West Africa. These different approaches to African cosmologies generate an interesting discussion of the documentaries and the current state of mental health in African countries.

State of Mind (2018) articulates Zimbabwe's outdated mental health policy and infrastructure by following Dr Chibanda's interventions in psychiatric hospitals and in the wider Zimbabwean society. It is worth reiterating that Zimbabwe's mental health policy was last updated in 1996 instead of being updated after every ten years as recommended by the World Health Organisation (Kidia et al, 2017). Furthermore, according to Dr Chibanda in the documentary, contemporary Zimbabwe has only fourteen psychiatrists for a population of fifteen million. Consequently, 90 percent of patients do not have access to mental health specialists. These statistical facts demonstrate the neglect of mental health/services in Zimbabwe since 1996. While during its first decade of independence, Zimbabwe was applauded for "not only car[ing] about whether the majority of its newly enfranchised black citizens lived or died, but also about their psychic well-being" (Jackson, 2005, p. 189), the contemporary situation paints the opposite picture. In contemporary Zimbabwe, the government arguably causes the death and psychiatric breakdowns of its citizens, not only due to the outdated psychiatric policy but also because of the dysfunctional political economy characterised by an almost non-existent public health sector, corruption, repression and poverty.

The documentary's sonic motifs paint a dire picture of the Zimbabwean mental health patient resonating with Biehl's (2005) conceptualisation of the Vita. Biehl (2005) characterises this Brazilian slum as a zone of abandonment and death. The soundtracks provided by Oliver Mtukudzi such as *Sarawoga* (2014) and *Seiko* (2004), resonate with some patients' songs to create a sombre atmosphere of governmental negligence and abandonment of its biomedical responsibilities. Mtukudzi's *Sarawoga* directly translates to "abandoned", therefore, resonating with Biehl's conceptualisation of zones of social abandonment. As they stand currently, Zimbabwean psychiatric hospitals are zones of social abandonment which tell a narrative of the economic problems haunting Zimbabwe. Once admitted into these hospitals, patients are abandoned to under-resourced and few psychiatric personnel. Relatives symbolically abandon their patients because of the costs that inhibit them from regularly visiting them while the government abandons them medically and politically. This is where Dr Chibanda intervenes through what he calls the Friendship Bench; a socio-psychiatric program embedded within the community's cosmology. It is a program that equips community grandmothers (*Mbuya Utano*) with psychological knowledge to act as psychotherapists to pre and post-patients. Dr Chibanda explains that the choice of these grandmothers aligns with Zimbabwean communal conceptualisations of elderly women as givers of wisdom and counsellors. This approach, while scientific, is also cosmological and economically beneficial since these grandmothers and their patients are involved in self-help projects such as poultry and weaving using recycled materials.

Berda's *A Crazy Hope* (2015) shares many of Chin'ono's themes, except conceptualisations of African cultures. This documentary focuses on the mental health crisis ravaging four West African countries, namely, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Burkina Faso and Togo. While Dr Chibanda advocates embedding psychiatric care within the community, Grégoire Ahongbonon argues that traditional African medical intervention inhibits the realisation of modernised health care in Africa. Unlike Dr Chibanda who is a professional psychologist, Ahongbonon is a former mechanic whose mental health activism is a consequence of his experience with mental illness. In his biography which acts as a background story to the documentary's representations of mental illness, he suffered from depression and almost committed suicide. To Ahongbonon, this experience of mental illness was an act of divine intervention which awakened him to the invisibility of mental illness patients and dehumanising experiences in the care of their families and traditional healers. Because of this Catholic aesthetic, the documentary portrays West African traditional mental health interventions as outdated.

I argued in Chapter 6 that the documentary's singular portrayal of the mental illness patients in chains in the traditional healer's compound constructs a narrative of African misconceptualisation of mental illness. Cohen (2019) argues that the unchaining of the mad is a metric used by Western psychiatry to construct narratives of its superiority. In this documentary, the same is the case because of unbalanced portrayal of the African traditional healer's methods. The crude restraints used by the traditional healer are presented as a contradiction to purported claims that these healers "treat" people better. By removing these chains, Ahongbonon claims to remove the physical and symbolic chains of traditions which function to dehumanise mental illness patients. The documentary emphasises Christian symbolisms in this unshackling of mentally ill patients. Ahongbonon does not hide this conviction. For example, large parts of his narration are filmed inside a Catholic church. In the same vein, the centres he builds to house the mentally ill are named after the Catholic patron of the sick; Saint Camille. The French psychiatrist who helps Ahongbonon with his mission, Dr Alacorn, equates him to Pinel, the mythologised saviour of the mental ill during the Age of Enlightenment in Europe. Berda's documentary demonstrates various Christian and Eurocentric attitudes towards African cultures and their medical interventions.

Despite these cultural issues, however, the documentary successfully demonstrates West African governments' negligence of social policy concerning mental illness. The invisibility of mental illness, argued to be traceable to African cultural misconceptualisation of madness intrinsic to policy makers, emphasises the deterioration of mental health services in these postcolonial nations. Issues addressed include lack of medical personnel, lack of infrastructure and lack of equipment. There is general lack of access to health services which are centralised in capital cities. Because of the inaccessibility of healthcare, families of patients often abandon their mentally ill on the streets of these cities where they fall prey to the slavery, and human and organ trafficking market of West Africa. The title *A Crazy Hope* denotes Ahongbonon's intervention to transform the perception of mental illness. By visualising the abandoned roaming the streets or chained to trees by traditional healers, he hopes to instill more humane perceptions of mental illnesses and mentally ill patients. He likens mental illness to any other illness thus illustrating the injustice of abandoning the patients to fatal fates such as organ harvesting. Apart from this, the documentary calls for the re-imagination of West African societies, particularly, in relation to women's socioeconomic experiences. Dr Alacorn argues that there is a wide field of psycho-trauma, not only linked to postcolonial political conflicts,

but to social issues such as rape, child marriages and women's childlessness. He shows how many women's painful experiences are ignored.

To answer Jackson's (2005) question posed in chapter one, about the stories contemporary psychiatry can tell about the world we live in, *State of Mind* (2018) and *A Crazy Hope* (2015) narrate stories of postcolonial psychiatric and political crisis. These documentaries are populated with images of lack and poverty. The sociomedical psychiatric crisis visualised in these documentaries are linked to the political and cultural issues obtaining in the postcolonies. Zimbabwean psychiatric patients are already disenfranchised by state corruption and poverty prior their consequent psychological breakdown. Chin'ono's characters demonstrate this by their poverty and substance-abuse induced mental breakdowns. Psychiatric patients themselves narrate stories of psychological anguish over their economic predicaments. To this end, both Dr Chibanda and Gregoire Ahongbonon envision that improvements in economic fortunes help alleviate the mental health crisis in Africa. Psychiatry in Africa is tasked with the complex predicament of taking care of mental and social health.

IsiLimela, Madness and a Reimagining the African World

The recap of chapters above maps the distinctive and unique philosophical concepts developed in these literary and cultural texts' depictions of madness. African ritual archives read in this research reveal concepts such as ritual mothering, *Ogbanje*, *IsiLimela*, *Ngozi* and reincarnation narratives used in the novels to confront the contemporary global, continental and local sociopolitical problems. The documentaries also offered concepts such as *Sarawoga* to depict conceptions of physical, psychological and political abandonment as a way of inspiring more humane approaches to psychological illnesses. Even problematic conceptualisations of African cosmologies imaged through chains in Berda's documentary significantly contribute to visualise various social injustices currently ignored by postcolonial African hegemonies. Importantly, however, the aforementioned vernacular terminologies convey African metaphysical meanings of the world that Western psychology discredits or is unable to theorise. With the exception of *A Crazy Hope*, a noticeable quality of the selected texts as discussed in the preceding chapters is their deliberate foregrounding of their narratives in African cosmology to capture the complexity of the historical and contemporary African experience. Foregrounding African cosmology in these texts is not simply a chauvinistic defence of African culture but a critical enquiry into its ritual archive to reimagine contemporary global relations, localised sociopolitical experiences and the position of African concepts in global

epistemology. These cosmological depictions interrogate colonial cultures fossilised by various African hegemonies as authentic precolonial realities. This interrogation significantly intersects with decolonial theories.

