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**Contesting patriotic identities: A study of literary counter-
discourse in the advent of the Third Chimurenga**

by

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DECLARATION

I, **Timothy Mhiti**, declare that the thesis that I herewith submit for the Doctoral Degree of Philosophy 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.

Signed:



Date: 30-01-2020

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DEDICATION

To my late father and brother

in the other world;

and in this world,

The study is dedicated to my wife Elisia, children Tracy, Dereck Simbarashe and Christabel, my mother and all my sibings.

ABSTRACT

This study examines how selected Zimbabwean writers have re-imagined patriotism as a mechanism of re-inventing the nation. It particularly seeks to demonstrate how a literary approach interjects, unsettles, unmakes and re-makes knowledges about contemporary manifestations and (ab)uses of the concept, as well as its historical trajectory and shifts since Zimbabwe's independence in 1980. The thesis explores literary constructions of national and patriotic identities in the context of the ruling ZANU PF party's black (neo)nationalist ideological dominance vis-à-vis perceptions of self, agency and the idea of nation, especially in the face of a socio-political and economic crisis that affected Zimbabwe from the year 2000, a period better known as the Third Chimurenga. Therefore, the study is situated within the historically specific temporal and spatial context of the Third Chimurenga where ZANU PF, which has dominated political power since 1980, has propagated grand narratives which authorise a homogeneous vision of the nation and patriotic identities in the Zimbabwean citizenry. The study specifically focusses on contestations between state-sanctioned patriotic identities and counter-discursive imaginaries of patriotism in selected Zimbabwean literary texts. It explores how the literature maps the purported state vision and the counter vision of the nation and engages, at a counter discursive level, with the notion of patriotic identities propagated in the ruling ZANU PF party grand narratives. To this end, the study closely reads novels and short stories by ten different writers, namely Shimmer Chinodya's "Queues", Nevanji Madanhire's "The Grim Reaper's Car", Lawrence Hoba's *The Trek and Other Stories*, Freedom Nyamubaya's "That Special Place", Petina Gappah's "The President Always Dies in January" and "From a Town called Enkeeldorn", Christopher Mlalazi's *Running with Mother*, Novuyo Rosa Tshuma's *House of Stone*, John Eppel's "The Awards Ceremony", Diana Charsley's "The Pencil Test" and Monireh Jassat's "A Lazy Sunday Afternoon." The study argues that these texts reflect on different experiences of marginalised patriotisms and contest various forms of exclusion such as political, economic, gender, ethnic and racial in order to counter toxic political processes and debilitating economic circumstances. Thus, the texts' counter-discursive thrust is broad and an expression of writerly and personal responses to political and economic circumstances birthed by crisis conditions. The study argues that the texts perform various forms of deconstructive acts and each of the texts analysed in this study constitutes a significant archive of the subversion of patriotic identities in post-2000 Zimbabwe. The writers write in idioms of subversion and defiance and evolve and employ multiple textual strategies including exposure, satire, parody, disruption, deconstruction and an

engagement in the practice of everyday life to contest the ZANU PF-crafted grand narratives that authorise and prop up patriotic identities. Thus, the study highlights how the texts analysed are at variance with the patriotic history project and construct an alternative vision of the nation and identities, otherwise termed counter-discourses, that is in contradistinction to the patriotic identities that ZANU PF advocates during the Third Chimurenga. The study utilises various strands in postcolonial theory, particularly postcolonial concepts on counter-discourse, notions on identity construction, and ideas on Zimbabwean patriotic identities. Drawing on these concepts, the study explores the deeply political mapping of the idea and memories of the nation and the concept of patriotic identities evident in post-2000 Zimbabwe and contested in the research's selected texts. The study concludes by noting how these literary interventions are critical in the enunciation of democratic ideals and the suggestion that future research should explore literatures about hegemonic systems and their entrenchment.

Key words: Counter-discourse; Contestation; Nation; Narration; Patriotic identities; Third Chimurenga; Patriotism; Memories; Post-2000 Zimbabwe; Literary interventions

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

During the first decade of Zimbabwe's independence (which was attained in 1980), the ruling party, the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) managed to stir the country into social and economic prosperity. These first decade prosperity-based trajectories were possibly because the nationalist government was borrowing from some of the ironically sound colonial policies, an inherited strong economic infrastructure and its adoption of the socialist economic policies aimed at addressing colonial imbalances. The new government also emphasised reconciliation and espoused a commitment to democracy and economic development (Raftopoulos, 2004, Holmes and Orner, 2010,). The fruits of these policies were quite evident during the first decade of Zimbabwe's independence as emblematised by the marked successes in education, health and economic stability. Nonetheless, it has to be pointed out that the espoused democratic ideals were tainted by the pitfalls of post-independence national consciousness that manifested in the Gukurahundi and Mugabe, the then Prime Minister of Zimbabwe,'s attempts to introduce a one-party system of governance. These were the early signs of hegemonic patriotic inventions in ZANU PF.

However, the second decade into Zimbabwe's independence witnessed the plummeting of the country's economic fortunes owing to the introduction of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund supported Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) (Muzondidya, 2009, Mlambo, 2009). Most Zimbabweans, especially workers and tertiary students; registered their general dissatisfaction during this second decade, with the discontent climaxing in 1997 when the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions led an unprecedented and successful general strike (Raftopolous, 1999). Despite the government's deployment of violence (Ranger, 2003, Raftopolous and Mlambo, 2009), the citizens' resolve was unshaken and in 1999, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), a labour movement aligned political party was formed, riding on the back of the workers' discontent.

It was inevitable that the coming into being of a robust and vibrant opposition political party would set it on a collision course with the ruling party. The clashes that followed witnessed the ruling party's deployment of various repressive measures to stifle the growth of the MDC and other opposition parties. The formation of the MDC in 1999 was thus the idiomatic straw that broke the camel's back on ZANU PF's part, especially considering that ZANU PF deemed the opposition party an imperialist machination (Nyamunda, 2014). Consequently, ZANU PF

reconceptualised national history in ways that suited the party. The revision was not surprising in the least because, as Muchemwa (2005: 195) contends, official history is selective and supportive of the status quo. Chennells (2005) also concurs with this point in his observation that the current dominant version of history in Zimbabwe is the self-serving memory of ZANU PF. This narrowed down version of history, which Ranger (2004) calls patriotic history, insisted on allegiance to the nation where failure to display such resulted in one being branded a traitor. This form of history thrived on the exclusion of groups such as white Zimbabweans who were othered and labelled foreigners, colonialists and agents of the British and Americans (Buckle, 2000, 2003). The exclusion of targeted groups was meant to prop up ZANU PF's waning political fortunes. Patriotic history was inward-looking and sought to create the vision of a nation that extols pan-African ideas as well as the constitution of a sense of self and belonging that was anti-opposition party oriented (Raftopolous and Savage, 2004). It also functioned to entrench a ZANU PF ideology on the one hand, and on the other, jettisoned the MDC out of the political space in Zimbabwe.

The above-noted idea of allegiance to the nation that is central in patriotic history is critical to the definitions of patriotism in Zimbabwe. Indeed, allegiance to the nation was an important marker of patriotism at independence in 1980 when the ZANU PF government embraced a policy of national reconciliation between the black and white races, in order to facilitate nation-building and promote economic growth. However, this understanding of patriotism in terms of allegiance to the nation changes after 2000 when the government abandons its reconciliation policy and replaces it with exclusionary politics that is enunciated in patriotic history. The abandonment of the reconciliation policy reconfigures patriotism in that it is now more inward-looking and narrow as it is conceived in terms of allegiance to the ruling party. This demonstrates that patriotism as a concept is fluxing and shifting as we move further and further from 1980 and hence, the significance of this study.

It is this seismic shift in the country's socio-economic and political trajectory and the concomitant and subsequent literary productions in Zimbabwe from 1980 that warrants scholarly scrutiny. The 1990s are significant in mapping the background to the way the vision of the nation and identities is later imagined and contested in the post-2000 period, a vision that is under focus in this study. In addition, this political counter-narrative witnessed in the 1990s is replicated or matched in equal measure by the literary counter-discourse that becomes even more pronounced during the post-2000 era, also known as the Third Chimurenga, which is at once unprecedented and unrivalled in terms of literary productions (Nyambi, 2013).

The above observations, however, do not suggest that the immediate post-independence witnessed a homogeneous articulation of national memories and identities on Zimbabwe's literary landscape. This sense of contestation is evident from the early years of Zimbabwe's independence.

It is indeed critical to note that, running alongside the political and social trajectory from 1980 to 1999 are literary productions in Zimbabwe that reflect the writers' different imaginings of the vision of the self and nation. On one hand, the literature produced soon after independence was "... optimistic and somewhat triumphalist" (Zhuwarara, 2001:24) and such writings "...prop(ed) up the foundations of the new nation" (Javangwe, 2011:15). Texts that fit in this category include Mutasa's *The Contact* (1985) and Chipamaunga's *A Fighter for Freedom* (1983) both of which justify and celebrate the war of liberation. On the other extreme end are writings that evince sceptical and iconoclastic tendencies as the writers anticipate the failure of the new government. As Veit-Wild (1993:7) asserts, some of the writers are "...people whose frustrations and lost hopes in the bleak years of UDI evolved into a general scepticism, a pessimistic approach towards society in general and disillusionment about African politics." Zhuwarara (2001:24) lends weight to this argument in his observation that the optimistic literature is "...followed by a sober and relatively more realistic kind of writing..." Shimmer Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns* (1989), Chenjerai Hove's *Bones* (1988) and Charles Samupindi's *Pawns* (1992) are examples of some of the literary productions that belong to this category. However, writers such as Chinodya, Hove and Samupindi were vilified with some being publicly censored for daring to challenge the "nationalistic impulse" for they had, in Primorac and Muponde's (2005) view, challenged the discourses of Zimbabwean nationalism well before its historiography did so.

It is within this divergence in perspective ambit that the study seeks to focus on the contestations between state-sanctioned patriotic identities and counter-discursive literature by selected Zimbabwean (both male and female, and black and white) writers. These writers include established writers such as Shimmer Chinodya and the new and post-2000 writers such as Lawrence Hoba who speak back to the notion of patriotic identities and satirise some of the established notions and grand narratives about the nation.¹ Chinodya and Nevanji Madanhire's

¹ Speaking or writing back as a concept is associated with Ashcroft et al. (1989). Ashcroft et al. (1989) contend that writing back is a characteristic feature of literatures that originate from the fringes. They further contend that as writers write from the periphery, they at once interrogate and destabilise the authority of grand narratives. This explains the subversive elements of such writings. Writing back has to be understood as a response to the politics of

short stories *Queues* (2003) and *The Grim Reaper's Car* (2003) respectively and Hoba's collection of stories in *The Trek and Other Stories* (2009) are analysed. Female-authored texts including Freedom Nyamubaya's short story *That Special Place* (2003) and Petina Gappah's short stories "The President Always Dies in January" and "From a Town called Enkeldoorn," both of which are in her collection of stories titled *Rotten Row* (2016), are also analysed. Both female writers' work is examined in order to discuss how they go against male-centred grand narratives about the post-2000 figure of what a patriot is, and in relation to political derision and iconoclasm, respectively. Christopher Mlalazi's novel *Running with Mother* (2012) and Novuyo Rosa-Tshuma's *House of Stone* (2018) are also analysed in relation to how they disrupt notions on oneness and historical continuum propounded by ZANU PF in post-2000 Zimbabwe. White-authored short stories including John Eppel's "The Awards Ceremony", Diana Charsley's "The Pencil Test" and Monireh Jassat's "A Lazy Sunday Afternoon" are also considered. The analysis of the short stories focuses on how the whites' imaginaries have mutated since the advent of the Third Chimurenga and, more importantly, the symbolic resistance in living and going on with their lives in a state where they are erased from the political discourses and imaginaries of who belongs to the nation. The study, therefore, seeks to highlight how the writers are at variance with the patriotic history project. In addition, the study critiques the way writers reflect on and contest ZANU PF's stranglehold on national history and in the process construct an alternative vision of the nation and identities. Such writerly agency, otherwise termed counter discourses (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 1989), is in contradistinction to the patriotic identities that ZANU PF advocates as alluded to earlier on in reference to texts that celebrate the gains of independence, and hence a major concept of focus in this study.

1.2.1 The Third Chimurenga Narrative

It is critical that literature on the Third Chimurenga be reviewed because the discourse is inextricably connected to the research's thrust. In fact, the Third Chimurenga narrative informs the crux of the study which considers how patriotic identities are contested in the post-2000 era in Zimbabwe, especially given that the discourse was one of the vehicles through which the

domination, hence, Ashcroft et al.'s (1989) emphasis on the counter-discursive elements of such writings. Counter-discourse empowers those placed at the margins to write back, question and challenge the assumptions upon which grand narratives are premised and in the process put the record straight. In the context of this study, therefore, the imagining of the nation contained in grand narratives (seen especially through the state-sanctioned patriotic identities) is put under serious scrutiny and destabilised by the selected writers.

politics of exclusion was articulated and enacted. Indeed, the Third Chimurenga was one of the most enduring conduits for the promulgation of ZANU PF political ideology, and hence the need to review the literature that articulates the discourse's contours. Furthermore, there is need to review literature on the Third Chimurenga because the study, which seeks to demonstrate how the concept of patriotism is shifting since 1980, is located in this historically specific temporal and spatial context. In addition, a review of literature related to the Third Chimurenga is critical in that it demonstrates how the study is an extension of ideas in existing studies related to the narrative.

Perhaps it is crucial to mention first that the Third Chimurenga as an inward-looking ideology or discourse is not especially novel. In fact, the Third Chimurenga has to be contextualised both globally and regionally. Its global and regional ideological antecedents are noted in the way unpopular political leaders made what Kennedy (2003:17) calls "perplexing political and economic choices." From a global perspective, the Third Chimurenga was enacted in ways reminiscent of what happened in Germany under the Nazi, a fact which has persuaded Muponde (2004:177) to conclude that "...the Third Chimurenga is a revival of essentialist and nativist politics, something comparable to what happened to Adolf Hitler's ideal of the Aryan race" whose supremacy he wanted to entrench. Hitler came to power and started persecuting Jewish industrialists whom he accused of plundering the country's wealth with the intention of offering the Jewish businesses to more deserving Aryans. The point here is that, apart from the fact that Jews lost their citizenship - a critical tool of identity, there were some Germany nationals who were also marginalised, and hence the suggestion that there were some Aryans who were "more Aryan" than others. This scenario was replicated on the Zimbabwean political landscape during the Third Chimurenga when Mugabe pronounced that "some Zimbabweans were 'more indigenous' than others" (Holland, 2008:97) leading some commentators to draw parallels between Mugabe and Hitler, with some critics even dubbing him Black Hitler.

The same inward-looking policies are evident in Malaysia's trajectories in the 1970s. The country introduced the New Economic Policy in the 1970s which was meant to distribute more wealth and develop the economic potential of indigenous Malay people. The project also involved the introduction of affirmative action policies seeking to benefit the Malays in areas such as employment in the civil service and education, and a simultaneous marginalisation of radical critics of the government. The Third Chimurenga in Zimbabwe is also a replica of such

inward-looking policies, especially given the state's version of the narrative that it is meant to uplift Zimbabweans economically.

A good example of a country that implemented inward-looking and anti-foreign control policies on the African continent is Uganda under the rulership of Idi Amin. Upon his ascension to power in Uganda, Amin instituted nationalist and ill-conceived economic policies meant to totally eliminate foreign economic interests. This was done in a bid to buttress the military dispensation in Uganda. As a testimony to his anti-foreign control policy, Lamb (1987:88) submits that Amin "...humiliated the Asians, expelling Uganda's entire community of 70,000 in 1972, and he toyed with the Europeans, once forcing British residents in Kampala to carry him on a throne-like chair." Lamb (1987) further submits that Amin gave the Asians' shops and businesses to his army cronies, and that the Asians were never compensated for the loss of their businesses. The expulsion of the Indians who had been the bedrock of the country's agribusiness, manufacturing and commerce dealt a huge blow on the country's economy. Investor confidence plummeted to an all-time low and the economy was brought to its knees. The situation bears an uncanny resemblance to what happens in Zimbabwe during the Third Chimurenga when white Zimbabweans lose their land and other moveable property without compensation.

The land question has also proved to be a highly emotive and contentious issue in Kenya. Manji (2014:4) contends that Kenya had and still has a "contradictory engagement with land issues before and after independence." Though not necessarily connected with an anti-foreign control policy, "land remains a key fault line in Kenya" (Hornsby, 2012:787), especially given the incoherent nature of land laws and the threat they pose to rule of law. Manji (2014:13) notes that there is a "grossly unequal land distribution" in Kenya, which perhaps explains why land grabbing and irregular land allocation are commonplace. In fact, land allocation is exercised in pursuit of a hideous agenda-political patronage and personal accumulation. This reality is akin to the experiences witnessed in Zimbabwe during the Third Chimurenga where land is, in most cases, used for political expediency. A brief look at the history of Kenya's land problems reveals that private ownership of land was valorised by the colonial government, a system that was borrowed intact by the Kenyan post-independence governments when they brought the vast majority of arable land, both commercial and residential land, under private ownership through a process of systematic first registration. Therefore, for anyone to obtain land (especially the indigenous people), they had to go through the state. This has led to the

proliferation of a culture of selective land allocation for political support by those in power. Manji (2014:14) concludes that “political control over allocation and management of land... is one element of Kenya’s land problems.” This selective allocation of land along party lines is also echoed in Zimbabwe during the Third Chimurenga, hence the parallels drawn between both countries.

The discourse about the Third Chimurenga is a complex narrative that demands equally complex ways to comprehend it. The Third Chimurenga is, according to Nyambi (2013:7), “a political philosophy and praxis involving the post-2000 anti-colonial nationalism spearheaded by ZANU PF which mostly manifested in the promulgation of black empowerment policies such as The Fast Track Land Reform Programme and the Indigenisation and Empowerment Act of 2007.” Nyambi (2016:7379) unpacks the discourse further as noted in his observation that it has been “named and conceived as a continuation of the nationalist struggle which is preceded by two armed versions... which liberated Zimbabwe.” For Manase (2011:2), the Third Chimurenga is some kind of a “final push” that would put to bed any “residual Rhodesian colonial influence and Euro-American imperial control of the country’s land and other natural and economic resources.” Mamdani (2008) also contends that the Land Reform process enacted via the Third Chimurenga was defined as a final closure in the decolonisation project. These descriptions and definitions are in harmony with recent scholarly explorations of the discourse. For instance, Mararike (2018) describes the Third Chimurenga as a discourse that is premised on the declaration of total independence and empowerment of Africans in consolidating their self-determination. This is the same scholarly posture that Hodgkinson (2019:7) assumes in the submission that the ZANU PF leaders created the narrative of the Third Chimurenga “in which war veterans and newly reconstituted ZANU PF youth militias seized white-owned farms with the covert assistance of state and party operatives as a continuation of the liberation war.” Thus, the Third Chimurenga refers to the drive or programmes embarked on by the ZANU PF government post-2000 that sought to compulsorily acquire white-owned land for the resettlement of black people as well as the “economic empowerment” of the black people. In addition, the Third Chimurenga had political and cultural dimensions intricately embedded in it. In fact, both the political and the cultural converge under the banner of the Third Chimurenga. The discourse, “better known as “the crisis” [and] premised on a platform of political and cultural ideologies” (Muponde, 2004:176), was conceived as a manoeuvre to buttress ZANU PF’s grip on power as well as to checkmate political adversaries-real and

imagined. Therefore, there is a sense in which the Third Chimurenga has to be viewed as a complex articulation of identity politics.

The Third Chimurenga is at once a homogenising and differentiating discourse. The discourse elicits diametrically opposed reactions both within and without the Zimbabwean borders. This is largely so because, almost invariably, there is a complexity in the manner in which individuals and collectives react to discourses that surround them or that they come into contact with. In other words, perceptions differ since they are contingent upon how a particular discourse impacts on individuals and collectives. The reaction of individuals and collectives to the Third Chimurenga as a discourse in the public realm and therefore open to public scrutiny, is largely dependent on their material and political interests. In fact, the Zimbabwean situation during the Third Chimurenga is a case of contradictory experiences and hence the conflicting and even antagonistic attitudes towards the narrative.

The Third Chimurenga is a highly emotive and complex discourse. This emotive and complex nature of the narrative has attracted the attention of critics. For instance, Hodgkinson (2019:11) comments on the emotive nature of the discourse in the articulation that during the Third Chimurenga, ZANU PF used land as an issue around which a new, emotive idea of the “nation” could be built. It has to be emphasised also that the discourse’s complexity makes it lend itself to multiple interpretations. Part of its complexity emanates from “the manner in which Mugabe has articulated the Zimbabwean crisis [which] has impacted not only on the social forces in the country but also on the African continent and the Diaspora” (Raftopoulos, 2004:160). Raftopoulos (2004:161) further unpacks the narrative’s complexity as a result of how “for many progressive African intellectuals, there is an internal tension over the content and form of politics of Mugabe’s Pan Africanist message, particularly in the face of the dominant message of Empire offered by the Bush-Blair axis.” What is emphasised here is the problematic nature of the discourse, more so given that simultaneously embedded within the narrative is “the historical resonance of the messages and the unpalatable coercive forms of the delivery of such messages” (Raftopoulos, 2004:161). Therefore, it is no coincidence that the narrative of the Third Chimurenga resonates well with those who support ZANU PF and does not bode well with those who oppose ZANU PF, which underlines that the discourse has the double-edged capacity to excite and to annoy.

Various studies offer views on the ambiguous and problematic nature of the Third Chimurenga. Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Muzondidya (2011:2) observe that the Third Chimurenga narrative is

grotesque and janus-faced in that, on the one hand it is supported and held in esteem as it is considered an emancipatory project, while on the other, it is dismissed and scoffed at as nothing more than “an exhausted patriarchal mode of nationalism.” Raftopolous (2007:182) describes this as a virulent form of revived nationalism that has race as its main trope. The emphasis here is placed on the divergent perspectives from which the narrative has been analysed by different critics. This is the same perspective that is held by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009:11) when he submits that the Third Chimurenga was “fully embraced by war veterans and others who still believed in the revolutionary character of ZANU PF as a former liberation movement... (and) contested by the opposition and civil society organisations” on the grounds of its racist undertones as well as its flagrant disregard for human rights. What is clear here is an ideological-cum political contest between those with a ZANU PF political orientation and those who are critical of the party. The same contradictory tone reverberates across the Zimbabwean borders. In South Africa for instance, “on the left of the ANC alliance the ambiguities on the Zimbabwean question have been striking, vacillating between a grudging admiration for the redistributive rhetoric of the land occupations, a distrust of the perceived neo-liberal leanings of the MDC, and a concern over the repressive policies of ZANU PF” (Raftopoulos, 2004:171). Pillay (2003:62) also submits that “those on the left have become spellbound by the anti-imperialist rhetoric” while Raftopoulos (2004:172) contends that the “resonance of the race debate in Zimbabwe [has] found a broader canvass for [its] articulation in the Diaspora.” Thus, what is critical here is the ambiguous and contradictory nature of the Zimbabwean situation during the Third Chimurenga and hence the narrative’s capacity to generate ambivalent attitudes in individuals and collectives. This polarisation of perspectives is central to this study because it clarifies the notion that ZANU PF’s monopoly over the national narrative has always been contested. Such a contestation follows the general trajectory of post-colonial history where dominant discourses are undercut by dissident narratives as articulated by Ashcroft et al. (1989).

The Third Chimurenga was promulgated and propped up on the cultural and literary fronts via music, performing arts and literature. For instance, the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation’s programming was fine-tuned in such a way that it screened films, documentaries and dramas that had the war of liberation as the main theme. In the same vein, songs and jingles that were played on air were meant to infuse a revolutionary sentiment (Ghandhi and Jambaya, 2002:12). Culture also provided an anchor to the Third Chimurenga narrative and this was done through the staging of galas, *biras* (ritual feasts), funerals and commemorations (Muchemwa, 2010:1).

These became a permanent fixture on the Zimbabwean political calendar during the Zimbabwean “crisis” and their main thrust was to “re-energise its [ZANU PF] patriotic metafiction, [...] to establish hegemony and claim legitimacy [as well as to] reconstruct and re-invent Zimbabwean national identity as part of a strategy in the contestation, usurpation and closure of narrative space” (Muchemwa, 2010:1). This cultural manoeuvre was a well calculated political project meant to prevent the constitution of alternative ways of perceiving the political situation on the ground. At the same time, this manipulation of culture evident in the post-2000 staging of galas was meant to buttress a vision of a supposedly united nation and to resurrect patriotic sentiments.

The originator and proponent of the Third Chimurenga was the then president of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe. Though Manase (2014:9) submits that “the ZANU PF government and its supporters constructed a grand narrative about land that involved the rhetoric of the Third Chimurenga (third war of liberation) to propagate and justify the land invasions and occupation of white-owned commercial farms from 2000,” the Third Chimurenga discourse was arguably propounded and popularised by Mugabe. It is therefore not surprising that Mugabe’s text, *Inside the Third Chimurenga* (2001) is seminal in that it presents a coherent shape to the narrative through his use of the discourse of intellectual authority. Mugabe has demonstrated clarity of thought in formulating his Third Chimurenga ideological vision. This positive appraisal is despite the political ramifications of his pronouncements on the ideology. Nyambi (2016:7379) supports the point that Mugabe is the ultimate point of reference in terms of the Third Chimurenga and submits that Mugabe was the chief author of the Chimurenga narrative. Commenting on the title of Mugabe’s book, Nyambi contends that the title is significant as it “aptly invokes the word “inside” to create a sense of “centredness” which comes with the impression that he [...] has authority over the Chimurenga narrative.” Conspicuous in Nyambi’s comments is that Mugabe’s title speaks with authority on the Third Chimurenga narrative or discourse. Therefore, Mugabe has to be identified as the originator and chief architect of the discourse, more so considering the political gains that accrue to him as a result of the promulgation of the Third Chimurenga.

The enactment of the Third Chimurenga marks a radical shift in Mugabe’s political orientation. Tendi (2010:94-5) underscores the pertinence of this point when he observes that Mugabe “cast the Third Chimurenga as the teleological culmination of the first two Chimurengas with white Zimbabweans being particularly targeted in the increasingly exclusionary discourses of citizenship that also featured in patriotic history.” Gwekwerere and Mlambo (2018) also

underscore the link (as noted in Tendi's quotation above) between the Third Chimurenga and the earlier Chimurengas in their study on memory, identity and power in contemporary Zimbabwe. The deployment of the racial trope and the exclusion of whites is both poignant and tragic. Thus, whites were branded traitors; they were "homogenised and cast as unrepentant racists who were the real impediments to bringing the Third Chimurenga to its "logical" conclusion" (Tendi, 2010:95). In this way, the Third Chimurenga sought to jettison whites out of the Zimbabwean geo-political space as confirmed by Tendi (2010:176) in the observation that the narrative "involved a calculated assault on human rights which attracted much international attention." The international community's condemnation of the Third Chimurenga is an affirmation of the questioning attitudes towards dominant and oppressive discourses as espoused in postcolonial theory, which seeks to break past mind-sets as well as challenge those minds that have become set in various patterns of thoughts affecting the way individuals and collectives respond to new situations and new ideas. The dissenting voices from the international community and literary critics are a precursor to the contestation of patriotic identities as delineated in texts that are under focus in this study.

Land is also firmly placed at the centre of the Third Chimurenga for, in the words of Raftopoulos (2004:168), it "has played a determining role as the marker of a common struggle [and] has formed a centrepiece of the ruling party's construction of belonging, exclusion and history." Rutherford (2007:106) also notes that land in Zimbabwe has become associated with the nation and "with the liberation struggle being interpreted as a peasant struggle for land." A deeper look at these submissions reveals the close connection between the Third Chimurenga and "Zimbabwean" identities. These identities are closely linked to land as expressed by Mugabe (2001:92-3) when he stridently and unapologetically pronounces:

We knew and still know that land was the prime goal of King Lobengula as he fought British encroachment in 1893; we knew and still know that land was the principal grievance for our heroes of the First Chimurenga led by Nehanda and Kaguvu. We knew and still know it to be the fundamental premise of the Second Chimurenga and thus a principal definer of [the] succeeding new Nation and State of Zimbabwe. Indeed we know it to be the core of the Third Chimurenga which you and me are fighting, and for which we continue to make such enormous sacrifices.

Seen in this light, land is central to the Third Chimurenga narrative, more so because of the nexus or dialectical link between land and the constitution of patriotic identities (Alexander, 2007). Land indeed forms the ballast upon which patriotic identities are constructed in post-2000 Zimbabwe, a point which is supported by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009) in his observation that control over and access to land continues to shape and influence postcolonial political contestations and imaginations of freedom.

In addition, Mugabe also directs his fury towards opposition political parties, under the guise of the Third Chimurenga. His discourses categorise any opposition-oriented individuals or collectives as discursively displaced from the Zimbabwean political space. In fact, the opposition MDC is not spared his vitriolic attacks. Mugabe (2001:88) fiercely declares:

The MDC should never be judged or characterised by its black trade union face; by its youthful student face; by its salaried black suburban junior professionals; never by its rough and violent high-density lumpen elements. It is much deeper than these human superficialities; for it is immovably and implacably moored in the colonial yesteryear and embraces wittingly or unwittingly the repulsive ideology of return to white settler rule. MDC is as old and as strong as the forces that control it; that drive and direct; indeed that support, sponsor and spot it. It is a counter-revolutionary Trojan horse contrived and nurtured by the very inimical forces that enslaved and oppressed our people yesterday.

Evident in this speech is a deliberate rupturing of the country's oppositional political fabric and a simultaneous re-configuration of identities through the optic of race, a fact that persuaded Muponde (2004:177) to conclude that "the Third Chimurenga is a revival of essentialist and nativist politics." In the words of Hammer and Raftopoulos (2003:27), white "had become in Zimbabwe's distorted political lexicon, a generic term for evil." Mugabe's approach to the Third Chimurenga is indeed radicalised and toxic as it is meant to subdue other forms of identities. This confirms Billig's (1995:25) observation that "a particular form of identity has to be imposed. One way of thinking of the self, of community and, indeed of the world has to replace other conceptions, other forms of life." Mugabe's statements are expediently intended to buttress the Third Chimurenga narrative especially through the politics of the exclusion of targeted groups. The convergence of the land and race in the political matrix is evident here as the two seem to, on the evidence of Mugabe's political lexicon, seamlessly conflate, a point

which is further clarified by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2008:15) when he contends that “the land and race question has formed the centrepiece of ZANU PF’s definition of belonging, citizenship, exclusion and the whole history of the nation.” The Third Chimurenga thus, is conceived and structured in such a way that it “enabled the ruling party to raise its ideological status and posture as the revolutionary nationalist party” (Kriger, 2007:74). The truth of the matter, however is that the ideology was hatched in an attempt to reinvigorate ZANU PF’s plummeting political fortunes.

Under the Third Chimurenga, much of the land was given to those individuals with the “correct” political orientation - those with ruling political party leanings. This condition confirms the following observation by Hage (1998:53), which is located in postcolonial theory:

those groups who are seen to be more national than others, because they possess greater ‘national cultural capital’-sanctified and valued social and physical cultural styles and dispositions are able to position themselves (and are recognised) as the arbiters of national culture and space. This means that they are not only able to access the material benefits of group membership (eg citizenship and welfare rights) but also define the conditions of belonging.

This invaluable submission explains the lopsided nature of land redistribution since the execution of the exercise rides on the back of the exclusion of targeted and undesirable groups, chief among which are whites and members of the opposition political parties. This lopsided nature is given credence by a number of academic and political personas including Muzondidya (2007), Fisher (2010) and the late Morgan Tsvangirai, the then MDC president. The whites, together with opposition political parties, were branded unpatriotic enemies who “falling outside the boundaries of citizenship ... should not expect protection from the state or benefit from land redistribution or indigenisation initiatives” (Fisher, 2010:202). Muzondidya (2007:1) concurs with this observation when he contends that “in its call for land redistribution, the state has increasingly resorted to authoritarian nationalism, invoking identity politics.” This is also the same line of thinking that Gwekwerere and Mlambo (2019) adopt in their study on names, labels and the language and politics of entitlement in post-independent Zimbabwe, particularly during the Third Chimurenga. The critics argue that war veterans, who, by and large, were used as instruments of coercion and deemed themselves exemplars of patriotic citizenship, classified people into patriots and sell-outs. The language they used created demarcations between

insiders and outsiders and hence closely linked to the politics of exclusion. Thus, the war veterans named and labelled individuals and groups opposed to the land reform programme in post-2000 Zimbabwe as sell-outs. This invocation of identity politics fractures the hitherto taken for granted conceptions of rights and power. Thus, whites and members of the opposition political parties realised that they exist on the fringes and are singularly undeserving of a “Zimbabwean” identity from the point of view of the ruling ZANU PF elite.

Other personal and biographical texts also treat the lopsided and chaotic nature of the land redistribution. For instance, Buckle (2000, 2003) describes personal testimonies of white exclusion in the land reform programme and shows the exclusion is based on the reason that whites had been othered and categorised as foreigners and agents of the British and Americans. In addition, Holland (2008:96) in her biography on Mugabe, also comments on the partisan nature of the land redistribution. Holland (2008:92) observes that prior to the “real” enactment of the land redistribution, “...much of the donor money that should have been spent on land reform was being squandered by the president’s cronies.” She contends further that successive British governments “had quarrelled with Mugabe over his land policies [and had therefore] cut off support for land redistribution...on the grounds that some of the farms purchased were being given to Mugabe’s cronies in a generally corrupt exercise” (2008:96). This, Holland (2008:121) submits, is the same scenario that obtains when Mugabe embarks on the Third Chimurenga, with farm invasions being “run from ZANU PF offices with the active help of the police and local officials.” The invaders are ZANU PF officials and supporters as well as the then Mugabe’s relatives, thus indicating the partisanship defining the land redistribution programme.

Critics and politicians also contend that the land redistribution was chaotic and haphazard. For instance, commenting on the disorganised manner in which the land reform was executed, the late Morgan Tsvangirai pointed out that, concerning the nature of the execution of the land reform, he could not countenance a situation where people just sprout on the farms like mushroom. His sentiments are echoed by Holland (2008:121) when she asserts that:

there were gangs springing up spontaneously all over the country, including his [Mugabe’s] police and army officers... You had hundreds of warlords, including Mugabe’s relatives springing up all over Zimbabwe each grabbing his own patch and saying “I’m in charge - I’m commander of this section or that section.

This reflects the chaos that characterises the land redistribution process. Muzondidya (2007:1) lends weight to the foregoing argument in his submission that the “restructuring of land has not only been violent and coercive, but also disorganised and divisive,” a point which is raised by Sachikonye (2003:3) when he comments that the land reform was “executed with vigour, considerable violence and chaos.” These scholarly submissions underscore how the ZANU PF-initiated land reform programme has attracted widespread disapproval and has been contested in both political and civic circles (Hodgkinson, 2019). In addition, the land reform was carried out outside a clearly defined legal framework (Rukuni and Jensen, 2003), thus pointing to its lack of organisation. Pertinent here is the dissident and substantive nature of the submissions by the politicians and literary critics. The submissions are in line with McAuslan’s (2003:251) observation that, “when ideas about fairness and equity are violated, when these ideas are turned into precise powers, duties limitations, restrictions, procedures, when it becomes clear who is to benefit and who is to lose out, then objections begin to be voiced.” The objections captured in this quotation underline how citizens challenged ZANU PF’s patriotic justifications for violence during the Third Chimurenga and illuminate how the opposition discourses imagine an alternative vision of the Zimbabwean nationhood (Hodgkinson, 2019).

Therefore, the critics and politicians’ comments are firmly located in the province of counter discourse as they take a swipe at the Third Chimurenga. The criticism contests ZANU PF’s political and economic choices and indicates how the Third Chimurenga contours are distinctly shaped along ruling party aspirations. This makes the Third Chimurenga discourse problematic, given that it is fraught with contradictions and ambivalences connected to the mapping of the vision of the nation in relation to identity formation and contestation which are central to this study.

1.2.2 Understanding Counter-discourse

Terdiman (1989) defines the concept of counter-discourse as the theory and practice of symbolic resistance. Ashcroft et. al (1989) note that the term has been taken on board in postcolonial theory to describe the complex ways in which challenges to a dominant or established discourse...might be mounted from the periphery. In a sense, counter-discourse is the strategy by which the authority of grand narratives is combatted or contested. As aptly explained by Ashcroft et. al. (1989:17) in their consideration of matters related to postcolonial theory in general, counter-discourse is a “project of asserting difference from the imperial centre.” What is overtly stated in this statement is that counter-discursive discourses or

narratives are responses to the politics of domination. This brings us to yet another important dimension of counter-discourse as espoused by Ashcroft et al. (1989) in the contention that a characteristic of dominated literatures is an inevitable tendency towards subversion, that a study of the subversive strategies employed by postcolonial writers would reveal both the configurations of domination and the imaginative creative responses to this condition. This understanding of counter-discourse is critical in this study which examines literary works that are written from the fringes. The bulk of the literary works under study here, including those by white writers and those of Ndebele ethnic grouping, are authored from the margins and evince a dissident inclination as the writers understand that it is their duty to deconstruct grand narratives. As Chennells (1999:126) contends, the writers are empowered to subvert “the authoritarianism of...the new nationalist centres.” In a way therefore, the writers under study here contest local domination and patriotic rhetoric through their writings.