A large part of the diverse madness depicted in the novels emanate from conceptions of the world shaped by Eurocentric colonial episteme. The political, environmental, ethnocentric, psychiatric and sexuality terrorscapes in each of my chapters emanates from colonial ideologies willingly perpetuated by African postcolonial leadership. All texts studied provide epistemological formulations on "how more humanly workable geographies might be imagined" (McKittrick, 2006, p. xxiii). Chief among these, the *IsiLimela* concept used by Tshuma in *Digging Stars* (2023) as a solution to the postcolonial madness in Zimbabwe is an idea with intercultural potential for different African and non-Western cultures. The first meaning I want to emphasize here is gleaned from the already discussed weaponisation of this concept in America's War on Terror. America's War on Terror represents one aspect of ethnocentric madness addressed by Tshuma, and especially depicted through depictions of the Zimbabwean political and economic crisis. Through the use of the *IsiLimela* geometry as a long-range missile guidance system, Tshuma articulates its potential as an epistemological and political navigational map out of the Zimbabwean ethnic, political and economic crises. Since these crises are experiential layers in Athandwa's psychological breakdown, the concept carries the potential to heal Zimbabwe's fragmented Bantu consciousness and sociopolitical body. The precision of the missile guidance system symbolising destructive capabilities if backed by capitalist ethnocentrism, paradoxically denotes its generative potential in Bantu cosmology. I argue its generative potential due to the various signals in the animal world's birthing seasons and meteorological signals to the precolonial Bantu's new farming season. The paradox also extends to early independence years of Zimbabwean postcoloniality where the symbolism was perverted into the *Gukurahundi*; the rain that washes away the chaff, infamously dubbed a moment of madness by Robert Mugabe. In this historical moment, Zimbabwe's postcolonial hegemony rendered the genocidal killing of Ndebele ethnic citizens an act of nation building, therefore, productive.

Zimbabwe's pursuit of the same perverted technology developed from the *IsiLimela* demonstrates its longstanding entrenchment in ethnocentric ideology. Tshuma's conceptualisation remaps and reconfigures the Bantu cosmology perverted in ZANU PF's moment of madness. This concept captures various layers/cultures of madness related to the

colonial and postcolonial perversion of Bantu cosmology. Another layer of madness, therefore, is ZANU PF's nation building which starts in the violent perversion of a generative mythology, and by ZANU PF's own admission, a moment of madness. This means that ZANU PF projects an inauthentic Bantu culture as its nation building template. This inauthentic culture of madness can be ruptured by a philosophical return to the *IsiLimela* mythology.

Through their depiction of madness using ritual archives, these novels have regenerated theories which locate imaginations of African worlds and other postcolonial worlds outside the dominant Westocentric frameworks. The *IsiLimela* is an interesting concept which literarily achieves the construction of virtual non-Western cosmologies. The videogame constructed by the central characters in *Digging Stars* (2023) symbolises the re-invention of non-Western worlds and a reclamation of cultural and political sanity. In Tshuma's novel, sanity denotes undoing ideologies of terror systematised by colonial and postcolonial hegemonies. Apart from the "global accessibility of [such a] digital archive" (Falola, 2017, p. 723), the value of constructing a virtual non-Western cosmological world can be demonstrated by Fanon's description of the Antillean colonial magazines in which "the Wolf, the Devil, the Evil Spirit, the Bad Man, the Savage are always symbolized by Negroes or Indians" (1952, p. 113). Colonial literature and political praxes generate worlds where subalterns are bodily and epistemologically disfigured to naturalise their social and psychological domination. *Digging Stars*' virtual cosmology dislocates long histories of disfigured colonial bodies and imagines the possibility of non-ethnocentric postcolonial African worlds. The metaphor is captured in Shaniqua's reflective question; "what kind of America an origin story born of the Sky Woman, and not Manifest Destiny, would have birthed?" (Tshuma, 2023, p. 181). Shaniqua's question can be extended to other postcolonial spaces built on colonial imaginaries as is contemporary America. Such topographies include Kosawa where African humans and ecosystems alike are dispensable in oil extraction. It also includes Zimbabwe where state sanctioned political terror has created an atmosphere of fear, death and the psychological breakdown suffered by Athandwa.

Mythologies of the digging stars depicted by Tshuma demonstrate the transformative capacity of quotidian concepts to open intercultural pathways to disentangle postcolonial geographies from global coloniality. This way, Tshuma's conceptualisation of the *IsiLimela* fulfils Falola's envisioned potential of ritual archives. When used as *IsiLimela* in Bantu mythology, *Bagonegiizhig* in Ojibwe astrology, the Three Zebras in Taino mythology and the Daughters

of the Sky God to the Khoisan, this metaphor communicates non-Western versions of history and mythology that are opposed to Pleaides which entrenches western epistemological inventions. *Bagonegiizhig* articulates the history of Native Americans as autochthons in America, a land given to them by Sky Woman as opposed to the economically dispossessed geographies of the Reservations. Pleaides, on the other hand, represents European conquest aligning with the British American settler myth of Destiny Manifest. Manifest Destiny and Terra Nullius myths imaginatively legitimate non-Western worlds as God-given "mass[es] of raw materials awaiting Western exploitation" (Nare et al, 2024, p. 365). The juxtaposition of non-Western intercultural ritual archives and colonising regimes' mythologies documents "the historical circumstances of our [shared] location in modernist projects" (Falola, 2017, p. 713). Athandwa's ritual archives-situated madness which we encounter as the terrors, therefore, facilitates theorising concepts that resist such contemporary ideologies of domination.

Tshuma's *Digging Stars* (2023) engenders reimaginations of the political theories that currently inform political madness in diverse African postcolonies, with special focus on Zimbabwe. It shares a concern for postcolonial nationhood with Bulawayo's *Glory* (2023) and Emezi's *The Death of Vivek Oji* (2020). In these texts, Zimbabwean and Nigerian postcolonies are shaped by ethnonationalist perceptions of nationhood. Simultaneous to challenging Western epistemology, concepts such as *IsiLimela* and Igbo reincarnation in *The Death of Vivek Oji* contain knowledges that may reconfigure contemporary ethnic relations in these postcolonies. Falola (2022) and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2011), commenting on the elusive Nigerian and Zimbabwean nation-state projects respectively, agree that these postcolonial nations showcase extreme forms of ethnonationalism. Evidence to this are the ethnic cleansings and genocides carried out by each nation's political establishments immediately after independence. In Nigeria, there was the Biafran Civil War as touched on by *The Death of Vivek Oji* while in Zimbabwe there was the *Gukurahundi* as addressed by the novel *Digging Stars* and *Glory*. These, according to my reading of the said novels, create unhealth national and individual psyches depicted as madness. African individuals inhabiting national spaces created by colonial inventions inevitably experience psychological breakdown as symbolised by the characters Athandwa in *Digging Stars*, Simiso, Destiny and Mugabe in *Glory*, and Vivek in *The Death of Vivek Oji*.

The problem is, therefore, how to move out of ethnocentric politics which has created terrorscapes, fictitious and unstable nations clearly, and maddeningly so, divided along ethnic

lines. By reframing the resulting madness from an African cosmological perspective, the selected texts evoke and revalidate other African epistemologies which contain solutions to these colonially rooted sociopolitical modernities. The various re-birth rituals evoked in these texts hold the promise of a reimagined African cosmology and of animating our reclaiming of Africa's stolen, discredited and lost heritage. Since this reframing recognises the cosmological aspects of madness resulting from unresolved deaths, and manifestations of ancestral beings and gods, it reintroduces the metaphysical in our social and political imagination. To conclude, cosmologies of madness require rigorous intellectual enquiry to formulate an ethos capable of resolving the contemporary global intellectual imbalances and the bio-logic cultures and political terror governing various postcolonial African nations as depicted in the discussed literary texts.

This study has discussed the various concepts contained within the African cosmology to deal with emerging issues within African cultures and global politics. Going forward, an analysis of madness in East African literary texts would be a fruitful endeavour to interrogate the conceptualisation of madness in these cultures. There are recently published texts such as Mukoma Wa Ngugi's *Unbury Our Dead With Song* (2021) which use madness and trauma to depict the intricacies of the Ethiopian/Somalian and Kenyan/Somalian postcolonial political conflicts. Ngugi uses the concept of the *Tizita* (traditional Ethiopian song) to express the various psychic wounds resulting from the political situation in these East African nations. Reading these psychic wounds vis a vis the African cosmology demonstrates how the *Tizita* as a traditional Ethiopian concept provides literary and musical resources to confront and historicise these psychopolitical issues. Another fascinating depiction of mental illness is in the novel *Lucky Girl* (2023) by Irene Muchemi-Ndiritu. While this novel does not necessarily depict mental illness as madness, it shows how sociopolitical issues prevailing in Kenya infringe on individual psyches. In a fashion similar to the documentaries studied in this research, Muchemi-Ndiritu's novel interrogates the poorly resourced state of mental health care in Kenya by showing the struggles of mental illness patients and their families. I believe these texts to be a crucial area of research into fictions of madness and mental illness in Africa because of the evocative concepts they use.

References

A Crazy Hope. 2015. [Film] Directed by Virginie Berda. West Africa: LUKARN.

Achebe, C., 1959. *Things Fall Apart.* New York: Anchor Books.

Achebe, C., 1964. The Role of the Writer in a New Nation. *Nigeria Magazine*, 18 June, pp. 157 - 160.

Achebe, C. C., 1989. Literary Insights into the Ogbanje Phenomenon. *Journal of African Studies,* 7(1), pp. 31 -38.

Adegbindin, O., 2017. Sophia, Phronēsis, and the Universality of Ifá in African Philosophy. In: A. Afolayan & F. Toyin, eds. *The Palgrave Handbook of African Philosophy.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 315 - 330.

Adeniji, A., 2018. Nigerian Literature: Then and Now. *The Wenshan Review of Literature and Culture,* 11(2), pp. 121-141.

Agamben, G., 1998. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life.* Stanford. California: Stanford University Press.

Agballah, U., 2018. *Where The Rain Started Beating Us.* Ibadan: Kraftgriots.

Akyeampong, E., 2015. A Historical Overview of Psychiatry in Africa. In: E. Akyeampong, A. G. Hill & A. Kleinman, eds. *The Culture of Mental Illness and Psychiatric Practice in Africa.* Bloomington and Indianapolis: University of Indianapolis Press, pp. 24 - 49.

Akyeampong, E., Hill, A. G. & Kleinman, A., 2015. Introduction: Culture, Mental Illness, and Psychiatric Practice in Africa. In: E. Akyeampong, A. G. Hill & A. Kleinman, eds. *The Culture of Mental Illness and Psychiatric Practice in Africa.* Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, pp. 1 - 23.

Akyeampong, E., Hill, A. G. & Kleinman, A., 2015. *The Culture of Mental Illness and Psychiatric Practice in Africa.* Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Almagia, R., 2024. *Amerigo Vespucci.* [Online] Available at: https://www.britannica.com/biography/Amerigo-Vespucci [Accessed 2 September 2024].

Anderson, B., 2006. *Imagnined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* Revised Edition ed. London. New York: Verso.

Armah, A. K., 1974. *Fragments.* London: Heinemann.

Armah, A. K., 2010. *Remembering the Dismembered Continent.* Per Ankh: Popenguine.

Asante, M. K., 1988. *Afrocentricity.* New Jersey: African World Press.

Aschwanden, H., 1987. *Symbols of Life: An Analysis of the Consciousness of the Karanga.* Gweru: Mambo Press.

Aspen Global Leadership Network, 2023. *But why did they specifically train a grandmother.* [Online]
Available at:

https://twitter.com/AspenAGLN/status/1681407226269818881?t=vXwWPN9ueHPgx2LBDd29_w&s=19
[Accessed 6 March 2024].

Awondo, P., Geschire, P. & Reid, G., 2012. Homophobic Africa? Toward a More Nuanced View.. *African Studies Review,* 55(3), pp. 145 - 168.

Banks, I., 2000. *Hair matters: beauty, power and black women's consciousness.* New York: New York University Press.

Baum, R. M., 2004. Crimes of the Dream World: French Trials of the Diola Witches in Colonial Senegal. *International Journal of African Historical Studies,* 37(2), pp. 201 - 229.

Bazin, N. T., 1992. Madness, Mysticism and Fantasy: Shifting Perspectives in the Novels of Dorris Lessing, Bessie Head and Nardine Gordimer. *Extrapolation,* 33(1), pp. 73-87.

Bazin, N. T., 1995. Southern Africa and the Theme of Madness: Novels by Doris Lessing, Bessie Head and Nadine Gordimer. In: A. E. Brown & M. E. Gooze, eds. *International Women's Writing: New Landscpaes of Identity.* Connecticut. London: Greenwood Press, pp. 137 - 149.

Beach, D. N., 1974. Ndebele Raiders and Shona Power. *Journal of African History,* xv(4), pp. 633 - 651.

Benyera, E. & Nyere, C., 2015. An exploration of the impact of Zimbabwe's 2005 operation murambatsvina on women and children. *Journal of Gender and Human Behaviour,* Volume 13, pp. 6522-6534.

Bertho, E., 2018. Reworkings of a Literary Myth and Historical Construction. In: A. Dodeman & E. Raimbault, eds. *Literary Location and Dislocation of Myth in the Post/Colonial Anglophone Works.* Leiden: Brill/Rodopi, pp. 103 - 119.

Bhebhe, N., 2024. *New Dawn...President Launches Gukurahundi Hearings.* [Online] Available at: https://www.chronicle.co.zw/new-dawn-president-launches-gukurahundi-hearings/
[Accessed 27 August 2024].

Biehl, J., 2005. *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment.* California: University of California Press.

Borah, A. & Sotunsa, E. M., 2020. Introduction. In: A. Borah & M. E. Sotunsa, eds. *Imagining Vernacular Histories: Essays in Honor of Toyin Falola.* New York: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. vii - xxii.

Brand, D., 2002. *A Map to the Door of No Return: Notes to Belonging.* Toronto: Vintage Canada.

Bronte, C., 1890. *Jane Eyre.* New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co.

Brown, C., 2008. A Divine Madness: The Secret Language of Trauma in the Novels of Bessie Head and Calixthe Beyala. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East,* 28(1), pp. 93-108.

Brown, C. A., 2017. Introduction: Women, Writing, Madness: Reframing Diaspora Aesthetics. In: C. A. Brown & J. X. Garvey, eds. *Madness in Black Women's Diasporic Fictions: Aesthetics of Resistance.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 1-18.

Brown, C. A., 2017. Magic, Madness, and the Ruses of the Trickster: Healing Rituals and Alternative Spiritualities in Gloria Naylor's Mama Day, Erna Brodber's Jane and Louisa Will Soon Come Home, and Nalo Hopkinson's Brown Girl in the Ring. In: C. A. Brown & J. X. Garvey, eds. *Madness in Black Women's Diasporic Fiction: An Aesthetics of Resistance.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 225 - 266.

Brown, C. A. & Garvey, J. X., 2017. *Madness in Black Women's Diasporic Fictions; Aesthetics of Resistance.* New York: Palgrave Maxmillan.

Brown, K. M., 2006. Afro-Caribbean Spirituality: A Haitian Case Study. In: C. Michel & P. Bellegarde-Smith, eds. *Vodou in Haitian Life and Culture.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bulawayo, N., 2013. *We Need New Names.* New York: Little, Brown & Company.

Bulawayo, N., 2023. *Glory.* New York: Little, Brown & Company.

Butler, J., 2004. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence.* London. New York: Verso Publishers.

Butler, J. & Athanasiou, A., 2013. *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bvuma, T. S., 1999. *Every Stone That Turns.* Harare: College Press.

Cabral, A., 1974. *Return to the Source: Selected Speeches of Amilcar Cabral.* New York: New York University Press.

Caminero-Santangelo, M., 1998. *The Madwoman Can't Speak: Or Why Madness is not Subversive.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Caronia, N., 2017. Resisting Displacement in Bernardine Evaristo's The Emperor's Babe. In: C. A. Brown & J. X. Garvey, eds. *Madness in Black Women's Diasporic Fictions; Aesthetics of Resistance.* New York: Palgrave, Macmillan, pp. 19-50.

Chibanda, D., 2024. *The Global Mental-Health Crisis Demands New Thinking.* [Online] Available at: https://www.project-syndicat.org/commentary/alternative-solutions-to-mental-health-crisis-in-developing-world-by-dixon-chibanda-2024-01?h=bC1ImafdHeqSbUS4NLlVGZjTo4zszlnJ1Jz4HB5nNTo%3d&
[Accessed 6 March 2024].

Chidora, T., 2018. *Of names and texts: The lighter of Zimbabwean Literature.* [Online] Available at: https://www.herald.co.zw/of-names-and-texts-the-lighter-side-of-zimbabwean-literature/amp/
[Accessed 1 December 2023].

Chidora, T., Tivenga, D. R. & Chitando, E., 2024. *The Zim-dancehall Revolution.* Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Chigumadzi, P., 2018. *These Bones Will Rise Again.* London: The Indigo Press.

Chigwedere, Y., 2015. *Head of Darkness: Representations of Madness in Postcolonial Zimbabwean Literature.* Johannesburg: UNISA.