Terdiman (1989:11), in pursuance of the point about the subversive inclination of counter-discourses, observes that counter-discourses are “modes of combat.” Counter-discourses challenge and attempt to reverse dominant discourses, thus, they are intrinsically connected to deconstruction as espoused by Derrida (1976). Looked at from this angle, it becomes apparent that counter discourse can play a subversive role with the concept still usable for some kind of a constructive deconstruction that ends with an amelioration of an anomalous state of affairs. Deconstruction entails the overturning of hierarchies that are essentialist in a manner that does not necessarily entail the dismantling of the hierarchy, so as to set up the inferior term in the place of the superior. Counter-discursive narratives are therefore mired in the politics of writing back (Chennells, 2005). This point is articulated with great clarity by Young (2001:15) in the submission that, postcolonial concerns or counter-discourses in general are “insurgent knowledges, particularly those that originate with the subaltern, the dispossessed, that seek to change the terms and values under which we all live.” What is emphasised here is the politics of contesting the dominant perspectives or discourses, a perspective which is also espoused by Ashcroft et al. (1989:45) in their observation that counter-discourse empowers those placed at the margins to write back to the imperial centre, through questioning and challenging the knowledges and assumptions that split and separated the centre and the periphery in the first place. Therefore, the above-cited critical works and others such as Nayer (2008) and Shohat (1992) show the resistance that is inherent in counter-discourse.

Counter-discourses also attempt to pluralise rather than essentialise. The desire in such discourses is to disrupt the dominance of the centre so that individuals relate on equal terms.

What is significant in the moving of the centre here is that the subversion does not seek to replace the dominant discourses in such a way that the powerful become the powerless and disenfranchised and vice versa. Terdiman (1985), in support of this view submits that the operation of post-colonial counter-discourse is dynamic and not static, and does not seek to subvert the dominant with a view to taking its place. Rather, the intention is, according to Harris (1985:27), evolve textual strategies that continually consume their own biases as well as “to expose and erode those of the dominant discourse.” Thus, counter-discourses, through deconstruction, undo and embarrass the rhetorical operation responsible for hierarchisation (Culler, 1983).

The counter-discursive narratives contest representational monologue as explained by Dirlik (2011). Representational monologue is challenged because, according to Said (1978:272), “any and all representations, because they are representations, are embedded first in the language and then in the culture, institutions, and political ambiance of the representer.” What this means is that all representations are ideologically motivated. No representation is pure, objective or disinterested because, as noted by Said (1978:273), representations operate:

for a purpose, according to a tendency, in a specific historical, intellectual, and even economic setting. In other words, representations have purposes, they are effective much of the time, they accomplish one or many tasks. Representations are formations, or...they are deformations.

This implies that there is a political dimension to the process of representation that makes it even more imperative for such structures of knowledge to be contested. For instance, as Said (1978) contends, Europeans produced and shaped knowledge about the Third World during the colonial enterprise. They monopolised history and proclaimed themselves the Self. They drew on pseudo-scientific, cultural and even religious reasons to buttress this supposedly superior status of theirs while simultaneously constructing the image of the non-Europeans and so called Orient, as the Other. This then became a canonical way of representing the non-Europeans as noted in some fictional works by western writers.

Various fictional works indeed prop up such colonial stereotypes. These texts, which include Carey’s *Mr Johnson* (1939), perpetuate and eternalise the negative image of the African while simultaneously projecting a positive image of the Euro-American. The Orient is thus arrested and imprisoned at a stereotypical level. It is this Eurocentric version of representation which is being challenged, dismantled and deconstructed by writers from the periphery. Writers from the

margins decentre, displace and deconstruct the ethnocentric assumptions in Western knowledge (Young, 2001). For instance, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) which the writer describes as a product of a prodigal son paying homage to his culture, challenges and deconstructs Carey's *Mr Johnson* and Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Achebe dismisses the Eurocentric notion that Africa was wrapped up in darkness and savagery. In fact, Achebe confesses in his essay 'The Novelist as Teacher' (1965), that he wrote *Things Fall Apart* as a response to the negative portrayal of the African in Carey's *Mr Johnson*, an observation which can as well be extended to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* especially in view of the latter's horrible characterisation of blacks. Similarly, Tiffin (1995:98) reads Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* as a canonical counter discourse to Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*. This is the same reading that is given to J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* which discursively counters Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* which, according to Tiffin (1995), "was part of the process of fixing relations between Europe and its others". The counter-discourses attempt to "investigate the European textual capture and containment of colonial and post-colonial space and to intervene in that originary and continuing containment" (Tiffin, 1995:98). Tiffin (1995:98), explains further how counter-discourses operate in her observation that, "post-colonial counter- discursive strategies involve a mapping of the dominant discourse, a reading and exposing of its underlying assumptions, and the dismantling of these assumptions from the cross-cultural standpoint of the imperially subjectified local." The import of this contention is that counter- discourses are intrinsically subversive and deconstructionist. In addition, counter-discourses interrogate dominant discourses. Hence, counter-discourses fall within the realm of protest literature.

Lara (1998:5) terms counter-discourses "emancipatory narratives," especially given their inherent deconstructionist and revisionist thrust. This observation is especially apt with reference to the female-authored texts that are examined in this study. Lara's ideas conflate those of Butler (1990) in her discussion of the performativity of gender. Also located in postcolonial theory and, by extension, in the counter-discursive writing canon, gender performance in the context of this study transgresses and destabilises the grand vision of what a nation and its memories, and the associated patriotic identities should be. Lara (1998:5) comments further on the liberating potential of counter-discourse in the contention that "literary works therefore assume an emancipatory role by means of exercising "illocutionary force" for the marginalised social groups whereby their narratives "configure new ways to fight back against injustices thus making institutional transformations possible" (Lara, 1998:5). The

suggestion here is that literature authored from the margins can play a positive subversive role via its counter-discursive thrust, a point which is obliquely stated by Ashcroft et al. (1989:19) in their observation that:

the institution of literature in the colony is under the direct control of the ruling class who alone licence the acceptable form and permit the publication and distribution of the resulting work. So, texts of this kind (counter-narratives) come into being within the constraints of a discourse and the institutional practice of a patronage system which limits and undercuts their assertion of a different perspective.

The mere presence of this stifling space and the concomitant audacity on the part of the marginalised to “write back” is evidence of the subversive nature of counter discourses. In fact, Ashcroft et al. (1989:45) contend that counter-discourse enables the empire to “write back to the imperial “centre”, not only through nationalist assertion proclaiming itself central and self-determining, but even more radically by questioning... challenging the worldview that can polarise centre and periphery in the first place.” The concepts of the governor and governed as well as that of ruler and ruled are deconstructed and challenged as essential ways of ordering reality (Harris, 1960). Therefore, counter-discourses have an inherent capacity to make dominant discourses implode and in the process reconfigure relationships between those placed at the centre and those at the periphery. In the case of this study, the centre is occupied by the ruling ZANU PF party and its supporters, and the periphery is inhabited by those who are excluded from the nation’s political and economic matrix, and these include whites and members of the opposition political parties, chiefly the MDC.

Another aspect of counter-discourse worthy discussing is that hegemonic narratives are always contested. Terdiman (1989:36) explains this important dimension to counter-discourse in the postulation that no dominant discourse is ever a monologue since there is always a counter-narrative that transgresses that dominant narrative. Terdiman’s submission is that there is no sovereign discourse that is exhaustive of reality and can stand on its own and apart from other discourses as a narrative unto itself. Thus, every discourse is prone to contestation and can be subjected to critical scrutiny. Such a scenario is fertile ground for the existence of counter-discursive narratives. Counter-discourse therefore is an on-going enterprise for much of our lives for as long as there still exists the dominant-powerless dichotomy in the ordering of relationships. Bhabha’s (1990:170) contention on this is insightful as he clearly articulates that “there can never be any one, coherent, common narrative through which (for instance) a nation

and its people can be adequately captured. The nation remains a site of heterogeneity and difference.”

Further understandings of counter-discourse are evident in Bhabha’s (1990) discussion on nationalist representations. Bhabha (1990:139) notes that grand or master narratives are “highly unstable and fragile constructions which can... become split by similar kinds of ambivalence to those that threaten the coherence of colonial discourses.” The suggestion here is that master narratives are always in existence, notwithstanding epochal or spatial and temporal variations, and hence the need to contest them. In fact, Bhabha (1990:148) articulates that, in the case of the nation:

the performative necessity of nationalist representations enables all those placed on the margins of its norms and limits - such as women, migrants, the working class, the peasantry, those of a different “race” or ethnicity - to intervene in the signifying process and challenge the dominant representations with narratives of their own.

He further submits that under such a scenario, the nation “becomes a liminal signifying space that is internally marked by the discourse of minorities, the heterogeneous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities and tense locations of cultural difference” (148). This point underscores the impossibility of creating or realising the ideal of a homogeneous people. Bhabha’s articulation amounts to Macleod’s (2000:119) consideration regarding nationalist representation when he asserts that “a plural population can never be converted into a single people because plurality and difference can never be entirely banished,” and hence the endemic proliferation of counter-discourses such as the ones that are explored in the texts selected for this study.

Therefore, counter-discourses have the capacity to interrupt and in the process reveal “different experiences, histories and representations which (grand) discourses depend on excluding” (Macleod, 2000:120). This point is noted further by Zoe (2013), in her study titled *Perceiving Pain in African Literature*, in the contention that patriotic narratives of togetherness must be recalibrated when one examines individual stories. This means that individual stories that reveal different experiences and histories that are excluded in grand narratives lie within the counter-discursive realm. The writers whose works are under scrutiny in this study are largely inspired by the objectionable Black Nationalist political project and its associated economic state of affairs evident in Zimbabwe from 2000. The study’s selected texts are also subversive

in that they articulate experiences that are deliberately glossed over in grand narratives and, therefore, fall under the counter-discursive canon.

1.2.3 Conceptions of identities

The study focuses on the way identities are contested in the post-2000 Third Chimurenga era in Zimbabwe. It examines the literature that interrogates the formation and dissolution of identities. As a result, I address the way identities are constituted by making reference to scholarly debates that focus on identity formation. Central to these debates is the role of the state and the individual in shaping and moulding identities. In addition, the role of ideology and that of discourse is deemed critical in the formation and dissolution of identities in this study.

Identities are complex and deep political projects, which, as Phimister (2012) rightly observes, are contradictory, contested and ambiguous. There are no fixed identity schemes both at the individual and institutional levels because identities are fluid or always in a state of flux. An understanding of this provisional nature of identities is important in this study which considers the contestation of patriotic identities.

While acknowledging that there are earlier perspectives on identity formation such as primordialism (Smith, 1998) which states that nations and identities are naturally occurring phenomena, I focus in this study on identities as defined from the modernist and the late modernity perspectives. The considered modernist concepts are linked to the works by scholars such as Gellner, Anderson and Hobsbawm. Gellner (1983) discusses the emergence of the modern nation as a consequence of the shift from an agricultural to industrial society and its associated societal re-configuration. Anderson (1991) concurs with this idea of the nation as a modern phenomenon but postulates further that the formation of nations rose from the proliferation of print capitalism that enabled large and impersonal societies to find a common imaginary to the nation. Gellner (1983) and Anderson's (1991) unpacking of modernism is critical in the explanation of the role of the state in identity formation, especially at the collective level of the nation. The scholars suggest that notions on collectivity and belonging are central to the idea of the nation. These notions of community are buttressed by the invention of tradition (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983:7) and the narration of history as postulated by critics such as Bhabha (1994) and Macleod (2000). Through the invention of tradition and the narration of history, the state is empowered to craft and shape identities through "individual figures who are identified as the chief actors and actresses in the story of the nation" (Macleod, 2000:70). This state of affairs is manifest in the way the ruling party ZANU PF manipulates

history and uses the Third Chimurenga to carve and consolidate patriotic identities. However, conditions prevailing in modernity do not allow for such monopoly over identity construction because, as noted by Brennan (2004:129), legitimacy and authority in modernity are no longer based on principles derived from the past. Instead, “in modernity, the questioner (of law, of right, of religion, of truth) offers his/her own justification. Modernity means to create one’s own normativity out of oneself.” This reading of conditions prevailing in the modern age is crucial in that it illuminates and corroborates the way the study’s focal texts are constructed since the texts authorise identities that deviate from the state-sanctioned grand narratives.

Nations are not immemorial entities. They have not always been in existence. Gellner (1983:49) submits that “nations are not inscribed into the nature of things. Nations, like buildings, are planned by people and built upon particular foundations-which also means that, like buildings, they can also rise and fall.” In addition, Gellner and Smith (1996:367) contend that “nations as a God-given way of classifying men, as an inherent political destiny, are a myth.” This submission underscores that a nation is primarily an idea. A nation is not a naturally occurring and fixed identity category but a figment of individuals’ imagination. Gellner’s (1983) sentiments are echoed by Anderson (1991:6) in his submission that nations are imagined political communities because “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow- members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.” The emphasis here is on the way individuals think that they are part of a greater collective and that they share what Anderson (1991:7) terms a “deep, horizontal comradeship with many others.” Therefore, Gellner and Anderson’s pronouncements underline that a nation is an idea or a myth because it is not based on historical or material facts. In addition, it is not a concrete reality but is brought into being for purposes of expedience, and hence the myth of national identities. As Gellner (1983:50) posits, “men do not become nationalists from sentiment, they become nationalists through practical necessity.” This suggests that nationalist discourses or grand narratives do not have to be imbibed simplistically. Instead, they have to be contested because in the first place they are crafted for political expedience. This contestation of grand narratives is treated in the writings considered in this study.

Other scholars also argue that nations are not naturally occurring entities. For instance, Macleod (2000:69) buttresses Anderson and Gellner’s ideas in the submission that “nations are not like trees or plants, they are not a naturally occurring phenomenon...nations are fundamentally...fabrications.” This submission suggests that nations are narrated and this is

confirmed in Macleod's (2000:73) contention that "nations are narrated like novels and newspapers." Anderson (1991:25) underscores the centrality of nation narration in his comparison of the imagining of the nation, especially one where there is a unitary language and the inhabitants are bounded by time and space, with the writing of realist novels and daily newspapers. These, according to Anderson, "provide the technical means for representing the kind of imagined community that is the nation." What this means is that the act of reading a newspaper for instance, "helps generate a sense of national community for the reader" (Macleod, 2000:73) as there are simultaneities of time and space which help create communities out of coincidence. This observation is linked to Anderson's (1991) idea of the creation of an imagined community that is constructed through the act of reading the same newspaper or engaging in the same consumption patterns within the confines of similar space and time. These simultaneities of time and space captured in narration are integral to the way individuals consider themselves part of a national community. However, the specific forms of narratives that seek to unite the nation are devoid of a universal appeal. They are "highly fragile and unstable constructions which can never produce the unity they promise" (Bhabha, 1994:139). For instance, the patriotic narrative that ZANU PF crafts does not bode well with the writers selected for this study, as explained in greater detail in later sections, since, as explained before, a plural population can never be converted into a singular people (Macleod, 2000).

The fact that nations are constructed and linked to myth-making brings in the idea of historical and fictional narratives that go along with these formations. The point here is that some historical and fictional narratives are produced in the service of the idea of the nation. Such narratives are used in the construction of a particular version of the imagined nation and creation of national identities. This then brings in the problematic dimension of narrative since it is ideologically motivated. For instance, national identities that are authorised by both historical and fictional narratives, are riven with ideological posturings, especially given that they are "often underwritten by the positing of a common historical archive that enshrines the common past of a collective "people" (Macleod, 2000:69). Any national history provides the people with "a sense of shared origins, a common past and a collective identity in the present" (Macleod, 2000:70). Such narratives are found in nationalist discourses, and hence nationalist discourses are integral in the formation of identities at a collective level. African narratives that belong to this category include Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom* (1994) which is essentially an ANC project that depicts Mandela's resilience and resistance to colonial domination. Other

narratives include Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* (1967) which describes a community that is reconstructing itself after the traumas of the liberation struggle and *The Last of the Empire* (1983) by Sembene which focuses on the need for Senegal to recover its "national" identity.

It is important to note that there are fissures in these two fictional works that have been identified as having nationalist qualities and these undermine the attainment of national identities. In *A Grain of Wheat* for instance, there is heterogeneity as reflected by the different ethnic groups, while the textual reality suggests that only blacks attend the independence celebrations and thus hinting at racial problems. In *The Last of the Empire* by Sembene, the coup which happens is said to be defensible on the grounds that the army is literally national and the soldiers are disciplined, yet the national identities that Sembene envisages are not voluntarist. In the Zimbabwe context, Sithole's *African Nationalism* (1968) which describes the African Nationalism discourse as a struggle against white supremacy that would continue until common sense prevailed provides a good frame of reference. However, it is important to note that such narratives or representations are done for political expedience. Therefore, much as nationalist discourses' centrality is acknowledged, I argue in this study that such an understanding of identity formation is partial because identities are complex projects. In fact, the state or nation is not the dominant force in shaping identities even though it attempts to deploy ideology and discourse to construct and cement specific identities. In the Zimbabwean case for instance, the state, which is synonymous with ZANU PF has attempted to construct patriotic identities but such identities are contested as shall be elaborated in later sections of the study that focus on narratives that deviate from the espoused patriotic trajectory. Therefore, nationalist discourses offer incomplete accounts of identities because they gloss over the fact that "there are as many different versions of history as there are narrators" and that "a national history makes one particular version of the past worthy of study" (Macleod, 2000:70). This is where the problematic nature of narrative emanates from. Every narrative is ideologically contaminated. A narrative is invariably a representation and any representation involves a point of view, a selection, a perspective on the represented object, criteria of relevance and an implicit theory of reality (Onega and Landa, 1996, Said, 1978).

This study is informed by Gellner (1983), Anderson (1991) and Brubaker and Cooper's (2000) constructionist approach to identity formation because such a paradigm speaks to the idea that identities are contingent and always in a state of flux. This fluid and provisional nature of identities is largely due to the fact that social organisations and symbolic interactions are always shifting and changing. In other words, there is a constant placement and displacement

of who we are (both at individual and collective levels) and as such, we have to think of identities as multiple, contextual, contested and contingent (Smith and Watson, 2001). Identities are therefore fluid and constantly being re-constituted depending on prevailing circumstances. Such an approach is also critical in that it feeds into an understanding of identities in late modernity as explained by Giddens (1991).

Giddens (1991) emphasises the role of the individual in the shaping and moulding of identities because the individual possesses an agency that transcends dominant structures. Under circumstances of late modernity individuals are given unrestrained agency in terms of authorising their identities (Giddens, 1991). Giddens (1991) offers invaluable details pertaining to the specificities or conditions prevailing in late modernity that are central to identity construction. He identifies globalisation, consumption, risk, individualisation and detraditionalisation as fundamental to the shaping of identities. Giddens (1991) contends that under these circumstances, individuals are enabled to slough off traditional identities while simultaneously re-embedding new identities. This point is obliquely corroborated by Hall (1996) in his views that traditional markers of identity, such as nationality, ethnicity, race and class' powers of conferring identities on individuals, have diminished. This is the same line of thinking that is adopted by Brubaker and Cooper (2000), Smith and Watson (2001), Woodward (2002) and Brennan (2004) when they discuss the provisional and shifting nature of identities under circumstances of late modernity. Hunt (2010) also lends weight to this argument on the reflexive and fluid nature of identity in late modernity, in her submission that identities are always in process rather than fixed entities. Hunt (2010) acknowledges the agency that is conferred on individuals to act within dynamic and complex social networks as they attempt to carve identities. Thus, as Hunt (2010:4) notes, the crafting of identities under circumstances of modernity and late modernity is negotiated in the context of "the inevitable vicissitudes of upbringing, including material and emotional constraints, the pressure of powerful narratives and discourses in the societies and cultures in which human beings are embedded." Nonetheless, the individuals are empowered to authorise their own identities.

Critical to note therefore is that identities, under circumstances of late modernity, are reflexively constructed, fluid, contingent, multiple and negotiated at a personal level. Living within structures or institutions may in one way or the other impact on how identities are shaped. Nonetheless, Calhoun (1994:27-8) notes that "identities are often personal and political projects in which we participate, empowered to greater or lesser extents by resources of experience, ability and social organisations." Thus, identities have increasingly become

projects in which individuals invest at a personal level. This bodes well for this study which considers how dominant discourses or modes of identities are contested by those writers who author identities through counter-narratives from the margins.

1.2.4 Zimbabwean conceptions of identity formation

This section briefly considers how Zimbabwean critics have engaged with the age-old debate about identity construction. The scholars' ideas on identity construction are, however, closely linked to the modernist and late modernity ideas as submitted and popularised by Gellner (1983) and Anderson (1991) and Giddens (1991) respectively. Ranger (1993) and Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2009) ideas on identity construction are reviewed here.

As a point of departure, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009) argues that prior to colonisation, African (and by extension Zimbabwean) identities were moral in texture and character. In other words, they were not rigid and cast in stone as they were not politicised. The identities were intrinsically fluid and flexible, a point which is given impetus by Ranger (1993) in the argument that pre-colonial African (and by extension Zimbabwean) identities were characterised by flexibility and pluralism. Ranger (1993:63) contends further that identities mutated after the colonial experience as they "were bounded by the rigidities of invented traditions." In a way, Ranger and Ndlovu-Gatsheni are of the opinion that colonialism impacted negatively on Zimbabwean identities as the associated reconfiguration and politicisation rendered them inflexible. In light of this politicisation of identities, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009:25) concludes that "the imagined common national (Zimbabwean) identity could not be manufactured within (an)... environment in which ethnic identities were deliberately politicised." Thus, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009) blames colonialism for the significant role it played in the forging of problematic Zimbabwean identities.

The problematic contemporary Zimbabwean identities are a product of the nationalist struggle. This is captured in Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2009:11) contribution that "...a people called "Zimbabweans" were a product of the nationalist struggle rather than a pre-colonial or primordial identity." Here Ndlovu-Gatsheni remotely echoes Gellner (1983) and Anderson's (1991) ideas that nations are not a naturally occurring phenomena. In fact, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009:74) goes further to almost replicate Anderson's (1991) ideas on imagined communities when he asserts that "nations are imagined entities which are forged through the instrumental use of the media, the educational system, administrative regulations, propaganda and sometimes outright lies and selected fragments of history." The point here is that the idea of a

nation which shares homogeneous identities is a myth. Ndlovu Gatsheni (2009:2) underscores this in his submission that identities are “products of human imagination and social construction (and therefore) are inherently prone to contestations, fragilities, acceptance, rejections and reconstructions.” It is significant to note that there is nothing innate about identities. Identities refuse fixity and are always in flux because they are constituted by human beings in reaction to their social, economic and political conditions and attempts to make meaning and improve their lives.

Furthermore, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009:26) criticises the nation-state project in Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular, with regards to the evolution of nationalism whose “discourses of nation-building favoured unitary histories on which to base the imagined postcolonial nation. In the process, they ceaselessly constructed national nodal points on which to hinge and construct national identity.” He contends that the nation-state project in Zimbabwe is beset by numerous challenges. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009) highlights the inadequacies of these nationalist discourses and their failure in attempting to forge a singular Zimbabwean identity, especially given their propensity to exclude other groups such as whites, members of the opposition political parties and members of certain ethnic groups such as the Ndebele. Thus, Ndlovu-Gatsheni suggests the idea of multiple Zimbabwean identities, an idea which resonates with post-modern approaches to identity construction. His ideas are also in harmony with Ranger (1999:210) who, while commenting on Joshua Nkomo’s (the late Zimbabwean Vice President) identities in multiple settings, envisages the possibilities and desirability of one person having multiple identities and “possessing such a hierarchy of identities, each deep and valid and each enriching the other.” Ranger’s ideas here share striking similarities with Giddens’ (1991) submissions on how identities are constructed and perceived in the late modern epoch. Here, Ndlovu-Gatheni’s criticism of nationalism, whose discourses favour unitary histories on which to base the postcolonial nation, are critical to my study which considers the way the selected writers contest the singular patriotic identities constructed by the ruling ZANU PF party, and advocate multiplicity which is a hallmark of identities in the modern epoch as noted in Giddens’ (1991) and Ranger’s (1999) ideas.

Both Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Ranger underscore and acknowledge the problematic nature of carving common and collective identities within the Zimbabwean geo-political space. They cite race and ethnicity as factors that can taint and complicate the identity construction process. The racial dimension to identity construction is captured by Pilosof’s (2012) historical analysis of white farmer experiences of anxiety and displacement during the post-2000 land

invasions and Manase's (2016) analysis of the connection between land and the constitution of identities during the same period. Manase (2016) analyses how whites, through personal narratives, articulate their experiences of dispossession and disenfranchisement along racial lines, and hence the reconfiguration of their identities. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009) and Ranger (1999) contend that there are challenges linked to the construction of common national identities and the forging of common citizenship when citizens are, in the first place, of different ethnic or racial extraction. Plural identities are therefore subtly encouraged and hence the counter-narratives that are analysed in this study. This plurality is openly advocated by Matekerere as submitted by Law (2014) in his review of the significantly titled monograph "One Zimbabwe Many Faces: The Quest for Political Pluralism in Postcolonial Zimbabwe" which discusses how ZANU PF has deliberately frustrated and stifled political pluralism in Zimbabwe since 1980.

1.2.5 Provenance of patriotic identities

This study is primarily concerned with the competing discourses regarding patriotic identities in the advent of the Third Chimurenga in the post-2000 period. It is of utmost importance that some form of context be given on the origins of patriotic identities in post-2000 Zimbabwe. Patriotic identities are firmly located in what Ranger (2004) has labelled patriotic history. Makombe (2019), in his study on literary narrativisation of patriotic history in Mashingaidze Gomo's novel, *A Fine Madness* (2010), contends that in post-2000 Zimbabwe, ZANU PF has appropriated liberation-war history and deployed it as a weapon (a point also noted by Youde, 2017) to consolidate power and assert political legitimacy. It is this history that Ranger labelled patriotic history. Ranger (2005:220) describes patriotic history as a narrative that is "more narrow than old nationalist historiography which celebrated aspiration and modernisation as well as resistance." The patriotic history narrative insists that there can only be a single identity for all Zimbabweans, a situation which has led Javangwe (2011) to brand the discourse a coercive narrative. Tendi (2010:2) posits that patriotic history was "developed as a sophisticated interpretation of Zimbabwe's past and elaborated by a wide spectrum of intellectuals and politicians...it has severely curtailed the development of Zimbabwe's past." Youde (2017) in his study on patriotic history and anti-LGBT rhetoric in Zimbabwean politics is even more scathing in his formulation of the concept as a wilful misreading of the past in order to reconstruct the present. While Youde (2017) discusses the nexus between patriotic history and political homophobia, what I find useful here are his ideas on patriotic history,

which he describes as a particular programme that posits a vision of Zimbabwe's liberation experience and political membership that reinforces ZANU PF's centrality and political legitimacy. The centrality of ZANU PF that Youde observes is also noted by Tendi (2010:4) in the submission that "patriotic history boils down to ZANU PF as the alpha and omega of Zimbabwe's past, present and future." Law (2014), in reviewing Tendi's (2010) *Making History in Mugabe's Zimbabwe* submits that the monograph critically examines ways in which history and collective memory have been mobilised and (re-) packaged under the auspices of patriotic history. Phimister (2012), quoting Ndlovu-Gatsheni asserts that "...the defining characteristics of patriotic history are the central roles ascribed to land and race, circumscribed by loyalty to the liberation movement in the shape of ZANLA/ZANU," with a further dimension being the affirmation of Zimbabwe's sovereignty against external interference. Therefore, these perspectives underscore that patriotic history is inflexible and also some ideological straitjacket that lacks patience with alternative versions of history or reality. It thrives on the politics of exclusion.

Patriotic history elicits different reactions in different individuals and collectives. Tendi (2010:6) acknowledges that patriotic history "played on real grievances and powerful memories of the colonial period," and then argues further that it is toxic and a "bastardised form of nationalistic politics." Implied here is that, just like the Third Chimurenga narrative discussed in an earlier section of this chapter, patriotic history is janus-faced in the way it is received by individuals and collectives, hence, the need to avoid generalisations when unpacking it. In fact, Tendi (2010:239) pronounces that patriotic history "speaks (differently) to diverse audiences within and beyond Zimbabwe's borders." Thus, on the one hand, it seeks to address and redress colonial imbalances, while on the other hand, it overtly props up ZANU PF's claims to political legitimacy. That is why there is a simultaneous construction of the narrative by some intellectuals and politicians with ruling political party leanings, and a deconstruction and sloughing off of the narrative by those intellectuals and politicians opposed to the ruling party. This contestation informs this study.

Furthermore, patriotic history resonates well and shares an intrinsic connection with the Third Chimurenga discourses. This is largely because land is at the heart of both discourses. Tendi (2010:19) contends that during the Third Chimurenga, ZANU PF "began to use history more inventively than ever before to legitimise and openly encourage... violent land seizures." The term "inventively" here indicates that the proponents of patriotic history deliberately connected their discourse with the contentious land issue for political expedience. Thus, to ensure the

resonance of its message, the authors of patriotic history referred to and tapped into some of the enduring legacies of the colonial experience such as the inequitable land distribution. Therefore, patriotic history is, from the perspective of the architects of the discourse, self-justifying given that it was meant to rectify a historical injustice based on a racialised land distribution.

There is a close link between patriotic history and the constitution of identities. As an ideological straitjacket, patriotic history insists on a singular identity mode. It also creates Otherness by valorising land and race, and an unquestionable loyalty to the liberation movement in the mould of ZANU PF. It clearly demarcates the boundary between the ‘insider’ and the ‘outsider.’ The insider in this case is the individual who toes the ZANU PF party line and is therefore perceived as patriotic and part of a category desired by ZANU PF. Conversely, the outsider refers to the individual at variance with the ZANU PF ideology and mostly a member of an opposition political party, or a white person. Ultimately, the outsider is labelled a sell-out. Patriotic history therefore has overt political connotations, and hence the need to give a brief political context to the concept.

The 1990s political and economic trajectories are significant in the mapping of the background to the way the vision of the nation and identities is imagined and contested in the post- 2000 period. The early 1990s witnessed the government’s introduction of the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) supported Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP), which saw the citizenry reeling from its attendant massive retrenchment and job losses (Raftopoulos, 1999). Zimbabwean citizens began to realise the detrimental effects of various ideological standpoints hatched and adopted by ZANU PF. In addition, the ZANU PF political elite began to disregard the nation’s welfare and entrenched its office bearers through draconian and restrictive legislation such as the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act as well as the Public Order and Security Act (Tendi, 2010). As a result, there was a general outcry as various classes tabled various grievances before government (Raftopoulos, 1999).

The 1990s’ political and economic trajectories climaxed in 1997 when the ZCTU began calling for general strikes. These culminated in looting and food riots. Those involved in the food riots were brutally dealt with, a brutality that continued into the 2000s (Ranger, 2003). Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009:6) observes that “the decolonisation euphoria was short-lived as some respected nationalists metamorphosed into tyrants and dictators, as economic models bred

acute crisis and economic stagnation, culminating in squandering all political legitimacy.” That is, instead of finding a lasting solution to the economic challenges, of which the food riots were a manifestation, the ZANU PF leadership took recourse to deploying violence in order to whip the citizenry into line. This penchant for violence foreshadows and explains the narrow essence of the patriotic history that is later generated by ZANU PF in a bid to consolidate its grip on power.

The late 1990s indeed witnessed the ruling party entrenching itself in power and clamping down on any conceivable form of dissent. The widely known violent police clampdown on workers’ riots in Harare and other cities in the year 1998 exemplifies this clampdown (Ranger, 2003). As a result, the nation moved towards an era characterised by the trampling of human freedoms as discussed in historical texts such as those by Ranger (2003) and Raftopoulos and Mlambo (2009). Nonetheless, the citizens were undeterred as the year 1999, as already noted, witnessed the formation of the labour movement inspired MDC.

The formation of the MDC forced ZANU PF to redesign national history in ways that suited its purposes from 2000 onwards. The party realised the real threat posed by the MDC in the aftermath of the latter’s success in galvanising the electorate to vote “NO” in the 2000 constitutional referendum. It then narrowed down the version of national history into what Ranger (2004) calls patriotic history, by insisting on allegiance to the “nation” and categorising any failure to display such as synonymous with being a traitor. The history that was propagated was contrived in such a way that it served partisan interests and entrenched the ZANU PF leadership in office. In addition, the history heavily prioritised involvement in the war of liberation as the ultimate marker of one’s belonging to the nation. For instance, it is on record that the leaders of the security forces in Zimbabwe who also belonged to ZANU PF during the turbulent years of the early 2000 decade openly declared that they would never support, let alone, salute a leader without war of liberation credentials (Rupiya, 2004). This and attempts at controlling public spaces such as the media, was an attempt to manipulate Zimbabweans into believing in a singular and clearly defined identity mode as the defining characteristic of Zimbabweanness (Thram, 2007). The history that was given credence to was black nationalist, and it solely celebrated the wars of national liberation whose completion largely depended on reclaiming resources such as land. As Manase (2016) points out, land is inextricably linked to identity construction as well as the crafting of artistic principles and spiritual meanings. It indeed is a marker of belonging or lack of it, and hence, denial of access to land, whether

deliberate or otherwise, leads to the brewing and escalation of tensions as reflected on the Zimbabwean geo-political space during the 2000-2010 period.

Patriotic history thrived on the exclusion of some groups. For example, white Zimbabweans were othered and excluded as foreigners, colonialists and agents of the British and Americans. We get a clearer picture of this state of affairs from white farmer texts such as Buckle's (2000, 2003) memoirs which, according to Manase (2016), depict eyewitness accounts of the events on the farms during the farm invasions and occupations. Such personal testimonies are critical in that they thrive on what Chennells (2005) terms authority of presence. Buckle chronicles her experiences and suggests that her identity was transformed overnight. In a way, white commercial farmers were discursively displaced from the Zimbabwean political space and rendered as undeserving of "Zimbabwean" identity from the point of view of the ruling ZANU PF elite. Thus, the history that ZANU PF propagated was inward looking and anti-Euro-American. It sought to create the vision of a nation that extols black-nationalist and pan-African ideas, as well as the constitution of a sense of self and belonging that was anti-opposition party oriented and anti-Euro-American, and hence patriotic (Raftopolous and Savage, 2004). Ironically, the whole patriotic history project is synonymous with a paranoia against the Euro-Americans, and it also extended to a ZANU PF categorisation of the opposition parties, chiefly the MDC, as agents of imperialism, and therefore treacherous (Nyamunda, 2014). Patriotic history therefore functioned as a discourse and act for the entrenchment of the ZANU PF ideology-and conversely sought to jettison the opposition MDC out of the political space in Zimbabwe. Therefore, patriotic history sought to project a rather jaundiced view and vision of the nation. The nation's memory was thus manipulated through convenient historical amnesia and this resulted in the vision of the nation being rendered singular and ruling political party-shaped (Ranger, 2005, Javangwe, 2011, Manase, 2016).

It should be underscored that the patriotic history project is linked to a number of nationalist projects, the constitution of patriotic identities and the beginning of the country's social and economic decline. There is a close link between the so-called patriotic identities and patriotic projects such as the invasion and seizure of white-owned farms 'patriotically' referred to as fast track land reform. Pilosof (2012) presents a historical analysis of the white farmer experiences of anxiety and displacement during the post-2000 land invasions. In addition, Buckle's (2000, 2003) memoirs chronicle her experiences during the land invasions and final seizure of her farm in a way that portrays the sense of exclusion and impact at a personal level for being at variance with the patriotic history project. The patriotic history project was and

continues to be related with an anti- Euro- America campaign which conflates anti-imperialism, a racist exclusion of white Zimbabweans and the persecution of the opposition political and civic activists as already noted. Finally, this patriotic project resulted in the breakdown of the country's economy. The commercial agricultural sector and the country's agro-based industries collapsed. There was a huge shortage of foreign currency, fuel and other basic commodities and the country suffered severely from a meteoric rise in inflation as shown in Chinodya's short story "Queues" (2003) which is examined in this study.

In line with the counter-discursive thrust explored in this study, it comes as no surprise therefore that Chinodya and other creative writers whose works form the core of this study produced works focusing on the existing conditions, and even contested ZANU PF's stranglehold on national history and social memory. Makombe (2019) also cites other writers, particularly Hove and Tagwira, who, though not included in this study, have also contested ZANU PF and its patriotic narrative. Such literary productions construct an alternative vision of the nation and identities that are in contradistinction to the "patriotic" identities that the ZANU PF clamoured for, hence this study.

1.2.6 A review of studies that focus on the post-2000 period in Zimbabwe

The study is aware of already existing studies that focus on the same period and the associated counter-narratives. For instance, Nyambi (2013) analyses the crisis that affected Zimbabwe from 2000 to 2010 and how, in turn, creative writers have responded to ZANU PF's ideological authoritarianism and historical monologue on the prevailing state of affairs in Zimbabwe. Nyambi is struck by and acknowledges the veracity of the vision articulated by the Zimbabwean creative writers in respect of the Zimbabwean experiences from 2000 to 2010. He highlights the contestations, questioning, deconstructionist and revisionist nature of most of the narratives that he uses in his study. The examined texts take a swipe at the grand narratives of the crisis. Nyambi also juxtaposes pro-ZANU PF narratives such as Maruma's *Coming Home* (2007) Mtizira's *The Chimurenga Protocol* (2008) and Gomo's *A Fine Madness* (2010) with texts that contest the ZANU PF grand narratives such as Vera's *Stone Virgins* (2002), Hove's *Blind Moon* (2003) and Mlalazi's "Idi" (2008) among others, in order to clearly deconstruct the grand narratives of the crisis. While Nyambi focuses on the contests at narrative level and the counter-discursivity thereof, this study's main thrust is the way the literature maps the purported state vision and the counter vision of the nation and engages, at a counter-discursive level, with the notion of patriotic identities propagated by the same ZANU PF grand

narratives that Nyambi analyses. It also adds a further dimension by considering the notion of the Third Chimurenga and its nature and role in, on the one hand, propagating patriotic identities, and on the other hand, spurring the production of contesting literatures and cultural productions. This study concentrates only on the counter-discursive texts without necessarily juxtaposing the conflicting literatures. The study also departs from Nyambi's work in that it includes works written after 2010 as well as those written by white Zimbabweans.

Manase's (2016) study focuses on writings about the land with his exploration effectively linking land with the constitution of identities within the context of the post-2000 land invasions. Manase (2016) analyses different memoirs by white writers which means that he is primarily concerned about individual experiences of dispossession and how that impacts on identities. He also submits that land, both in terms of its ownership as well as perceptions about it, is a hotly contested territory in Zimbabwe. While there is a counter-discursive appeal in the white memoirs that Manase engages in his study, a counter-discursive thrust that I also consider in my study, the variation comes in that Manase limits his focus only to white narratives. In addition, my study, unlike Manase's, incorporates counter-narratives in the form of fictional works written by blacks and has the notion of patriotic identities at the centre of the study focus.

Magosvongwe's (2013) study is closely linked to Manase's (2016) in that it links land and identity (both at a collective and individual level) as portrayed in Zimbabwean fiction. Magosvongwe establishes the link between land ownership and cultural identities in Zimbabwe. Ultimately, like Manase, she concludes that land is a locus or site for fertile contestation and hence the counter-discursive thrust that it generates. In addition, Magosvongwe (2013) just as Nyambi (2013) juxtaposes narratives (fictional works) that openly contest each other in terms of vision and thrust. This however is slightly different from my study, which does not juxtapose narratives. Instead, my study only focuses on narratives that contest the state's grand narratives.

Mangena's (2015) study, which is significantly titled *Counter-Discourse in Zimbabwean Literature* discusses subversion in multiple contexts including gendered representations and the silencing of voices in nationalist discourses; threads that I also pursue in my study though the bulk of the focal texts are different. Mangena also includes a narration of the Gukurahundi, something that I also focus on but the focal texts are different. On the Third Chimurenga, Mangena looks at its re-interpretation in post-2000 writings, while the main thrust of my study draws its foundation from or narrative anchor on the Third Chimurenga discourses and the

associated counter-narratives. Thus, our studies simultaneously intersect and diverge, thus enriching each other in terms of the politics of identities.

My discussion on critical works that studied the literary productions of the same period is critical in that it establishes benchmarks or parameters within which to base my study. The study is intended to add on to the existing body of knowledge on counter-discourse from the angle of patriotism and the formation of contesting identities in modernity and late modernity. Unlike in traditional societies where individuals were immersed in social groups and therefore had essentialist identities, identities under circumstances of modernity and late modernity, are dynamic, elastic and reflexively constructed. Therefore, there are no singular, composite or definitive identities because of the constant placement and displacement of individuals (Smith and Watson, 2001) in a variety of contexts. Even though identities in modernity and late modernity are validated and sanctioned socially (Woodward, 2002), they are personal projects (Hunt, 2010). Expressed in a different way, identities in modernity and late modernity are forged reflexively under the pressure of social and economic change. Thus, the study is significant in that it acknowledges the agency and rational choice (Woodward, 2002) that late modernity confers on the writers selected for this study to contest the state-constructed patriotic identities. In addition, the study is important in that it explores the relatively under-researched concept of patriotism and identity formation.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The ZANU PF party, which has dominated political power in Zimbabwe since 1980, has propagated grand narratives, which authorise a homogeneous vision of the nation and patriotic identities in the Zimbabwean citizenry. The vision and memories about the nation and patriotic identities are enacted through pro-black nationalist discourses. These discourses include narratives aired on Zimbabwe's Broadcasting Cooperation celebrating the heroics of the freedom fighters, fictional works depicting the war of liberation from colonialism such as Mutasa's *The Contact* (1985) and other narratives about neo-Euro-American imperialism and the anti-white commercial farmers' project, as well as those focusing on the fast track land reform projects. Such grand narratives do not allow for alternative perspectives, yet the postmodern dispensation is such that individuals do not "discover" their identities (Giddens, 1991, Woodward, 2002) but forge and authorise them in the context of external reality as they respond to discourses that surround them (Woodward, 2002, Brennan, 2004, Hunt, 2010). The individuals' identities are affected just as their social and economic lives are also impacted on by the grand narratives, and in most cases, individuals are forced to challenge and contest those

grand narratives. Thus, the research problem focuses on the way state-sanctioned patriotic identities are contested in Zimbabwe during the post-2000 era, as depicted in selected literary texts.

1.4 Study Objectives

The research attempts to:

- a) outline the state and tone of literary and cultural productions in Zimbabwe between 1980 and 1999 vis-à-vis their treatment of the theme of national identity.
- b) analyse how creative writers, through their works, have responded to the major political turning points in contemporary Zimbabwe in the wake of the re-emergence of race-inspired notions of patriotic identities during the post-2000 era.
- c) determine how writers consider the idea of the nation and patriotic identities propagated by the ruling ZANU-PF elite.
- d) discuss the way dominant and state-sanctioned narratives are contested in Zimbabwe during the post-2000 era.
- e) analyse the kind of identities that are projected as alternatives to patriotic identities

1.5 Key Research Questions

- a) What is the state and tone of literary and cultural productions in Zimbabwe between 1980 and 1999 in relation to their treatment of the theme of national identity?
- b) What major political turning points in Zimbabwe leading to the formation of the concept of patriotic identities are explored by writers and literary critics?
- c) How do writers consider the idea of the nation and patriotic identities propagated by the ruling ZANU PF elite?
- d) How are dominant and state-based narratives countered in Zimbabwe during the post-2000 era?
- e) What kind of identities are projected as alternatives to patriotic identities?

1.6 Theoretical Framework

The study deploys an eclectic approach, and in particular, ideas on counter discourse, in order to explore the deeply political mapping of the idea and memories about the nation and the concept of identities evident in Zimbabwe post-2000. This is especially so given that identity

categories such as those of the self and the nation are not “naturally occurring phenomena” (Macleod, 2008:68) nor are they “inscribed into the nature of things” (Gellner, 1983:49). Instead, identities are narrated and thus constructed entities. This constructed nature of identities means that their coming into being is not neutral or innocent but ideologically motivated. As such, this opens up the issue of identities to counter discourses. In pursuance of the same line of argument, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009:2) contends that identities are “products of human imagination and social construction, and are therefore prone to contestations.” The constructed nature of identities is, for instance, noted in how, during the colonial enterprise, blacks were othered and categorised as the orient (Said, 1978). This idea is captured in imperial discourses such as Haggard’s *King Solomon’s Mines* (1885), a trend that is extended in Smith’s *The Great Betrayal and the Dreadful Aftermath* (2007). However, the reality is that identities are always in a state of flux (Smith and Watson, 2001) and other historical reasons facilitate the witnessing of a shift of perceptions of identities. For instance, in Zimbabwe soon after the attainment of independence whites’ loss of privilege is minimal but after 2000, it becomes more radical as they are forced to surrender their positions of privilege (Buckle, 2000, 2003), and later on, some are dispossessed of the land and sense of belonging in the nation and citizenship. This state of affairs points to the shifting nature of identities.

Thus, firstly, postcolonial theory is used as the overarching theory in this study. The study draws on postcolonial concepts on counter discourse by critics such as Terdiman (1989) and Ashcroft et al. (1989), and notions on identity construction by Gellner (1983) and Anderson (1983), and particularly ideas on patriotic identities by Ranger (2004) and Gatsheni-Ndlovu (2009). These are considered in order to arrive at deeper insights on the formation and dissolution of identities as portrayed in the research’s selected texts. Mindful of the various strands within postcolonial theory, this study uses those tenets of postcolonial theory that interrogate different identity categories such as nation, self, gender and race, as postulated by critics such as Gellner (1983), Anderson (1983), Ranger (2004) and Ashcroft et al. (1989). Those strands aligned to identities contest the notion of ascribing single meanings to human experiences. Postcolonial theory has been chosen because its borders are porous to the extent that it encompasses and borrows from a myriad other theories such as counter-discourse, deconstruction and discourse analysis, which are considered in this study. This is pertinent in this research which seeks to critique the provenance of patriotic identities as well as interrogate how those patriotic identities are contested in the advent of the Third Chimurenga.

Postcolonial theory is used because it lends itself to a flexible yet critical usage since it can address the politics of identity and reaffirm openings for agency and resistance. This resistance is, according to Young (2001:13), inherent in postcolonial theory as he observes that “the term postcolonial will certainly always involve the idea of resistance.” Young (2001:14) argues further that the resistance is made possible by the fact that:

Postcolonialism offers a language of and for those who have no place, who seem not to belong, of those whose knowledges and histories are not allowed to count. It is above all this preoccupation with the oppressed, with the subaltern classes, with minorities in any society, with the concerns of those who live or come from elsewhere, that constitutes the basis of postcolonial politics and remains the core that generates its continuing power.

This reading and understanding of the primary concerns of postcolonial theory is critical in that it reflects how the selected works generated from the fringes respond in a resistant way to the dominant discourses. Thus, the writers selected for this study are in one way or the other resisting ZANU PF’s grand narratives about patriotism.

Postcolonial theory’s centrality also rests on the fact that it engages with different categories of identity including nation, self, gender and race (Ashcroft et al. 1989, Javangwe, 2011). In fact, Parry (1996:67) notes that postcolonial theory has the capacity to throw “the claims of both official and dissident historiographies into disarray.” For this reason, therefore, the theory is used to probe and interrogate patriotic identities as a contested space. Postcolonial theory is also deemed vital in this study because it grapples with and contests representational monologue. Chennells (2005) observes that postcolonial theory is a way of writing back to history as communities or individuals are obliged to assert themselves for their survival. In addition, Dirlik (2011) points out that postcolonial theory speaks to the legacies of the past. Integral to these submissions is the deconstructionist propensity inherent in postcolonial theory as confirmed by Shohat (1992:108) in the argument that postcolonial theory allows for “a vibrant space for critical, even resistant scholarship (as well as) a contested space.” Thus, deconstruction, as a way of undoing, decomposing and desedimenting of dominant structures (Derrida, 1976) that, in the context of this study, are emblematised by the ruling party’s grand narratives of patriotism, is critical to the way the texts selected for this study contest patriotic identities within the socio-economic and political space created by Zimbabwe’s ruling party.

Postcolonial theory is also vital for its insistence on hybrid representations and contestation of essentialist, absolute and fixed identity categories (Young, 2001, Shohat, 2011). The point here is that, in the context of this study, singular accounts of identities, as emblematised by the ruling party-constructed patriotic identities, are not healthy since they conceal rather than illuminate important intersection lines between groups. Thus, postcolonial theory valorises hybridity (Bhabha, 1994). Javangwe (2011) lends weight to this argument when he contends that postcolonial theory refutes the idea of according lived experience, memory and cultural myths any single meaning. Explicit here, therefore, is that postcolonial theory privileges hybridity. Such hybridity, according to Shohat (2011:108) “allow(s) negotiation of the multiplicity of identities and subject positioning which results from displacements, immigrations and exiles without policing the borders of identity along essentialist and originary lines.” What is being emphasised here is postcolonial theory’s flexibility in terms of its capacity to accommodate or take on board different identity postures. This bodes well for the texts under consideration in this study, in that the texts are allowed room to articulate alternative identities that are at variance with the state-projected patriotic identities. Javangwe’s (2011:19) observation on this is perhaps more illuminating and insightful as he notes that postcolonial theory “ treats the narrative of the nation as one of those grand discourses that overrides the smaller groupings and their interests... the nation subsumes those in conditions of subalternity, those who occupy the space physically but are not given the opportunity to represent themselves.” This point resonates well with Dirlik’s (2011) assertion that recent postcolonial insistence on the hybridisation of identities has revealed the irrelevance of the search for national identity. In the context of this study, the narrative of the nation is broadened and extended to encompass or to mean the patriotic identities being authorised by the ruling party, which have a narrow essence, hence the deconstruction of such grand narratives (patriotic identities). Postcolonial theory therefore is instrumental in that it has an intrinsic ability to interrogate, disrupt, deconstruct and undermine the presuppositions of grand narratives as demonstrated in the texts under study.

The study also draws on theories on everydayness (De Certeau 1984), exclusion (Agamben 1995), citizen classification (Bowker and Star 1999), third generation writing (Veit-Wild 1992, Adesanmi and Dunton 2005 and Hewett 2005), the speaking of the unspeakable (Rich 1979, Morrison 1988 and Muponde and Taruvinga 2002) and conceptions of gender (Butler) and the gendering of the national imaginary (Yuval-Davis and Anthias, 1989, McClintock, 1993, Macleod, 2000, Veit-Wild, 2006). These counter-discursive theories, which are deployed in

the analysis of some of the texts in this study, are also all located in postcolonial theory and evince a deconstructive bent. As such, it is important to analyse the theories briefly.

In line with the above-noted point, I deploy the theory on everydayness, understood as errant and indirect trajectories that obey their own logic and posited as the locus of a hidden poetics of resistance (De Certeau 1984), in my analysis of white-authored fictional narratives, including Eppel's "The Awards Ceremony", Charsley's "The Pencil Test" and "Jassat's "A Lazy Sunday Afternoon." De Certeau (1984) argues that everyday practices, particularly those related to consumption and tactics enable the subaltern to escape, resist and subvert dominant structures. This subversive tendency in the practice of everyday life connects the theory to counter-discourse as postulated by Ashcroft et. al. (1989), and hence the centrality of using the theory in this study which considers how the grand narrative of patriotic identities is contested in post-2000 Zimbabwe.

In addition, the study deploys concepts on generational writing as postulated by Veit Wild (1992) and particularly those developed by Adesanmi and Dunton (2005) and Hewett (2005) in analysing fictional narratives written by third generation Zimbabwean writers. Chapters two and three of the study draw on these concepts to prop up the major theoretical ideas on counter discourse and deconstruction that are employed in this study. The stories analysed from this premise include Hoba's *The Trek and Other Stories*, Nyamubaya's "That Special Place" and Gappah's "The President always dies in January" and "From a town called Enkeeldorn". The theorists argue that third generation writings are subversive owing to the fact that the writers are "born into the scopic regime of the postcolonial and the postmodern – an order of knowledge [...] that questions erstwhile totalities such as history, nation, gender and their representative symbologies" (Adesanmi and Dunton 2005:10). The theorists also argue that third generation writing is given force by the imperatives of historical revisionism, and hence, the dissident nature of the writings. The third generation writing is associated with radicalism, non-conformism and an avant-garde writing approach, and hence the link between the theoretical paradigm and counter-discourse and deconstruction which are the major theoretical concepts guiding the study.

The study also employs theoretical ideas on exclusion and citizen classification as postulated by Agamben (1995) and Bowker and Star (1999) in the analysis of Ndebele-authored texts, including Mlalazi's *Running with Mother* and Tshuma's *House of Stone* that contest state-sanctioned marginalisation of Zimbabweans of Ndebele ethnicity. For instance, Agamben (1995) argues that the overarching concern of politics is the classification between inclusion

and exclusion of citizens. Similarly, Bowker and Star (1999:196) note that classification systems are sites of political and social struggles and as such, “are politically and socially charged agendas.” The theorists note further that classifications are an organising rubric in complex relationships and reveal a hidden agenda of suppressing and silencing those who do not fit in the binary. Thus, the theorists argue for the contestation of classificatory regimes. Therefore, these ideas are critical in this study because they link with critical concepts such as counter-discourse that inform the study.

The study also draws on the notion of the speaking of the unspeakable as postulated by Rich (1979) and expanded by Morrison (1988) and Muponde and Taruvunga (2002) in the analysis of the female-authored texts, including Nyamubaya’s short story “That Special Place” and Gappah’s two stories “The President always dies in January” and “From a town called Enkeeldorn.” The concept, which is concerned with how writers deal with difficult or sensitive subjects in a particular political situation, links with those of deconstruction as postulated by Derrida (1976) and counter discourse (Ashcroft et. al. 1989) in that it is associated with dissidence, and hence its centrality in this study. In addition, speaking the unspeakable constitutes a deconstructive act, a view that is critical to the way I read the female-authored texts in Chapter Three. Thus, the theory is invaluable in this study.

The study also draws on theoretical ideas on the performativity of gender as argued by Butler (1990). These ideas link with postcolonial theory. The queer theory, which basically critiques anything that falls within the normative and deviant categories particularly sexual activities and identities, is used to analyse female-authored texts in mapping the vision of the nation and contesting the grand narrative about patriotic identities. Butler (1990) makes the strong argument that there is no coherent identity that can be used as a point of departure since bodies are gender-indeterminate to begin with. Gender identities are not ontological or innate. Rather, they materialise out of their performance or through actions. The performativity of gender is a repetitive act and an individual is always doing gender, performing or deviating from the socially accepted performance of gender stereotypes. One therefore is at liberty to perform gender in a way that destabilises the grand vision of a nation and its memories, and the associated patriotic identities as the study attempts to demonstrate especially in the analysis of Nyamubaya’s short story, “That Special Place”.

In pursuance of the above-noted point, and to complicate and problematise the often taken for granted male/female gender binary in nationalist representations, I deliberately split writers in chapters two and three along gender lines. This distinction is primarily informed by Veit-

Wild's (2006) argument that Zimbabwean patriotic history in its present form is that which is written by men, and more specifically old men. Veit- Wild contends further that the other side of this history is either told by women or seen through the eyes of younger men. Thus, I argue that while it has been submitted that the contours of nationalist historiography are distinctly male, the young male writers that I analyse in this study destabilise and challenge that assumption. They do not fit into the invented constructions of the Zimbabwean nation as inherently male because they are excluded from the imaginings of the nation by the older men, the authors and architects of Zimbabwean patriotic history (Veit-Wild). Therefore, I argue that both these male and female writers provide different versions of the way patriotic identities are contested and are part of the multiple voices that challenge the official position of Zimbabwean patriotism.

In conclusion, it is pertinent to state that other concepts such as narratology and discourse analysis complement this analysis of patriotic identities. Nonetheless, this study uses the critical literary and cultural textual analysis method to analyse the primary texts. This approach bodes well for this research in that, as noted by Bakhtin (1981), it enables the researcher to engage the creative texts in a bid to understand or unearth how concerns are delineated. This is because the study recognises that there is no neutrality of poise as writers write. Rather, they always write from a certain standpoint and hence the assertion that texts have the capacity to challenge or confirm reality or worldviews. There is therefore the need to engage the selected texts in order to understand the perspective from which they are authored in relation to identity articulation and the contestation of identities. Thus, I adopt an analytical approach that is double-pronged. On the one hand, I embrace a gender-based approach in the analysis of texts in chapters two and three. On the other hand, I adopt a location-based approach in my exploration of Gukurahundi-based texts in Chapter Four and white fiction and the everyday in Chapter Five. This fusion of different analytical approaches is important in that it enables me to analyse how the selected texts contest patriotic identities and authorise alternative identities that are in contradistinction to those sanctioned by the state.

1.7 Chapter Delineation

This section focuses on the study's chapter layout. Chapter One introduces the study. It outlines the background to the study, reviews literature related to the study, states the research objectives as well as the statement of the problem, and unpacks the theoretical framework that is deployed in the study.

Chapter Two analyses Chinodya's short story "Queues" (2003), Madanhire's short story "The Grim Reaper's Car" (2003) and Hoba's stories in his collection of stories *The Trek and Other Stories* (2009). The chapter determines the way the selected writers treat the notion of patriotic identities and satirise some of the established notions and grand narratives about the nation and perspectives on who is and who is not patriotic.

Chapter Three considers selected female writers' depiction of the gender dimension to the contest on 'patriotic' identities. Works that include Nyamubaya's short story "That Special Place" (2003) and selected stories from Gappah's collection of short stories *Rotten Row* (2016) are analysed to unpack their contribution to mapping counter-discourses to male-centred grand narratives about the post-2000 figure of what a patriot is, and authorise political derision and iconoclasm respectively.

Chapter Four analyses works written by Ndebele-speaking Zimbabwean writers. The novels that are analysed include Christopher Mlalazi's *Running with Mother* (2012) and Novuyo Rosa-Tshuma's *House of Stone* (2018). The texts are analysed in relation to how, as Gukurahundi-inspired Zimbabwean narratives, they disrupt notions on oneness and historical continuum propounded by ZANU PF in post-2000 Zimbabwe as a weapon against past and new forms of imperialism.

Chapter Five analyses white-authored short stories including John Eppel's "The Awards Ceremony", Diana Charsley's "The Pencil Test" and Monireh Jassat's "A Lazy Sunday Afternoon." The chapter considers the stories' role in depicting and mapping how the whites' imaginaries have mutated since the advent of the Third Chimurenga and the symbolic resistance in living and going on with their lives in a state where they are marginalised.

Chapter Six concludes the study.

Chapter 2: Subversion of Patriotic Identities in Male-authored Zimbabwean Fictional Narratives

2.0 Introduction

This chapter considers the way(s) the selected male Zimbabwean writers treat the notion of patriotic identities advocated by the Zimbabwean ruling elite during the post-2000 period. The male writers are a part of the multiple personas on Zimbabwe's literary landscape under focus in this study whose voices contest patriotic identities. In addition, these male writers belong to the category of younger men who are at variance with the patriotic history grand narrative and articulate the other side of patriotic history (Veit-Wild, 2006). They are the younger male writers who turn against and deconstruct the history of the old men as noted in Veit-Wild's submission that patriotic history in its present form is that history which is written by old men who in this case, are members of the ruling ZANU PF party. Thus, the selected male writers are a subalternised group since they are excluded from the imaginings of the nation whose historiography is constructed by the old members of the ruling ZANU PF elite. In addition, the male writers problematise the classification of males as a privileged category in the imagining of the nation and consistently prove the instability of these supposedly natural gender categories. The chapter focuses mainly on Shimmer Chinodya's short story "Queues" (2003), Nevanji Madanhire's short story "The Grim Reaper's Car" (2003) and Lawrence Hoba's collection of stories in *The Trek and Other Stories* (2009). The writers under focus have been in Zimbabwe all along so their perceptions and imaginaries are not blurred by geographical distance. They have an intimate understanding of the prevailing state of affairs hence, they provide a vivid sense of the experiences under state agenda-setting on social memory and the associated counter discourses. Bearing in my mind that the period under focus is associated with a myriad of political, economic and social problems, it is imperative to engage in an analysis of how male creative writers have responded to the debilitating situation. Thus, I premise this chapter on Muchemwa's (2011:8) fundamental question, "What happens when the economy and the state on which it is enacted collapse?" To this question I wish to add two more. Given that questions of artistic creativity cannot be understood outside politics, what is the role of the artist under such circumstances? Is the artist a free agent under such circumstances? These questions are important because they align with Felski's (2008) argument, in her evaluation of the uses of literature that literary works actively engage with their historical and social contexts. The works that are analysed have been chosen as representative of the general attitude to patriotic identities by writers in the post-2000 era in

Zimbabwe, as the writers under focus write counter-discourses to state narratives as enunciated in the Third Chimurenga discourses.

While I acknowledge that there are some writers such as Maruma (2007), Mtizira (2008) and Gomo (2010) whose works have been read as propping up the state's Third Chimurenga narratives, I argue in this chapter that the writers under consideration refuse to be guardians of ZANU PF political ideologies. Instead, they write against the grain of nationalist discourse in Zimbabwe submitted by Primorac (2007:75) as "an official narrative-the "patriotic" master fiction" that has been entrenched in Zimbabwe. This patriotic master fiction is a prescriptive narrative that is benchmarked on loyalty to ZANU PF. The narrative is hegemonic and gives increased visibility to the virtues of ZANU PF and its involvement in Zimbabwe's liberation struggle. The entrenchment of this patriotic master fiction (Primorac, 2007) happens through what Mbembe (1992:2) calls state power's institution of administrative practices which create a "world of meanings all its own, a master code which, in the process of becoming society's primary central code, ends by governing-perhaps paradoxically-the various logics that underlie all other meanings within that society." Mbembe (1992:2) further argues that the state attempts to institutionalise its world of meanings as a socio-historical world. Thus, the state attempts to transform its created world into people's common sense by "instilling it in the minds of the target population...and integrating it in the consciousness of the period" (Mbembe, 1992:3). This constituted grand narrative, is noted further by Mbembe (1992:4) as:

officially invested with a surplus of meanings which are not negotiable and which one is officially forbidden to depart from or challenge. So as to ensure that no such challenge takes place, the champions of state power invent entire constellations of ideas; they adopt a distinct set of cultural repertoires and powerfully evocative concepts, but they also have resort, if necessary, to the systematic application of pain. The basic goal is not just to bring a specific political consciousness into being but to make it effective.

The import of Mbembe's submissions on the Zimbabwean context refers to the ruling elite's demand for an unquestioning allegiance to the nation and constitution of a political consciousness aligned to the ruling party. It is designed to foreclose political contestation. However, I argue in this chapter that the writers whose works are analysed deviate from the patriotic trajectory that the ruling elite find palatable. Thus, my analysis of the texts seeks to reveal the different ways in which fictional narratives interrogate and subvert the official narratives of the governing party which can also be viewed as "African postcolonial master

fictions” (Primorac, 2007:10). I therefore argue that literary works have the capacity to “refract and interrogate” (Primorac, 2007:2) master fictions of the postcolony.

I also argue that the writers’ desire for creative independence compels them to desist from taking any advice regarding what to write about or how to write. The considered writers dared to tread on forbidden territory and have given a voice, a local habitation and a name to the “unspeakable.” Commenting on the unspeakable, Rich (1998:338) states that “whatever is unnamed, undepicted in images, whatever is omitted...censored...whatever is misnamed as something else...whatever is buried in the memory by the collapse of meaning under an inadequate or lying language-this will become, not merely unspoken but unspeakable.” What is implied here is that the unspeakable deviates from the conventional, the norm or the expected. By extension, those writers who deviate from the patriotic literary trajectory are in a sense treading on the territory of the unspeakable. That is so because, as Rich (1998:338) puts it, “naming the unspeakable is at once a transgress act that knowingly seeks to expose and break the boundaries on which the organisation of cultural knowledge depends and a discursive strategy that...allows a vital “making sense” of one’s own multiple differences.” Understood in this light therefore, writing about the unspeakable constitutes a deconstructive process in the sense that, in Derrida’s (1976) formulation, deconstruction interrogates and destabilises accepted values and hierarchies and undermines absolute truth and power systems. Nonetheless, this is precisely what is negotiated by all the writers that are discussed in this chapter since, each in their own way, contest a patriotic representation of the state of affairs on Zimbabwe’s political firmament. The writers reject a literary compromise authorised chiefly through the politicisation of the literary imagination where the state rewards those writers who prop up ZANU-PF’s ideology. It must be noted that this politicisation of the literary imagination is not new as attested to by Veit-Wild’s (1992) exploration of how the creative space in colonial Rhodesia was controlled by the white minority through the Literature Bureau. This control over the creative space, especially the regimenting of the literary and cultural productions, is also noted in the USSR in its heydays. The writers under focus in this chapter do not tread the patriotic path foisted on them by the ruling elite. Instead, they write in ways that advance the interests that they stand for, thus underscoring the way writers consider the notion of patriotic identities propagated by the ruling ZANU PF elite and how they contest dominant and state-based narratives.

The chapter is deliberately structured in such a way that I begin by focusing on Shimmer Chinodya’s short story “Queues” (2003) before I consider Nevanji Madanhire’s short story

“The Grim Reaper’s Car” (2003). Thereafter, I focus on Lawrence Hoba’s short stories *The Trek and other Stories* (2009). Not only is this initial focus on Chinodya determined by the fact that he is the most established of the writers under focus but- perhaps more importantly-the choice is also informed by the pertinent issues that Chinodya raises with regards to the provenance of the myriad problems affecting Zimbabwe. The problems are then later on articulated from different angles by the other two writers and hence the order in which the writers’ works are analysed is not coincidental but deliberate.

2.1 Shimmer Chinodya’s ‘Queues’ as a literary refusal to endorse the ZANU PF anti-West rhetoric

Falling broadly within what Muchemwa (2011) describes as the elegiac moment-that moment which mourns the death of the nationalist dream-the story “Queues” (2003) is literally concerned with an unpacking of the moment, akin to that noted by Achebe (1958), as one where the rain began to beat the Zimbabwean nation. Evocatively titled, the story attempts to trace, locate and name the origins of the myriad social, political and economic problems that affected Zimbabwe post-2000 and culminated in the endemic “queues” literally witnessed throughout the country. Thus, the title is used metaphorically to capture the ubiquitous nature of the challenges experienced in Chinodya’s fictional Zimbabwe. The queues witnessed are symbolic of the extent of the proliferation and virulence of the crisis. I argue that Chinodya makes no attempt to mask his ideological orientation since it is evident that an anti-establishment stance informs the narrative. The story refuses to “rehearse and reinforce” (Primorac, 2007:2) the state’s narrative of the crisis. Instead, “Queues” deconstructs the state’s articulation of the source of the crisis. Chinodya juxtaposes a love story with that of the nation’s demise and goes on to subtly suggest that the two are inextricably interwoven as they share symbolic resonances. The story has to be read as a refusal, through its content, to affirm the Third Chimurenga position. Thus, the story is an anti-patriotic narrative that shuns the “state-centred perspectives of history which remembers the heroic and so-called patriotic side of history” (Muwati, 2010:4).

2.2 “Queues” as historical fiction

One way to better understand Chinodya’s “*Queues*” (2003) is to read it as a historical fiction, a genre which is described by White (1987:121) as the “literature of fact.” The emphasis here is on a fidelity to facts in historical fiction. White (2015) further contends that historical fiction is a literary treatment of historical reality. This understanding of historical fiction explains why

White (2015:3) terms the genre “novelesque history” by which he refers to stories that deal with, or are inspired by history. Muwati (2010) describes historical fiction as a creative recreation of the people’s past by drawing inspiration from real life historical experience. Muwati (2010:4) further unpacks the genre as “a creative artistic intervention and discursive instrument for negotiating the thin line between the past, the present and the future using images, characters and symbols as embodiments of historical action and memory.” In a way, therefore, historical fiction is firmly embedded in the source of history. What it means here is that there is a thin line that separates facts and fiction in a historical narrative as espoused by Freeman and Levstik (1998:331) when they encourage readers of historical fiction to make “comparisons between historical fiction and the data from which historical fiction emerges.” Freeman and Levstik (1998:331) further contend that “historical fiction... is more than a simple retelling of past events. Rather, historical fiction is part of an on-going process of interpretation in which readers can participate.” In other words, the reader’s participation is based on that comparison between what they come across in the text and what is on the ground. The reader has the choice to either agree with or interrogate the content of the historical novel, and that agreement or interrogation is inevitably based on the material reality delineated in the text.

Historical fiction establishes connections between the text and the circumstances that inform the text’s production. This point is given credence by Gambahaya’s (2006:56) assertion that “creative efforts and scholarship should not distance themselves from real life. This entails going into real life and studying it.” What that means is that the writers of historical fiction do not just write on a whim; neither do they hallucinate. Rather, the content of their creative art is informed by the concrete situation on the ground. The content of historical fiction stays very close to the represented phenomenon. That is largely so because historical fiction resonates with that Platonic and Aristotelian conceptualisation of art as mimetic (Ricoeur, 1984, Aristotle, 2006). Art, and by extension, historical fiction, imitates life and for this very reason historical fiction is quite instrumental (Nagy, 2014). Muwati (2010:5) acknowledges the centrality of historical fiction when he submits that “the historiographical value of historical fiction cannot be underestimated as it significantly contributes to a better understanding of a given historical era.” Mensah (2004:69) lends weight to this observation when he contends that “the historical novel provides a tangible human portrayal of the historical trends of an epoch.” This point is further articulated with a fair degree of complexity by Ricoeur (1984) in his postulation that there is an intrinsic connection between narrative and time. In Ricoeur’s (1984:4) formulation, “the world unfolded by every narrative work is a temporal world. Time

becomes human time to the extent that it is organised after the manner of a narrative; narrative, in turn, is meaningful to the extent that it portrays the features of temporal experience.” Ricoeur’s (1984:4) argument is that, as he powerfully submits, “what is ultimately at stake in the structural identity of the narrative function as well as in that of the truth claim of every narrative work is that it deals with the temporal character of human experience.” This understanding of the link between time and narrative clarifies the notion that the historical novel provides a concrete portrayal of the historical trends of an epoch. Thus, historical fiction resonates with historically-concrete representations of reality. It is firmly steeped in the there and then and the here and now.

I contend that Chinodya’s “Queues” (2003) is historical fiction because the text focuses on the relationship between the production of narrative and social space - times. The story draws on history in its consideration of what happens on the Zimbabwean political and social landscape. Thus, the story can be pigeonholed as historical fiction because it is a “literature of fact” (White, 1987:121) and is a literary treatment of historical reality. Chinodya is primarily concerned with the major political turning points in Zimbabwe that had a direct bearing on the country’s plummeting socio-economic and political fortunes. Writing in a way which is almost reminiscent of the critical realism tradition, Chinodya challenges the ruling elite through his representation of the prevailing state of affairs. He subtly suggests that what he presents are extremely unattractive facts and that no purpose is served by denying them since they are a part of the present reality. The truth, thus, has to be accepted in its crude ugliness, at least according to Chinodya’s intimations. In his quest for that honesty, Chinodya deliberately produces an ‘anti-patriotic’ literary narrative. Chinodya critiques official narratives while “confronting the tendency by the ZANU PF government to prevent other [alternative] pasts from articulating themselves” (Alexander, 2006:105).

As a historical work of art straddling both the pre and postcolonial space in Zimbabwe, “Queues” (2003) demonstrates the synthesis of time and space. It is rooted in specific historical contexts which show an intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships. Thus, it confirms Bakhtin’s (1984) notion of the chronotope in delineating the conflation between the past and the present. In Bakhtin’s (1984) formulation, there is unity of time and space inherent to a narrative. This unity is especially critical to our understanding of the relationship between the fictional and historical texts. That is so because the fictional and the historical are unified by their occupation of the same time and space. The story catalogues and archives the political turning points contributory to Zimbabwe’s dire economic, political and social circumstances.

These are presented showing Chinodya's quest for a truthful depiction of the country's history that unsettles the ruling elite. As a result, there are a number of events that Chinodya faithfully records and that the ruling party ZANU PF would rather they were not exposed. Chinodya insinuates that before independence life was a lot better than it became after independence. For instance, in apparent reference to the pre-independence era in Zimbabwe, Chinodya evocatively pronounces that:

Once upon a time in the days of Sisi Elizabeth a loaf of bread cost twelve cents and you could buy a kilogram of meat for a dollar. Twice upon a moon your father sent you, by registered mail, two dollars pocket money to last half a term... Four times upon a sun your father sent three siblings to boarding school on a milkman's pay...Six times upon the universe you were poor, but you survived (p.44).

What is subtly embedded here, through an outrageous deployment of poetic licence, is Chinodya's indictment of the ruling elite, as he considers them responsible for the economic mess that the country finds itself mired in. The ruling party is struggling to shepherd and steer the country's economic ship unlike their predecessors who, while it is a fact that the majority were impoverished, at least managed to ensure that everyone got access to life's barest necessities. To emphasise the point, Chinodya (2003:45) repeats the idea of survival when he asserts that "you were dirt poor, but you seldom starved." Thus, it is the ruling elite who are being implicated for driving the country into this economic morass.

Chinodya's attitude towards the ruling elite explains why he is determined to try and locate where the ruling elite made mistakes. Furthermore, the author is, true to the tradition of historical fiction, succinct and vivid in his capturing and depiction of the Zimbabwean social and historical trajectories in "Queues". That is why he finds it prudent to state that:

We declared independence, after that long bitter war in 1980. In the late 80s we tried to unshackle ourselves from the past. Out went the chains of the old constitution and in came the new. Out went the premiership and in came the presidency. We ploughed forward with a show of fisted arms, with calls for reconciliation, a brave new unity and work. Of course there were not enough funds. It wasn't easy. We massacred each other. We manufactured enemies. We squandered resources. There was mistrust. Gangrene setting in (p.47).

Here, Chinodya, in his quest to establish and name the source of Zimbabwe's problems, literally engages in intense interrogation of the critical moments in Zimbabwe's history. He

also indicts the ruling party for its ineptness. For instance, he makes reference to the institution of a “new” constitution in order to suggest that the ruling class in the mould of ZANU PF is to blame for whatever changes and the economic misfortunes that the country finds itself in. A constitution is the supreme law of a country and the ultimate legal point of reference on issues to do with governance. That there is a new constitution, that which replaces the premiership with the presidency in 1980, therefore, marks a radical shift in terms of ways of doing things. It constitutes a break with the colonial legacy. Thus, obliquely, Chinodya identifies the ruling elite as the architects of the constitutional amendments which replaced the premiership with the presidency and led to whatever problems the country faces thereafter. The blame is, in the context of the country’s history, shifted away from the former colonisers as ZANU PF would like the world to believe, as depicted in texts such as *Traitors Do Much Damage to National Goals* (2005) and Mugabe’s *Inside the Third Chimurenga* (2001) both of which are the ZANU PF party’s first line of defence in terms of its ideologies. Hence, Chinodya buttresses the point by making reference to ZANU PF’s slogan which is performed with clenched fists. The fists hint at intimidation and coercion, hence the author’s critical attitude towards ZANU PF.