Chigwedere, Y. & Choto, I., 2017. The Colonial Boomerang: A Comparative Analysis of Traumatic Effect of the Violence of War in Alexander Kanengoni's Echoing Silences and Alexandra Fuller's Scribbling the Cat. *Imbizo,* 8(2), pp. 1 - 18.

Chikwava, B., 2009. *Harare North.* London: Jonathan Cape.

Chimakonam, J. O., 2017. The Question of African Logic: Beyond Apologia and Polemics. In: A. Afolayan & T. Falola, eds. *The Palgrave Handbook of African Philosophy.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 105 - 128.

Chimuka, T. A., 2020. Statecraft: Robert Mugabe and Traditional African Religions. In: E. Chitando, ed. *Politics and Religion in Zimbabwe.* New York: Routledge, pp. 76 - 87.

Chin'ono, H., 2023. *Hopewell Chin'ono (@daddyhope) on x.* [Online] Available at: https://x.com/daddyhope/status/1665675789382057989?t=OJ2kqVLLXBM3-AWTOWDJZQ&s=09
[Accessed 4 March 2024].

Chipanga, C. & Mude, T., 2015. An Analysis of the Effectiveness of Sanctions as a Law Enforcement Tool in International Law: A Case Study of Zimbabwe from 2001 to 2013. *Open Journal of Political Science,* Volume 5, pp. 291 - 310.

Chitando, E., 2023. Ibotso MuDzimba Dzemabwe: Winky D and the Quest for Human Flourishing in Zimbabwe. In: T. Chidora , D. R. Tivenga & E. Chitando, eds. *The Zimdancehall Revolution: Critical Perspectives.* Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 119 - 134.

Chivaura, V., 2018. African History; An Intangible Living Force. In: R. Magosvongwe , O. B. Mlambo & E. Ndlovu, eds. *Africa's Intangible Heriatge and Land; Emerging Perspectives.* Mount Pleasant: University of Zimbabwe Publication, pp. 1 -5.

Chivaura, V. G., 1998. Human Factor Development: Agenda for the Future. In: V. G. Chivaura & C. G. Mararike, eds. *The Human Factor Approach to Development in Africa.* Mount Pleasant, Harare: University of Zimbabwe, pp. 1 - 8.

Chivaura, V. G., 1998. Zimbabwean Literature in English: Its Place, Status and Identity in the History, Culture and Arts of Zimbabwe. In: T. S. Walters, ed. *Oracy, Literacy and the Fictive Imagination: African Diasporan Literatures.* Michigan: Bedford Publishers, pp. 341 - 368.

Chukwu, A. O., 2017. A Bibliographical Report on African Philosophy. In: A. Afolayan & T. Falola, eds. *The Palgrave Handbook of African Philosophy.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 813 - 826.

Clough, E., Hardacre, J. & Muggleton, E., 2023. Poverty Porn and Perceptions of Agency: An Experimental Assessment. *Political Studies Review,* pp. 1 - 18.

Cohen, B. M., 2016. *Psychiatric Hegemony: A Maxist Theory of Mental Illness.* London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Cohen, B. M., 2019. A Postcolonial Critique of Mental Health: Empire and Psychiatric Expansion. In: R. Moodley & E. Lee, eds. *The Routledge International Handbook of Race, Culture and Mental Health.* New York: Routledge, pp. 32 - 42.

Cohen, B. M. Z., 2018. Introduction: the critical approaches to mental health and illness. In: B. M. Z. Cohen, ed. *Routledge International Handbook of Critical Mental Health.* New York: Routledge, pp. 1 - 12.

Collignon, R., 2015. Some Aspects of Mental Illness in French-Speaking. In: E. Akyeampong, A. G. Hill & A. Kleinman, eds. *Culture, Mental Illness, and Psychiatric Practice in Africa.* Bloomington and Indianpolis: Indiana University Press, pp. 163 - 185.

Collins, A., 2013. What is Critical Psychology?. In: D. Hook, ed. *Critical Psychology: The Basic Co-ordinates.* Cape Town: Junta & Compant, pp. 22-23.

Conrad, J., 1994. *Heart of Darkness.* London: Penguin Classics.

Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, 2022. *Destruction of Gukurahundi Bhalagwe Memorial Plaque.* [Online]
Available at: https://www.crisiszim.org/post/destruction-bhalagwe-memorial-plaque-appaling [Accessed 1 December 2023].

Cross, S., 2004. Visualizing Madness: Mental Illness and Public Representation. *Television and New Media,* 5(3), pp. 197 - 216.

Dangarembga, T., 1988. *Nervous Conditions.* London: The Women's Press.

de Saugy, Y. F., 2022. “We Are Not Gays”: Regime Preservation and the Politicization of Identity in Mugabe’s Zimbabwe. *African Studies Review,* 65(3), pp. 591 - 614.

Dlamini, N., 2017. *Zimbabwe: Coup Was a 'Counter Coup' to Grace - Mutsvangwa.* [Online] Available at: https://allafrica.com/stories/201712020176.html [Accessed 13 September 2024].

Donald, B., 2000. Circling Back on the Road to Independence: Models of History and National Identity in Irish Children's Literature. In: J. Webb, ed. *Text, Culture and National Identity in Children's Literature.* Helsinki: NORDINFO.

Douglas-Chin, R., 2017. Madness and Translation of the Bones-as-Text in M. NourbeSe Philip’s Experimental Zong!. In: C. A. Brown & J. X. Garvey, eds. *Madness in Black Women's Diasporic Fictions: An Aesthetic of Resistance.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 51 - 74.

du Toit, L. & Cooetze, A., 2017. Gendering African Philosophy, or: African Feminism as Decolonizing Force. In: A. Afolayan & T. Falola, eds. *The Palgrave Handbook of African Philosophy.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 333 - 247.

Dube, S., 2023. *Winky D under siege.* [Online] Available at: https://www.newsday.co.zw/thestandard/standard-style/article/200010528/winky-d-under-siege
[Accessed 23 Sepetember 2024].

Dyson, E., 2020. *The Psycho-Politics of Fanonand Michel Foucault: A Critical Dialogue.* Oxford: Oxford University.

Ehanhire, B. A., 2022. The Weapons of Subjugation in Imbolo Mbue's How Beautiful We Were. In: E. N. Emenyonu, ed. *African literature comes of age.* Oxford: James Currey, pp. 107 - 118.

Ellison, R., 1952. *The Invisble Man.* New York: Random House.

Emezi, A., 2018. *Freshwater.* New York: Grove Press.

Emezi, A., 2020. *The Death of Vivek Oji.* New York: Riverbed Books.

Eppel, S., 2004. 'Gukurahundi' The need for truth and reparation. In: B. Raftopolous & T. Savage, eds. *Zimbabwe: Injustice and Political Reconciliation.* Cape Town: Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, pp. 43 - 62.

Fabian, J., 2000. *Out of our Minds; Madness and Reason in the Explorations of Central Africa.* California: University of California Press.

Falola, T., 2016. *The Humanities in Africa.* Austin: Pan-African University Press.

Falola, T., 2017. Ritual Archives. In: A. Afolayan & T. Falola, eds. *The Palgrave Handbook of African Philosophy.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 703-728.

Falola, T., 2022. *Nigerian Literary Imagination and the Nationhood Project.* Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Fanon, F., 1952. *Black Skin, White Mask.* London: Pluto Press.

Fanon, F., 1963. *The Wretched of the Earth.* New York: Grove Wiedenfield.

Felman, S., 2003. *Writing and Madness: (Literature/Philosophy/Psychoanalysis).* Palo Alto, California: Stanford University Press.

Flanders, S. et al., 2016. On the subject of homosexuality: What Freud said. *The International Journal of Psychanaysis,* Volume 97, pp. 933 - 950.

Fontein, J., 2018. Political Accidents in Zimbabwe. *Kronos,* 44(1), pp. 33 - 58.

Fontein, J., 2020. Burying Bob. *The Thinker,* Volume 84, pp. 4 - 11.

Foster, D., 2013. Liberation Psychology. In: D. Hook, ed. *Critical Psychology.* Claremont: Juta and Compant, Ltd, pp. 559 - 603.

Foucault, M., 1965. *Madness and Civilisation: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason.* New York. Toronto: Random House Inc.

Foucault, M., 1977. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison.* London: Allen Lane.

Freidman, R. C., 2008. Freud, Ouedipus and Homosexuality. In: R. C. Freidman & J. I. Downey, eds. *Sexual Orientation and Psychodynamic Psychotherapy: Sexual Science and Clinical Practice.* New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 87 - 97.