The author draws on the genocide, popularly known as the Gukurahundi, which occurred in the early 1980s in Matabeleland. It is pertinent, here, to revisit Freeman and Levstik’s (1998) exhortation to readers of historical fiction to draw comparisons between historical fiction and the data from which historical fiction emerges. In this case, it is clear that Chinodya’s historicisation and narrativisation of the Matabeleland genocide is corroborated by evidence from scholarly research on the Gukurahundi phenomenon, by Mlambo (2014), Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru (2013) and Sachikonye (2011). In a way, therefore, Chinodya’s “Queues” draws on history that is defensible. The story, in other words, resonates with “historical facts.” It exposes the country’s hitherto hidden hideous memory. The Gukurahundi memory is at worst deliberately excluded in state narratives because it is a part of the country’s history which does not endear the ZANU PF government to both the international community and the affected local communities. Thus, Chinodya is being deliberately dissident and subversive in the manner in which he excavates a historical memory conveniently swept under the carpet and buried by the ruling elite.

“Queues” (2003) draws from and benefits immensely from recent Zimbabwean history. The story reads more like a rewriting or a catalogue of recent Zimbabwean history, particularly, the critical moments where the government made errors in policy formulation and implementation. Chinodya indeed draws on a number of issues. For example, Chinodya treats the international

community's attitude to Zimbabwe as predicated on the country's intransigence and obstinacy. He writes:

She counted off on her fingers our crimes and shortcomings and reproached us but we did not listen. She said, "Stop giving ex-combatants grants," but we did not listen. She said, "Stop subsidising commodities," but we did not listen. She said, "Stop controlling prices," but we did not listen. She said, "Devalue your currency," but we did not listen. She said, "Stop tampering with the land," but we did not listen. She said, "Stop grabbing farms," but we did not listen (p.50).

The trope of silence and refusal to listen is used to emphasise the ruling elite's intransigence. This reluctance to listen echoes Young's (2001) submission about the curious but symptomatic deafness by those in power. This deliberate or feigned deafness is more an illustration of the government's inflexibility which then is singularly the cause of the country's undoing.

Evident here also is the way Chinodya treads on recent Zimbabwean history. He reproduces previous experiences such as the awarding of grants to war veterans, land invasions and the subsidising of prices encountered by the nation, and suggests that the occurrences have a direct bearing on the country's politics and economy. It is no coincidence, perhaps, that Chinodya begins by making reference to the giving of grants to ex-combatants because that was a watershed in the developments that negatively impacted on the country's economy. Bond and Manyanya's (2003) analysis of the antecedents of the Zimbabwean crisis shows that the major political and economic decisions taken in Zimbabwe in the late 1990s and early 2000s, especially the 1997 one, to offer gratuities to the ex-combatants, is one of the triggers of the crisis. Davies (2004:54) concurs with Bond and Manyanya's (2003) analysis when he contends that "1997 marks the start of the current economic and political crisis. Many would date this from the collapse of the Zimbabwe dollar on 14 November 1997. Numerous factors contributed to this, including the unbudgeted payments to war veterans." Mnangagwa (2009) and Sachikonye (2012) concur with this observation. An even more articulate account of the impact that the payment of grants to war veterans had on the economy is noted in Nyathi's (2004:93) submission that:

In the face of pressure and in fear of losing the war veterans' substantial and key support ahead of elections, Mugabe capitulated to their demands and, without consulting Cabinet or considering the budgetary and economic repercussions, the President unilaterally offered the approximately 50 000 war veterans cash gratuities of

Z\$50 000 each, free healthcare and education for their families, and Z\$2 000 monthly pensions for life. This resulted in the immediate crash of the Zimbabwean dollar, which halved its value overnight on what is known as “Black Friday” in November 1997.

Based on this evidence, it is axiomatic that Chinodya produces a historical-cum political treatise in “Queues”. The story can be read as a political commentary to the effect that the subsequent political and economic problems such as international isolation, hyperinflation and scarcity of basic commodities affecting the country have their roots in this 1997 presidential bungling.

Chinodya also refers to the contentious and controversial events and discourses related to the post-2000 land invasions and later fast track land reform programme that is popularly known as the Third Chimurenga. This complex and ambiguous nature of the land reform programme, also captured by Lawrence Hoba in *The Trek and Other Stories* (2009) analysed later in this chapter, is evaluated by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009) and Raftopolous (2004). Chinodya depicts the discordant nature of the voices that comment on the thorny and delicate issue through the narrator’s assertive expression that:

We were confused. We did not speak with one voice. Some of us said, “Leave the white farmers alone” and others said, “No way!” Some of us said, “Don’t destroy the soul of this land, the farming industry, the economy-don’t turn this gem of a country into a land of peasants” and others replied, “Better be poor on your own land than be slaves forever (p.51).

The above quotation shows that the land issue was understood and embraced from divergent perspectives. This divergence in perspective is captured by Hanlon et al. (2013) in *Zimbabwe Takes Back its Land* which is an influential and challenging intervention in discourses on Zimbabwe’s land reform programme. Hanlon et al. (2013:18) positively appraise the land reform process and, in their endorsement of the successes of the land reforms, they claim to have “seen something different” from the line taken by many international agencies and local opposition groups who view the land reform as an abysmal failure. What is also explicit here is that Chinodya has placed himself in the camp of those who are opposed to the modalities regarding the enactment of the land reform programme. What Chinodya submits here is that he and like-minded Zimbabweans questioned the programme right from its conception. When the narrator says “some of us said”, it can be inferred that this is an authorial comment where Chinodya suggests that his is the voice of rationality, moderation and common sense.

Obliquely, therefore, he is implicating those with a pro-land grab mentality in the country's economic demise. Such individuals are complicit with the ruling elite, hence they are the authors of both their own and the nation's miseries.

Chinodya is even more scathing when he compares the differing levels of consciousness between the urban dweller and those who live in the country. He insinuates that the rural folk are, to use Marxist terms, wrapped up in false consciousness and confined by rural life's lack of sophistication. Displaying coruscating wit, Chinodya posits that:

In towns sleek residents clicked their tongues in disapproval. In the country tottering grandmothers and grandfathers and newly reformed rustics rejoiced at the pieces of their ancestral land that were restored to them, at the little seed packs, thrifty bags of fertilisers and itinerant tractors that were availed to them (p.51).

The fact that the land reform resonates well with, and is palatable to only the elderly and rustics speaks volumes with regards to Chinodya's sense of disenchantment. In a way, Chinodya finds it necessary to criticise both the ruling elite and those simple-minded rural folks who are hoodwinked by the cosmetic, superficial and ephemeral in the form of seed and fertilizer so as to embrace the ZANU PF ideology. Thus, Chinodya, does not spare the rural dwellers in his vitriol and portrays them as the individuals who are partly to blame for the political and economic morass that the country finds itself in. Chinodya is indirectly confirming Hage's (1998) assertion that groups which are seen as more national than others benefit in the form of having access to space because they possess greater national capital than other groups. Thus, the rural folks who are prepared to toe the ZANU PF party line are rewarded through having access to land.

That divergence in perceptions on the land issue is re-enacted on the international platform where "the world did not speak with one voice either. It quarrelled with itself" (p.51). Resorting to his trademark deployment of direct speech as different characters dialogue with each other, Chinodya fictionally describes the international community's conflicting attitude towards Zimbabwe's adoption of the land reform programme. He, for example, describes that:

Some voices pleaded "Leave this little country alone," and the most strident among the other lot shrilled, "No, this precedent is bad for the world, a prescription for chaos and disrespect for the rule of law. This country must be stopped at all costs-punished, humiliated, isolated, starved and squeezed until it gets down on its knees and accepts defeat" (p.51).

Thus, the story comments on the tricky and delicate nature of the land issue. It also captures the sense of controversy surrounding the Zimbabwean land reform programme from the perspective of the international community. Ultimately, Chinodya exposes the intricate contours of the issue, a complexity which is also noted by other academic and political personas. For instance, Pillay (2003) notes the diverse nature of the international community's reaction to the Zimbabwean situation. This divergence in perspective is largely informed by the side of the ideological divide regarding the Zimbabwe Land Reform Programme that one is on. However, what is subtly embedded in Chinodya's fictional submissions is that the Zimbabwean government is to blame for the ensuing social, political and economic crisis.

Chinodya also satirises the chaotic nature of the farm occupations in a way resonating with descriptions made by Sachikonye (2003) and Muzondidya (2007), and hence the link between historical fiction and events on the ground. Chinodya indeed goes on to describe the experiences on the farms, particularly the occupiers' inability to engage in serious agriculture—an aspect also treated by Hoba in his short stories as noted further in this chapter. He asserts that, “they put up little pole and dagga huts and tilled the land with cattle and donkeys and iron ploughs. Other new farmers came purely out of greed-veritable new settlers with not an iota of the farming instinct in their veins” (p51). Hence, the farm invasions are seen as a result of the wave of the moment which is by and large politically motivated as ZANU PF sanctions the illegal occupations of farms purely to gain political mileage.

Finally, Chinodya captures the magnitude of the social ramifications arising from the land occupations and fast track land reform. He bitterly notes that “aggrieved white farmers packed up and abandoned their houses and lands to seek refuge in city flats and hotels or neighbouring countries” (p.51). This displacement of whites confirms Fisher's (2010) submission that whites fall outside the boundaries of citizenship, and hence should not expect protection from the state or benefit from land redistribution. If anything, they are branded unrepentant racists who deserve to be punished (Tendi, 2010), a point which is also supported by Holland (2008) and Manase (2016). The exercise is carried out with force and outside legal frameworks (Rukuni and Jensen, 2003) and for that very reason, Chinodya finds it unpalatable. The way the exercise is carried out also exposes the grasping tendencies of ZANU PF functionaries such as war veterans who, in the process of trying to acquire land themselves, end up “bullying peasants out of furnished farmhouses and barns and eyed rich valleys and well-developed properties” (p.51). Therefore, Chinodya indirectly lambasts the Zimbabwean government for giving a nod to such a chaotic and violence ridden programme.

Chinodya's story also treats social and political matters, such as the country's multilateral linkages with countries from the global north, in his fictional consideration of the economic collapse that Zimbabwe faced after 2000. Thus, I premise this reading of the story "Queues" on Nyambi's (2016:219) submission that:

In the state's grand narrative of the Third Chimurenga, Zimbabwe's post-2000 economic challenges are essentially viewed as a result of punitive sanctions imposed by Western governments to avenge the compulsory acquisition of White-owned land and the subsequent jettisoning of Whites from the national imaginary.

What is clear from this submission is that the state version of the crisis-both political and economic-is that the crisis is a progeny of the West. The West is perceived as working insidiously to derail the gains of independence in Zimbabwe through working in cohorts with the local opposition parties, chiefly the MDC, with a hideous agenda to effect regime change in Zimbabwe, and in the process, give back access to and control of natural resources to the whites. Thus, in state narratives, Zimbabwe is a victim of the West. It is against this background of Western vilification in the state's grand narratives that I read Chinodya's "Queues" (2003) as a rendition of an alternative version of the Zimbabwean crisis. I endeavour to demonstrate how Chinodya offers a counterview regarding conceptualisations of the origins of Zimbabwe's problems and in the process also demonstrate how Chinodya is at variance with "the contemporary official demands for patriotic behaviour and writing" (Muponde and Primorac, 2005:xv). In a way, Chinodya seeks to undo the meandering that characterises the articulation of the crisis, and in the process put the record straight. "Queues" is, thus, a literary rebuttal of the state's account of the cause of the economic and political crisis unfolding in Zimbabwe.

Chinodya compares what obtained during the colonial era and what obtains after independence in order to underscore the extent of the political and economic shift. What emerges from the comparison is that life was a lot better during the colonial period, ironically when the Zimbabweans were not in control of their destinies. The narrator asserts that, "in the mid-seventies Sisi Elizabeth earned twenty-two dollars a month working for whites" (p.43), and describes further that "in the days of Sisi Elizabeth a loaf of bread cost twelve cents and you could buy a kilogram of meat for a dollar" (p.44). Here, Chinodya emphasises how accessible and affordable some of life's basic necessities were. Chinodya also portrays how even the lowest paid, including milkmen (p.44), could afford to send their children to boarding school.

The subtle suggestion here is that the colonial economy was stable and firmly rooted thus allowing for individuals to afford basic items. Thus, Chinodya is by extension implicating the current ruling elite in the country's economic breakdown since basic commodities are depicted as beyond the reach of the majority, as there are "houses in the townships where one could buy, at five or six times the normal price, unlimited supplies of bread, sugar, maize, mealie-meal, salt and cooking oil without having to join the queue" (p58). There also exists, apart from this black market scenario, a proliferation of queues for every conceivable commodity throughout the country. The narrator in the story states, as he waits for his turn in the fuel queue that, they "talked about queues at the banks, in the supermarkets, in the pubs, at the bus stops, at the mortuaries, and at cemeteries" (p58). The reference to queues in mortuaries and cemeteries is symbolic of the extent of the economic malaise. The mortuaries and cemeteries are used as metaphors for the most basic components of human life whose provision must not be problematic. The fact that people queue even in those places or for those services amplifies the desperate state of affairs in the country, and there are no prizes for guessing who is responsible for that kind of mess according to Chinodya.

The narrative is structured in such a way that it exposes and criticises the ruling elite for dragging the country into an economic abyss. The trope of courtship is used to describe Zimbabwe's relationship with the international community and the impact of the relationship on the social and economic conditions of the country. Zimbabwe, as the male partner, is portrayed as taking the initiative in the game of courtship. Chinodya asserts that:

We fumbled with propriety, with new challenges. The world was watching, avariciously. We invited the world out for dinner and she coyly agreed. The world came with a wig and sweet-smelling musk, large round earrings, a black T-shirt, a short denim skirt and black *gogo* shoes. She was bra-less and pant-less and we leapt to her, our mouths drooling (p.47).

The above courtship imagery shows that the Zimbabwean government is given ample opportunity to handle its economic affairs in a productive way. However, Chinodya is quick to point out that the Zimbabwean government, instead of taking advantage of the situation and adopt a proactive attitude, acts amateurishly. He submits that "the world ordered a rock shandy and a tuna-fish sandwich and watched us while we knocked back lager after lager and gorged ourselves on sadza and cows' hooves. The world watched as we paid the bill, then she gave the waiter a little tip (p.47). This monumental bungling of biting "more than we could chew" (p.48)

leads to the failure of the courtship. Simultaneously suggested and taken a swipe at here is the government's improvidence and spendthrift attitude as they squander "the national cake" (p.49). Chinodya, thus, indirectly refuses to cry foul about and to unnecessarily endorse the so-called Western machinations as singularly responsible for Zimbabwe's economic woes. Instead, he suggests that Zimbabweans are victims of the complex web of their leaders' making.

Furthermore, the author uses authorial intrusion to absolve the international community in general and the West in particular for causing the economic meltdown in Zimbabwe. He presents a West-Zimbabwe relationship in a dialogic repertoire as a way to interrogate who is to blame for Zimbabwe's problems and suggests that the problems are caused by the Zimbabwean government. Chinodya challenges the Zimbabwean government to:

look at things differently. This is not the twentieth century any more. You can't go on flogging the colonial horse. The colonial horse is dead. You have got to find yourselves new horses, new mules. You've got to survive. You have got to change your ideas. You can't go on excusing your corruption and inexperience forever, and persecuting each other. You have got to have the rule of law (p.50).

Understood in this light, therefore, it is clear that Chinodya's text questions the ZANU PF government's attempts to explain the present by making reference to the past. In fact, Chinodya is aware that the government expediently blames colonialism solely for Zimbabwe's current problems in order to mask their own involvement in the plummeting of the country's economy. The reality, however, is that the West is not to blame for Zimbabwe's economic problems but endemic corruption and the disrespect for the rule of law are the causes of the country's economic undoing.

Chinodya observes that the Zimbabwean government deliberately disengages from the international community despite the latter's preparedness to dialogue. As he notes, "our probation with the world was interminable" (p.50). The language of industry as noted in the word 'probation', that is used here is suggestive of the fact that Zimbabwe is being watched in terms of how it handles its relationship(s) with the international community. In addition, the word "interminable" underscores Zimbabwe's obstinacy as it suggests doing things in ways contrary to the world's expectations. Zimbabwe remains intransigent and unresponsive to the world beyond its borders' attempts to extend an olive branch. As Chinodya asserts:

The world phoned back long-distance with a crackling voice and said, 'Look, you little truant, just say you are sorry and we will come back, and we sulked. The world said, 'Look, we want to come back and play with you. We'll give you back your marbles and bring you many more. We'll give you liquorice and candy and cake and teddy bears,' and we sulked some more. The world said, 'Now you are going to be really sorry.' (p. 54-5).

The above quotation which is replete with an implied dialogue underscores the lack of a cordial relationship between Zimbabwe and the international community. The sulking that is done by Zimbabwe highlights a dismissive and even contemptuous tone that is directed towards the international community. What is underscored ultimately is the international community's preparedness and willingness to engage the Zimbabwean government so that the frosty relations between Zimbabwe and the West, particularly Britain, can be rectified. However, Zimbabwe remains headstrong and intransigent, and hence Chinodya exonerates the West from any wrong-doing and simultaneously indicts the Zimbabwean government. As a result, the story links origins of Zimbabwe's economic problems to the ZANU PF government's reluctance to meaningfully and positively engage the international community.

The reluctance to engage with the west is depicted as having led to Zimbabwe's international isolation and economic collapse. This lack of dialogue has multiple ramifications as even the country's erstwhile friends forsake it. Chinodya explains that after the international community disengages from Zimbabwe:

Now we were really sorry. The banks ran dry. We queued helplessly for cash that wasn't there. The industrialists went off to visit our neighbours. We ran out of foreign exchange. Our friends said, 'Enough is enough. You are a bad friend. You don't pay your debts. Now we can't give you any more fuel. Now we can't give you any more food [...] now we were really really sorry. We had no power. We had no electricity (p.55).

What is clear from this submission is that the problems that affect the Zimbabweans are self-inflicted. To reinforce the idea that the West is not to blame, Chinodya (2003:55) explains that even "our own spirits, Chaminuka and Nehanda, sulked and turned against us. They said, 'No more rain, kids.'" Irony and paradox are subtly embedded here as depicted through the visual imagery of turning one's back on one's own progeny. The use of direct speech helps to capture a sense of immediacy to the desperate state of affairs. Thus, the reference to Chaminuka and

Nehanda, Zimbabweans renowned for instigating the war of liberation (Chimurenga) in Zimbabwe, amplifies the magnitude of the ZANU PF government's indiscretions. In a sense, therefore, Chinodya shifts the blame away from the West. To do this, he uses an inverted or reverse perspective which shows that while ZANU PF is outward blaming, the author is inward looking in the search for who is to blame. In a drought-induced panic mode, the Zimbabwean government;

turned to Chaminuka and Nehanda and said, 'But what have we done? How can we have a drought now, when we have other problems?' Chaminuka and Nehanda sulked. Chaminuka caressed the knob of his staff and looked away from us, towards the distant hills. Nehanda picked the threads of her cloth and said, 'You know what you did.' We said, 'We don't understand. Please explain,' and she said, 'You are too young to know. One day you will know' (p.55).

There is use of historical allusion in the above quotation. From a Zimbabwean cultural perspective, the allusion to Chaminuka and Nehanda is important because the two are metaphors for salvation in times of exigencies. It is however, clear from the quotation that the author destabilises and undermines the Third Chimurenga narratives which valorise Zimbabwean history and culture. The fact that the Zimbabwean government is forsaken by the spiritual pillars of the Zimbabwean nation further reinforces the idea that the current Zimbabwean problems have to be squarely put on ZANU PF's shoulders. When she says "you know what you did", the fictional Nehanda is pointing an accusing finger at the Zimbabwean government, and this gives impetus to the argument that the author provokes us to think that it is the ZANU PF government that is responsible for creating this economic and political exigency.

Chinodya juxtaposes the story of Zimbabwe's economic collapse with that of the narrator's love affair with Rudo in an attempt to tease out who is responsible for the country's post-2000 social, political and economic downturn. Both stories share symbolic resonances on a metaphorical plane. For instance, in the 'story within the story', the narrator's courtship of Rudo imitates Zimbabwe's courting of the international community in the main story. We notice these parallels in the way Zimbabwe is put on a probation which is "interminable" (p.50), by the international community just as the narrator is also put "through some kind of probation" which lasts for weeks, by Rudo (p.49). In addition, in the main narrative, Zimbabwe is the male partner and takes the initiative in the courtship game with the world beyond its borders, and

the narrator also takes the leading role in establishing the relationship with Rudo. Here, Chinodya draws an analogy between Zimbabwe and the narrator in the two stories respectively to illustrate that the narrator's extramarital affair with Rudo is not the cause of the marital disharmony at home. If anything, Rudo asks the narrator if he does not "have a wife to love" (p.44), why he "never talk[s] about [his] wife" (p.52) and if he kisses his own children in the same way he kisses Tariro, Rudo's daughter. The author suggests that the problems exist prior to the establishment of this relationship since the narrator's wife is said to be "estranged" (p.47) and the narrator confesses that "God had eluded me, had been too hard on me and my family" (p.48). Implied here is that, through the analogy that smacks of the allegorical that the author uses, there is a dysfunctional relationship at home and this state of affairs bears a close resemblance with the internal problems such as endemic corruption and disrespect for the rule of law that affect Zimbabwe. In a way, the author asks us to think critically about a scenario where the exoneration of Rudo, the mistress, can, by extension, be an exoneration of the international community as well. Therefore, just as the narrator's problems are his "self-imposed gloom" (p.47-8), the economic and political problems in Zimbabwe are largely the result of the machinations of the ZANU PF government.

Overall, Chinodya's story indicates that the country's plummeting political and economic fortunes are the result of the ruling elite's political miscalculations and blunders. These blunders include the squandering of resources, provision of unbudgeted grants to ex-combatants, grabbing land without paying for it, and the subsidisation of commodities and control of prices in an economy strongly affected by a global political economy. The story also indicates that the ruling party is not flexible and adaptive enough to embrace and adopt views that are contrary to their own. As a result, the country finds itself mired in an economic and political conundrum of gargantuan proportions which perhaps -quite paradoxically- is why one drunk character in the story pronounces that "our case is beyond politics. We need some kind of supernatural intervention" (p.58). Under normal circumstances, a political problem calls for a political solution but this is not the case here, as noted by the drunk, thus amplifying the contradictory nature of the Zimbabwean experiences during the crisis. However, it is clear that Chinodya uses a critical realist approach to fictionally explore the causes of the political and economic problems in Zimbabwe. Thus, the narrative is a deconstruction of the notions engendered in state narratives that blames the West for the myriad problems that Zimbabweans are experiencing in the post-2000 era. Chinodya, therefore has decided against writing from

dictation and his standpoint runs contrary to the patriotic narratives that ZANU PF encourages from artists.

2.3. The Grim Reaper's Car: Nevanji Madanhire

Just like Chinodya's "Queues" (2003), Madanhire's "The Grim Reaper's Car" (2003) according to Muchemwa's (2011) categorisation of Zimbabwean literature, belongs to the elegiac moment- the moment which Muchemwa (2011) describes as that which mourns the death of the nationalist dream. Occupying the same temporality with Chinodya's "Queues" (2003), Madanhire's "The Grim Reaper's Car" (2003) grapples with issues of grinding poverty in an urban space in post-independence Zimbabwe. Written with a painstaking honesty, the story flies in the face of "contemporary official demands for patriotic behaviour and writing" (Muponde and Primorac, 2005: xv). Madanhire, to use Young's (2001) words, offers a radically different perspective to that which is sanctioned by the state. The story deviates from the patriotic literary trajectory that the state prescribes for artists in Zimbabwe post-2000. The story neatly fits in the corpus of counter-discursive narratives because of its courageous exploration of the state of affairs. The ruling elite downplays the impact of the economic meltdown and has infinite impatience with narratives that paint negative images of, and draw pessimistic conclusions on the prevailing state of affairs. Writings that paint a bleak and desperate picture of the national conditions are deemed unpatriotic. Madanhire's "The Grim Reaper's Car" (2003), written from the perspective, is a good example of those narratives that express dissent to the patriotic grand narrative. Thus, the argument in this section is that the narrative can be pigeonholed as an anti-patriotic rendition of the state of affairs in post-independence Zimbabwe.

2.3.1 A Subversive intent: Mapping the Dissident nature of the story

The story "The Grim Reaper's Car" (2003), which is about grim poverty and deplorable living conditions experienced by the family of an ex-combatant and other residents in the fictional urban suburb of Tafara, casts the then Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe in negative light. The fictional president is referred to as the Grim Reaper and the name smacks of sarcastic undertones. Searle (1975:viii) contends that naming expresses "the feelings and attitudes" of the person assigning the name. The assigning of a name to a person therefore, betrays the ideological orientation of the one naming. Naming is ideologically motivated as it is done in pursuit of a specific agenda. This point is supported by Nyambi (2015:2) in his observation that "inherent to the process of naming is the prior intention and sense of authority to name. This

authority informs the purpose of name-calling and labels, that is, to ‘perform an act.’” Though in reference to representations in general, Said, (1979:272) contends that “any and all representation, because they are representations, are embedded first in the language and then in the culture, institutions, and political ambiance of the representer.” The emphasis here is on the ideological contamination that is attendant to any act of representation. Said (1979:273) further argues that:

representations operate as representations usually do, for a purpose, according to a tendency, in a specific historical, intellectual, and even economic setting... representations have purposes, they are effective much of the time, they accomplish one or many tasks. Representations are formations, or... they are deformations.

Said’s contention that representations are formations or deformations links well the relationship between naming and representation in the context of “The Grim Reaper’s Car” (2003). To name, especially using an epithet or a moniker, is to represent. It is to deform. Thus, Madanhire satirically names the President in order to create a particular perception of the President in readers. He portrays a horrifying picture of the President as he has “big white teeth and empty sockets. No eyes” (p.135). This is an ultimate image of a monster or a cannibal. This confirms Hansen’s (2012:203) contention that names are “signifiers that support the identity of the object [bearing the name]” and Nyambi’s (2015:2) proposition that “naming and nicknaming are forms of identity-making speech acts.” Thus, on a symbolic plane, naming is vital in that it suggests the attributes of the named individual or object. In this case, the attributes of the President are captured in the name Grim Reaper.

In addition, Madanhire uses the trope of a predator in his description of the president. The fictional national president is likened to the Hollywood film star Sylvester Stallone and this points to his predatory instincts. The narrator asserts that “I can imagine our president holding a big gun; like Rambo’s. We saw Rambo at the community hall last month. I think Rambo was just imitating our president, for how could he shoot so many people if he was not imitating our president?” (p.131). There is an ironic ring to this observation by the narrator in the sense that the exploits of the president are exaggerated to a point where it becomes clear that the narrator does not believe that the president shot any people. Thus, Madanhire obliquely parodies the president. This parody is further seen when the narrator pronounces that “I wish I could see him one day holding the big gun as he used to do when he shot all the settlers” (p.131) and that “I am a born-free. That means, when I was born, the president had killed all the settlers”

(p.131). This blatant exaggeration of historical facts is subversive, for the grim reaper aptly fits with the imagery of a trigger-happy president. The President is murderous, ruthless and callous as suggested by his repeated injunction to “let the children come to me” (p.131, 135) while he is in his big black car. There is something sinister about this injunction which is a perversion of Jesus Christ’s call for the young to come to him. In fact, he is depicted as awe-inspiring and the narrator confesses that “I didn’t like the look of his smile. It was too toothy” (p.131). His calling of the children therefore, also suggests the reaping captured in the title and it implies the killing of innocent children. Metaphorically, the young narrator’s dreams have been killed by the callous ruling elite personified by the President. Therefore, the naming that is done is important in that it helps generate a deep revulsion for the nameless President in the reader.

The name Grim Reaper has to be understood as an epithet and according to Nyambi (2015:12), “monikers and epithets are a part of consciously worked identity projects. They are purposively created and circulated to generate identity constructs that can influence people’s sympathies or rejections of the namer and the named.” In this case, it is easy to analyse the kind of feelings that Madanhire attempts to engender. The description of the President as a grim reaper does not in any way endear him to the people. Instead, a deep-rooted resentment is aroused. Even the description of the president’s car as big and black is important. In fact, the black car is symbolic of death. It is suggestive of a funeral hearse. The car is a monster which swallows people as denoted by the president’s incessant injunction to “let the children come to me” (p.131). In a sense, therefore, Madanhire is courageous enough to tackle a subject which is almost taboo in Zimbabwe, that of criticising the then Zimbabwean President. The writing act is tantamount to denigrating not only the person, but perhaps more importantly, the office of the president. By naming and denigrating the President, Madanhire has trodden on the terrain of the unspeakable which, according to Rich (1998), constitutes a subversion and transgression. To buttress this point, Griffin (2009:48) observes that “name-calling can be devastating because the epithets force us to view ourselves in a warped mirror. The grotesque images are not easily dismissed.” Thus, the title *The Grim Reaper’s Car* reflects subversion and dissidence and underscores Madanhire’s sense of disenchantment, not only with the existing state of affairs but more importantly with those responsible for the creation of the sorry state of affairs in post-2000 Zimbabwe.

2.3.2 Symbol Deployment as an Articulation of Dissidence

Just as the naming process can be used to influence people's sympathies or rejections of the namer and the named (Nyambi, 2011) as already explained, symbols can also be deployed for similar purposes. Griffins (2009:61) defines symbols as arbitrary signs which on their own do not have inherent or pre-existent meanings. Instead, it is the people in specific contexts or settings who invest symbols with meanings. Meanings of symbols can either be universal or restricted. As writers write, they look for a symbol or symbols that can best generate the feeling they want to elicit. In addition, Alinsky's (1969:77) description of the technique he uses for selecting a symbolic issue is one where "you start with the people, their traditions, their prejudices, their habits, their attitudes and all of those circumstances that make up their lives. It should always be remembered that a real organisation of the people... must be rooted in the experiences of the people themselves." What this means is that symbols must be taken from intimate parts of people's lives in order for them to produce the desired impact. This understanding of symbol selection that Alinsky engages in is important and insightful when applied to "The Grim Reaper's Car" (2003). It is therefore, critical to explore the impact of the symbols that Madanhire uses in the story. Despite the array of symbols that Madanhire incorporates in his story, I confine my analysis to the symbols of rats and the national anthem because the two are powerfully and evocatively deployed to appeal to the people's emotional fabric.

To begin with, Madanhire uses the symbol of rats in the story to draw the reader's attention to the squalid conditions in the urban spaces post-2000, and to attack the ruling elite for their failure to provide decent accommodation and uplift standards of living of the ordinary Zimbabweans after independence.² There is a sense in which Madanhire seems to have drawn from Alinsky's (1969) use of the symbol of rats. Alinsky (1969) attempted to bring the authorities' attention to the substandard housing in Chicago and simultaneously galvanised the residents through the symbol of rats that infested the squalid apartments of Chicago. "Rats as big as cats" (Griffin, 2009) was Alinsky's organisation's rallying cry and the effect was tremendously positive as the city authorities started to crack down on slum landlords. Madanhire's "The Grim Reaper's Car" (2003) has to be understood in the same way since he goes to great lengths to exploit the symbol of the rats. The rats are constant companions at the

² A rat is a small rodent larger than a mouse which is considered to be harmful. It is said to carry disease. A rat also feeds on people's grain. Therefore, a rat is a loathsome animal. It is also irksome in that when found in homesteads, it destroys household utensils, clothes and disturbs sleep. Rats are associated with cramped and squalid conditions. Thus, rats generally arouse a feeling of revulsion.

narrator's home and, as implied in the story, the whole of the fictional township of Tafara. It is therefore quite deliberate on Madanhire's part that he opens the narrative with a direct reference to rats. The narrator complains:

My fingers are itchy. It must be the rats... There are so many rats in our house. I see them every day, coming from under the cardboard box that contains our clothes. There is a hole in the corner of our house. I saw them last night, darting in and out of it. All rushing towards my fingers. They were big. One was the size of a cat (p.127).

Here, the narrator expresses a bitter and contemptuous tone as she draws our attention to the wretched conditions at her home as attested to by the prevalence of rats. The fact that one of the rats is the size of a cat echoes Alinsky's (1969) "rats as big as cats" rallying cry. The obsession with rats is deliberately intended to shock into awareness and sharpen the reader's sense of outrage. The rats are so many that they are a part of these people's lives. According to the narrator, the father "insists that there is nothing he can do about the rats. He says they have always been part of the house. Always, that is, since he was a child himself" (p.128). The narrator goes further to explain that "our house is no different from the next one, or from the hundreds of others that make up this place called Tafara" (p.128). This description resonates with Mbembe's (1992) conceptualisation of the grotesque, located by Bakhtin (1984) in the province of non-official cultures, as intrinsic to all systems of domination, and to the means by which those systems are confirmed or deconstructed. Here, in Mbembe's (1992) formulation, the grotesque is being used as a means of deconstructing particular regimes of domination which in this case is the ruling ZANU PF party for its failure to provide decent accommodation to the residents. What the narrator means as confirmed in the quotation above is that all the Tafara residents are exposed to the same squalid conditions as they live in rat-infested houses. Thus, the rats are used as powerful symbols of the abject nature of the accommodation in Tafara as it is wretched and substandard. Madanhire deploys the discourse of spectacle and display when he makes massive reference to rats in order to draw the authorities' attention to the squalid conditions under which the majority still live, ironically, after independence. Madanhire deliberately employs this symbol in order to indict the ruling elite whom he sees as responsible for the creation of this unsavoury state of affairs. Madanhire's account of the prevailing state of affairs therefore goes against the state-sanctioned "patriotic master fiction" (Primorac, 2007:75) that creates the image that all is well in the country.

Tafara is a colonial creation whose coming into being was influenced by the prevailing racial relations in Rhodesia. The narrator mentions that the father “accuses the colonialists for having built such houses for black people” (p.127) and further contends that:

they say the place was given the name because so many years ago, before even my father’s father was born, black people did not have houses to live in...The whites saw that their suburbs were getting crowded so they decided to build a home for their workers. And when these houses were built and given to the workers, the workers were very pleased, hence they called this place Tafara (p128).

What is evident here is that the whites put in place this abject accommodation for the black people, and that was done for purposes of political expedience as the move was meant to rid the white suburbs of the black men who are viewed as “a form of pollution and a menace” (Vambe, 1976:146) to the white men. Furthermore, the houses are small and there are strings attached to their use as noted in the narrator’s submission that “the men who lived here were not allowed to bring their wives. So the houses are very small” (p.128). This description of the accommodation in Tafara closely echoes Vambe’s (1976:142) description of the “chief ghetto of the urban African ‘native location’ of Harare.” In explaining the reasons for the establishing of the native location, Vambe (1976:142) clearly states that “these ghettos were established for racial, political and economic reasons.” Vambe (1976) further explains that the black housing projects were meant to ensure that whites and blacks were not only physically, but also socially separate. Having blacks in the native location thus emphasised their degree of civilization as compared to that of the whites and also enabled the whites to control the blacks as they were concentrated in one place. Vambe (1976) clarifies this point by pointing out that in the event that blacks rioted or went on strike, they could be easily cowed into submission through having food or water supplies cut off. Vambe (1976:143) concludes by noting that:

by creating these places and devising complicated laws for their administration, the Europeans in Southern Rhodesia and South Africa made certain that they had most of the land, the wealth for its development and the social services necessary for their needs, while the Africans would remain trapped, deprived of physical freedom, proper housing, roads, sanitation or shopping facilities. As a mode of living, it was profoundly degrading.

The nub of Vambe’s assessment of the situation is that Africans were socially and economically relegated to the periphery as depicted through the accommodation they were given. It is this

colonial creation that Madanhire takes a swipe at in “The Grim Reaper’s Car” (2003). The location’s continued existence after independence confirms Stoller’s (1997) ideas on the presence of the past in the present. The jerry-built houses bear testament to a lived past and they are a throwback to the colonial era. The naming of the location as Tafara is satirical because the appalling conditions associated with this location are an antithesis of the happiness that is connoted in the name of the location. However, even though this wretched accommodation which is rat-infested is a colonial creation, Madanhire also attacks the government of the day because of its failure to improve that accommodation. This failure is expressed through a paradoxical situation evident in the parallel between the government’s failure to improve the citizens’ conditions with the narrator’s father’s unwillingness to “do something about the holes through which the rats come into our house” (p.127). In a way, therefore, Madanhire’s “The Grim Reaper’s Car” (2003) confirms Chennells’ (1999:126) articulation that writers from the fringes are empowered to scoff at repression; and in the case of Madanhire’s narrative, there is a simultaneous subversion of both “the authoritarianism of the imperial centre as well as the new nationalist centres.” Nothing seems to escape Madanhire’s refining bonfire as he deconstructs both colonial and nationalist narratives, and shows their inherent worrying similarities. Hence, “The Grim Reaper’s Car’s (2003) counter-discursive thrust operates at two levels. It is, to use Bhabha’s (1994) phrase, a double narrative movement that is meant to, on the one hand, indict the colonial discourses and on the other hand, attack the ZANU-PF ruling elite.

Madanhire also manipulates the symbolic significance of the national anthem to mourn the death of the nationalist dream. The national anthem is inextricably linked to a country’s history and culture. It archives the national memory. As Macleod (2001:69) notes, “a sense of mutual national belonging is manufactured by the performance of various narratives, rituals and symbols which stimulate an individual’s sense of being a member of a select group.” Macleod (2001:69) further contends that this performance of narratives or traditions is critical because it establishes a link between a nation’s present and its past and “helps concoct the unique sense of the shared history and common origins of the people.” The emphasis here is on the performance, which according to Macleod is pivotal to the sustenance of a national culture and the creation of a sense of oneness. The performance therefore, falls within the realm of what Bhabha (1994:145) terms the “repetitious and the recursive” which is central in that it leads to the creation of a national culture. As part of the invention of traditions (Hobsbawm, 1983), national symbols such as the national anthem serve as focal points around which a larger

number of people gather as a single national body. Thus, as a symbol, the national anthem helps fix the norms and limits of a nation (Bhabha, 1994), and stands as an “idiosyncratic and emotive symbol” (Macleod, 2001:70) which has the capacity to galvanise people as an intact collective with a shared past, vision and aspirations.