Freud, S., 1918. *Totem and Taboo.* New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, INC..

Freud, S., 1927. *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics.* New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, Inc.

Garvey, J. X., 2017. Conclusion: Moving Beyond Psychic Ruptures. In: C. A. Brown & J. X. Garvey, eds. *Madness in Black Women's Diasporic Fictions: An Aesthetics of Resistance.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 293 - 310.

Garvey, J. X., 2017. Fissured Memory and Mad Tongues: The Aesthetics of Marronage in Haitian Women's Fiction. In: C. A. Brown & J. X. Garvey, eds. *Madness in Black Women's Diasporic Fictions: An Aestehtics of Resistance.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 103 - 138.

Garvey, M., 1937. Speech in Nova Scotia. *Black Man,* 3(10), pp. 7 - 11.

Gaylard, G., 2007. Writing Madness: Borderlines of the Body in African Literature by Flora Veit-Wild. *English Studies in Africa,* 50(2), pp. 177-180.

Gelfand, M., 1967. Psychiatric Diorders as Recognised by The Shona. *The Central African Journal of Medicine,* pp. 29-46.

Gelfand, M., 1967. The Shona's Concept of Mental Disorder. *The Central African Journal of Medicine,* pp. 39 - 46.

Gibson, N. C., 2021. Decolonizing Madness: The Psychiatric Writings of Frantz Fanon . In: L. Laubscher, D. Hook & M. U. Desai, eds. *Fanon, Phenomenology and Psychology.* New York: Routledge, pp. 21 - 47.

Gilbert, S. M. & Guba, S., 2020. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination.* Veritas Paperback Edition ed. New Haven. London: Yale University Press.

Gilman, S., 1988. *Disease and Representation: Images of Illness from Madness to AIDS.* Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.

Ginio, R., 2011. Colonial Minds and African Witchcraft: Interpretations of Murder as Seen in Cases from French West Africa in the Interwar Era. In: A. J. Johnston, J. D. Le Sueur & T. Stovall, eds. *The French Colonial Mind: Mental Maps of Empire and Colonial Encounters Volume 1.* Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, pp. 49 - 71.

Goddard, L., 2008. Middle-Class Aspirations and Black Women's Mental Health in Zindika's Leonora's Dance, and Bonnie Greer's Munda Negra and Dancing on Blackwater. In: R. D'Monté & G. Saunders, eds. *Cool Britannia? British Political in the 1990s.* New York: Palgrace; Maxmillan, pp. 96-113.

Godwin, P., 2011. *The Fear: The Last Days of Robert Mugabe.* New York: Picador.

Gomo, M., 2010. *A Fine Madness.* Oxfordshire: Ayebia Clarke Publishing.

Gordimer, N., 1981. *July's People.* Cape Town: Raven/Taurus.

Gordon, A. F., 2008. *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination.* Minneapolis. London: University of Minnesota Press.

Gubar, S., 1997. *Racechanges: White Skin, Black Face in American Culture.* New York. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gunda, M. R., 2020. The Making of a Legend in the narratives on Robert G. Mugabe's Life and Politics. In: E. Chitando, ed. *Politics and Religion in Zimbabwe; The Deification of Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe.* New York: Routledge, pp. 63 - 75.

Hamourtziadou, L., 2021. *Body Count: The War on Terror and Civilian in Iraq.* Bristol: Bristol University Press.

Haynes, T., 2012. The Divine and the Demonic: Sylvia Wynter and Caribbean Feminist Thought Revisited. In: *Love and Power: Caribbean Discourses on Gender.* Kingstone: University of the West Indies, pp. 54-71.

Head, B., 1974. *A Question of Power.* London: Heinneman.

Headley, C., 2017. Between Africa and the Caribbean: The Nature of Afro-Caribbean Philosophy. In: A. Afolayan & T. Falola, eds. *The Palgrave Handbook of African Philosophy.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 269 - 286.

Heelas, P. & Lock, A., 1981. *Indigenous Psychologies: The Anthropology of Self.* London: Acdemic Press.

Hegel, G. W. F., 1900. *The Philosophy of History.* Revised Edition ed. New York: Willey Book Co.

Helliker , K. & Murisa, T., 2020. Zimbabwe: continuities and changes. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies,* 38(1), pp. 5 - 17.

Henderson, M. G., 1999. Toni Morrison’s Beloved Re-Membering The Body As Historical Text. In: W. L. Andrews & N. Y. McKay, eds. *Toni Morrison's Beloved: A Casebook.* New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 79 - 106.

Herald Reporters, 2024. *Chorus grows louder for president to stay on.* [Online] Available at: https://www.herald.co.zw/chorus-grows-louder-for-president-to-stay-on [Accessed 24 Sepetember 2024].

Himmelman, N., 2010. Writing Madness: Borderlines of the Body in African Literature, by Flora Veit-Wild. *A Journal of Engish Studies,* 27(1), pp. 115-117.

Himmelmann, N., 2006. *Madness in Africa; Ambivalence, Fluidity and Play.* Cape Town: Cape Town University.

Hodgkinson, D., 2019. Nationalists with no nation: oral history, ZANU(PF) and the meanings of Rhodesian student activism in Zimbabwe. *Africa,* 89(S1), pp. S40 - S64.

Hook, D., 2013. *Critical Psychology.* Claremont: Junta & Compant Ltd.

Hook, D., 2014. Foucault, disciplinary power and the critical pre-history of psychology. In: D. Hook, ed. *Critical Psychology.* Claremont: Juta and Compant, Ltd, pp. 210 - 238.

Horsthemke, K., 2017. Indigenous (African) Knowledge Systems, Science, and Technology. In: A. Afolayan & T. Falola, eds. *The Palgrave Handbook of African Philosophy.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 585 - 603.

Hove, C., 1987. *Bones.* Harare: Baobab Books.

Hughes, L., 1951. *Montage of a Deferred Dream.* Harlem: Holt.

Ikuenobe, P., 2017. Africa and the Philosophy of Democratic Governance In: A. Afolayan & T. Falola, eds. *The Palgrave Handbook of African Philosophy.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 571 - 584.

Ilechukwu, S. T., 2017. Ogbanje/abiku in the Conceptualisations of Pyshcopathology in Nigeria. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture,* 10(3), pp. 239 -255.

Jackson, L. A., 1999. The Place of Psychiatry in Colonial and early Postcolonial Zimbabwe. *International Journal of Mental Health,* 28(2), pp. 38 - 71.

Jackson, L. A., 2005. *Surfacing Up: Psychiatry and Social Order in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1908-1968.* New York: Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Jean-Charles, R. M., 2014. *Conflict Bodies: The Politics of Rape Representation in the Francophone Imaginary.* Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press.

Jell-Bahlsen, S., 1995. The Concept of Mammywater in Flora Nwapa's Novels. *Research in African Literatures,* 26(2), pp. 30 - 41.

Jones, 2010. 'Nothing is Straight in Zimbabwe': The Rise of the Kukiya-kiya Economy 2000 - 2008.. *Journal of Southern African Studies,* 36(2), pp. 285 - 299.

Jules-Rosette, B., 1998. *Black Paris: The African Writers' Landscape.* Urbana. Il: University of Illinois Press.

Kanengoni, A., 1997. *Echoing Silences.* Harare: Baobab Books.

Karmakar, G. & Chetty, R., 2023. Extraction and Environmental Injustices: (De)colonial Practices in Imbolo Mbue's How Beautiful We Were. *eTropic,* 22(2), pp. 126 - 147.

Keller, R. C., 2007. *Colonial Madness: Psychiatry in French North Africa.* Chicago. London: The University of Chicago Press.

Kennon, R. D., 2017. "We Know People by Their Stories": Madness, Babies, and Dolls in Edwidge Danticat's Krik? Krak!. In: C. A. Brown & J. X. Garvey, eds. *Madness in Black Women's Diasporic Fictions: Aesthetics of Resistance.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 163 - 197.

Kerr, D., 1999. Character Role, Madness, God, Biography, Narrative: Dismantling and Reassembling Bessie Head's A Question of Power. *Marang; Journal of Language and Literature,* Volume Special Issue, pp. 191-198.

Kidia, K. et al., 2017. Mental Health in Zimbabwe: A Health Systems Analysis. *The Lancert Psychiatry,* 4(11), pp. 876 - 886.

Kortenaar, N. T., 2007. Oedipus, Ogbanje, and the Sons of Independence. *Research in African Literatures,* 38(2), pp. 181 - 205.

Kurtz, R. J., 2021. *Trauma and Transformation in African Literature.* New York: Routledge.

Lan, D., 1985. *Guns and Rain: Guerrillas and Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe.* London. Berkerly and Los Angeles: James Currey. University of California Press.

Laubscher, L., Hook, D. & Desai, M. U., 2021. Of Bodies that Matter: Fanon, Phenomenology and Psychology. In: L. Laubscher, D. Hook & M. U. Desai, eds. *Fanon, Phenomenology and Psychology.* New York: Routldge, pp. 1 - 20.

Lessing, D., 1950. *The Grass is Singing.* Oxford: Heinemann.

Magaqa, T. & Makombe, R., 2021. Decolonising Queer Sexualities: A Critical Reading of the Ogbanje Concept in Akwaeke Emezi's Freshwater (2018. *African Studies Quarterly,* 20(3), pp. 24 - 39.

Magosvongwe, R., Ndlovu, E. & Mlambo, O. B., 2016. Africa's Intangible Cultural Heritage vis-a-vis Autonomy, Dignity, Justice, Peace, Empowerment, Sustainable Development and Survival. In: R. Magosvongwe, E. Ndlovu & O. B. Mlambo, eds. *Africa's Intangible Heritage and Land; Emerging Perspectives.* Mount Pleasant. Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, pp. 6-17.

Maldonado-Torres, N., 2007. On the Coloniality of Being Contributions to the development of a concept. *Cultural Studies,* 21(2 - 3), pp. 240 - 270.

Manase, I., 2006. *White Narratives: The Depiction of post-2000 Land Invasions in Zimbabwe.* Pretoria: Unisa Press.

Manase, I., 2014. Representations of the Post-2000 Zimbabwean Economic Migrancy in Petina Gappah's "An Elegy for Easterly" and Brian Chikwava's "Harare North". *Journal of Black Studies,* 45(1), pp. 59 - 76.

Mangena, F., Muwati, I. & Gambahaya, Z., 2006. Echoing Silences as a Paradigm of Restorative Justice in Post-conflict Zimbabwe: A Philosophical Discourse. *Zambezia,* 33(1 - 2), pp. 1 - 18.

Mangena, T., Nyambi, O. & Ncube, G., 2021. *The Zimbabwean Crisis After Mugabe: Multi-disciplinary Perspectives.* New York: Routledge.

Mangezi, W. & Chibanda, D., 2010. Mental health in Zimbabwe. *Int Psychiatry,* 7(4), pp. 93 - 94.

Manyika, S. L., 2022. *Glory by NoViolet Bulawayo review - a Zimbabwean Animal Farm.* [Online]
Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/books/2022/mar/23/glory-by-noviolet-bulawayo-review-a-zimbabwean-animal-farm
[Accessed 20 September 2024].

Marechera, D., 1978. *The House of Hunger.* London: Heinneman.

Mareva, R., 2014. The art of Neologism and Borrowing: Some Recent Additions to the Shona Slang Lexicon. *Global Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences ,* 3(4), pp. 179-183.

Maskiri & Shastro, 2018. *Garwe Ngaridzokere Mumvura.* [Sound Recording] (Dj Realman Mr Africa).

Mavengano, E., 2023a. The phallocentric paradox and semantics of Eve's myth in Zimbabwe's contemporary national politics: An ecofeminist reading of Bulawayo's novel, Glory. *Theological Studies,* 79(3), pp. 1 - 9.

Mavengano, E., 2023b. The Nehanda mythology: Dialectics of gender, history and religion in Zimbabwean literature. *Theological Studies,* 79(4), pp. 1 - 9.

Mbaegbu, C. C., 2018. *The Ultimate Being in Igbo Ontology.* Nsukka: University of Nigeria.

Mbembe, A., 2001. African Modes of Self-writing. *Identity, Culture and Politics,* 2(1), pp. 1 - 39.

Mbembe, A., 2001. *On the Postcolony.* University of California: Berkeley · Los Angeles · London.

Mbiti, J. S., 1969. *African Religion and Philosophy.* London: Heinemann.

Mbue, I., 2021. *How Beautiful We Were.* Edinburgh: Canongate Books.

McCulloch, J., 1995. *Colonial Psychiatry and 'the African Mind'.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McFaul, K. A., 2021. “One Foot on the Other Side”: An Africanfuturist Reading of Irenosen Okojie’s Butterfly Fish (2015) and Akwaeke Emezi’s Freshwater (2018). *Feminist Africa,* 2(2), pp. 47 - 61.

McKittrick, K., 2006. *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Melber, H. & Southall, R., 2006. *Legacies of Power: Leadership Change and Former Presidents in African Politics.* Cape Town: Human Sciences Research Council.

Meredith, M., 2002. *Mugabe: Power, Plunder and the Struggle for Zimbabwe.* New York: Public Affairs.

Metz, T., 2017. African Philosophy as a Multidisciplinary Discourse. In: A. Afolayan & T. Falola, eds. *The Palgrave Handbook of African Philosophy.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 795 - 812.

Mignolo, W., 2011. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options.* Durham: Duke University Press.

Mignolo, W. D., 2017. The Advent of Black Thinkers and the Limits of Continental Philosophy. In: A. Afolayan & T. Falola, eds. *The Palgrave Handbook of African Philosophy.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 287 - 301.

Mkhize, N., 2013. Psychology; An African Perspective. In: *Critical Psychology.* Claremont: Junta & Compant Ltd, pp. 24-52.

Mlambo, O. B. & Chitando, E., 2022. The spectacles and semiotics of the presidential scarf in Zimbabwe's "Second Republic". In: O. Nyambi, T. Mangena & G. Ncube, eds. *Cultures of Change in Contemporary Zimbabwe: Socio-political Transition from Mugabe to Mnangagwa.* New York: Routledge, pp. 38 - 51.

Morrison, T., 2004. *Beloved.* New York: Vinatge International.

Mountain, C. T., 2001. *Bodies of Knowledge; Madness and Power in Africana Women's Texts.* Florida: University of Florida.

Moyo, S. T., 2021. *Ndebele spirituality as pathways to peace and healing in Zimbabwe.* Durban: Durban University of Technology.

Moyo, T. & Mavengano, E., 2022. A deja vu of Orwellian Proportions: Re-reading Animal Farm in the Context of Zimbabwean Politics of Change. In: O. Nyambi, T. Mangena & G. Ncube, eds. *Cultures of Change in Contemporary Zimbabwe: From Mugabe to Mnangagwa.* New York: Routledge.

Mpofu, S. & Nenjerama, T., 2018. Imaginations and Narrations of the Nation: The Music of Raymond Majongwe and Brian Muteki in the Identity Construction of Post-200 Zimbabwe. *Muziki,* 15(1), pp. 1 - 15.

Mtukudzi, O., 2004. *Seiko.* [Sound Recording] (Mosi-oa-Tunya).

Mtukudzi, O., 2012. *Sarawoga.* [Sound Recording] (Tuku Music).

Muchemi-Ndiritu, I., 2023. *Lucky Girl.* New York: The Dial Press.

Muchemwa, K., 2005. Some Thoughts on History, Memory and Writing in Zimbabwe. In: R. Muponde & R. Primorac, eds. *Versions of Zimbabwe: New Approaches to Literature and Culture.* Avondale, Harare: Weaver Press, pp. 195-202.

Muchemwa, K. Z., 2007. 'Why don't you tell the children a story?': Father figures in three Zimbabwean short stories. In: K. Muchemwa & R. Muponde, eds. *Manning the Nation. Father Figures in Zimbabwean literature and society.* Avondale, Harare: Weaver Press, pp. 1 - 16.

Mudimbe, V.-Y., 1988. *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the order of Knowledge.* London: James Currey.

Mudiwa, R., 2017. *Coups and phalluses.* [Online]
Available at: https://africasacountry.com/2017/11/on-grace-mugabe-coups-phalluses-and-what-is-being-defended/
[Accessed 28 November 2023].

Mukondera, D., 2024. *Gukurahundi was not genocide, Charumbira tells editors ahead of hearings.* [Online]
Available at: https://www.chronicle.co.zw/new-dawn-president-launches-gukurahundi-hearings/
[Accessed 27 August 2024].

Mungoshi, C., 2005. The Sins of the Fathers. In: I. Staunton, ed. *Writing Still: New Stories from Zimbabwe.* Avondale, Harare: Weaver Press.