National anthems are important in any nation. According to Brennan (1990), national anthems verbally concretise a nation’s longing for durable form. For Vambe and Khan (2009:27), a national anthem is a “foundational narrative” that addresses the specific history, culture and views of a people in a specific nation. Vambe and Khan (2009:26) further contend that:

the call to defend or celebrate national achievements is always marked from start to end by recitals of the rituals of singing the national anthem to authenticate the histories of the country. It is in this sense that as a useful spiritual resource, an anthem becomes a political biography of the nation insisting through institutionalized forms of memories never to forget those histories.

The emphasis here is on history. National anthems therefore, are used to confirm an existing historical order which is believed to be instrumental in charting a nation’s future. This fact is corroborated by Vambe and Khan’s (2009:31) assertion that through the singing of the national anthem, “historical facts are then transformed into irascible memories that must inform our future political conduct.” It is in this sense that the sick young narrator exclaims “today is Wednesday. There will be an assembly at school today; I will miss that because we sing the national anthem on Wednesdays. God bless our land which we won through the blood of our gallant fighters” (p.129). Wednesdays become such important days to the narrator because of the recitals of the national anthem. The fact that the national anthem is sung every Wednesday confirms Bhabha (1994) and Macleod’s (2001) submission that symbols must be endlessly performed so that they take on an emotive and semi-sacred character for the people. Not only are Wednesdays important to the young narrator as they are also special days for the teachers at school for “they dress best on Wednesdays. I don’t know why” (p.131). Though presented in a truncated form, the import of the national anthem is not lost on the narrator. The line “which we won through the blood of our gallant fighters” (p.129) captures the painful memories of the road to independence (Vambe and Khan, 2009). The verse is resonant with Zimbabwean history. It links the coming into being of the Zimbabwean nation with the war of liberation. This is the state version of how Zimbabwe was born. It is perhaps even more significant that this history is being institutionalised. The fact that the national anthem is being

sung at a school where there are young people is illuminative. It is the objective of the ruling elite to saturate the minds of the young with what they believe are correct historical facts. The ruling ZANU PF elite purport to have the intention to instil patriotism in the young when the reality is that they are foisting a one-dimensional ZANU-PF history on the innocent children.

Madanhire employs the national anthem symbol in order to interrogate and deconstruct the ruling ZANU PF party's version of history and to demonstrate his disenchantment with the existing state of affairs. It is difficult to miss the irony that is subtly embedded in the way the young narrator responds to the national anthem. There is a sense in which the narrator seems to rubbish the national anthem's archiving of the nation's history. The narrator casts a sceptical glance at her own father's participation in the liberation struggle. As she notes, "father says he was one of the gallant fighters but I don't believe it because he is so afraid of the rats" (p130). Here, one gets the sense that Madanhire cleverly conflates the rat and national anthem symbols to destabilise the ruling elite's grand narratives. This lack of belief on the narrator's part is, in a way, Madanhire's strategy to interrogate the ruling elite's version of history. Madanhire is being deliberately dissident through the implied dismissal of the heroism of the narrator's father, a heroism which he describes as being associated with the liberation struggle and captured in the country's national anthem.

The short story indeed depicts a sense of scepticism in the narrow essence of the history that is conferred on the Zimbabwean people through the recitation of the national anthem. Vambe and Khan (2009:27), in their discussion on the significance of national anthems, contend that "national anthems are created by human beings to reflect upon their history." Seen in this light, it is axiomatic that national anthems are creations or fabrications. They are "artistic and historical creations which are naturalised to make them appear as the collective vision of the nation" (Vambe and Khan, 2009:36). In addition, national anthems are creations of and seek to fulfil the agenda of the ruling elite. Thus, the Zimbabwean national anthem primarily captures the history of the ruling ZANU PF elite, as noted in the story through the reference to "the land which was won through the blood of our gallant fighters" (p.129). These gallant fighters in Zimbabwean political discourse and parlance are synonymous with ZANU PF. The captured history is, for that very reason, contested.

The national memory that is captured in the national anthem is contestable. That is so because it valorises one version of history and at the same time excludes other historical memories. This resonates with Bhabha's (1994:169) view that "the national memory is always the site of

the hybridity of histories and the displacement of narratives.” As with the focus of this study, the national memory is embodied in the symbol of the national anthem, thus, becomes a locus for hybrid histories which makes it prone to challenge. The history that is captured in the national anthem, as noted by Vambe and Khan (2009:25) is selective and expresses the self-serving memory of the ruling ZANU-PF elite. As such, there is an implied dismissal of other alternative histories that are in contradistinction to that deemed correct by the ruling elite. In addition, Madanhire intervenes in the “signifying process and challenge(s) the dominant representations with [a] narrative of [his] own” (Macleod, 2009:119). The story’s narrator refers, in a dismissive way, to the names and spaces associated with the country’s war of liberation from colonial rule, and in that way dismantles the significance of the national anthem. For instance, the narrator complains “tomorrow is sports day. I will miss sports. I am good at high jump. I compete for my house. My house is called Tembwe. The others are Mugagawu, Mboroma and Chimoyo. Father says they are names of great places. I don’t believe him” (p134). All these names are historically significant, at least from the perspective of the ruling ZANU PF elite, because they are linked with Zimbabwe’s war of liberation. However, that the narrator doubts the greatness of those places amplifies Madanhire’s sceptical attitude towards national history and all narratives, such as the national anthem, which venerate the nation’s history. Read from this perspective, “The Grim Reaper’s Car” (2003) is intensely subversive. It “disturbs those ideological manoeuvres through which imagined communities are given essentialist identities” (Bhabha, 1994:149) and ultimately destabilises the post-2000 ZANU PF authored state’s grand narratives.

2.3.3 “The Grim Reaper’s Car” as an oblique challenge of unjust political systems

“The Grim Reaper’s Car” (2003) can also be understood as an oblique protest against unjust political systems. As a counter-narrative, it “interrupts the nation’s smooth self-generation at the level of the performative, revealing different experiences, histories and representations which nationalist discourses depend on excluding” (Macleod, 2001:120). The different experiences referred to here are best illustrated by the chasm that separates the narrator’s father and the president, yet they fought the same war that brought the country’s independence. Though bounded by the same spatial and temporal frameworks, the narrator’s father and the fictional president’s experiences are markedly different. This difference is seen in that, while the narrator’s father leads a life of penury, the president drives around in a big black car and wears a black suit, white shirt and red tie (p.131). Madanhire, thus, deliberately situates the child narrator within an environment which is economically debilitating in order to expose and

probe serious political issues. The child narrator is in a confined domestic space which is at once stifling and suffocating because of the miserable nature of the accommodation and glaring poverty, and Madanhire draws our attention to these conditions in order to interrogate the basis upon which the chasm that separates the narrator's father and the president is predicated. Thus, Madanhire is grappling with serious political issues both at the level of the family and the nation. In fact, the family is used as a microcosm of the nation.

Madanhire firstly uses odd juxtapositions to express his protests against unjust political systems. The narrator's father is juxtaposed with the president. The young narrator cannot help but compare her father to the president, considering that they both played a role in the liberation of the country. The president, as noted earlier, lives lavishly, wears a black suit, white shirt and red tie (p.131) and drives around in a big black car, while the narrator's father languishes in abject poverty. The narrator asserts that "the other day we saw the president. It was on Independence Day. The president fought for freedom, not father. If father is right that he too fought for freedom why doesn't he wear a black suit, a white shirt and a red tie?" (p.131). It is clear that there is a world of difference between the two in terms of their experiences after independence. In addition, the child narrator ends up doubting her father's participation in the liberation struggle.

Nyambi and Mlambo (2011:5) in their study on representations of struggling father figures in Zimbabwean literature capture an attitude, similar to Madanhire's child narrator, as described above, in their observation that the young reject and interrogate "portions of history that are shared by the old. They subvert the old men's self-proclaimed legitimacy by a consciousness of the material futility of the present." This subversive scepticism is evident in the narrator's obsession with the father's participation in the liberation struggle and her doubts, given the economic exigencies at home, as noted in the question "But why can't father get a job? Pupu's father works. If father really fought and chased away the white settlers he should get a good job. The white settlers had good jobs, so we are told. I don't think father chased away the white settlers because, otherwise, he would have a job" (p.133).

Here, one gets the impression that Madanhire is being ironic as he plays around with the image of a war veteran who cannot provide for his family because of lack of employment. He is therefore, indicting the ruling ZANU PF elite for breeding this crisis of expectation where the wishes and aspirations of those who took an active part in the liberation struggle remain unfulfilled.

The story underscores that all the hopes that the combatants had as they fought the war of liberation are dashed and all that the narrator's father can do is get solace from the past, albeit a past which is irrelevant to the present objectionable circumstances. As the narrator pronounces, "Father doesn't seem to like kapenta either. He is always cursing saying he wishes the war would come back. He says they used to eat nothing but chicken during the war. But where did he get the chicken in the bush? I think he will be lying. That is why I don't think he fought the war" (p.134).

This assertion, ending as it does with the usual refrain that the narrator does not think the father fought the war, reinforces the irony that Madanhire adeptly employs as he takes a swipe at the ruling elite for not creating opportunities that can ensure that war veterans lead decent lives. The narrator's doubt is predicated on the fact that the father's revolutionary rhetoric is not in harmony with the wretched circumstances of the present. To quote Nyambi and Mlambo (2011:5), the narrator's sceptical attitude is "informed by the inconsistencies of revolutionary rhetoric and their abject material circumstances." These miserable present circumstances are sharply contrasted with the president's lavish lifestyle. This glaring contradiction between the father and the president's lifestyles amplifies Madanhire's sense of disenchantment.

There are a number of challenges faced by the narrator's family and those challenges mirror the general problems affecting the country. The challenges are a result of the politics of exclusion practised by the ruling elite. In the story, the narrator's father struggles to make his family's ends meet. In fact, the narrator's father is rendered economically redundant and, to quote Zhuwarara (2001:98), "his indigent situation mocks his sense of manhood." He has been emasculated by the crisis, a crisis that has impacted on cultured masculinities and exposed the vulnerability of the male father figure (Nyambi and Mlambo, 2011). In a way, Madanhire acknowledges how the male father figure has been rendered useless by the vagaries of the economic downturn. The father finds himself in a complex situation where he is unable to find the wherewithal with which to fend for his family as there are a myriad challenges at the narrator's home that the father cannot deal with. For instance, the accommodation is abject, the family cannot afford medication, they have to contend with cold baths, poorly cooked dried fish called kapenta and using paraffin instead of electricity. Tomatoes are a luxury that the family cannot afford. They watch television in neighbours' houses and rats are constant companions at the narrator's home. All these endemic problems, cancerous in terms of their magnitude, are manifestations of larger forces that are at play. In fact, the economic and political factors that impact on the family are well beyond the father's reach, which is ironic

considering that the father has taken an active part in the liberation struggle. In a way, therefore, Madanhire is attacking the leadership which is presiding over the failed state since the challenges at the narrator's home are a microcosm of the general problems affecting the country.

At another level, however, Madanhire's "The Grim Reaper's Car" (2003) interrogates the ideology of patriarchy. Much as the father is a victim of circumstances that are seemingly beyond his control, there is a sense in which Madanhire indicts him. There is something escapist about the father, as he seems to want to duck life's harsh realities through beer drinking. The father is in fact more noticeable because of his absence from home as evidenced by the narrator's claims that she does not know "how he spends his days" (p.132). The child narrator observes the operations of patriarchy within the domestic space where it is enacted by the father who literally abdicates his responsibility of taking care of the family. The fact that the father has to rely on his wife who is imaginative, resourceful and resilient in difficult economic circumstances, as substantiated by her ability to sell tomatoes and feed the family, demonstrates that he is not industrious enough. Inescapably, therefore, he leads a life of penury. The impact of his indolence is not lost on the wife who corrects the narrator when she agrees with her father's claim that he does not visit the rural areas because it reminds him of poverty. The real reason for not visiting the rural areas according to the narrator's mother is that the father has "failed to build even a hut because of laziness so he is ashamed because all other men of his age have decent homes (p.129). Instead of working hard for his family's upkeep, the narrator's father piles irrational and unreasonable demands on his wife, including his desire to be given meat. For instance, he complains, "Can't there ever be just a piece of meat for the father of the house?" (p.135). Here, Madanhire is suggesting that the father could at least have done something to improve the livelihood of his family but he deliberately decides against that as he solely relies on his wife, while at the same time he expects preferential treatment as the head of the family. In a way, therefore, Madanhire is writing back to patriarchy through exposing its fault lines.

That not all is well in the nation is best illustrated through the disease imagery that Madanhire employs in the narrative. The child narrator's mind is disturbed and diseased. She is psychologically displaced as evidenced by her inability to cope with adversity. Throughout the narrative, the narrator is a victim of clinical depression, which according to Payne et. al. (2009:46) is a "psychological condition or disorder in which an individual experiences a lack of motivation, decreased energy level, fatigue, social withdrawal, sleep disturbance,

disturbance in appetite, feelings of worthlessness and despair.” The narrative depicts that the narrator has no appetite, does not sleep well as suggested by the dreams in which the president features prominently, and feels worthless as she compares her father to the president and in the process finds it difficult to accept that her father actually participated in the liberation struggle.

The narrator is also a victim of both clinical depression and an obsessive-compulsive disorder which according to Payne et. al (2009:53) “is an anxiety disorder characterised by obsessions (intrusive thoughts, images, or impulses causing a great deal of distress).” As explained earlier, the narrator is obsessed with the contrasting lifestyles of her father and the president. The intrusive thoughts and images are so powerful on her mind that she cannot easily let go of them. Therefore, one can conclude that the problems wreaking havoc at the narrator’s home contribute to her condition.

There is virtually no affirmation of growth, health and adaptation on the narrator’s part. By extension, her diseased condition is symbolic of the diseased state of the nation. As Javangwe (2011:155) contends, “the trope of sickness evokes images of a universe in turmoil and which begs for order.” In a way, Madanhire’s story suggests that the political problems of Zimbabwe and the associated marginal existence of the poor and disenfranchised calls for an intervention that must result in the restoration of the order. Thus, the narrative operates at a counter-discursive level as Madanhire boldly displays the Zimbabwean political and economic problems in a way that runs contrary to the ruling elite’s grand narratives that all is well in the country.

The desire to lead decent lives is captured in the narrator’s dreams. Dreams are instrumental in that they permit important information to be processed. According to Feldman (2010), dreams are messages from deep regions of the mind that are not accessible during waking life. Dreams are instrumental in that they permit important information to be reprocessed during sleep. They also allow for wish fulfilment and the gratification of desires even if only in symbolic form and provide a safety valve by allowing a person to release unconscious tension by expressing his or her desires, although in a disguised form (Feldman, 2010). For Jung (2002), dreams are fundamental in our day to day lives because they express the subconscious self. Dreams are at times about what human beings have desired to express but have suppressed. Therefore, dreams contain valuable clues to the unconscious. Seen in this light, the dreams that the narrator has are significant. An engagement in dream analysis which is a Freudian technique for uncovering the unconscious material in a dream by interpreting the dream’s content reveals that the narrator

has a genuine desire to escape the life of poverty that she is experiencing. The president features prominently in her dreams. What is more important, however, is the latent content of the dreams, that is, what the elements of the dreams represent. To buttress this point, Feldman (2010) contends that the manifest content of dreams often disguises the latent content of the dreams. The narrator's dreams have to be understood in the same way. There is something cadaverous and sinister about the president as evidenced by the empty eye sockets and toothy smile (p.131) and a note of irony in the narrator's description of the president. However, the narrator casts an envious gaze at the president. This gaze symbolises the narrator's desires to live a fulfilling life just as the president. The dreams thus express a genuine desire to escape a miserable existence. The dreams are also an indicator, at a subconscious level, of the narrator's wishes to express her dissatisfaction with the existing state of affairs, a dissatisfaction that is even sustained at a conscious level when she questions her father's participation in the liberation struggle because of the abject misery the family is subjected to.

Madanhire also challenges unjust narratives through the politics of narration. In the story, Madanhire makes use of the child narrative perspective to interrogate unjust political systems. The supposedly innocent child narrator is given some kind of a bird's eye view as she describes events and experiences in a matter of fact way. This narrative style seeks to disguise the serious political issues that Madanhire is dealing with. The narration, therefore, is not neutral. Rather, it is, to quote Vambe (2008:186) "politically contaminated such that it becomes a polemical text serving a particular political agenda" which in this case, is the rubbishing of the ruling party as embodied in the person of the then president satirically referred to in the story as the grim reaper.

To further understand the impact of the narrative perspective adopted by Madanhire in the story in relation to how he interrogates unjust discourses, it is critical that Rimmon-Kenan's (1983) focalisation theory be made reference to. Rimmon-Kenan (1983:71) contends that the focalisation theory relates to the mediation of "some perspective or angle of vision" articulated by the narrator in a text which is not necessarily always the narrator's perspective. In the context of "The Grim Reaper's Car" (2003), therefore, it becomes strongly apparent that the perspective on what is obtaining is not necessarily the young narrator's. Rather, it is a perspective that is influenced by the adult writer Madanhire as informed by the circumstances around his adulthood. This is portrayed in the way the young narrator interrogates and questions issues, which oversteps the limits and boundaries within which young minds operate. The

narrator is precocious and that sharpness and incisiveness in terms of perception can only belong to the adult world.

The narrator, as already noted, is depicted as having an acute awareness on multiple issues. Her innocent observations have been intruded by an adult understanding of issues. For instance, the narrator is conscious of the operations of colonialism and how it adversely impacted on the blacks as reflected through the blacks' poor accommodation. In addition, she is aware of the way in which the liberation struggle was prosecuted and how in turn the majority are betrayed after independence as the war combatants find themselves leading difficult lives, while the new black leadership live in comfort. The narrator is also aware of the majority of the people's lack of access to land, especially within the urban spaces as noted in the way some urbanites carry out agricultural activities on "just patches of land that the municipality has not decided how to use" (p.129). The narrator further submits that they are "not even allowed to grow crops on the patches of land" (p.129) and that failure to comply with this directive results in the destruction of crops, unless it is council election time when the municipal authorities require the people's votes. Therefore, the innocent narration in the story has been intruded by an adult conceptualisation and analysis, something that Javangwe (2011:51) prefers to term inscriptions of political consciousness in childhood memory.

Furthermore, the child's recounting of events and experiences is invested with meanings that are apparently beyond the narrator's age. As Javangwe (2011:59) further contends, the narrative "resonates with a critical consciousness that engages complex matters that can only belong to the adult world. It is the adult world that inscribes political consciousness in the narrator." Seen in this light, Madanhire's narrative perspective in the story confirms Rimmon-Kennan's (1983) focalisation theory. So, instead of taking the narrator for her word, it is easy to notice that there is an imposition of a political worldview from an adult perspective which in this case, is the worldview of the writer Madanhire. If that is a correct assessment of the state of affairs, what it therefore means is that the story is ideologically contaminated and politically motivated. The story's narrative perspective, therefore, confirms Postman's (1994) conceptualisation of childhood as an invented social structure or social artefact. Postman's (1994) postulation, as is indeed the case with the story's narrative perspective, illuminates that childhood can be deployed in the service of adult ideological standpoints. Thus, the mode of narration that Madanhire uses is far from innocent. Rather, it is some kind of a literary political subterfuge. In a way, the story's narrative perspective confirms Jameson's (1981:20)

contention that “there is nothing that is not social and historical-indeed, that everything is in the final analysis political.”

Therefore, Madanhire’s “The Grim Reaper’s Car” (2003) is a counter-discursive narrative. The story has, in Young’s (2001:25) words, a “radical agenda... to reject the unbearable conditions of inequality and poverty... and to demand equality, dignity, and well-being for all the people.” Madanhire uses his story to register his deep disenchantment with the loss of the nationalist dream as reflected through the new black leadership’s abysmal failure to steer the country’s political and economic ship for the betterment of ordinary people’s lives. The story draws pessimistic conclusions on the obtaining economic state of affairs and Madanhire is courageous enough to point an accusing finger, though in an oblique way, at those presiding over the state as embodied in the person of the president who drives around in a big black car as if to flaunt his wealth, and in the process mock the poor who cannot even afford one decent meal per day. Therefore, “The Grim Reaper’s Car” (2003) runs contrary to state-sanctioned patriotic narratives. State narratives, being by their very nature imagined realities are largely dependent on whether or not people believe in them and in this case, Madanhire has chosen not to – and perhaps with good reason – as the economic and political realities simultaneously demonstrate the excesses of the ruling elite and the suffering of the majority.

2.4 The Trek and Other Stories: Lawrence Hoba

2.4.1 Introduction

The Fast Track Land Reform Programme provides the background and context within which Hoba’s *The Trek and Other Stories* (2009) are read and understood. The stories are a product of a radically informed postcolonial consciousness. This radically informed postcolonial consciousness inherent in the stories explains why Manase (2014:1) categorises the stories as belonging to “the third generation narratives and new voices which comment on the post-independence Zimbabwean trajectories.” This generational concept is explained by Veit-Wild (1992) when she locates writers in different historical periods. This placing of writers in different historical periods is based on when the writers were born and the critical historical moments, such as colonialism, that impacted on and shaped their perceptions. Veit Wild (1992) places all those writers who were born in 1960 and after in the third generation category, and she further notes that these writers’ perceptions have not been influenced by Christian mission education values. Manase’s comment cited above is insightful to the overall unpacking of Hoba’s stories because as a writer, Hoba belongs to the new or third generation where we also

find other writers such as Madanhire. Nyambi (2013:105) gives such writers the tags “born free” and “oppositional writers.” This tagging of writers as oppositional is important in that it pre-emptively and betrays the writers’ ideological leanings and makes one anticipate an avant-garde and non-conformist approach to issues. The way these writers articulate issues, both stylistically and thematically, is emblematic of dissidence. In a way, the writers feel that they have a generational mandate to query, probe and deconstruct grand narratives. Veit Wild (1992) and Manase (2014) point out that sardonic humour and satire are some of the defining stylistic aspects associated with third generation writing. They also note that, thematically, the writers tackle issues that openly criticise the establishment. Hoba’s stories can be pigeonholed as those narratives that interrogate grand narratives since they deconstruct the ZANU PF-instituted Fast Track Land Reform Programme.

The ruling ZANU PF party crafted a grand narrative about land in order to legitimise the wave of farm occupations that happened in Zimbabwe from 2000. The farm occupations were precipitated by disgruntlement on the part of the majority black Zimbabweans, especially liberation war fighters, over land, which they felt they justly deserved after they had played a role in the liberation struggle (Mamdani, 2008, Rutherford, 2007). The programme was marked by chaos because it was not enacted within a proper legal framework (Rukuni and Jensen, 2003). Thus, despite it being vaunted as a big success in pro-state narratives such as Mugabe’s *Inside the Third Chimurenga* (2001) and *Zimbabwe Takes Back its Land* (2013) by Hanlon et al., the land reform programme is shown to have serious weaknesses. In fact, the realities on the farms tell a different story and it is these realities on the farms that inform Hoba’s narratives. Hoba’s stories also deconstruct the transformational aspect of the programme as enunciated in state narratives. In view of this, therefore, the stories refuse to rehearse or confirm the Third Chimurenga position that the state encourages from writers. Thus, this section discusses the stories from Primorac’s (2007) formulation and thus assumes that, Hoba writes against the grain of nationalist discourse in Zimbabwe today.

Hoba’s anthology comprises ten stories. Seven of these stories including “The First Trek –The Pioneers”, “Maria’s Independence”, “The Travelling Preacher”, “Specialisation”, “Having my Way”, “The Second Trek – Going Home” and “The Third Trek –Resettling” portray experiences related to the land reform programme. The remaining three faintly hint at the land reform programme. Inevitably, therefore, my analysis is mainly based on those seven stories that address the land reform programme vis-a- vis Hoba’s treatment of the same. I argue that the overriding impression that pervades the stories is that Hoba does not glorify the land reform

programme. Instead, despite that faint hint of optimism in “Maria’s Independence”, Hoba does not portray a compassionate account of the land reform programme as seen through his satirisation of the same. In Hoba’s estimation, the land reform programme is an abysmal failure, something akin to Stalin’s collectivisation programme in Russia which was famed for Stalin’s evaluation of the programme as “dizzy with success” when the reality was that the programme was a monumental failure since it led to mass disruption of agricultural activities and loss of human lives.

2.4.2 The *Trek and Other Stories* as a critical exploration of the government’s narrative about empowerment

This section examines Hoba’s *The Trek and Other Stories* (2009) in relation to the ZANU PF party’s discourses about the land reform process, as part of the Third Chimurenga and final closure in the decolonisation project, seeking to empower the Zimbabweans (Mamdani, 2008). I acknowledge the existence of literary and cultural studies on Hoba in relation to the grand narrative about land. For instance, Manase (2014) analyses Hoba’s stories in relation to the stories’ relationship with other Zimbabwean fictional works about land and Hoba’s subversive perceptions on how the land issue has been handled. Nyambi (2017) also analyses Hoba’s stories with his focus being on an exploration of how the stories treat the land question, with specific emphasis on the stories’ depiction of the ironic ambivalence of black beneficiaries of the land reform programme. While aware of the social and historical background about and existing studies on the literary and cultural depictions on land in Zimbabwe, I specifically consider the discourses on ‘black empowerment’ in my analysis of Hoba’s *The Trek and Other Stories* (2009). My analysis unpacks Hoba’s imaginaries on the nature of the ZANU PF government’s land reform-based empowerment drive. Therefore, I analyse the stories in relation to how they subvert the government’s narrative about empowerment. I argue that Hoba exposes the land reform programme’s myriad fault lines and portrays it as a manifestation of a myopic empowerment vision that is largely characterised by various absurdities.

The most remarkable aspect about the programme is that the new farmers lack equipment, seed and fertiliser. This point is brought home with great clarity in “Maria’s Independence”. The story describes the experiences of black males in Hoba’s fictional Zimbabwe during the farm invasions as they are surprised to discover that there is a female – Maria - in their midst. As it turns out, the conditions on the farms do not allow for meaningful agriculture and human

settlement. Ultimately, most of the men give up on farming but Maria remains as a successful farmer employing her own workers. The narrator points out that, “there we all met. With neither hoe, tractor, plough, seed nor cow” (p.4), thus underscoring lack of requisite agricultural resources. This is hardly surprising given that the new farmers are “united in [their] poverty” (p.5). The import of these ironic comments is that the farmers are ill-equipped to engage in serious farming. Farming, by its very nature, requires adequate resources and as such this lack of resources, as explained by the narrator, captures the gloomy nature of the farming undertakings. A pessimistic tone is invoked, as the lack suggests that no meaningful production will take place. It is little wonder that the lack of farming resources paints the euphoria associated with the acquisition of the new farms as ephemeral. The narrator notes, “as time passed, people began to falter. The farms were not the paradise we had thought them to be. We had [no] machinery of our ancestors’ enemies” (p.6). Here, Hoba is, true to the stylistic appeal and thematic concerns of third generation writers as noted earlier, openly dissident and subversive. There is irony – which is the dominant trope of satire – in that nothing materialises on the farms. In a way, Hoba paints negative images of, and draws pessimistic conclusions on the land reform programme. Hoba notes that the first hurdle that the farmers have to surmount is that of acquiring resources. This is so because after being ‘given’ pieces of land, they are left to their own devices by the ZANU PF government which is responsible for initiating this programme. Implied here, therefore, is a political satire on the ZANU PF government for hatching the programme without any meaningful implementation strategies.

This bleak outlook that one observes in “Maria’s Independence” is also captured in the first story “The First Trek – The Pioneers” which portrays the experiences of the poverty-stricken Magudu family on their way to their recently acquired farm, from a child narrator perspective. The Magudus are referred to as the pioneers, thus alluding to the idea that they are in the vanguard of the land reform programme. However, by deliberately situating the Magudus in the forefront, Hoba is being satirically dissident because the family is hamstrung by its poverty. This incapacitation is emblematised by the family’s scant possessions which are stacked in an “old scotch cart” (p.1). The limited and wretched nature of their worldly possessions alerts us to the possibility that they will not fare well on the new farm because they are definitely not going to afford buying requisite agricultural resources. In addition, the family members’ body language reflects a predominantly negative image of the trekking and pioneering instincts. We notice that the father, *baba*, looks tired and bored, while the mother, *mhamha*, is expressionless and does not even smile at the baby, and the narrator sits “staring forlornly from side to side”

(p.3). This body language expresses the fact that there is a genuine lack of zeal on the new farmers' part. It also reveals the futility of the new farmers' adventures. Hoba, thus, constructs the Magudus as the pioneers in this wave of farm take-overs, in order to create a parody of the land reform programme. He depicts the land reform process as just an appetite for land which is not supported at resource mobilisation level. In addition, the Magudus who are at the forefront of the exercise do not exude that rough and ready attitude and an indefatigable spirit synonymous with pioneers, as noted in Chennells' (1995) discussion on the qualities of Rhodesian pioneers.

The lack of access to resources and failure of the new farmers' agricultural endeavours is also manifest in the story "The Second Trek – Going Home". The Magudus, despite taking over the farm and unorthodoxly inheriting the previous owner's sugar cane, still cannot afford to transport the ill-gotten cane harvest to the mill. In the words of the young narrator, "there are piles and piles of sugar cane. The whole farm is full of it because *baba* couldn't find a tractor to take it to the mill. He says *murungu* should have left the tractors" (p.27). Through the use of the supposedly innocent narrator, Hoba is, in fact, interrogating serious political issues. Hoba demonstrates that giving farmers access to land without equipping them with machinery is not an adequate way to empower them. The lack of machinery is not lost on the new black farmer, J. Magudu, who ends up wishing the white man had left everything for him in order to allow for ease of farming operations. Thus, Hoba pokes fun at the ruling ZANU PF government in that, despite its bombastic rhetoric that venerated the land reform programme's capacity to transform the economic fortunes of ordinary black people in Zimbabwe, the programme turns out to be not well thought-out and a failure, thus underscoring that it was crafted for political expediency.

Hoba also ridicules the grand narrative about land reform as synonymous with black empowerment in the story "Maria's Independence." The story shows that the majority of the new farmers lack the requisite farming technical knowhow and all of them, except for Maria, leave their farms. Even Martin, one of the beneficiaries of the land reform programme, leaves to pursue a course as an agricultural extension officer, thus hinting at Hoba's expression of the necessity of equipping the new farmer with the requisite technical agricultural skills. Indirectly, therefore, Hoba attacks the government for giving land to people who do not have the necessary skills to work on the land productively. It is because of this wrong order of priorities that Martin now has duties "on other farms where the owners are still learning to farm years after they took over the land" (p.7). Here, one gets the sense that the story is negotiated at a counter-discursive

level as Hoba mocks the ruling ZANU PF government for an improperly conducted land reform programme.

This lack of farming expertise treated in “Maria’s Independence,” is also evident in the story “The Travelling Preacher.” The story is as much about the travelling preacher as it is about the new farmer. It describes how the new farmer, after driving out the white owner of the farm *Baas Tiki*, abandons the farm so that all the farming activities are to be done by the workers. The author shows that all the new farmer does is give orders to his workers that “they had to farm” (p.10). Ironically, the farmer does not even bring seed or fertiliser. As the narrator satirically points out, “someone said the new *baas* did not know how to farm so he had gone to school to learn how to farm. And they all knew it would take him three years to learn” (p11). This comment is important in that it brings into sharp focus the calibre of individuals who occupy the farms. They have no idea whatsoever as to what real farming means as evidenced by the fact that right up to the end of the narrative, “the new *baas* had not finished learning how to farm” (p.12).

Hoba also exposes, in the story “Specialisation”, how lack of expertise on the part of the new farmers is a hindrance to agricultural pursuits. The story is intensely satirical as it reveals the characters seeking redress from a debilitating drought by taking recourse to the spiritual world in order to make things happen on their newly-acquired farm. It is because of the dearth of expert knowledge that the farmers, including a war veteran and a university graduate who at one point confesses that “they believed in my ability to solve our problems” (p.16), decide to consult a spirit medium to seek solutions to the problem of the drought. They only have their epiphany at the end of the story when the narrator, a university graduate, notes that:

I remembered that we – Chimoto, Baba Nina and I – had forgotten to find someone who knew about irrigation. Someone who would wake up each morning with the same gusto as we did to do what they had to do. Our dam was still full and the irrigation equipment was lying idle. Maybe specialisation could work, after all, if only we could find someone with the right skills to join us (p.19).

Here, Hoba describes the characters’ moment of collective reckoning and satirises the farmers’ lack of awareness as they are blind to the glaring fact that the dam is still full and the irrigation equipment is lying idle. Their journey to the spirit medium does not yield any result. If anything, they are just reminded to “go and work hard *vazukuru*. Simply work hard” (p.18). They also lose their money in the process. The pith of Hoba’s argument here is that expertise

is critical to a successful farming enterprise. Therefore, Hoba obliquely attacks the ZANU PF government for instituting a programme without equipping the new farmers with the necessary skills that will ensure the viability of their agricultural undertakings.

The new farmers are also depicted as lacking farming discipline. Hoba sheds light on most of the farmers' lack of farming discipline as noted in the story "The First Trek – The Pioneers" where baba is outstanding because of his lackadaisical if not non-committal approach to farming. The narrator authoritatively pronounces that, baba "never works in the fields" (p.3). Instead, all that he is good at is "gallivanting, searching for the farmer who might have brewed a few drums of thick, rich maseke" (p.3). While this could be a comment on irresponsible masculinities, Hoba is also indicting baba for his lack of discipline to engage in farming. Baba's lack of discipline is also explored in the story "The Second Trek – Going Home" which describes how the Magudu family is displaced from their recently acquired farm by a more powerful farmer with a big belly. Here, baba is depicted as always away on drinking sprees. This habit is also evident in the story "The Third Trek – Resettling" where the farm workers have all gone because baba could not pay them, while electricity has been disconnected because of his failure to pay bills and the engines for pumping irrigation water are no longer working. This lack of discipline on the farmers' part also tells its own story concerning the people being given access to land. In a way, Hoba indicts the government for not putting in place monitoring mechanisms and checks and balances that would ensure that the farmers are engaged in serious agricultural pursuits. In addition, Hoba seems to suggest that we should not expect any meaningful production at such a farm where utter lack of discipline is glaringly evident.

An undisciplined approach to farming is also evident in other stories in the collection. In the story "The Travelling Preacher", there is an absentee farmer who, after taking the farm and "everything from Baas Tiki never returned" (p.9). This absentee landlordism indicates the new farmer's serious lack of farming discipline that impacts severely on farming activities. The narrator of the story observes, "he had not brought any seed, or fertiliser. And the fields were not tilled. The tractors were abused, were dead" (p.12). Furthermore, the farm workers' realisation of the new boss' perennial absence resulted in the abuse of tractors until the machinery could no longer function. There is a sense in which Hoba seems to point out that both the new boss' absence and the abuse of the equipment and machinery by the workers equally cannot be condoned. Hence, Hoba indicts the ZANU PF government for selecting unsuitable beneficiaries.

Hoba also exposes the hollow nature of the land reform programme through his portrayal of constrained conditions on the farms. The new farms turn out to be environments which are not enabling. For instance, it is described in the story “Maria’s Independence” that “the farms were not the paradise we’d thought them to be. There were no schools and clinics” (p.6). This lack of schools which is also explained by the narrator in the story “The Second Trek – Going Home” when he says “there is no school here” (p.27), underscores the government’s lack of foresight. It is only after going back to his original home as seen in the story “The Third Trek – Resettling” that the narrator is able to go to school.

Hoba’s dissident imaginings are also noted in his depiction of the ephemeral nature of the thrust of the Land Reform Programme. The new farmers are vulnerable to the whims of politicians. As it turns out, the farms become the stage on which power dynamics are played out, and in the process, the new farmer is rendered vulnerable and insecure. As evident in the story “Maria’s Independence”, the farmers are aware of the need to observe the order of the rank and file of the new beneficiaries of the programme. As the narrator submits, in their quest to get farms, “sometimes we would arrive at a farm, only to be told that someone more important had taken it, and we had to move on” (p.4). This idea that some people are more important than others reveals the lopsided nature of the empowerment drive. This point is brought home more clearly in the stories “The Second Trek – Going Home” and “The Third Trek – Resettling” when the Magudus are evicted from their newly-acquired farm. The new farmer in the story “The Second Trek – Going Home”, presumably a politician as substantiated by the narrator’s description of him as “a man with a big stomach standing beside it (the car)” (p.29), evicts the Magudu family with the assistance of law enforcement agents who bring “guns and big helmets with glasses on them” (p.29). The new ordinary farmers who do not have any political clout are deprived of a sense of permanence on the farms. It is therefore not coincidental but quite deliberate on Hoba’s part that he makes the Magudus’ adventure on the new farm a short-lived one. Their return to their original home has to be understood in the context of Hoba’s confirmation of the hollow nature of the land reform programme.

The crux of Hoba’s argument is that the government’s empowerment drive is bald because it is not soundly grounded. His stories indicate that for as long as the new farmer is not given access to resources and exposed to the technical aspect of farming, there will be no meaningful farming. In addition, the stories indicate that the programme is not backed up by the provision of essential services such as schools and clinics and, for that reason, it is empty. Hoba indirectly points an accusing finger at the ZANU PF government for not coming up with a soberly

thought-out land reform process. At the same time, he indicts the same government for not putting in place tracking systems and audits to ensure that those who have benefitted from the land reform programme are seriously engaged in farming. Thus, through an exposure of the hollow nature of the empowerment drive, Hoba's *The Trek and Other Stories* (2009) belongs to those dissident narratives which undercut dominant discourses (Ashcroft et al., 1989). So, in essence, *The Trek and Other Stories* (2009) is a counter discourse of the land reform programme especially in view of the fact that the empowerment that is associated with the programme and is celebrated in state narratives is shown in the stories to be a distant mirage on the political horizon.