Munhende, L., 2023. *New Zimbabwe.* [Online]
Available at: https://www.newzimbabwe.com/fight-us--if-you-really-want-power-zanu-pfs-mutsvangwa-tells-opposition-parties-urges-them-to-stop-complaining-on-international-fora/
[Accessed 7 October 2023].

Munro, M., 2012. *Exile and Post-1946 Haitian Literature: Alexis, Depestre, Ollivier, Laferrière, Danticat.* Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

Muponde, R., 2005. Children of Resistance: Childhood, History and the Production of Nationhood in two Zimbabwean Novels. In: R. Muponde & R. Primorac, eds. *Versions of Zimbabwe: New Approaches to Literature and Culture.* Avondale, Harare: Weaver Press, pp. 119 - 130.

Murray, S. O. & Roscoe, W., 1998. Africa and African Homosexualities: An Introduction. In: S. O. Murray & W. Roscoe, eds. *Boy-Wives and Female Husbands: Studies in African Homosexualities.* New York: St Martin's Press, pp. 1 - 16.

Musanga, T., 2015. Intra-Urban Mobilities and the Depiction of the City in Zimbabwean Fiction as Reflected in in Valerie Tagwira's Uncertainty of Hope (2006). *Journal of Black Studies,* 46(1), pp. 102 - 116.

Musanga, T., 2017. "Ngozi" (Avenging Spirit), Zimbabwean Transnational Migration and Restorative Justice in Brian Chikwava's Harare North (2009). *Journal of Black Studies,* 48(8), pp. 775 - 790.

Musiyiwa, M., 2013. Hit Songs and the Dynamics of Postcolonial Zimbabwe: A Study in Popular Music Trends, 1980 - 2009. *Journal of International Library of African Music,* 9(3), pp. 60 - 91.

Musiyiwa, M., 2022. A Nation Burdened by an Unappeased Ngozi? A 'Folk' Cultural Perspective on Zimbabwe's Stagnation. In: O. Nyambi, T. Mangena & G. Ncube, eds. *Cultures of Change in Contemporary Zimbabwe: Socio-Political Transition from Mugabe to Mnangagwa.* New York: Routledge.

Muzondidya, J., 2004. 'Zimbabwe for Zimbabweans'; Invisible subject minorities and the quest for justice and reconcilliation in postcolonial Zimbabwe. In: B. Raftopolous & T. Savage, eds. *Zimbabwe: Injustice and Political Reconciliation.* Cape Town: Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, pp. 213 - 235.

Nare, M., Moopi, P. & Nyambi, O., 2024. Global Coloniality and Ecological injustice in Imbolo Mbue's How Beautiful We Were (2021). *Journal of Black Studies,* 55(4), pp. 349 - 372.

Ncube, G., 2024. (Im)possible Monuments? Gukurahundi and the Poitics of Memorialisation in Zimbabwe. In: J. S. Sanni & M. Z. Phiri, eds. *Monuments and Memory in Africa: Reflections on Coloniality and Decoloniality.* London and New York: Routledge, pp. 114 - 126.

Ncube, G., Nyambi, O. & Mangena, T., 2021. Introduction: Negotiating the Zimbabwean Crisis post-Mugabe. In: *The Zimbabwean Crisis after Mugabe: Multidisciplinary Perspectives.* New York: Routledge, pp. 1 - 16.

Ndakaripa, M., 2014. Ethnicity, narrative and the 1980s violence in Matebeleland and Midlands provinces of Zimbabwe. *Oral History Forum,* 34(Special Issue on Human Rights and Oral History), pp. 1 - 47.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J., 2009. *Do 'Zimbabweans' Exist? Trajectories of Nationalism, National Identity Formation and Crisis in a Postcolonial State.* Oxford: Peter Land.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J., 2009. Making Sense of Mugabeism in Local and Global Politics: 'So Blair, keep your England and let me keep my Zimbabwe'. *Third World Quarterly,* 30(6), pp. 1139 - 1158.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J., 2011. *The Zimbabwean Nation State Project A Historical Diagnosis of Identity and Power-Based Conflicts in a Postcolonial State.* Uppsala, Lightning Source UK Ltd..

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J. & Ruhanya, P., 2020. *The History and Political Transition in Zimbabwe: From Mugabe to Mnangagwa.* Cham: Switzeland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ndlovu, I. & Dube, B., 2013. Response to Maurice T. Vambe's 'Zimbabwe genocide: Voices and perceptions from ordinary people in Matabeleland and the Midlands provinces, 30 years on'. *African Identities,* 11(4), p. 353–366.

Nenadović, A., 2023. What about Love? 'Defiant Love' and Civic Dissent in Season of Crimson Blossoms and The Death of Vivek Oji. *Matatu,* Volume 54, pp. 277 - 300.

Newell, S., 2008. Writing Madness: Borderlines of the body in African literature, by Flora Veit-Wild. *African Affairs,* 127(428), pp. 483-485.

NewsDay Zimbabwe, 2016. *Grace Mugabe attacks Mnangagwa faction.* [Online] Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x84BTjUE1cw [Accessed 13 September 2024].

Ng, E., 2020. *A Time for Lost Gods: Mediumship, Madness and the Ghost of Mao.* Oakland, California: University of California Press.

Ngugi, M. W., 2021. *Unbury our Dead With Song.* Abuja. London: Cassava Republic.

Nobles, W. W., 2015. From Black Psychology to Sakhu Djaer: Implications for the Further Development of Pan African Black Psychology. *Journal of Black Psychology,* 41(5), pp. 399-414.

Nwadiokwu, C. N., Nwadioku, E. S., Favour, E. N. & Okwuazun, M. E., 2016. Rites of Passage African Traditional Region. *International Journal or Education and Research,* 4(9), pp. 41-51.

Nyambi, O., 2016. "The Lion Has Learnt" The Novel A Fine Madness and Third Chimurenga Discourse in Contemporary Zimbabwe. *Journal of Black Studies,* 47(3), pp. 217 - 234.

Nyambi, O., 2022. The 'spectre' of Mugabe: Land, change and the discursive politics of dispensations in Zimbabwe. In: O. Nyambi, T. Mangena & G. Ncube, eds. *Cultures of Change in Contemporary Zimbabwe: Socio-political Transition from Mugabe to Mnangagwa.* New York: Routledge, pp. 101 - 118.

Nyambi, O., Mangena, T. & Ncube, G., 2022. *Cultures of Change in Contemporary Zimbabwe: Socio-political Transition from Mugabe to Mnangagwa.* New York: Routledge.

Nyanzi, S., 2020. *No Roses From My Mouth.* Kampala: Revolutionary Readings.

Nyathi, K., 2024. *Zimbabwe President Mnangagwa seeks constitutional changes, abandons third term bid.* [Online] Available at: https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/rest-of-africa/mnangagwa-seeks-

constitutional-changes-abandons-third-term-bid-4609330
[Accessed 24 Sepetember 2024].

Okello, E. & Musisi, S., 2015. The Role of Traditional Healers in Mental Health Care in Africa. In: E. Akyeampong, A. G. Hill & A. Kleinman, eds. *The Culture of Mental Illness and Psychiatric Practice in Africa.* Bloomington and Indianapolis: Univerity of Indiana Press, pp. 249 - 261.

Okpanachi, E. O. & Idachaba, A. P., 2014. Arrow of God and the Problem of Time. *Okike: An African Journal of New Writing,* Volume 52, pp. 137 - 152.

Okri, B., 1991. *The Famished Road.* London: Vintage.

Orwell, G., 1945. *Animal Farm.* London: Tempo Haus.

Ossana, E., 2021. Precolonial Igbo Voices in Akwaeke Emezi's Freshwater (2018): A Palimpsestic Search for "Home". *Complutense Journal of English Studies,* Volume 29, pp. 81 -92.

Osunlakin, D. S., 2020. Rethinking Cultural Diversity and Sustainable Development in Africa. In: M. E. Sotunsa & A. Borah, eds. *Imagining Vernacular Histories: Essays in Honor of Toyin Falola.* London. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 47 - 70.

Owusu, K., 1988. Armah's F-R-A-G-M-E-N-T-S: Madness as Artistic Paradigm. *Callaloo,* Volume 35, pp. 361-370.

Oyeleye, O., 2017. Feminism(s) and Oppression: Rethinking Gender from a Yoruba Perspective. In: A. Afolayan & T. Falola, eds. *The Palgrave Handbook of African Philosophy.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 349 - 369.

Oyewumi, O., 1997. *The Invention of Women: Making An African Sense of Western Gender Discourses.* Minneapolis . London: University of Minnesota Press.