Overall, a distilling of the essence of Hoba's stories shows that, unlike the portrayal of the land reform programme in state-aligned narratives, Hoba judges the land reform programme by reference to facts. By having the realities on the farms inform his stories, Hoba ingeniously throws the evaluation of the ZANU PF-crafted land reform programme into the court of public opinion. The nub of Hoba's evaluation of the programme is that those who show a fidelity to the land reform programme and view it as beyond reproach miss the point by the proverbial mile. In view of this, the stories deconstruct the positive perceptions of the land reform programme as espoused in state-centred narratives such as, as noted earlier, Mugabe's *Inside the Third Chimurenga* (2001) and Hanlon et. al.'s *Zimbabwe Takes Back its Land* (2013) both of which venerate and endorse the successes of the Land Reform Programme. Therefore, *The Trek and Other Stories* (2009) deviates from the patriotic literary trajectory that the ZANU PF party is comfortable with during the Third Chimurenga.

2.5 Conclusion

It was submitted as an entry point into the chapter that all the works discussed treat the Zimbabwean experience during the post-2000 period. The chapter's thrust was to interrogate how creative male Zimbabwean writers respond to the debilitating political, economic and social situation in Zimbabwe vis-à-vis their roles as writers. The nub of the argument in the chapter was that the selected writers have adopted a non-conformist writing style since all of them write against the grain of nationalist discourse in Zimbabwe today (Primorac, 2007). It was also submitted that Chinodya's "Queues" (2003) refuses to endorse the ZANU-PF anti-West rhetoric, while Madanhire's "The Grim Reaper's Car" (2003) treads on the territory of the unspeakable by attacking the then Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe for causing the suffering of the majority. Hoba's *The Trek and Other Stories* (2009) was analysed as a

deconstruction of the narratives about black empowerment through the land reform programme, as espoused in state narratives. Hence, the overarching submission in the chapter was that all the works under focus run contrary to the patriotic literary trajectory that the state expects the writers to follow. Thus, all the works discussed, in one way or the other, demonstrate the capacity of literary works to offer alternative perspectives on the existing state of affairs on Zimbabwe's socio-economic and political firmament. Ultimately, such literary interventions are crucial because they demonstrate that the national space is a contested arena that is "internally marked by the discourse of minorities, the heterogeneous histories of contending peoples" (Bhabha, 1994:148). The writers articulate their views from the margins, hence they confirm Bhabha's (1994:169) contention that "the national memory is always the site of the hybridity of histories and the displacement of narratives. The next chapter analyses female-authored Zimbabwean fictional narratives that also challenge the notion of patriotic identities.

Chapter 3: Transgressing Boundaries and Naming the Unnameable in Female-authored Zimbabwean Fictional Narratives

3.0 Introduction

This chapter analyses female-authored Zimbabwean fictional narratives that critically engage patriotic identities in post-2000 Zimbabwe. The main focus in the chapter is on how the selected fictional narratives transgress state-circumscribed boundaries of national identity and deal with taboo subjects in the political domain. The chapter focuses mainly on Freedom Nyamubaya's short story "That Special Place" (2003) and Pettina Gappah's short stories "The President Always Dies in January" and "From a Town Called Enkeldoorn", both of which are in her collection of stories titled *Rotten Row* (2016). The central argument that the chapter makes is that, apart from inscribing the female writers' agency to transgress politically-motivated exclusions from the national narrative, the style that the writers deploy is vital in expressing a subversive meta-narrative that deconstructs patriotic identities. The texts are analysed through the optic of the third generation writerly subversion and the discourse on the speaking of the unspeakable as postulated by Rich (1979) and expanded by Morrison (1988), Muponde and Taruvinga (2002) and Hewett (2005).

The two writers under focus in this chapter are both female. As such, the angle of analysis in this chapter is partly informed by how both female writers contest the gendering of the national imaginary and write against the authoritarian and male version of patriotic history by which the ruling ZANU PF party defines Zimbabwe's past, present and future (Veit-Wild, 2006). In addition, both writers belong to the Zimbabwean third generation of writers (Veit-Wild, 1992) with Nyamubaya being an early third generation writer and Gappah a contemporary third generation writer. Thus, the choice of texts and writers in this chapter is largely informed by how the texts speak to each other, challenge the patriarchal narrative of the nation and, how the writers' style and sensibilities are predicated on the third generation writing concept. The generation concept is defined by Adesanmi and Dunton (2005:8) as "the project of defining and delimiting the boundaries of a literary generation [which offers possibilities for] a systematic understanding of literary trends and currents synchronically and diachronically." This demarcation of literary boundaries is central in locating writers into clearly defined literary generations. Thus, it is easy to categorise Nyamubaya and Gappah as, despite the age gap that separates both, belonging to the third generation of Zimbabwean writers. That is so because they are both born after 1960, a time that falls within Veit-Wild's (1992) categorisation of third generation Zimbabwean writers. For this reason, it is important to analyse how their stylistic

approach and handling of thematic concerns are braided together by this generational concept explained in detail below.

The female-authored texts under focus in this chapter are analysed from the premise of shifts or growth in writing against patriotic discourses witnessed in the post-2000s. The premise leads to a further supposition that there has been a flux in the ways male-circumscribed patriotic narratives are subverted. This analysis is thus predicated on the understanding that, while both female writers under focus belong to the third generation of writers, they are separated by the fact that one (Nyamubaya) is located right at the beginning of this generational spectrum while the other (Gappah) is located at the other end of the third generation aisle. Furthermore, Nyamubaya was directly involved in Zimbabwe's war of liberation and that involvement gives her narration an immediacy and informedness in terms of perspective. This point is in harmony with Nyambi's (2016:149) assessment that Nyamubaya's status as a veteran of the country's liberation struggle makes her "intimately connected to the nation's political, socio-political and economic transformation." In addition to that, Nyamubaya, who is now late, spend all her life after the war of liberation in Zimbabwe, so her perceptions and imaginaries on the prevailing state of affairs were intimate. This is given testament to by the way her oeuvre, beginning with the publication of *On the Road Again* (1986), traces closely the postcolonial trajectory of the nation. Nyamubaya also writes from inside the belly of the beast and this accounts for the way her subversion is muffled. However, Gappah has had the privilege to travel and live outside Zimbabwe which allows her to adopt what Magaisa (2006) terms the insider-looking in perspective. In other words, Gappah writes from the vantage position of both an insider (as she is Zimbabwean) and outsider (since she lives in the diaspora), and this gives her the latitude to unflinchingly interrogate what she sees as politically objectionable. This gives her narratives a perspective that departs from Nyamubaya's, and hence the contention that there is a shift in the ways the two third generation writers deconstruct state-sanctioned patriotic narratives.

The third generation writing concept is central to this chapter and therefore warrants a brief scrutiny. As already noted, the generational concept is a literary tradition which is coterminous with a literary movement or a school. Hewett (2005:5) contends that, as a category or literary lineage, literary generations "provide us with a useful narrative of the literary changes, developments, and influences that take place over time." What is underscored here is the idea that literary generations capture both the trajectory and state of literary trends at particular historical moments. Thus, there are specific features which define generational currents. For instance, Adesanmi and Dunton (2005:8) contend that:

most literary traditions agree on temporal coevality and ideological/thematic coherence as the two significant features in the constitution of a generation. In other words, the writers/artists and intellectuals who are categorised as belonging to a particular generation either fall within a loosely determined age bracket, or are published within a loosely defined timeframe on the one hand, and their themes/tropes are shaped by identifiable events or experiences commonly shared.

What this means is that, temporal and thematic considerations are central to the classification of writers into different literary generations. This understanding of the generational concept is important in that it shapes the way the chapter's argument is formulated.

Broadly speaking, three literary generations are identified in the African context. These are generations one, two and three. According to Adesanmi and Dunton (2005:9) "the African writers who are often categorised by critics as belonging to the first and second generations were mostly born during the first five decades of the twentieth century when the colonial event was still in full force." It comes as no surprise, therefore, that those writers' textualities are massively overdetermined by that colonial experience. In other words, colonialism is an overarching and shaping influence in the writers' works. Adesanmi and Dunton (2005:9) distinguish between first and second generation writers in their observation that "the second generation were also born into the colonial event but their formative years were mostly shaped by independence and its aftermath of disillusionment and stasis." Thus, the second generation writers differ from the first generation writers in that, while they both articulate the colonial experience, second generation writers also explore themes around post-independence disenchantment. The writers belonging to the third generation were born in 1960, "the emblematic year of African independence from colonialism" (Adesanmi and Dunton, 2005:9), and after, and they did not experience colonialism.

The third generation writing concept is espoused in the Zimbabwean context by Veit-Wild (1992). Veit-Wild divides the Zimbabwean writers into three generations, with generation one covering writers born between 1917 and 1939, the second generation encompassing those writers born between 1940 and 1959 and the third generation consisting of those writers born in 1960 and after. Of interest to me here is the third generation of writers since it is the generation to which the writers under focus in this chapter belong. Nyamubaya and Gappah's texts belong to what Manase (2014:5) describes as "the body of Zimbabwean English fiction that is commonly identified as the third generation narratives and 'new voices' which comment on the post-independence Zimbabwean trajectories." Furthermore, the two writers are situated

in a uniquely post-2000 period characterised by deep polarisations of perspectives and narratives of the crisis. Therefore, it is critical to analyse how they creatively respond to the debilitating situation. Nonetheless, it has to be underscored that, as already noted, these third generation writerly trajectories are not a distinctly Zimbabwean phenomenon as they have also been deployed in the analysis of Nigerian literature as noted by Adesanmi and Dunton (2005). Therefore, it is important that the third generation writing concept be unpacked, especially considering that the writers under focus here are rooted in the third generation of writers.

Veit-Wild (1992:88) contends that third generation writers are “not burdened by traditional beliefs. [Instead,] they are modern young people who experience difficulties in growing up [and] criticise old ways of life and refuse to take for granted the mental liberation of Zimbabwe.” This description of the third generation of writers typecasts them as intrinsically adversarial. This adversarial strand is also noted by Chennells (1993:14) as captured in his submission that “the writers of the third generation are non-believers” and also by Nyambi (2013:105) who labels the third generation writers “oppositional writers.” The implication here is that the third generation writers’ default position is a sceptical one. Their hallmark is non-conformism as seen through the way they explode popular perceptions.

The third generation writing spectrum is wide since it covers works written by writers born in 1960 and after. This wide nature is given testament to by the fact that even present-day writers such as Gappah are classified as third generation writers. However, the boundaries in terms of perceptions are vague. In light of this, third generation writerly subversion is more an expression of class consciousness since the writings are products of a radically informed post-colonial consciousness. What this means is that there is a seamless continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical epoch ascribed to the third generation Zimbabwean writers. This position is concretised by Veit-Wild’s (1992:5) assertion that “individual voices appear in their singularity as well as mouthpieces for the common feeling.” The common feeling referred to here is the consciousness of the third generation writers which in this case is their subversive propensity. Adesanmi and Dunton (2005:10) explain that this subversive inclination is a result of the fact that third generation writers are:

born into the scopic regime of the postcolonial and the postmodern, an order of knowledge in which questions of subjecthood and agency are not only massively overdetermined by the politics of identity in a multicultural and transnational frame but

in which the tropes of Otherness and subalternity are being remapped by questioning erstwhile totalities such as history, nation, gender and their representative symbolologies.

The above quotation clarifies that third generation writing is given force by the imperatives of historical revisionism, and hence the dissident nature of the narratives written by third generation writers.

It is also important to underscore the point that the vision of third generation writers varies across time. The third generation writing spectrum itself is wide in nature. This is precisely what Veit-Wild (1992:5) emphasises when she mentions that ‘individual voices appear in their singularity.’ In support of this shift, Chennells (1993:21), in his evaluation of Veit-Wild’s generational categorisation, contends that Veit-Wild “demonstrates that there is enough in common among members of each generation for there to exist the shaping forces of a shared material reality although this might produce different responses at the level of individual writers’ consciousness.” The emphasis here is on how individual writers respond and it is these individual responses that account for the shift in perceptions.

In addition, writers, while belonging to the same generation as is the case with Nyamubaya and Gappah, are located in different historical circumstances and that is also critical to the way perceptions or attitudes to patriotic identities mutate. This mutation, as explained by Adesanmi and Dutton (2005:8), is a consequence of “thematic fluidity and temporal overlaps [which] constantly ensure that even the most ostensibly reliable rules of generational boundary cutting are very easily overwhelmed by exceptions.” The same scholars argue further that boundaries of specific literary generations “can never escape the problem of semantic, thematic and even ideological indeterminacy” (Adesanmi and Dunton, 2005:8). What this means is that writers belonging to a particular generation can deal with particular tropes from different perspectives as a result of the different historical circumstances they find themselves located in. This point is explained further by Manase (2014:6) in his contention that, “the different historical moments, such as social histories, colonial and anti-colonial eras, and the post-independence dispensations are significant in mapping writers and their narratives’ generations.” The historical circumstances alluded to are dominant shaping forces. Those historical circumstances are always in a state of flux and so they contribute to the mutation of perceptions and visions, and hence the heterogeneity in the way third generation writers subvert patriotic identities. The point here is that third generation writers do not have a monolithic identity and their narratives do not follow a universal blueprint because, to quote McClintock (1993:67), different writers “do not identify with or experience the myriad national formations in the same

way”. Therefore, there are both distinct and overlapping trajectories in the third generation writing matrix.

As already mentioned, the third generation writing spectrum is wide as it straddles both the pre and post-independence eras in Zimbabwe. This longevity accounts for the flux that characterises the writings written at different historical moments by the third generation writers, as is the case with Nyamubaya and Gappah who are early and contemporary third generation writers respectively. The flux is as a result of a shift in political attitude at various moments in history. In other words, there has been a renaissance of perceptions coinciding with a complex articulation about patriotism as per the nub of the argument in this study. For instance, there is a less confrontational tenor and a tentative, if not hesitant approach, to the subversion of patriotic identities by early third generation writers. Conversely, contemporary third generation writers are remarkable for their radicalism which is captured in their non-conformist and avant-garde dismantling of the patriotic discourses that are treated with reverence by the ruling ZANU PF political elite. This avant-garde approach – a style of writing that departs from formulaic and conventional writing (Ravengai, 2006) and manifests itself in various aesthetic movements which include, inter alia, constructivism, surrealism, futurism, modernism, post-modernism and post-colonialism (Aronson, 2000) – is seen in “the formal, stylistic and thematic features of [the third generation writers’] work” (Muchemwa, 2013:74).

However, third generation writers generally adopt a writing style that is emblematic of dissidence. The writers who belong to this generation criticise the ruling elite and explode popular conceptions. Such writers include Brian Chikwava and Lawrence Hoba who satirise the ruling elite and take a swipe at government initiatives such as the Fast Track Land Reform Programme. As noted by Alden (2007:2) in her submission that “young writers have thrown all caution to the winds and are tackling political writing face on”, non-conformism is the overarching influence in the writings by third generation writers. This is the same line of argument that Hewett (2005:10) makes in her discussion of Nigerian women writers of the third generation whose “short stories claim previously taboo subjects and advocate a radical critique of patriarchal culture and its master narratives.” This radicalism is a marker of non-conformism and the argument bodes well for purposes of this chapter which considers Zimbabwean women writers whose short stories are read as dissident narratives.

The chapter’s argument also draws another important strand, which is the narrative on the rhetoricising of the unspeakable (Rich, 1979; Morrison, 1988). Rich (1998) defines the unspeakable as that which is unnamed, undepicted in images omitted, censored, misnamed as

something else and is buried in the memory by the collapse of meaning under an inadequate or lying language. What is embedded in this quotation is the idea that some subjects remain concealed because they are considered sensitive. Thus, the lack of exposure of, or the inability to write about such subjects is a result of political imperatives that require a little evasiveness on the writers' part. Another central idea in this quotation is that there is a broad range of subjects that is constitutive of the unspeakable.

It is important to understand the prevailing political situation when dealing with the discourse on the speaking of the unspeakable. That is so because politics exerts a huge influence in the way writers deal with difficult or sensitive subjects. For instance, Alden (2007:1) clarifies the central role that politics plays in the way writers write as noted in her discussion on "what the [political] crisis in Zimbabwe does to the arts and what the arts do about the crisis." Thus, Morrison (1988) encourages us to consider the political climate in which the writing takes place when dealing with the discourse of the unspeakable. Rich (1979) underscores the centrality of this argument in her contention that not speaking is a result of manipulated passivity. This passivity, in other words, is a consequence of political imperatives that ensure that writers keep certain subjects at a measured and chiselled distance in their writings.

Nonetheless, a further unpacking of the discourse of the speaking of the unspeakable reveals that those writers who write against the grain (Primorac, 2006) are empowered by the knowledge that, as Morrison (1988:16) alerts us, "invisible things are not necessarily 'not there' [because] a void may be empty but not be a vacuum." The import of this contention is that if something is unspoken, that does not translate to its absence. Thus, some writers have the courage to write "unauthored and unauthorable material" (Morrison, 1988:18) because they are convinced about the "do-or-die significance of [the] effort to say something unsayable" (Morrison, 1988:23). In light of this, Morrison (1988:29) defines the speaking of the unspeakable as an act of distributing "the weight of [...] problematical questions to a larger constituency, and [a justification of] the public exposure of a privacy." This exposure of problematical or sensitive subjects underscores the dissident nature of the very act of speaking the unspeakable. This dissidence explains why Morrison (1988:24) draws the conclusion that speaking the unspeakable is "dangerous, solitary and radical work." This radicalism is a hallmark of writings that go against the grain as is the case with the narratives under focus in this chapter.

It must also be noted that a writerly speaking of the unspeakable has two important strands. On the one hand, there is the disclosure of secrets. This strand has to do with the writing of the

unspeakable or unauthorable material. On the other hand, there is the exposure of secrets which is primarily to do with the politics of publication. Morrison (1988:27) explains the two strands in her submission that “the publication (as opposed to the writing) involve[s] the exposure; the writing [is] the disclosure of secrets.” Essentially, therefore, the speaking of the unspeakable is the private disclosure of secrets and the public exposure of shocking knowledge. It is an articulation of “the truth in the face of falsehoods” (Morrison, 1988:24), a point which is buttressed by Alden’s (2007) description of young writers in Zimbabwe whose “bold current writing seeks to throw light on the high-level lies that have become the food of the disadvantaged.” What is critical in these two quotations is both the disclosure and public exposure of sensitive subjects.

In the Zimbabwean context as per the focus of this chapter, the discourse on rhetoricising the unspeakable is premised on the scenario that there are certain subjects which have been rendered taboo in Zimbabwe. These subjects as discussed in Muponde and Taruvinga (2002) include rape, incest, abortion and murder. Not only are such subjects unspoken but they are also unspeakable. In addition, in the context of this study, any subject that goes against the sacred ordinances of the ruling ZANU PF brand of patriotism is considered taboo and therefore, is unspeakable. This point is articulated by Alden (2007:3) in her submission that political issues are a taboo subject in Zimbabwe, especially in the post-2000 era as noted in the way writers engage in “ruthless self-editing [because of the] need to avoid any overt critique of government policies or reference to individuals in government.” This argument is echoed in Siziba’s (2017:1) submission in the discussion on the depiction of Zimbabwe’s structural and political violence through the trope of the unnameable and unnamed in Brian Chikwava’s *Harare North* that, “state censorship renders other subjects unsayable, denies people voice and turns political commentary to taboo subjects.” What this means is that writers depict what the political elite, which in this case is ZANU PF, regiment. This argument is in line with Smith and Watson’s (2001:42) contention that individuals are constituted through discursive practices and “tell stories through the cultural scripts available to them, and they are governed by cultural strictures.” While Smith and Watson’s (2001) discussion pertains to autobiography, their ideas are relevant in the context of this chapter which discusses fictional narratives because the production of narrative in whatever form is intimately or remotely controlled, as noted earlier, by prevailing political circumstances. Thus, the way writers write is determined to a larger extent by the political climate obtaining and that political climate is constitutive of or equivalent to those cultural strictures that regulate the writing of autobiography. Therefore, as

per the focus of this chapter, these cultural strictures in the Zimbabwean context are political practices which render other subjects unsayable or unnameable.

However, the writers under focus in this chapter transcend the limits of state censorship. They write about subjects which fall within the domain of the unspeakable, thus underscoring the ways in which patriotic identities are deconstructed in post-2000 Zimbabwe. Here, Nyambi et. al.'s (2016) ideas are also crucial. While Nyambi et. al.'s (2016) study focuses exclusively on onomastics, one can nevertheless glean some insightful ideas related to the naming of the unnameable which in this case is that the naming/speaking of the unnameable/unspeakable is reflective of the political and ideological itinerary of the namer/speaker. This political or ideological itinerary leads the writers to articulate a vision that is in contradistinction to the state expectations. Thus, the idea of naming the unspeakable gives traction to the argument in this chapter. As explained in chapter two of this study, naming the unnameable constitutes a deconstructive process. This idea is captured in Rich's (1998:338) submission that "naming the unspeakable is at once a transgressive act that knowingly seeks to expose and break the boundaries on which the organisation of cultural knowledge depends." Seen in this light, therefore, the unspeakable falls within the realm of deconstruction (Derrida, 1976). Smith and Watson (2001:41) lend weight to the adversarial stance germane to the speaking of the unspeakable when they contend that for some writers, the rhetoricising of the unspeakable "has come at the price of incarceration, persecution and exile," while other writers have incited condemnation of both their narratives and their lives as scandalous. This condemnation of the writers and their narratives by the ruling elite is a form of rejection and a mark of disapproval regarding the conduct of the individual writers. Nonetheless, Nyamubaya and Gappah's narratives fall within the realm of the unspeakable narratives because they both deal with sensitive and uncomfortable subjects in the Zimbabwean political matrix. The way they transgress boundaries and name the unnameable underscores the way in which the writers contest patriotic identities in post-2000 Zimbabwe.

3.1 Exposing and dismantling phallogocentric conceptions of power in Nyamubaya's "That Special Place"

This section analyses Nyamubaya's short story "That Special Place" as a narrative that exposes and contests the gendered politics of Zimbabwe's war of liberation discourses and exposes the ruling party's dark past. In other words, the analysis is made from the premise that it exposes the politically offensive. I acknowledge that the first strand I analyse has received great critical attention. However, I focus on it as a stepping-stone on to the second strand which gives greater

traction to the argument in this section of the chapter. In addition, the main focus in my analysis of those two strands is on the way Nyamubaya articulates her dissidence. The argument that I make is that Nyamubaya adopts the velvet hammer approach in her deconstruction of the patriotic essence in post-2000 Zimbabwe. She engages in some kind of just-the facts narration. She writes less brutally and less violently in her matter of fact way. What she does is just hold that brutal mirror before the ruling elite so that it can see its debased nature. Nonetheless, I argue that this seemingly neutral fact-checks approach is equally effective as a means of contesting authoritarian discourses.

Falling within the realm of the life story, “That Special Place” is a fictional rendering of the autobiographical narrator’s life during the liberation struggle. The story inventories the tribulations of a female recruit-cum freedom fighter at a military training camp in Mozambique. The story is written from a feminist perspective.

3.2 Contesting gendered alterity in Nyamubaya’s “That Special Place”

The analysis in this section is based on the contention that Freedom Nyamubaya’s short story “That Special Place” contests the patriarchal narrative of the nation. This argument is in line with Veit-Wild’s (2006:197) submission that “patriotic history in its present form is written by men—more specifically, by old men. Hence, the ‘other side’ of this history is either told by women or seen through the eyes of children or younger men.” Therefore, the story exposes the gendered politics of Zimbabwe’s war of liberation discourses which insist that “there are sons of the soil but no daughters” (Muchemwa, 2011:28). This valorising of the sons of the soil and a simultaneous silencing of the daughters amounts to a privileging of certain voices over others (Phimister, 2012:28). The silencing of the female voices is captured by Kandiyoti (1988) in a discussion on how women in Sub-Saharan Africa are generally an excluded group and those under classic patriarchy are domesticated and manipulated. This exclusion and manipulation jettisons the females from the national space. It is against this background of exclusion that the story “That Special Place” is read as a narrative that contests “the monolithic, authoritarian (and male) version of ‘patriotic’ history by which government defines Zimbabwe’s past and present” (Veit-Wild, 2006:2).

It is critical, before considering the way Nyamubaya articulates her contestation, to engage in a brief discussion on critical scholarship on the gendered nature of nationalism. Such a discussion is important in that it interrogates discourses on the constitution of nationness in Zimbabwe which is premised on the liberation struggle. As a narrative, the liberation struggle

gives impetus to and sustains the being of the Zimbabwean nation. The liberation struggle, in turn, is inextricably connected to discourses on nationalism, hence, the significance of discussing scholarly ideas related to the gendered nature of nationalism.

Many scholars including McClintock (1993), Enloe (1989), Macleod (2000) and Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1989) all acknowledge the gendered nature of nationalism as a discourse of liberation. Kandiyoti (1988) also concurs with these scholars' views on the gendered nature of nationalism as noted in the contention that women are an excluded group as emblematised by the way they are denied access to commercial capital. Such a denial of access deprives them of agency to participate in the national space. If anything, females are relegated to the peripheral roles of domesticated housewives who are only there to produce for the world market. Thus, all these critics argue that females are located outside or on the periphery in nationalist discourses. Macleod (2000:114) expresses this point succinctly in the contention that nationalism "traffics in representations of men and women which serve to reinforce patriarchal inequalities between them. Nationalist representations have been in danger of perpetuating disempowering representations of women." This point is also confirmed by McClintock (1993:61) in her observation that "nations are historical and institutional practices through which social difference is invented and performed." Both quotations underscore that females are generally discursively excluded from nationalist discourses. This is precisely what happens in Zimbabwe where there is a male version of patriotic history. The 'male' Zimbabwean historiography is silent on female participation in the liberation struggle, a point which is clearly explained by Macleod (2000:114) in his assertion that "the process of liberation [in Zimbabwe] is constructed as an exclusively male endeavour which ignores the contributions made by millions of women to independence struggles." This indicates that only men are recognised and acknowledged as chief actors in the liberation struggle. Consequently, the history of the Zimbabwean nation is organised around a male national narrative. However, the reality is that females also actively participated in the war of liberation. This is attested to by the firming canon of female-authored books re-gendering Zimbabwe's liberation war (Nyambi and Matsika, 2016). Such texts include Chung's memoir about the liberation war, *Re-Living the Second Chimurenga: Memories of the Liberation Struggle in Zimbabwe* (2006) and, more recently, Chigumazi's *These Bones Will Rise Again* (2018).

The above-noted gendered nature of nationalism and its exclusion of females from the national narratives of the liberation struggle is what Nyamubaya contests. Her contestation resonates with Bhabha's (1994) ideas on nation and narration, which define the nation as a contested

space. Bhabha (1994) explains that the performative necessity of nationalist representations enables all those individuals and groups located on the periphery of its norms and its limits to intervene in the signifying process and challenge the dominant representations with narratives of their own. In this case, it is the female freedom fighter who is excluded from dominant narratives, and hence the desire to inscribe her participation through her own narrative. Nyamubaya realises that patriotic history, from which derives the idea of patriotic identities, genders the national imaginary and needs to be contested. It is a contestation of the problem of alterity in a supposedly homogeneous society. Thus, the story confirms, as discussed below, Norridge's (2013:51) observation about "how patriotic narratives of togetherness and unity must be recalibrated when the writer examines individual stories."

As already submitted, the contestation of female exclusion from nationalist discourses is an area that has received adequate scholarly attention. However, the intention here is to expand on that by examining the way(s) in which that contestation is articulated. This thrust is informed by the understanding that there exists limited attention on the way the contestation is articulated. Thus, I am primarily interested in how Nyamubaya, as an early third generation writer, deconstructs male-constructed nationalist discourses.

To better understand how Nyamubaya contests the distinctly male Zimbabwean historiography, one needs to consider the politics of narration. In this case, I argue that the writer's narrative perspective is significant in engraving the subject narrator's participation in the liberation struggle. The story is written in the first person narrative perspective, and hence it is autobiographical. Smith and Watson (2001:119) note that in autobiography, the autobiographer is "both the narrator and the protagonist of the narrative." This indicates that the self is placed at the centre of the narration and this position is central to the way I read the story. Thus, in "That Special Place", Nyamubaya stories the autobiographical narrator's personal experiences during the liberation struggle. This use of the autobiographical mode of narration confers intimacy and immediacy to the events and experiences being narrated.

While it is true that there are problems associated with reliance on autobiography as an expression of an objective truth, the autobiographical narrative mode is central to the way writers represent personal experience. This is so because the autobiographical writers are empowered by "authority of experience" (Smith and Watson, 2001:27) and authority of presence (Chennells, 2009). This centrality of the autobiographical mode of writing is also confirmed by Mbembe (2001:2) in his submission that "African modes of writing the self are inseparably connected with the problematics of self-constitution." In pursuance of the same

line of argument, Mbembe (2001:3) notes further that autobiography can “open up a space in which [individuals] can narrate their own fables (self-definition) in a voice that cannot be imitated because it is authentically their own.” This intrinsic capacity of autobiography to open up spaces and confer an authentic voice on the autobiographical narrator is critical to the way I read Nyamubaya’s “That Special Place”. This is because Nyamubaya uses her own voice and makes reference to personal experience in order to deconstruct the patriarchal narrative of the nation to which the ruling elite is quite receptive.

In the story, the narrative embeds the female autobiographical narrator within the war of liberation discourse. This sedimenting of the female figure within the liberation matrix is significant in that it places the female at par with her male counterpart. In the process, the story subtly contests the distinctly male Zimbabwean historiography. The contestation is softly and calmly articulated as the writer simply grounds it in empirical evidence, hence the contention that she makes use of the brutal mirror and a velvet hammer, an approach that covertly shapes political discourse. In other words, the contestation is not as radical as is the case with Gappah’s stories that are analysed later in this chapter.

In addition to placing the female figure within the war of liberation narrative, there is also an implied celebration of female courage and resilience in the story. For instance, the autobiographical narrator describes the beatings that she is subjected to while at Tembwe Training Camp in Mozambique and how she braves them. Despite the torture that she receives in order to force her to confess that she has been sent by the enemy to infiltrate the guerrilla camps, she remains resilient. As she asserts, in her conversation with Che, a male freedom fighter who is in the same predicament with the narrator, she is encouraged to “cook up a story and tell these guys that you were sent by the enemy otherwise you will die in this small thatched hut” (p.225) but remains unshaken as she is convinced that “it was wrong to tell lies” (p.225). Thus, right up to the end, the narrator insists that she is innocent. Her courage is contrasted with the timidity of the male recruits who end up making up stories in order not to get further beatings. This contrast underscores the central role that females played during the struggle.

Furthermore, the fact that the autobiographical narrator weathers the vagaries of hunger and deplorable conditions also attests to the resilience of the female cadres during the liberation struggle. The deplorable nature of the conditions is given testament to by the non-existence of good food (p.223), overcrowding and poor sanitation and their living in makeshift huts made of grass walls and khaki sack doors (p.218) which makes it impossible for them to enjoy privacy. In addition, she is, as noted in her conversation with Che, the only woman around in

the interrogation hut (p.225). The narrator also mentions at one point that when she is asked to write the story of her life upon arrival at the camp, there are also two women “who had been assisted across the Zambezi by a comrade” (p.222). This is further proof of female participation and bravery during the liberation struggle, a reality that the grand narrative about the war of national liberation ignores.

Ultimately, Nyamubaya’s “That Special Place” confirms that females were involved in the liberation struggle. The autobiographical narrator de-silences the past and inscribes her active participation in the war of liberation. This point about female participation is in line with Anthias and Yuval-Davis’ (1989:10) argument that “women are participants in national, economic, political and military struggles contrary to many nationalist representations which depict women in a supportive and nurturing relation to men.” Coiled within this argument is the suggestion that the story “That Special Place”, in typical third generation writing tradition, explodes popular perceptions. It flies in the face of nationalist discourses which forget the presence and narratives of certain peoples within its imaginary boundaries in order to function. Through the invoking of personal experience, Nyamubaya demonstrates that while the ZANU PF political elite valorise sameness and not difference in the articulation of patriotic identities in post-2000 Zimbabwe, she is certainly not reading from the same script as her depicted past indicates the contrary. Thus, the narrative perspective employed here is consistent with the subversion of the male version of patriotic history.

3.3 A searing exposé of the ruling elite’s dark past in “That Special Place”

ZANU PF’s post-2000 grand narrative in Zimbabwe is that the freedom fighters were a monolithic block during the liberation struggle. The narrative insists that the freedom fighters were united and enjoyed a harmonious relationship. As a result, the ruling elite is impatient with narratives that paint negative pictures on what happened during the liberation struggle. They regard any writer’s exposure of the dark side of the liberation struggle as anathema. This is the perspective that Nyamubaya writes against. Her story is an antithesis of the ruling elite’s discourses as it exposes the politically offensive that happened during the liberation struggle. Here, it is significant to note that Nyamubaya, in writing about an offensive past in a post-2000 period that is dominated by inward-looking black nationalist ZANU-PF grand narratives, actually uses the past to address a present political reality – that of the failure of the political process in Zimbabwe. This failure is articulated by Alden (2007:2) in the observation that “almost all the [...] writers feel that the government has failed the people by leading Zimbabweans into a disastrous economic crisis.” Nyamubaya makes the point that the failing

of the people is nothing new as even during the national liberation, women and some men were failed as their freedoms were trampled underfoot. Thus, the text is subversive and is located in the rhetoric of opposition.

As already stated, “That Special Place” confirms Norridge’s (2013:51) submission about “how patriotic narratives of togetherness and unity must be recalibrated when the writer examines individual stories” as the story speaks with authority on the prevailing state of affairs prevailing during the liberation struggle. Nonetheless, the story is written from a victim’s perspective and exposes the brutality, inhuman treatment and rape inflicted on freedom fighters at the training camps. The intention in this section of the chapter is to analyse Nyamubaya’s deconstruction of the ruling elite’s patriotic narratives of togetherness and significance towards the reshaping of the political discourse in Zimbabwe post-2000.

To begin with, Nyamubaya takes the autobiographical narrator’s body as her narrative point of departure. This stance is critical in that, as Smith and Watson (2001:37) contend, “the body is a site of autobiographical knowledge, as well as a textual surface upon which the person’s life is inscribed.” In the context of Nyamubaya’s story, the body is the source of the autobiographical narrator’s political consciousness and this is important in that it signifies the writer’s courage to speak the unspeakable. Nyamubaya graphically describes how the autobiographical narrator was raped by Nyathi during the liberation struggle. In a tone of bitterness tinged with contempt, the narrator writes about how “that beast Nyathi broke his way into my vagina and escaped with my virginity” (p.227). Apart from the contempt for Nyathi, there is also sympathy for the narrator that is aroused in the reader when considering that the rape is gruesome and animalistic. To further underscore the pain that the narrator feels, she describes how “Nyathi had a big black penis whose erection got harder with resistance” (p.228). Here, Nyamubaya uses vivid and explicit language that shocks in order to underscore the narrative’s dissident inclination. It is a way of obliquely showing her abhorrence of the military leaders’ actions during the war of liberation. In addition, the narrator submits, “I was fifteen, and I cried as I felt blood run down my legs on my way back to the barracks in the moonlight” (p.228). Thus, Nyamubaya underlines the young age of the autobiographical narrator to further amplify the level of pain that was experienced.

Speaking publicly about sexual issues, more so those related to the liberation struggle, is taboo subject in Zimbabwe. Nonetheless, Nyamubaya has “defied [political] prohibitions by publishing [a] narrative of [a] sexed and gendered bod[y]” (Smith and Watson, 2001:41). This analytic perspective underscores the narrative’s subversive undertones. It is a discourse that is

constructed around female self-disclosure. Thus, “That Special Place” can also be read as an archive of sexual tribulations of a female ex-combatant. It is an autobiographical story of sexual abuse and primal scenes of violence (Smith and Watson, 2001) inflicted on the autobiographical narrator during the liberation struggle. Not only the narrator is a victim of rape but other women too are as given testament to by how “several brave rural farmers complained that their women and children were being sexually abused in the base camps back at home” (p.220).

Another interesting point is that the Zimbabwean ruling party leadership wears a male face, as expressed through the phallogentric nationalist historiography, and is uncomfortable with the exposure of stories of, or about rape in military camps during the war of liberation. Writing about respectable middle-class women in the nineteenth century, Smith and Watson (2001:390) contend that the women “could not, and would not, tell sexual stories about their bodies because the cultural meanings assigned to those bodies had to do with myths of the corrupt nature of female sexuality. To speak about sex was to shame or pollute oneself.” The emphasis here is on the suppression of narratives that deal with the gendered and sexed female body. The above-noted Smith and Watson (2001) idea resonates with the Zimbabwean context in that the popular feeling among the ruling elite is that an exposure of liberation war-time sexual violence taints the freedom fighters, casts them in bad light and does irreparable damage to their image. As a result, such narratives are intentionally relegated to oblivion because, from the perspective of the ruling elite, forgetting is protective. In addition, those writers who dare to focus on such taboo subjects incite the condemnation of both their narratives and their lives as scandalous. However, Nyamubaya’s story transgresses the boundaries of the politically and morally unspeakable by describing the autobiographical narrator’s body as “situated at a nexus of [...] gender [and] sexuality” (Smith and Watson, 2001:38). Those descriptions account for the narrative’s subversive inclination as the story contests the notion that harmony prevailed during the liberation struggle since it fictionally recreates sexual violence characterising this historical event.

Nyamubaya adopts the autobiographical mode or narrative perspective to expose the rape of the narrator as a means to confront authority. This point is buttressed by Veit-Wild’s (2006:197) assertion that “speaking out in public about their rape by male comrades in the guerrilla camps, female ex-combatants broke a long-guarded taboo and contributed to ‘desilencing and deconstructing the male history of the Second Chimurenga.’” Through speaking out, the narrator exposes the brutality of the male guerrillas, and hence insinuates that they are

not deserving of the veneration they receive nor the central role that they take in the post-2000 grand narrative about patriotism.

“That Special Place” is a victim’s narrative that focuses on “bodily-centred crisis and trauma” (Smith and Watson, 2001:41). It is a “gripping example of [Nyamubaya’s] foray into the trope of incarceration and the aesthetics of trauma” (Adesanmi and Dutton, 2005:12), an observation which is also noted by Hewett (2005:10) in the submission that women writers of the third generation have evolved an “aesthetics of pain”. Thus, the trauma that assails the narrator is evident in the story. For instance, the narrator explains how she is affected by the rape incident as shown in her statement, “for years, my body reacted to the memory, and it was years before I felt whole again” (p.228). This underscores the morally revulsive and traumatic nature of the experience of the rape. The lack of psychic wholeness for a long time and an implied need for emotional first aid and mental rehabilitation underscore the negative impact of the rape. In addition, the narrator is subjected to gendered insults as noted in the way she is labelled a “prostitute [who is] bitching around with those Frelimo soldiers” (p.224). She is further publicly humiliated because of this ‘crime’: “instead of coming to fight for Zimbabwe, she came to sleep around with Frelimo soldiers in Tete” (p.227). In yet another instance that occurs during her interrogation, Nyathi orders Chombo, his assistant, to use a scissors to cut through the narrator’s hair “from ear to ear and from the forehead to the back of her neck and then let’s see if she thinks she is beautiful [and] special” (p.226). This act symbolises the mutilation of the narrator’s ego and her sense of self-worth, hence, the disabling memories of trauma she has to contend with for the rest of her life. Such memories do not fade. This is the reason she speaks out these memories, and in the process “engage[s], contest[s] and revise[s] cultural norms determining the relationship of bodies to specific sites, behaviours and destinies” (Smith and Watson, 2001:42). The exposure of such memories undermines and problematises the ruling elite’s patriotic history grand narrative of togetherness and unity which they claim prevailed during the war of liberation.

The story also exposes how some military camps were turned into torture chambers for the brutalisation of liberation fighters. This is evident when new recruits are interrogated and tortured on suspicion of being traitors. The Camp Security Commander, Nyathi, is described as “vicious and cruel” and one who “thrived on sadism and intimidation” (p.219). This image of monstrosity underscores the male military hierarchy’s penchant for violence. The narrator submits how interrogation was “accompanied by a slash on the buttocks with a whip or a slap on the face” (p.221). This naked violence confirms McClintock’s (1993:61) assertion that “all

nationalisms are dangerous in the sense of representing relations to political power and to the technologies of violence.” Thus, those who lack access to the technologies of violence as is the case with the narrator and her fellow male suspects are insecure in multiple ways since they are beaten and are forced to do hard tasks such as “fetching grass and poles for construction, digging toilets and weeding in the camp fields” (p.223). This is decisive evidence to prove that they were fundamentally ill-treated. Therefore, the narrative deconstructs the ruling elite’s claims that the freedom fighters enjoyed a harmonious relationship and pokes holes on the patriotic history project.

It is also important to note that the violence to which the freedom fighters are exposed has a traumatic effect on them. Che, one of the victims of the brutalities of the camp commanders, who ends up with a mental illness, evidences this. The narrator describes how, when she met Che in the streets of Harare, “nothing he said made sense, and I realised he was mentally ill” (p.228). The narrator is also definitive that Che’s condition is a result of the treatment he received at Tembwe Training Camp in Mozambique. This is noted in the narrator’s statement that “I am sure it arose at that special place: the place that many people in this world will never know or understand” (p.228). This quotation is significant in that it illuminates the significance of the title of the story. The title is ironic because the place is associated with bad memories, hence it cannot be considered special. The irony is deliberately intended to draw attention to the challenges that some of the liberation fighters faced and thus disrupt the sanitised ruling elite’s post-2000 narration of the nation’s history.

The story’s conclusion is subtly radical. It is clear that Nyamubaya deliberately treads on the terrain of the unspeakable as noted in her reference to Tembwe Training Camp as “the place that many people in the world will never know or understand” (p.228). The implication here is that the memories of what prevailed there during the war of liberation are submerged amidst other bad memories. In other words, those memories are classified as not worthy remembering by the ruling ZANU PF elite which invents ways to bury or at least reshape the vast majority of their worst moments. This deliberate forgetting is central to discourses on suppression. Nonetheless, Nyamubaya excavates such memories and by so doing refuses to sanitise the old Zimbabwean men’s patriotic history. Contrary to Mbembe’s (2001:16) contention that “the self that claims to speak with its own authentic voice always runs the risk of being condemned to express itself in a pre-established discourse that masks its own, censors it, or forces it to imitate”, Nyamubaya refuses to tread on the male national narrative trajectory.

Overall, Nyamubaya's "That Special Place" is a quintessential expression of third generation writerly subversion. She deconstructs the male nationalist historiography and names the unnameable through her depiction of rape and the ill-treatment experienced by freedom fighters. The pith of the argument presented here is that Nyamubaya writes in a matter-of-fact manner, and she writes less brutally as well as less violently. The language of this velvet hammer aesthetic is nuanced and coded in a way that makes it fall within third generation writerly subversion. The writer does not shirk difficult facts but subverts by exposing them, and thus engages with patriotic identities at another level. Nyamubaya's approach is different from Gappah's, which is explored in the next section of this chapter.

3.4 Iconoclasm and political derision in Petina Gappah's *Rotten Row*

In line with Felski's (2008) contention that literary works actively engage with their historical and social contexts, Gappah's collection of stories in *Rotten Row* (2016) connect with the world around them in intimate ways. The bulk of the stories capture contemporary Zimbabwean experiences, with each having remote or close echoes of criminality. This close connection with crime makes all the stories converge around the image of Rotten Row courts in Harare where criminal cases are handled. The stories, twenty of them to be precise, are divided into two sections, namely "Capital" and "Criminal" and all of them are a representation of the prevailing state of affairs in Zimbabwe. However, for purposes of this study, only two stories, namely "The President Always Dies in January" and "From a Town Called Enkeldoorn" both of which are taken from the section "Criminal" are analysed. The focus is not on the criminal element but on the way(s) in which Gappah as a contemporary third generation writer demonstrates her attitude to authority, a strand that is connected to the chapter's focus, which is the way the two female writers under focus transgress boundaries and name the unnameable in the Zimbabwean political matrix.

As was the case with Nyamubaya's "That Special Place", Gappah's stories are read through the optic of the third generation writerly subversion and the notion of speaking the unspeakable. Both stories analysed here are firmly located in the counter-discursive canon because they authorise "insurgent knowledges" (Young, 2001:15) and evince a "tendency towards subversion" (Ashcroft et. al., 2007:45). The insurgency and subversive elements that pervade the stories explain why I categorise both stories as falling within the realm of what Mbembe (1992) terms political derision. In addition, both stories confirm that Gappah is an iconoclastic writer who has pushed the boundaries with her highly subversive narratives.

In order to properly contextualise the thrust of the argument here, it is critical to make a brief discussion on what the objects of reverence are and what is deemed sacred in post-2000 Zimbabwe. To answer this question, I turn to Ranger's (2004) ideas on patriotic history. In his formulation, patriotic history valorises the ruling ZANU PF party. This argument is supported by Tendi (2010:4) as noted in the submission that "patriotic history boils down to ZANU-PF as the alpha and omega of Zimbabwe's past, present and future." This description underscores that the ZANU PF party is the correct object of reverence in Zimbabwe post-2000. This point is also noted by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009) in the contention that patriotic history is defined by an unquestioned loyalty to the liberation movement in the mould of ZANU PF and its leader. These scholarly ideas on what is deemed sacred in post-2000 Zimbabwe are also buttressed by Mbembe's (1992) insightful ideas on the postcolony. Mbembe suggests that the correct object of reverence in the postcolony is the *commandement*, a French term which he uses to denote a spectacularly performed authority. As he contends, "the *commandement* defines itself as a cosmology, or simply as a fetish. A fetish is, among other things, an object which aspires to be made sacred, it demands power and seeks to maintain a close, intimate relationship with those who carry it" (1992:10). This description of the *commandement* as sacred is essential in that it influences my analysis of Gappah's stories on the grounds that the short story smashes that which is treated with reverence. Mbembe (1992:10) further contends that "fetishistic power in the postcolony is invested in the person of the autocrat and in the persons of the commandement and its agents – the party, policemen, soldiers [...]". Expressed in a different way, the political elite wield power over the ordinary people and they expect to be regarded as sacred and to be treated with reverence. Nonetheless, Gappah's stories under focus here deconstruct the sacred image of the fictional president and the ruling elite.

In the Zimbabwean context post-2000, loyalty to the institution of the presidency and other grand narratives such as the war of liberation that are deemed central to the coming into being of the Zimbabwean nation is expected from every citizen. Every Zimbabwean citizen is, to borrow from Mbembe (1992:4), "officially forbidden to depart from or challenge" the ruling party's grand narratives. As a result, those in authority promote a specific political consciousness in citizens to guard against any form of challenge and also resort to "the systematic application of pain" (Mbembe, 1992:4). Mbembe (1992:11) notes further that this violence is used to "protect the vocabulary used to denote the *commandement* or to speak to it and to safeguard the official fictions that underwrite the apparatus of domination." The argument here is that the *commandement* keeps itself in power by any means necessary.

It is against this background of state control that the chosen stories from Gappah's *Rotten Row* (2016) are read as narratives that poke holes in sacred institutions. That is so because, despite the fact that "all verbal dissidence, whether written or sung, is the object of close surveillance and repression" (Mbembe, 1992:17). Gappah nonetheless navigates that treacherous terrain and criticises those in authority. The basic argument here is that Gappah is a writer who does not pander to what the *commandement* expects from ordinary citizens. If anything, she opposes the veneration of the political elite through satire and humour. This style of writerly subversion is typical of contemporary third generation writers, a point which is explained by Manase (2011:5) who says that satire and sardonic humour are typical of "narratives by some of the urban-born or urban-raised third generation Zimbabwean writers, whose perceptions were not influenced by Christian mission education values." Humour is an effective tool that is deployed by writers to deconstruct regimes of power. It is an expression of resistance or dissidence. This point is buttressed by Mbembe's (1992:8) contention that humour is a "manifestation of hostility towards authority." Thus, unlike Nyamubaya who uses the velvet hammer approach, humour and satire are part of the linguistic protocols by which Gappah deconstructs the grand portrait of the president and discourses considered seminal to the founding of Zimbabwe as a nation.

In addition to this third generation writerly subversion that is evident in Gappah's stories under focus in this chapter, the argument also draws traction from the way Gappah names the unnameable. Coiled within this idea of the speaking of the unspeakable is the entrenchment of the absence of freedom. This is in line with Foucault's (1979) submission that even the contents of our thoughts, together with the institutions that circumscribe our lives, are expressions of systemic power. Foucault paints a picture of people as puppets, in thrall to institutions that channel the interests of the elite. As he observes, institutions discipline individuals into upholding the status quo. This idea is given more force by Thalos (2016) in her contention that systems inhabit our imaginations to the extent that one's mind cannot expand to take in available alternatives, even if only to draw a map of hypothetical pathways. However, Gappah demonstrates that her ideas are an antithesis of those expected of individuals by state institutions. In fact, she is her own woman and in her stories, there is, to quote Mbembe (1992:11), "a breach in the wall of prohibitions. [She] transgresses taboos and constraints [and that way] unpacks the officialese and its protective taboos and tear apart the gods that African autocrats aspire to be." This transgression of taboos and tearing apart of autocrats is central to the way the argument put forward in this section of the chapter is formulated.

It must be noted, though, that the speaking of the unspeakable and the third generation writerly subversion are not mutually exclusive. Instead, they are conjunctive, and hence the importance given to the two concepts in analysing Gappah's stories. This conjunctive aspect is captured by Mbembe (1992:8) in his discussion about autocrats in the postcolony when he submits that "by making it possible to play and have fun outside the limits set by officialdom, the very fact that the regime is a sham allows ordinary people to say the unsayable and to recognise the unrecognisable." Evident here is a conflation of third generation writerly subversion, especially with regards to the deployment of humour, and the naming of the unnameable. The two concepts are an overarching influence in the way Gappah's stories are analysed in this section of the chapter.

3.5 Gappah's "The President Always Dies in January" and the subversion of the fetish perfection

Gappah's "The President Always Dies in January" subverts the enunciated allegiance to the president viewed in the state's grand narratives as the quintessential expression of patriotism in post-2000 Zimbabwe. The president is regarded as one of the correct objects of reverence in the post-2000 patriotic discourses. It has to be noted, however, that Gappah, through the way she portrays her fictional characters, radically departs from deifying or glorifying the president. Instead, she marks him out as an object of ridicule. Thus, the story fits in well within the body of literature that test the image of the president as a champion of democracy and the Third Chimurenga. It puts into sharp focus the magnitude of revulsion that the president arouses in ordinary people. The story expresses through a satirical tone, serious misgivings over the veneration of the president. Thus, the story is read here as "a refusal to preach before the fetish the fiction of its perfection" (Mbembe, 1992:21). Expressed differently, Gappah adopts an iconoclastic stance by attacking that which is considered sacred. Unlike Nyamubaya who uses a velvet hammer approach, Gappah shuns oblique discourses and adopts a confrontational approach. Hers is a discourse of inversion (Mbembe, 2001) as she deliberately sets out to deconstruct the veneration of the president. It is the way that Gappah subverts the sacred that largely informs the argument in this chapter.

The story focuses on Fortune Mpande, a former Zimbabwe Broadcasting Co-operation (ZBC) employee who now lives as a refugee in Luton in the United Kingdom after fleeing imprisonment in Zimbabwe for committing the crime of reading unedited news. Contrary to his expectations that he would be gainfully employed in the United Kingdom, Fortune finds himself working as a care giver. It is only after the fictional Zimbabwean president insults all

those who work in care homes as British Bottom Cleaners that Fortune, together with his associates, the self-styled Keyboard Warriors, embarks on a crusade to undermine the president on social media platforms. His crusade is based on resentment of the president as the author of his predicament. When Fortune and the Keyboard Warriors hear about the fall of the president on the carpet at the airport, they magnify the story and post it on various social media platforms. Thus, the news of the fall gets viral and is shared on various platforms throughout the world and as it is circulated, it gets blown out of proportion until the president is reported dead; but as it turns out, it is fake news as the president is, as proven at the end of the story, alive and very much in control.

As the title of the story suggests, the president goes through an infinite cycle of death and renewal (resurrection). This is a perfect metaphor for what happens to him health-wise in a world that runs on social media. Every year he dies in January and each year he is resurrected before dying again the next January. What is clear in both the title of the story and the story itself is that there is a presidential death wish and this underscores the revulsion that the president arouses in ordinary people.

The story, “The President Always Dies in January”, is an overt political commentary that resides in the domain of political derision. It depicts contemporary Zimbabwean politics and makes no attempt to mask the object of its attack. Interestingly, Gappah (2016:x) in ‘A Note on *Rotten Row*’ confesses that “any coincidences between real life and the fictional lives of my ill-fated characters is only further proof that, as is written in the Book of Ecclesiastes, that which has been is what will be, that which is done is what will be done and there is nothing new under the sun.” What is fascinating here is that Gappah does not regret the resemblances. If anything, she brushes them aside as an inevitable consequence of the ‘way of things’ as “there is nothing new under the sun”. In a way, Gappah shields her intentions under the biblical armour and that on its own is a pre-emptive attack that is meant to foreclose contestation. What is clear in the narrative is that Gappah grapples with a distinctly Zimbabwean experience and attacks the fictional president in a no-holds-barred fashion.

Firstly, the president is attacked because he is the cause of the Zimbabwean people’s miseries as given testament to by the fact that so many Zimbabweans are living in the diaspora. The Zimbabwean exiles lead demeaning lives as epitomised by the protagonist who “makes a living caring for Britain’s ageing population, [a job which is] poorly paid but requires rich reserves of patience and unflinching good cheer” (p.163). In addition, Fortune at one point finds himself living in a “two-bedroom flat shared by eight other Zimbo men in Woolwich [where at one

time] he had spent a week sleeping in the bathtub while listening to the sounds of furtive copulation from the next room” (p.169). This bleak image illustrates the challenges of living in the diaspora. However, the author brings home this bleakness through the grim conclusion that “in Woolwich, he had lived worse than he would have in any township in Harare” (p.170). Here, Gappah picks up a recurring motif in post-2000 literary scholarship – that of the exploitation of Zimbabweans and their wretched living conditions in the diaspora. I acknowledge that a lot of scholarship devoted to that notably that by McGregor (2007), Block (2010) and Pasura (2010), is in existence. However, I refer to this thematic concern so as to properly contextualise where the hatred for the president emanates from.

In addition to causing the Zimbabweans to opt for the diaspora solution, the president is depicted as insensitive to their plight. This insensitivity is captured in the way he makes “caustic comments about how all people who had fled Zimbabwe were nothing but British Bottom Cleaners, only good for wiping the bottoms of white people” (p.170). The language that the president uses is coarse, hence, it incenses those in the diaspora. The writer notes that “it had been a cruel jibe that had expressed the heartlessness of the inner man. The insult had cut deeply” (p.171). We also learn that Fortune does not forgive the president for insulting him because “it seemed the president had come to his house, ordered its destruction, then pissed all over the shattered bricks and glass before laughing at his wailing grief” (p.170). The depiction here carries the tone of bitterness engulfing the protagonist, and by extension the displaced Zimbabweans. Mbembe (1992:15) notes that “the production of vulgarity needs to be understood as a deliberately cynical operation.” In this case, the president’s vulgar statements demonstrate the baroque character of the postcolony in terms of its unusual art of representation. His obscenity is a mode of expression which is “an integral part of the stylistics of power” (Mbembe, 1992:14). Therefore, the author is critical of such nauseous stylistics of power that is demonstrated by the president through his insensitivity to the plight of the Zimbabweans in the diaspora.

A discussion on how the dominated respond to the stylistics of power, as noted above is imperative. Such an exploration of how the dominated respond is critical to our understanding of the way(s) in which ordinary Zimbabweans subvert and deconstruct patriotic identities in the post-2000 era. Mbembe (1992:14) notes further that “obscene and grotesque elements are intrinsic to the means by which those systems are confirmed or deconstructed.” The story’s ordinary characters use the same linguistic protocols and political register that the president uses. This is symbolised by Fortune’s blog which uses the *Amai Bhoyi* alter ego to discuss

overtly sexual issues. Interestingly, the avatar is in the form of “a woman on her hands and knees with a large bottom invitingly offered to the viewer while she gives a knowing sideways wink” (p.166). In addition to that body language, “her most frequent comment for any woman in the news whether for good or bad things, is always the same: ‘*Haiwawo, kushaya anokwira uku*. She just needs a good screw” (p.166). Here, one gets the sense that Gappah exploits the use of the vulgar or obscene to register her subversive intent. She deploys the vulgar as a cynical operation. It is a means by which she subverts the dominant system. Thus, the narrative acts as a discourse of inversion (Mbembe, 2001) and draws its fundamental categories from the linguistic protocols and myths of the system that it opposes. This also explains why Fortune and the Keyboard Warriors congregate in virtual spaces to attack the president in an incognito mode. We note that “insulting the president is a specialisation of all of Fortune’s three avatars. He has not forgiven the president and his government for starving ZBC of funding while they insisted that journalists spread ruling party propaganda” (p.168). In the same breadth, the narrator submits how Fortune’s alter ego, the Rhodesian Brigadier, “does not hesitate to remind people of the glories of Rhodesia and the failures of Zimbabwe” (p.165). Here, Gappah employs a mocking and critical tone to underscore the extent to which Zimbabwe has been turned into a failed state by the ruling elite. Thus, Gappah deconstructs the image of the nation which is considered in state narratives as a sacred institution. In addition, Gappah is not deferential to the institution of presidency as noted in the way she empowers her fictional characters to insult the president. Hence, the subaltern fight back in response to the stylistics of power demonstrated by those in authority, the subaltern fight back using the same language that the powerful use.

Gappah acknowledges the impact of social media as a ‘democratic’ platform that eludes state control. It reshapes political reality through its capacity to speak to a borderless audience. The concept of social media as an enabling and democratic space is explored in various studies including those by Moyo (2007), Manase (2013), Mpofu (2013) and Keller et.al. (2016). In fact, Mpofu (2013:6), apart from contending that social media affords greater freedom of assembly and expression to different communities, “places the new media on a pedestal of a liberating alternative public sphere, where dominant acts of silencing debates, deemed ‘divisive’ by authorities are challenged.” This is the same observation that Keller et. al. (2016) make as noted in the contention that social media, which they refer to as digital mediation, allows new connections and democracies previously unavailable to citizens. Thus, Gappah shows the existence of fictional figures who are using “the weapons [they have] at [their]

disposal” (p.171). These figures use the language of the contemporary people to contest patriotic identities. Such language is emblematised by Fortune and the Keyboard Warriors’ pronouncement that their opposition to the president will be “tweeted, facebooked and social forumed” (p.171). Thus, the figures use the weapons of late modernity to fight the system and it is a so twenty first century approach. Therefore, Gappah’s approach is futurist – a strand located in, as noted earlier, the avant-garde writing tradition – and hence, is an antithesis of the ZANU-PF backward-looking approach. Thus, she subverts the patriotic image and discourses that are stuck in the past.

Furthermore, Gappah deploys parody and satire in the story in order to mock the supposedly sacred. One of the areas subjected to parody is the imaginary of the war of liberation, which is dubbed the Second Chimurenga in patriotic discourses. For instance, the story parodies the discourse about the war of liberation thus:

the rallying cry of the Second Chimurenga, the war against the settler regime had been: *tora gidi uzvitonge*; Pick up the gun and determine your own destiny. Fortune’s rallying cry along with his rowdy comrades in the Chimurenga, which, on Twitter they call the Twimurenga, was; *tora keyboard uzvitonge, tora unlimited broadband uzvitonge; tora Photoshop uzvitonge*. With these three weapons, Fortune became an avenging Crusader and Keyboard Warrior (p.171).

The quotation above shows a parodic reproduction of the rallying cry of the Second Chimurenga, a discourse considered sacred because of its centrality to the founding of Zimbabwe as a nation. Gappah mocks the objects of historical reverence in Zimbabwe by elevating social media platforms as an antithesis of the gun. Hence, the suggestion is that the fight now, unlike the ZANU-PF prescribed one, is at the level of ideas and on a new frontier altogether, which is the social media. This new front is emblematised by the way Fortune’s “attention moves between four screens: an iPad: a 40-inch Phillips TV screen playing a football match, a Sony Vimeo laptop and a Samsung galaxy phone” (p.163) and how he literally lives on social media platforms where “he is an active and permanent member of the Political Commentariat” (p.165).

In addition to the parody that Gappah deploys, one also gets a glimpse of how political derision is used to undermine discourses considered as sacred. Mbembe (1992:4) notes that this derision is characterised by people’s development of ways that separate words or phrases off from their conventional meanings and using them in quite another sense. In this way, people have built

up “a whole vocabulary, equivocal and ambiguous, that ran parallel to the official discourse” (Mbembe, 1992:4). In the story, Gappah makes reference to words such as “*twimurenga*” and phrases such as “*tora keyboard uzvitonge*” both of which have been divested of the meanings that they have in official discourse in Zimbabwe. In the same vein, the “Dare reTwimurenga” (p.171) is a parody of the Dare ReChimurenga, an important organ of the Zimbabwean liberation fighters comprising military personnel and civilian liberation leaders whose mandate was to determine the course of action to take in the midst of the war of liberation and to decide on leadership when in crisis. Even the opposition to the president, as noted earlier, is described as a revolution “that would be tweeted, Facebooked and social forumed” (p.171), which also shows the opposition as a parody of the liberation struggle. Thus, the parody and derision employed are significant to the mapping of Gappah’s story as subversive and iconoclastic.

The story also consists of a pattern of contempt for political power that is specifically targeted towards the president. The fictional president is caricatured and made an object of ridicule when he falls on the carpet at the airport. In typical mock-heroic terms, the president is “Photoshopped into patently ridiculous situations” (p.171) by the Keyboard Warriors. As the narrator notes, “there was the president doing the Pasodoble on Strictly Come Dancing, there he was running from the truncheons of his own riot police, there he was on a broom in mid-air [...] and there he was on the moon’s surface, arm-in-arm with Neil Armstrong, one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind” (p.171-2). Here, a staggering allusive density amplifies the ridiculousness of the president. The president’s fall is likened to a ballroom dance, the Pasodoble, and to a Quidditch match – both of which allude, in a sarcastic way, to how the president has fallen from grace. That the fall is also likened to Neil Armstrong – the American astronaut who first stepped onto the moon – is riddled with irony. The fall is the first step for man and the implications of the fall are the “one giant leap for mankind”. In other words, the one small step for man is in reference to the president’s physical frailty which points to his imminent demise. The depiction of a frail president flies in the face of patriotic narratives that venerate the president. The one giant leap for mankind implies that the president’s looming death could lead to the turning around of the Zimbabweans’ fortunes. Thus, embedded within this quotation is the idea that the president forestalls political and economic progress in the country, hence, the celebration on the part of those who witness the fall. The fall, thus, is depicted through hyperbolic images so as to reinforce the contempt for the president.

The depiction of the president calls to mind Said’s (1978:272) contention about representation when he submits that “any and all representation, [...] are representations [because they] are

embedded in the language [...] and political ambience of the representer". Said (1978:273) suggests further that representations are done for a purpose and hence they are "formations or deformations". The import of these submissions is that representations have a political dimension to them since they are meant to achieve a specific purpose. In this case, Gappah's intention is to portray the fictional president as gross, thus, making him an object of ridicule. In addition, the president is also lampooned for reading "the same speech twice [and for] sleeping in public" (p.171). The tone that the narrator uses in describing the president's faltering in public is one of mockery, thus further underscoring the way contemporary third generation writers slough off patriotic identities.

The contempt with which the fictional president is regarded is further highlighted in the story's direct reference to his testicles. Constable Mafa, one of the characters in the story and the one who mockingly points out that the president always dies in January, asks the youths who had been rounded and locked up in police cells the night before for a brawl on account of a misunderstanding over the president's "death", if they had "forgotten about the president's testicles" (p.177). The narrator notes how the perplexed youths:

are too young to remember that for years it had been rumoured that the president's ability to father children had been a casualty of the armed struggle for their independence [...] until the circulation of yet another rumour, that their Medical Marvel of a president had had his life-giving force returned to him through special surgery in China (p.177).

Here, Gappah draws on the vulgar and derisive as she transgresses and pushes boundaries of political and personal taboos. Reference to sexual organs is intrinsically vulgar and hence, deliberately cynical. Mbembe (1992:8) contends that reference to the genital organs of the men in power makes people laugh in a way that kidnaps power and forces it, "to examine its own vulgarity." Thus, Gappah is being deliberately subversive in her sustained attack of the president. This attack is also noted in the omniscient narrator's sceptical and humorous conclusion that:

a few rational minds noted the absurdity of this [the returning of the president's testicles through surgery]; if indeed the testicles had been reattached, they were surely not his own. Unless of course, said a caustic wit, Ian Smith had very kindly and thoughtfully kept the originals cryogenically frozen next to his peas and carrots, just for the eventuality that they would be needed, for a special surgery in China (p.177-8).

What Gappah does here is both unmask and emasculate the fictional president, thus further underscoring her subversive intent in the story.

The president is also attacked for his ostentatious display of power. This power is symbolised by the presidential entourage in the:

sixteen-vehicle motorcade [which] is seen speeding into town from the airport [...] and then the long black limousine labelled ZIM1 – with windows darkened so that the Ozymandias within does not have to look upon his works, this Mighty One, and despair [...] and, finally bringing up the rear, an ambulance, the only one in the entire country that is guaranteed to be fully equipped (p.179).

Such extravagance confirms Mbembe's (1992:17) assertion that "the postcolony is characterised by a loss of any limits or sense of proportion." The allusion to P.B Shelly's poem "Ozymandias" is significant in that the poem has as its theme the idea that all tyrants are eventually defeated and reduced to nothing. The poem is a reminder to the powerful people about the transient nature of their power since they are mere mortals. Thus, by alluding to "Ozymandias", parallels are drawn between the ancient king in Shelly's poem and the president. The poem's tone is ironic and mocking, and this is the same tone that Gappah creates here.

The megalomaniac sense that is captured in the image of Ozymandias is replicated in equal measure in the way the president is addressed especially on the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC). The first point of totalitarian neglect is that the ZBC journalists are forced to "spread party propaganda" (p.168) without being paid even "for a full year" (p.168). The narrator describes further how "working in news meant reading no news at all, but pure propaganda, all to elevate the man they were forced to call not just the president, but the president and Head of State and Government and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces" (p.168-9). The use of these multiple titles captures the way in which the president is deified and highlights a sense of omnipotence. However, Fortune Mpande and his friend Gabriel Makonyera go on to invert this, "after a particularly ambitious parliamentarian had said the president could not be compared to a mere mortal but was God's Other Son" (p.169). They call the president by his official title and added self-bestowed titles of Idi Amin and Emperor Bokassa to style him, "President and Head of State and Government and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Lord of all the Beasts of the Earth and Fishes of the Seas, the Thirteenth Apostle of Jesus Christ and God's Other Son" (p.169). The inversion registers a tone of

bitterness and concretises the writer's disenchanted vision. It also confirms Ncube's (2016:217) contention that the act of naming is a "socio-political praxis for re-imagining social relations in Zimbabwe during the post-2000 period that is characterised by socio-political and economic turmoil and crisis." Thus, Gappah uses irony and inversion in her deconstruction of the president's sense of greatness.

The thread of presidential deification is further noted when Chopper, a member of the Grassroots Empowerment Group, claims that the president is not a mortal. In his heated exchange with the two traditional beer drinkers who seem to celebrate the "death" of the president, Chopper accuses them of insulting the president by insisting that "you said he is like you or me! [...] You said he is a mere mortal" (p.177). This scene evokes hilarious laughter and sardonic humour because of the irony that Gappah deftly deploys in order to explode the perception that the president is an immortal.

It is also implied that the president is ruthless and insensitive. His ruthlessness is highlighted in the reference to "the rubble of houses destroyed by bulldozers in the last week" (p.178). This echoes Operation Murambatsvina where people's houses were destroyed ostensibly to make the urban environment clean. His insensitivity is noted in the way the windows of his limousine are "darkened so that [he] does not have to look upon his works" (p.179). The darkened windows therefore are a portrayal of an attitude, in this case, the president's intransigence and his unwillingness to acknowledge the failure of his political ideas.

The contempt for political power is not only confined to the president. Gappah also attacks those the president ring-fences himself with. For instance, the Information Minister who is said to be "cantankerous" (p.171) is lampooned because of his laughable attempts to defend the indefensible. He is depicted as a target of the Keyboard Warriors who work in shifts "to mock and pour scorn on his facile attempt to defend the increasingly hapless president" (p.171). The Minister struggles to defend the president when the president reads the same speech twice, only managing to unconvincingly dilute the impact of the presidential bungling by suggesting that the president did not read the same speech twice but "merely emphasised it" (p.171). By the same token, he defends the president's unseemly habit of sleeping in public by suggesting that "he was merely nodding in agreement" (p.171). In addition, he explains away the president's fall at the airport by insisting that "he did not actually fall, he attempted to break the fall" (p.171). Such blatant sycophancy and bootlicking does not escape Gappah's satire. The minister

is depicted as one of those people who do not want to acknowledge the fact of the president's diminishing physical health and functional status as well as his dwindling cognitive efficacy. Thus, his attempts to explain away the president's failings are pathetic and humorous, thus further underlining the writer's subversive intent.

In addition to the Information Minister, the president also ring-fences himself around his "combative spokesperson" (p.178). The description of the spokesperson as combative reinforces his readiness to fight or argue in defence of the president and the political edifice. It is the spokesperson who refutes it on ZBC when the news of the president's "death" circulates. The narrator portrays the way in which he rabidly refutes the rumour humorously in the description that, "the vitriol of the spokesperson's invective is matched by his inattention to grammar" (p.178). The inaccurate grammar, as noted in the spokesperson's statement that "the president's passing and/or demise is nothing than merely gossip [...] Such malcontentious talk is the work of those detractors, malcontents and renegades who do not believe that the country shall ever be a colon again" (p.178), highlights the mocking tone that Gappah adopts. As one of the president's political and ideological hit men, the spokesperson reads from the same script as the president, and hence there is no shortage of reaction to his radicalised stance as demonstrated by Gappah's satirical depiction of the spokesperson.

The president also gets support from the "See-ten", a colloquial term for members of the Central Intelligence Organisation. The intelligence operatives are said to be "everywhere, arresting people on public transport and in bars, listening on the streets to punish those who would dare to give their economic malaise a name, and that name, that of the president. They [...] are ready at any time and in any place to get offended on behalf of the president" (p.174). The author uses exaggeration to invoke a tone of contempt for the 'see-ten' because of their unreasonable protection of the president. Gappah is brutally frank in that she names the fictional president as the one responsible for the country's economic downturn. She is also sarcastic as she mocks the 'see-ten' for getting offended on the president's behalf.

Lastly, the structures and institutions that prop up the political edifice are also subjected to ridicule in the story. These include the youth members of the Grassroots Empowerment Group who are represented by Chopper, and legal provisions and institutions such as the ZBC. The author reflects the absurdity where the fact that the youths are unemployed does not stop them from "defend[ing] the president by any means necessary" (p.176). The writer mocks the youths who blindly support the president despite their indigent status. The mockery extends to the ZBC, which is infamously reputed for peddling falsehoods to the extent that whatever it

broadcasts is received with suspicion and scepticism. The narrator emphasises the wretched nature of the broadcaster's reputation by describing the propagandist presidential spokesperson's refutation of the president's death on ZBC that "the denial has the unintended effect of confirming the news [for] such is the national broadcaster's reputation that if it is to say that the sky is blue, people will look up to confirm that fact themselves" (p.178). Hence, the writer uses exaggeration and humorous depictions to subvert the youth's and national broadcaster's unquestionable support for the fictional president.

Gappah completes her dismantling of those around the president by focusing on the president's wife. The author describes the fictional president's wife as "the mistress who later became the Second First Lady" (p.177) and as "a pillar of toxic elegance" (p.179). The oxymoron in both descriptions indicates the sense of distaste that the writer has for the fictional first lady. That the wife is described as a pillar of "toxic elegance" suggests the writer's sense of outrage and tone of mockery. Therefore, Gappah's dismantling of all those around the president demonstrates her heterodox deconstruction and subversive portrayal of this figure who is expected to be held highly in the post-2000 Zimbabwean politics.

It is also important to note that Gappah demonstrates her disenchantment with the president through her characters. The author portrays the characters as lacking empathy for the president. There is an astonishing absence of fellow-feeling among her characters when they get the news about the president's "death". This lack of sentimentality is shared by a cosmopolitan constituency and for that reason, it is a marker of how the citizens across the globe perceive the political processes set in motion by the depicted president. The period from the moment the president collapses up to the time he is "declared dead" by witnesses is described thus:

all around the world, in every city where Zimbos have taken refuge in every city of every continent, there is ecstasy of typing on Twitter and Facebook and WhatsApp [...] as his countrymen and women across the world join to discuss the horizons that are revealed by this news (p.172).

This upsurge of interest in forums on every website such as "ZimOnline, ZimDaily, ZimUpdate, ZimNews, ZimSituation, ZimPanorama, ZimObserver, ZimTimes, ZimNow, ZimThen, ZimForever, RememberRhodesia.com" (p.172-3), actually underlines the magnitude of their resentment for the president. They all seem to have great expectations that he dies. Their wish for the president's death is concretised by the fact that "the president gets

progressively worse with each report [until he is declared dead]” (p.172). Thus, the declaration of the president’s death underscores the revulsion that the president generates in the citizens.