Papa, V., 2017. Embodied Haunting: Aesthetics and the Archive in Toni Morisson's Boloved. In: C. A. Brown & J. X. Garvey, eds. *Madness in Disporic Black Women's Fictions: An aesthetics of Resistance.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 75 - 99.

Parker, I., 2014. Psychoanalysis and psychology. In: D. Hook, ed. *Critical Psychology.* Claremont: Juta and Compant, Ltd, pp. 139 - 161.

Patel, V., 1995. Explanatory Models of Mental Illness in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Journal of Social Sciences and Medicine,* Volume 40, pp. 1291-1298.

Patel, V. & Stein, D. J., 2015. Common Mental Disorders in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Triad of Depression, Anxiety, and Somatization. In: E. Akyeampong, A. G. Hill & A. Kleinman, eds. *The Culture of Mental Illness and Psychiatric Practice in Africa.* Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, pp. 50 - 72.

Philip, N., 2008. *Zong!.* Toronto: The Mercury Press.

Pilling, M. D., 2022. *Queer and Trans Madness: Struggles for Social Justice.* Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Pinford, J., 2010. Lozikeyi Dlodlo, Queen of the Ndebele: “A very dangerous and intriguing woman”, by Marieke Faber Clarke, with Pathisa Nyathi. *African Research and Documentation,* Volume 114, pp. 73 - 75.

Praeg, L., 2017. African Philosophy in a World of Terror. In: A. Afolayan & T. Falola, eds. *The Palgrave Handbook of African Philosophy.* NEw York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 659 - 670.

Ranger, T., 2005. Rule by historiography: the struggle over the past in contemporary Zimbabwe. In: R. Muponde & R. Primorac, eds. *Versions of Zimbabwe.* Avondale, Harare: Weaver Press, pp. 217 - 243.

Read, U. M., Doku, V. C. & De-Graft Aikins, A., 2015. Schizophrenia and Psychosis in West Africa. In: E. Akyeampong, A. G. Hill & A. Kleinman, eds. *The Culture of Mental Illness and Psychiatric Practice in Africa.* Bloomington and I ndianapolis: University of Indiana Press, pp. 73 - 111.

Reid, G., 2002. *A Re-examination of Tragedy and Madness in Eight Selected Plays from the Greeks to the 20th Century.* Lewiston: Mellen.

Rodney, W., 1964. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa.* Washington D.C.: Howard University Press.

Rowe, D. D. & Chavez, K. R., 2011. Valerie Solanas and the Queer Performativity of Madness. *Cultural Studies - Critical Methodologies,* 11(3), pp. 274 - 284.

Rowe, K. D., 2019. Beyond "Good Hair": Negotiating Hair Politics Through African American Language. *Women & Language,* 42(1), pp. 41 - 68.

Saidi, U., 2022. Auxillia Mnangagwa's "Amaihood" and the Cultural Politics of the Zimbabwean First Lady in the "New Dispensation". In: O. Nyambi, T. Mangena & G. Ncube, eds. *Cultures of Change in Contemporary Zimbabwe: Socio-Political Transtion from Mugabe to Mnangagwa.* New York: Routledge.

Shakespeare, W., 1603. *Hamlet.* London: Ling & Trundell.

Shaw, A., 2023. *Uganda Antihomosexuality Bill of 2023: No Basis in Evidence.* California: UCLA.

Soyinka, W., 1976. *Myth, Literature and the African World.* Cambridge. New York.: Cambridge University Press.

State of Mind. 2018. [Film] Directed by Hopewell Rugoho-Chin'ono. Zimbabwe: Television International Production.

Stone, E. K., 2017. “Recordless Company”: Precarious Postmemory in Helen Oyeyemi’s The Icarus Girl. In: C. A. Brown & J. X. Garvey, eds. *Madness in Black Women's Diasporic Fictsions: An Aesthetics of Resistance.* New York: Palgave, Macmillan, pp. 267 - 292.

Tamale, S., 2013. Confronting the Politics of Nonconforming Sexualities in Africa. *African Studies Review,* 56(2), pp. 31 - 45.

Tavuyanago, B., 2013. The 'Crocodile Gang: A Critical Reflection on the Genesis of the Second Chimurenga in Zimbabwe. *Global Journal of Human Social Science,* 13(4), pp. 2249 - 460.

Thomas, C., 2020. Modern African Historiography: Toyin Falola and Others. In: M. E. Sotunsa & A. Borah, eds. *Imagining Vernacular Histories: Essays in Honor of Toyin Falola.* London. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 3-26.

Thompson, R. F., 1983. *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy.* New York: Vintage Books.

Thornton, R., 1987. *American Indian Holocaust and Survival: A Population History since 1492.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Tikkanen, A., 2024. *Reign of Terror | History, Significance, & Facts.* [Online] Available at: https://www.britannica.com/event/Reign-of-Terror [Accessed 13 February 2024].

Tshuma, N. R., 2019. *House of Stone.* New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Tshuma, N. R., 2023. *Digging Stars.* New York: W.W.Norton.

Vambe, M., 2005. The Poverty of Theory in the Study of Zimbabwean Literature. In: R. Muponde & R. Primorac, eds. *Versions of Zimbabwe; New Approaches to Literature and Culture.* Avondale, Harare: Weaver Press, pp. 89-101.

Vambe, M. T., 2004. *African Oral Story-telling Tradition and the Zimbabwean Novel in English.* Pretoria: Unisa Press.

Veit-Wild, F., 2006. *Writing Madness; Borderlines of the Body in African Literature.* Oxford: James Curry.

Veit-Wild, F., 2021. *They Called you Dambudzo: A Memoir.* Johannesburg: Jacana Media.

Veit-Wild, F. & Chennells, A. J., 1999. *Emerging Perspectives on Dambudzo Marechera.* Trenton: Africa World Press.

Vera, Y., 1993. *Nehanda.* Harare: Baobab Books.

Vera, Y., 2002. *The Stone Virgins.* Harare: Weaver Press.

Veyne, P., 1984. *Writing History.* Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.

Viswanath, T., 2023. Reimagining Hindu Mythology for the Diasporic QueerBody: Discursive Materiality in Vivek Shraya's She of the Mountains. *South Asia: Journal of South Asia,* 46(5), p. 1066 –1083.

Wailers, B. M. a. T., 1976. *War.* [Sound Recording] (Island Records and Tuff Gong).

Wailers, B. M. a. T., 1979. *One Drop.* [Sound Recording] (Island Records & Tuff Gong).

Wasosa, W., 2023. The "New Old Dispensation": A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Selected ZANU PF Speeches in the Post-Mugabe Era and Implications on Zimbabwe's Electoral Process. In: E. Mavengano & S. Chirongoma, eds. *Electoral Politics in Zimbabwe, Volume 1: The 2023 Election and Beyond.* Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 191 - 214.

wa Thiongo, N., 1986. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature.* London: James Currey.

White, K., 2018. The Social Construction of Mental Illness. In: B. M. Z. Cohen, ed. *Routledge International Handbook of Critical Mental Health.* New York: Routledge, pp. 24 - 30.

Williams, D. A., 2007. Palying on the "Darky": Blackface Ministrelsy, Identity Construction, and the Deconstruction of Race in Toni Morrison's Paradise. *Studies in American Fiction,* 35(2), pp. 181 - 200.

Williams, S. D., 2017. “Dark Swoops”: Trauma and Madness in Half of a Yellow Sun. In: C. A. Brown & J. X. Garvey, eds. *Madness in Black Women's Diasporic Fictions: An Aesthetics of Resistance.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 139 - 161.

Winky D & Holy Ten, 2023. *Ibotso.* [Sound Recording] (winkydonline).

Wiredu, K., 1996. *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Wright, D., 1992. Ritual and Revolution: Soyinka's Dramatic Theory. *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature,* 23(1), pp. 39 - 58.

Wylie, D., 1991. *English in Africa.* London: Hienemann.

Wylie, D., 2005. 'Mind has Mountains': Poetry and Ecology in Eastern Zimbabwe. In: R. Muponde & R. Primorac, eds. *Versions of Zimbabwe; New Approaches to Literature and Culture.* Avondale, Harare: Weaver Press, pp. 147 - 160.

Yelin, L., 1998. *From the Margins of Empire: Christina Stead, Doris Lessing, Nadine Gordimer.* New York: Cornell University.

Young, S., 2010. Therapeutic Insanity: The Transformative Vision of Bessie Head’s A Question of Power. *Research in African Literatures,* 41(4), pp. 227-241.

Zizek, S., 2001. *Enjoy Your Symptom.* New York: Routledge.