The news does not only appeal to the Zimbabweans living in the diaspora but also to a wide spectrum of the world population and the Zimbabweans at home. The story shows that the death appeals to the Mpandes of the textual and wider world. The narrator states that “the news soon makes its way to international news channels, to Al Jazeera, BBC and CNN” (p.173). However, despite correctly reporting that this is just a rumour, “it is this international imprimatur that gives the news ‘wings’ and this is noted in the way in Zimbabwe itself the words ‘BBC reports the President’s Death’ flashes on Gift Chauke’s phone at eight in the morning” (p.173). This shift in setting is important in that it highlights the degree of revulsion that the president elicits. Thus, there are various narratives in Zimbabwe which jostle for attention to confirm the veracity of the news of the president’s death. The narratives converge on the fact that they all wish him dead because he is the cause of the soaring unemployment. We are told that “the news [of the death] flashes on phones as the eighty-nine percent [unemployed] huddle to discuss it” (p.177). Their wish is encapsulated in one character’s pronouncement that “it was prophesied by that man in Nigeria, that prophet *wezi*Afro, that this would be the year that it happens” (p.175). This reference to a popular Nigerian prophet T.B Joshua and embedded euphemism for death confirm the prevalence of a death wish for the president, and hence a subversion of the existing state-controlled imagining of the presidency. Finally, the fact that the president is mocked in “death” reflects a strong dislike for him. He is described by one character as having been “too old” and “the oldest person in the country” (p.176), a fact which is confirmed by Constable Mafa when he emphasises that it is not an insult to say that the president is old because he is indeed old for “what is ninety two years if not old?” (p.176). This is a humorous moment that Gappah injects in the story in an attempt at underscoring her distaste for the president. Constable Mafa further comments that it is not an insult to say that someone is dead because the president is “not Jesus of Nazareth [but] just a mere mortal” (p.177). This biblical allusion focuses on issues of immortality through resurrection, but the fact that the president is contrasted to Jesus serves to highlight the lack of sympathy for him in his “death”. In addition to the mockery, the president’s “death” is celebrated as demonstrated by Tryson who is prepared to throw a “presidential party with a cover charge of thirty pounds” (p.173). This is suggestive of the excitement that is associated with the news. However, Gappah suggests that if anything could match the excitement that is associated with the news of the president’s death, it is the disappointment at the realisation that

he is alive. As the reader is told, “two nights later, the president appears on television, his wife beside him [...]. In a voiceover, a reporter breathes that ‘the president said he had the bones of a thirty-year old’” (p.179). While the comment is humorous, there is a tone of bitterness here just as is in the observation that another rumour circulates to the effect that the “president is not, after all, ninety-two. He is in fact only seventy” (p.179). Thus, the story ends on a note of disappointment because the president is alive and well. In addition, the disappointment reflects the writer’s strong feelings against the president.

Overall, Gappah, in “The President Always Dies in January” demonstrates that there is a withering-away of loyalty and loss of faith in the president because he is an embodiment of toxic political ideas. Gappah unmasks and attacks the fictional president, those who surround him and sacred institutions such as the liberation struggle using language that is described by Muchemwa (2011:262) in his discussion of Gappah’s *An Elegy for Easterly* (2009) as “deadpan humour.” In the process of attacking the president, Gappah separates the man from the myth but certainly does not separate the man from his noxious politics. Her contempt for the fictional president is deep-rooted as suggested by the offensive language that she uses to attack him. Ultimately, Gappah’s story is intrinsically iconoclastic and is located in discourses of political derision.

3.6 The digital age’s experimental form and dissidence in Gappah’s “From a Town Called Enkeldoorn”

This section focuses on Gappah’s vocabulary and stylistic approach in “From a Town Called Enkeldoorn”, which enables her to experiment with form and produce a tech-based unconventional narrative to determine its role in underlining the dissident narration of the story about the nation in post-2000 Zimbabwe. The story radically departs from formulaic fiction writing and spills beyond the confines or boundaries of familiar story-writing approaches. It reflects the preoccupations of its time as it is written in the form of social media interactions depicting characters dialoguing with each other. The story is remarkable because of Gappah’s outrageous inventiveness. Thus, Hayden White’s (1987) ideas on the inherent connection between the content and the form of literary texts give traction to the argument that I make in this section of the chapter. I also argue that the form of the social media exchange that Gappah deploys in the story is a prototypical model of storytelling in the digital age that symbolises an innovative literary approach, a sense of narration that is non-conformist to the dominant story of the state and a form of dissidence. Thus, the story’s unconventional form emblematises dissidence to the ZANU-PF grand narratives about the nation in post-2000 Zimbabwe.

The story “From a Town called Enkeldoorn” is, on the surface, about a Canadian national, Will, who is looking for his relatives with whom he has lost contact. He posts a message on the www.GreatZim.Com platform in the hope of getting information that could help him locate his relatives. As it turns out, Will’s story is pushed to the periphery by the trolling that follows the post and it becomes a side story. The story has two strands where the one which was supposed to be the main pales in comparison to the other. In non-literary parlance, the story is written in the dispassionate form of netizens retreating into their respective corners and sparring on social media. I argue that this debate among the online community is the pith of Gappah’s representation in the story. The story addresses the issues of colonialism and the Zimbabwean postcolonial situation, which are major themes in the ZANU-PF post-2000 grand narrative, but with piercing precision and both discourses being deconstructed by Gappah through sardonic satire and humour.

The authority of Gappah’s story derives primarily from both its style which in this case is its form, and its “factual evidence or rigor of argument” (White, 1987:20). In other words, Gappah’s political thought, and what I argue as her dissidence in this section, draws nourishment from the aesthetics of her writing and remarkable degree of creativity. For this reason, it is prudent to discuss the form of the story briefly since it is precisely the story’s form that is used as an expression of dissidence.

The story’s generic nomenclature defies pigeonholing and classification. There are characters dialoguing with each other, and a central subject, yet the ‘story’ “possesses none of the characteristics that we normally attribute to a story” (White, 1987:10). The story is not written in “the form that we normally associate with storytelling” (White, 1987:8) because it is written in the form of social media interactions. However, the narrative possesses a structure and an order of meaning since the ‘events’ are “ordered vertically as a file [...] into elements of a linear or horizontal process” (White, 1987:10). Thus, though it is an almost non-narrative mode of representation, Gappah’s approach is “a particularly effective system of discursive meaning production” (White, 1987:5) in which the social media exchanges are “the central organising principle of meaning of [the] discourse” (White, 1987:15). As a result, the narrative does not belong in the strictest definition of story-telling. This is significant in that it maps and opens up possibilities of creating new narratives predicated on the understanding that stories cannot be located in the realm of the traditional and old only, as ZANU-PF is known to do. In a sense, the story problematises and destabilises the one-dimensional ZANU-PF patriotic narratives.

In addition, Gappah does not “impose upon [the narrative] the form of a story” (White, 1987:8). Instead, her fiction is “capable of speaking itself and of displaying itself as a form of a story” (White, 1987:19). What this means is that Gappah adopts a writing perspective that, according to White (1987:8), does not “look out on the world and report it [but is] a discourse that feigns to make the world speak itself and speak itself as a story.” The import of these contentions is that the social media interactions are some kind of crowd-sourced story-telling where the author detaches herself from the story while letting the characters tell their stories. Nonetheless, this detachment is a calculated assault on authority that the writer observes with a critical gaze. In addition, the metanarrative symbolises a sense of dialoguing and multi-vocality that ZANU PF does not practise. Thus, Gappah uses the story’s form to subvert ZANU-PF’s monologue.

I read “From a Town called Enkeldoorn” as a subversive story because of its nuanced form. To echo Olney (1988), the story’s indefiniteness, its lack of generic rigor and its comfortably loose fit and generous adaptability account for its subversive inclination. As noted earlier, the story is written in the form of a social media troll. The form departs from mainstream story-telling techniques and assists in demonstrating Gappah’s dissidence. The departure is consistent with third generation writing which is associated with an avant garde style and non-conformism. In light of this, as White (1987:4) argues, the “narrative is not merely a neutral discursive form that may or may not be used to represent real events [...] but entails ontological and epistemic choices with distinct ideological and even specific political implications.” The political implications of the story are captured in the avant garde approach which in this case is a symbolic attack on the location of the grand narratives about the nation and patriotism in old aesthetics that do not conform to the present. Thus, the story has to be read as a narrative that addresses a particular political agenda.

In addition to the lack of generic compartmentalisation, the social media troll that Gappah deploys is significant because it allows for a disjuncture in the narrative as noted in the disjointed nature of the story which is characterised by “abrupt narrative transitions” (Muchemwa, 2013:75). The disjuncture is portrayed in the way the online community engage with each other almost in an uncoordinated fashion. I read this disjuncture or lack of coordination as an oblique way of expressing dissidence. That is so because the writer purposefully creates a layer of narrative opacity that is beyond the threshold of ordinary readership but for the professional critic. In addition, despite the fact that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, I submit that the voices that intrude on and interrupt each other contribute to the meandering way in which Gappah articulates her central concerns. Thus, I

contend that being deliberately vague through this disjuncture is a radical act. This radicalism is expressed through having an authorial voice that allows the participants to reshape the narrative's twists and turns.

Apart from its form, what also accounts for the story's iconoclastic inclinations is, as already mentioned, the rigor of its satirical commentary. Before analysing the argument that Gappah grapples with, it is appropriate to mention that there is a compression of issues in the story. The central concerns are dealt with within the confines of a single night – that is, from 18:47 to 23:55 to be precise. This is typical of online communication, which overcomes the constrictions of space and time. This echoes Ricouer's (1984) postulation that there is an intrinsic connection between narrative and time since narrative deals with the temporal character of human experience. As Ricouer (1984:4) notes, "the world unfolded by every narrative work is always a temporal world. Time becomes human time to the extent that it is organised after the manner of a narrative; narrative in turn, is meaningful to the extent that it portrays the features of temporal experience." Thus, the temporal precision that we witness in the story parallels the way Gappah meticulously examines issues at hand as noted in the way she inventories a concise summary of historical and current political events happening in Zimbabwe, and hence, the contention that there is an in-depth commentary in the story.

As is the case in the story "The President Always Dies in January" in which Gappah demonstrates an iconoclastic attitude towards sacred institutions, Gappah registers her disappointment with the continued failure of political processes in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe in "From a Town Called Enkeldoorn". The story provides a cogent historical summary and a near-panoramic view of the colonial experience in Zimbabwe and after. Gappah deconstructs the discourse of colonialism for the evil that it was and subverts the Zimbabwean postcolonial narrative for the evil that it is. As shall be explained later, the evil of colonialism is captured in the way whites took black people's land and were racist (p.241), while that of the Zimbabwean postcolonial narrative is noted in the way the ruling elite have led to the collapse of the economy (p.239, 242) and instituted undemocratic political processes (p.241). The story therefore, is, to quote Chennells (1999:126), a simultaneous subversion of both "the authoritarianism of the imperial centre as well as the new nationalist centres". Thus, the story is, to draw on Bhabha (1994), a double narrative movement that seeks to, on the one hand indict colonial discourses, and on the other hand, take a swipe at the new ruling elite. Gappah has the courage to criticise these discourses, and hence the story neatly fits with the speaking of the unspeakable and subversion of authority which are under focus in this chapter.

Firstly, the story subverts the colonial enterprise through character depiction. The subversion is captured firstly in Tobaiwa Nehasha's pronouncements. Though Tobaiwa Nehasha is depicted as radical in the way he supports the contemporary establishment in Zimbabwe, a further distilling of the essence behind his ranting reveals that he has a point. He provides snippets and a historical summary of the colonial encounter and how it impacted on the native population. He points out in his exchange with Cliff Dupont that it is the whites, whom he derogatorily refers to as "pale devils", who took black people's land during the colonial encounter. For this reason, he is bitter with them and this is captured in his description of the colonial white government as a "racist regime of plundering thieves" (p.238). In addition, he points out how the colonial establishment violated the tenets of democracy in his rhetorical submission: "what did Rhodesia know about democracy exactly?" (p.241). Thus, through the portrayal of the character of Tobaiwa Nehasha who exposes the evils of colonialism, Gappah makes a statement with regards to the discourse by taking a swipe at colonialism because it took its toll on the colonised black majority.

Gappah also argues that apart from depriving the indigenous population of their suffrage rights, the colonial government was brutal and violent. This is portrayed through Tobaiwa's narration of the way Cecil John Rhodes killed blacks in order to "establish Rhodesia" (p.241) and the way he took "other people's land, expropriating it and stealing it with no compensation" (p.241). Tobaiwa Nehasha further rhetorically asks, "who gave him permission to come into our country and just take all the land that he wanted and grow rich from looting minerals from our own soil?" (p.241-2). One realises that this is an accurate historicisation of the colonial project in Zimbabwe, and hence the way Gappah exposes it for the evil that it was. It is critical to underscore the centrality of narration here. An understanding of the politics of narration enables one to correctly unpack the import of Tobaiwa Nehasha's pronouncements. Thus, while Gappah creates a distance between herself and her characters through the narrative mode that she adopts in the story, what is clear is that she shares Tobaiwa Nehasha's perspective on colonialism. In other words, the writer is the voice behind the characters' ideological standpoints.

The author further dismantles the colonial project through character portrayal. In this case, the writer uses Nyamaende Mhande, a character we first come across in the story "The President Always Dies in January" as one of Fortune Mpande's three alter egos, which also include Rhodesian Brigadier and Amai Bhoyi, to critique the colonial project. Nyamaende Mhande, whose one concern is the restoration of the Mutapa Empire, also expresses his disappointment

with the way the whites took the blacks' land and how, in turn, "the AFRIKAN has known no peace" (p.243) since his first encounter with the whites in 1629. There is historical nuance to Mhande's statements, hence, the resonance of Gappah's deconstructionist message. Mhande is convinced that "only if the Mwenemutapa is restored to his Rightful Place and the bones of Cecil John Rhodes are cast into the Zambezi River will AFRIKANS experience PROGRESS" (p.248). The casting of bones is an expression of utter rejection of a system that stands in the way of progress. This contempt for alien presence is reflective of the way in which Gappah dismantles colonial authority.

Ultimately, Gappah shows contempt for colonialism. This contempt is concretised in the depiction of the implied incestuous relationship between Doug and Rosaleen, Will's grandparents. The incestuous relationship is symbolic of the gross and laughable nature of colonialism. The gross aspects are captured in Will's disbelief as noted in his exclamation that "that can't be right. You are saying my granddad married his sister. That can't be right at all" (p.249). This trope of incest is an index of Gappah's cynicism. The incestuous relationship's revelation provides a humorous moment in the story. It is also exploited by the other characters much to their derision of Will and all that colonialism stood for. For instance, Tobaiwa Nehasha, for all his reluctance to acknowledge the existence of Enkeeldorn, actually comments that "*Chabvondoka paEnkeldoorn*" (p.249). Another character, Bhoki yaBaba Jukwa also comments that "I am getting the popcorn for this one. Just bring your own drinks! *Zvaatori madhambudhanana masokisi ejongwe*" (p.249). There is derisive laughter here and this highlights Gappah's cynical attitude towards the colonial enterprise. As a result, she deconstructs it.

The story can also be read as a subversion of the Zimbabwean postcolonial ruling elite. As a contemporary third generation writer, Gappah satirises the ruling elite for the way they have presided over the nation. The overriding tone in the story is one of contempt for the ruling elite. This is shown in the way she caricatures ruling-party aligned characters such as Tobaiwa Nehasha and empowers her other fictional characters to mock the ruling elite's excesses. This disdain for the elite arises from the way they have driven the nation to the precipice of economic and political collapse. In an analysis of Gappah's *An Elegy for Easterly* (2009), Muchemwa (2011:401) contends that "Gappah evades the apportioning of blame in her stories [but her] fiction is daring in the use of living historical subjects." That comment is as applicable to *An Elegy for Easterly* as it is to *Rotten Row*, especially in "From a Town called Enkeeldorn" where Gappah apportions blame to the ruling party and its leader for ruining the country's economy.

She narrates experiences such as the seizure of farms (p245) and disputes around electoral issues (p.241) which are familiar in the Zimbabwean political matrix, and satirically mocks the ruling elite in the process. Therefore, Gappah's stories are "a discourse of the real" (White, 1987:17) because there is a "correspondence of the story told to the story lived by real people in the past" (White, 1987:5). In addition, the disclosure of such sensitive subjects underlines the story's subversive inclination. It demonstrates that Gappah transgresses boundaries and oversteps the limits of state control and hence, the subversion therein.

Furthermore, character experiences confirm the author's subversion of the new nationalist centres. The depiction of the Rhodesian Brigadier, who is nostalgic about the past is instructive here. He considers that Rhodesia was better than Zimbabwe and hence, he mocks the present-day ruling elite. He exclaims in sardonic humour that "before 1980, the Zimbabwe Ruins were a pre-historic monument in Masvingo. Now, 36 years later, the Zimbabwe Ruins cover the whole country. *Ki ki ki!*" (p.239). Here, Gappah effectively deconstructs the authority of the new ruling elite through the pun on the word ruins. The fact that the ruins now cover the whole country suggests that the image of ruins now covers the destruction of the country by the ruling elite. The semiotic representation of laughter at the end of the quotation, which also pervades the whole story, demonstrates Gappah's derisive attitude to those in authority.

In addition to destroying the country, those in leadership are criticised for causing various challenges such as the severe shortage of electricity. This point is portrayed when the Rhodesian Brigadier sarcastically asks: "What did the Zimbos use for light before they started using candles? They used electricity! *Ki ki ki*" (p.242). There is a tone of mockery in this comment and it is suggestive of the writer's sense of disenchantment with the way the leadership preside over the nation. The leadership's insensitivity to the plight of the ordinary people is also implied in the ironic submission that "the capital of Zimbabwe is in Switzerland. *Ki ki ki*" (p.240). The cynic statement suggests that the elite is busy externalising ill-got riches to Switzerland while not taking better care of the citizens. As a result, Gappah mocks the ruling elite for abdicating their responsibilities and abandoning the ordinary people in pursuit of personal accumulation of wealth that leads to the ultimate categorisation of Zimbabwe as a failed state.

Gappah's critical attitude towards the ruling elite is also portrayed through the characters of Comrade Marley and Cliff Dupont. Comrade Marley reminds Tobaiwa Nehasha, a ruling party fanatic, that he (Tobaiwa) was "chased out to look for opportunities [he] could not find at home" (p.240-1). There is a tone of bitterness in Comrade Marley's statement as there is an

implied ruthlessness of the ruling government as captured in the use of the trope of chasing which suggests forced displacement. This ruthless streak is also noted by Cliff Dupont in his contention that the government that is in power, “is not the choice of the majority of the people who have voted that government out three times already. [...] That this government is still in power is a shocking outrage against democracy” (p.241). The implication here is that the government retains power through ruthless means. Here, Gappah addresses a sensitive but critical issue of legitimacy or lack of it thereof, of the Zimbabwean government. She is brutally frank and she imposes her critical perspective and disenchanted vision on her fictional characters.

The indictment on the ruling elite is also noted in the way the characters exploit Will’s search for his relatives to expose the ruling elite’s greedy and personal aggrandizement tendencies. The mockery begins when Amai Bhoyi, one of Fortune Mpande’s sock puppets, humorously comments that “*ende kulez vako wavalavha dhiya*. Did he leave you an inheritance or something?” (p.245). Amai Bhoyi’s comment which, roughly translated means, ‘you love your uncle so much’ is made as a reaction to Will’s repeated attempts to get information that can assist him connect with his relatives. The language used here, Shona slang, is an index or expression of Gappah’s cynicism. This is noted in Comrade Marley’s comment that “if the inheritance was a farm in Zanuland, he can forget about it. *Ki ki ki*” (p.245), and in Bhoki yaBaba Jukwa’s observation that “if the farm had oranges on it, they have all been turned into *zhingy zhong* lemons in Chinambabwe. *Ki ki ki*” (p.245). The quotations indicate the cruel nature of the ZANU-PF leadership and their inability to farm productively. The cruelty is noted in the implied seizure of land that does not belong to them. Their inability to farm is seen in the turning of oranges into *zhingy zhong* lemons. In Zimbabwe’s political and social discourse, *zhingy zhong* is a quintessential expression of everything that comes from or is associated with China, which is regarded as of a low quality and is not long-lasting. Therefore, Gappah’s dissidence is registered in a humorous way here in the sense that she pokes fun at the ruling elite’s inability to engage in meaningful agriculture. The semiotic representations of laughter at the end of the quotations further highlight the mocking tone. However, apart from the humour, what stands out prominently here is the way the writer directly comments on political developments in Zimbabwe, where white farmers were dispossessed of their farms, and underscores the ruling elite’s greedy and personal aggrandizement tendencies as noted in how the grabbed farms have ironically ceased being productive, as metaphorically symbolised by the turning of oranges into lemons.

In addition to that, the language that Gappah uses is corrupted so as to make it politically profane and lampoon the ruling elite. For instance, the corrupted words “Zanuland” and “Chinambabwe” indicate how the country has been turned into a one-party state and how it has been turned into a Chinese colony respectively. Comrade Marley also comments that if the farm had oranges on it, then the oranges “have been turned into Mazoe Orange Crush in Zvimbabwe!” (p.245). Here, the corrupted word “Zvimbabwe” is an attack on the former president of Zimbabwe who came from Zvimba, a district in Mashonaland West Province in Zimbabwe. He is accused of seizing vast tracts of land in the productive Mazoe District outside Harare, and turning the country into private or personal property. In the same vein, the reference to Mazoe Orange Crush is also an attack on a business enterprise in Mazoe owned by the former president and his wife.³ This reference to Zimbabwe as a Chinese colony at a time when the state’s grand narratives emphasise Zimbabwe’s sovereignty is politically sensitive just as is the exposure of the President’s grabbing of farms and privatisation of the country. Thus, Gappah has the courage to write about issues which the ruling elite have silenced, and hence the categorisation of the story as subversive.

The corruption of words calls to mind Ardonio’s (1973:35) contention that “the profane language could only approach the sacred one by distancing itself from the sound of the holy instead of by trying to imitate it.” Gappah’s jargon transgresses this rule by imitating the sound of official discourse, and in the process mocks the supposedly sacred. For instance, the corrupted word “Zvimbabwe” imitates the word Zimbabwe and then draws attention to the way the country has been privatised by the president like it is now his village, Zvimba. This line of argument is also confirmed by Mbembe (1992:10) in his contention that “by taking over [and corrupting] the signs and language of officialdom, people have been able to remythologise their own conceptual universe while in the process turning the *commandement* into a zombie.” What this means is that, by corrupting those words, the writer deliberately pokes fun at the ruling elite.

Finally, Gappah attacks the new nationalist centres through caricature. In this case, Gappah mocks those who show a fidelity to the ruling elite because their brand of politics is toxic. She acknowledges that such individuals exist and that they are ruling party functionaries, some of whom are used as cyber troops to fight on behalf of the system through participating in debates

³ See The Zimbabwe Independent of 31 January 2014 for a description on how the Mugabes seized the Mazoe Citrus Estate with Grace Mugabe, the former Zimbabwean President’s wife, claiming that she wanted to expand her orphanage located close to the productive farm.

and engaging in patriotic trolling. She depicts them as individuals who, in their defence of the political edifice, engage in identitarian politics and demonstrate political fundamentalism. Such individuals are symbolised by Tobaiwa Nehasha who engages in politics of hyperbole and extremism. His radicalism is highlighted in the way he refuses to acknowledge the existence of Enkleldoorn. He says that, “I refuse to accept that there was ever a place called Enkleldoorn because it was renamed by a renegade racist regime” (p.238). In addition, this is portrayed in the way he insults Comrade Marley as a “Useful Black who defends the Pale Devils” and “a fucking Native Informant” (p.240). Gappah mocks Tobaiwa for his radicalism and political fanaticism. His name has symbolic significance as it resonates with Wakota’s (2016:174) submission that names are the “nodal point[s] around which characters’ actions, behaviour, ideology and descriptions converge or speak to each other.” Thus, his name connotes the idea that his default position is a combative one as *hasha* means short temper. He is quickly given to anger and he uses coarse and caustic language. This is highlighted when he labels Will “an idiot fool” (p.237) and a “moron” (p.238). In addition, he always uses the expletive “fucking” which is uttered as a way to reflect the toxicity of his brand of politics and how he cannot sustain an argument. Thus, he is depicted as an object of ridicule.

Furthermore, Tobaiwa Nehasha is lampooned for his blind loyalty to the ruling party, notwithstanding the real circumstances of his life. Comrade Marley reminds him that, “you sit on your laptop in whatever Western city you live in to ululate and celebrate the regime that chased you to look for opportunities you could not find at home” (p.240). The quotation highlights the ironic and even contradictory situation of Tobaiwa’s life because, while he is out of the country on account of the dearth of opportunities, he continues to support the regime that chased him out. Tobaiwa is, to quote Cabral (1973:32), a prisoner “of the [political and socio-economic] contradictions of [his life]”. He is therefore, lampooned because he is not able to make an honest and rational evaluation of the situation that impinges on him. In addition, it is also critical to note that the government engages in noxious politics as suggested by the trope of chasing. This chasing which is suggestive of forced removals highlights the brutal nature of government, and hence the deconstructionist stance that Gappah takes.

Tobaiwa is also ridiculed for showing an unquestioning fidelity to the ruling party and demonstrating sycophancy. This is seen in the way Cliff Dupont derogatorily calls him “a bootlicker” and a “Brown Noser” (p.240), and the way Comrade Marley refers to him as “the Paramount Chief of Bumlickers” and “a real bottom feeder” (p.240). All these names denote contempt and the tone they capture is quite sarcastic. In addition, Tobaiwa is caricatured

through the way he boasts that he can live in any country he likes and can support any party he wants because it is “MY right, it is MY right that was gained for me through the sacrifice of the BLOOD that was shed in the liberation struggle” (p.241). Here, Tobaiwa is caricatured for parroting the ruling party mantra and grand narrative that whatever happens in the here and now is the result of the liberation struggle that they successfully waged. It is comical that Tobaiwa insists that he can live in any country because Zimbabwe won its war of liberation. In a way, Gappah mocks him for his blind loyalty to the ruling party that almost borders on naivety, a naivety that extends to the ruling party, architects of such inward and parochial political discourses.

It is important to point out that Gappah, as argued in the analysis of the story “The President Always Dies in January”, is convinced that political figures, both in the colonial era and after, are not objects of reverence. For this reason, she subverts both the authoritarianism of the imperial centres and the new nationalist centres. This point is also treated in the story “From a Town Called Enkeldoorn”, through Nyamaende Mhande’s insistence that the ancient Mutapa Empire be resuscitated in a typical Cabral’s (1973) return to the source imagery. Mhande argues that Mwenemutapa should be “restored to his Rightful Place” (p.243, 248) because the Mutapa “are the only legitimate rulers of this land” (p.248) and the “true OVERLORD of this land” (p.243). In addition, Mhande also agitates for the restoration of “AFRIKAN Ancestors to their Rightful Place of REVERENCE” (p.243-4) in order for the country to know “PEACE and PROSPERITY” (p.244). He concludes by declaring that “Bring back the Mutapa Empire. Today!” (p.244). Dissonance is created here in that Mhande disrupts all prevailing discourses mapping ZANU PF as the father of the country, by suggesting an alternative and much more historically grounded authority – the Mwenemutapa as legitimate rulers and not the ZANU PF elite. As to whether Gappah quests for new beginnings benchmarked on a return to some mythical Zimbabwean past, is of no consequence in this discussion. Instead, what is important to note is the way she deconstructs both colonial and nationalist discourses. In addition, the hint at a return to the source expresses her dissatisfaction with the existing state of affairs.

It is clear that Gappah has pushed boundaries with her style in the story “From a Town Called Enkeldoorn”. Gappah borrows cultural texts from social media to portray vividly the ordinary Zimbabwean people’s perceptions of their political and economic realities. She also exploits semiotics from social media narratives to underline the mocking tone in the story. The story’s form is pivotal to the way the writer articulates dissidence. The form typifies third generation writerly subversion since it suggests non-conformism. Thus, the concept of challenging

patriotic identities in the context of this story has been expanded to encompass not only the content but also, and mainly, the form of the story. Another critical issue discussed here is the double narrative movement that is evident in the story, which enables the writer to take a swipe at both colonial and nationalist discourses. The major preoccupation in this section was on the arithmetic and aesthetics of style in relation to how Gappah articulates her subversion. It was submitted that Gappah uses satire, irony and humour to underline the deconstructionist stance that she adopts in the story.

3.7 Conclusion

The chapter analysed Nyamubaya's short story "That Special Place" and Petina Gappah's two short stories, "The President Always Dies in January" and "From a Town called Enkeldoorn". The chapter shows that both writers belong to Zimbabwe's third generation of writers, with Nyamubaya being an early third generation writer, while Gappah is a contemporary third generation writer. This distinction was considered important to the development of the central argument that there is a shift that characterises this third generational writing concept. Hence, the observation that, while both writers belong to the same generation of writers, Nyamubaya and Gappah's methods of subverting patriotic identities are different. Nonetheless, the reading and analysis of both writers' stories were predicated on the third generation writerly subversion and the speaking of the unspeakable.

The analysis on Nyamubaya's story "That Special Place" was based on the view that it uses the velvet hammer approach in contesting patriotic identities. It viewed the narrative as contesting gendered alterity and exposing the politically offensive in Zimbabwe's war of liberation. It was argued that, Nyamubaya as an early third generation writer and one writing from inside the belly of the beast, is restricted from being overtly political by fear of consequences. Hence, she takes recourse to the subversion of patriotic identities via a less radicalised approach. However, the velvet hammer aesthetic was, in the final analysis, considered an effective way of contesting that which is objectionable.

On the other hand, Gappah's two stories were read as narratives that reflect a typical contemporary third generation writerly subversion. It was argued that Gappah belongs to an intrepid band of radicalised writers who smash at taboos and conventions. In this regard, "The President Always Dies in January" was read as intrinsically iconoclastic because it

deconstructs the politically sacred. The observation was that the story refuses to deify the president and other sacred narratives. In the same vein, “From a Town called Enkeldoorn” was considered a narrative that smashes at colonial and nationalist discourses. However, the latter story was primarily analysed on the basis of its form, hence the submission that the story draws its authority from its form to reflect a writerly non-conformism, and dissidence to the post-2000 ZANU-PF grand narrative about the nation. However, it was noted that both stories, as typical of a contemporary third generation writer productions, are characterised by satire, irony and sardonic humour. This radicalised approach, thus, distinguishes contemporary third generation writers from early third generation writers who are less confrontational, and hence the argument that there has been a shift in the way patriotic identities are subverted.

The next chapter analyses fictional narratives written by Ndebele-speaking Zimbabweans. The main focus is on how the selected narratives disrupt notions on oneness and historical continuum preached by ZANU-PF in post-2000 Zimbabwe as a weapon against imperialism.

Chapter 4: A disruption of notions on oneness and historical continuum in Gukurahundi-inspired Zimbabwean narratives

4.0 Introduction

This chapter analyses Gukurahundi-inspired narratives written by Ndebele-speaking Zimbabwean writers that disrupt notions on oneness and historical continuum propounded by ZANU PF in post-2000 Zimbabwe as a weapon against past and new forms of imperialism. The chapter, which focuses on the novels *Running with Mother* (2012) by Christopher Mlalazi and *House of Stone* (2018) by Novuyo Rosa Tshuma, draws on citizen classification (Agamben, 1995, Bowker and Star, 1999) and ethnicity as an entry point into the analysis of the selected texts. The chapter engages in the ‘unity in diversity’ conundrum that has captured interest in cultural studies such as Nyambi’s (2018:2)) study on how sport/soccer has been used “to promote a sense of national unity and ethnic cohesion”, Raftopoulos (2007), Muchemwa (2010) and Ndlovu-Gatsheni’s (2011) studies on the performance of galas and ‘biras’ in post-2000 Zimbabwe as attempts to “naturalise the unity of the nation by concealing the internal ethnic tensions within the polity and the reality of Shona political dominance” (Raftopoulos, 2007:182) and Muchemwa’s (2010) on the necropolitan imagination in reconstructions of the Zimbabwean nation where state funerals at the National Heroes Acre are used to re-energise the state’s patriotic metafiction. In addition to these cultural studies, I contend that the literary-critical interventions that I focus on in this chapter are critical in that they add an important dimension to the ‘unity in diversity’ conundrum by fictionalising the experiences of ethnic tensions and highlighting the elusive nature of nation in Zimbabwe. Further, the literary-critical interventions also demonstrate an unambiguous consciousness of ethnic subordination” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008, Nyambi, 2018). The chapter ultimately argues that the ZANU PF-enunciated ideas about togetherness and historical continuum are in contradistinction with the writerly articulation of lack of oneness and unity in Zimbabwe. The texts analysed are counter-discursive and reveal “different experiences, histories and representations which grand discourses depend on excluding” (Macleod, 2000:120). The chapter draws further on Zoe’s (2013:51) formulation about “how patriotic narratives of togetherness and unity must be recalibrated when the writer examines individual stories”. As a result, this chapter considers the disruption of oneness as an idiom of defiance.

The writers whose works are analysed in this chapter are of Ndebele ethnic extraction and both hail from the province of Matabeleland. According to biographical information provided by Morris (2006), Mlalazi was born in Plumtree but grew up in Bulawayo. However, both areas

are in Matabeleland. As for Tshuma, she explains in an interview with Mother Jones (Tshuma *Interview*, 2019) that she was born in Matabeleland in 1988, a year after the Unity Accord to end the Gukurahundi. Matabeleland is a part of Zimbabwe that is described by Mhlanga and Mpfu (2017:1) as “a region of historical complexities in Zimbabwe” due to the persecutions and political and economic marginalisations that have been encountered in the region. The political persecution is emblematised by Joshua Nkomo, the late former vice president of Zimbabwe who is the epitome of Ndebeleness. What was done to him when he was represented as the “father of dissidents” (Nkomo, 2001:237) and forced into exile is testimony of the ethnic fissures in the Zimbabwean body politic. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2012:1) adds to the peripheral status of Matabeleland in his contention that “Matabeleland is home to the minority Ndebele-speaking people who have, since the 1980s, been complaining about political and economic marginalisation.” Thus, the writers whose texts are analysed in this chapter have “the advantage of ‘subjective’ insider knowledge” (Mhlanga and Mpfu, 2017:2) and as such, the chapter is interested in the counter-textualities they present about history, the nation and its future. I attempt to analyse how the writers’ textualities link with Bhabha (1994), Macleod (2000) and Ranger’s (2005) postulations about nation, narration and history.

In addition, both texts analysed in this chapter deal with the sensitive subject of the Gukurahundi. Both have “much to add to the existing pain narratives concerned with the Matabeleland Crisis” (Zoe, 2013:29). This connecting motif is central in Ndebele-authored texts that, almost invariably, have to be “read in the context of the state’s efforts to discourage debate over Gukurahundi” (Nyambi, 2013:124). I argue that Ndebele-authored texts’ exploration of “a contested period of Zimbabwe’s history” (Zoe, 2013:29) reflects a narrative tension in Zimbabwe. This tension is marked by, on the one hand, “the repression of alternative memories and imaginations of the nation” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011:2) by the ruling ZANU PF party in its rule by historiography (Ranger, 2005), and on the other hand, a determined attempt by the Ndebele-speaking writers to write and archive memories of state terror (Werbner, 1998). I take this narrative tension as a manifestation of the existence of different versions of history in the nation as argued by Bhabha (1994) and Macleod (2000) and metaphorical representation of the lack of unity in Zimbabwe post-2000. Thus, I submit that writing about the Gukurahundi is an act of “remembering the past against the grain” (Ndlovu Mphatisi, 2018:6) since the subject is generally taboo in Zimbabwe. In addition, this assertion places the texts firmly within those narratives that “write against the grain of nationalist discourse or ‘patriotic master fiction’” (Primorac, 2006:75) that is benchmarked on loyalty to ZANU PF (Ranger, 2005).

Gukurahundi forms the bedrock of the argument that I make in this chapter because it informs and influences the texts under focus. The historical occurrence is the organising trope in Mlalazi and Tshuma's texts and as such, it is important to explore the discourse briefly. There, however, is an abundance of literature on the subject, including that by Sithole and Makumbe (1997), Werbner (1998), Kriger (2003), Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2003, 2011), Eppel (2004), Ncube and Siziba (2017) and Ndlovu Mphahisi (2018). All these critics, each in their own way, acknowledge and analyse the devastating impact of the Gukurahundi phenomenon. As such, dwelling much on the subject runs the risk of sounding tautological. Nonetheless, I find it prudent to rehash some of the key ideas related to the subject so as to properly contextualise the argument that I make in the analysis of focal texts.

The term Gukurahundi has been defined by various scholars with Sithole and Makumbe (1997:133) explaining it as a Shona word which literally means "the storm that destroys everything" and further defining it as a "policy of annihilation; annihilating the opposition." This definition links with Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2011:9) unpacking of the concept as a philosophy of confrontation that "entailed embracing violence as a legitimate political tool [for] the destruction of opponents and enemies". A more immediate and instructive definition is given by Eppel (2004) and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2008) in their contention that, Gukurahundi refers to the state-sanctioned violence that was unleashed on Ndebele-speaking Zimbabweans in Matabeleland and parts of the Midlands province between 1983 and 1987. Thus, Gukurahundi can best be viewed as a metaphor for violence as the above definitions given converge on the violence and its ultimate objective to annihilate a perceived enemy who were the Ndebele-speaking people. While the exact figure of the victims may never be known, what is not in doubt is that the Ndebeles were killed in their thousands, with the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (1997) putting the figure at around twenty thousand.

A further unpacking of the concept reveals that the operation was carried out by the 5th Brigade, which is a specially-trained military unit, composed mainly of Shona-speaking former ZANLA guerrillas (Eppel, 2004). The victims or targets of the 5th Brigade atrocities were outrightly Ndebele-speaking Zimbabweans. This dimension is important in that it illuminates the line of argument that I pursue in this chapter which is that of citizen classification along ethnic lines that, in turn, reveals the lack of unity among the different peoples of Zimbabwe. Nonetheless, I also argue that the writers whose works I analyse here expose and in the process contest these classificatory regimes. The contestation resonates with the counter-discursive strand that I unpack in this study as postulated by Ashcroft et. al. (1989). Various reasons have been given

for the targeting of Ndebele-speaking people and these include that they were assisting and harbouring dissidents (Alexander, 1998). I however, contend that the victimisation was steeped in the ideology and dynamics of ethnic classification, hence the argument that a united Zimbabwean nation in post-independence is a myth as shall later be made clear in the analysis of focal texts.

Lastly, while my analysis of the discourse relates specifically to the early 1980s massacres in Matabeleland, I am also fully aware that critics contend that it is a phenomenon that originated before independence. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2011:9) argues that “while the strategy of Gukurahundi was openly embraced as party policy in 1979, [...] it is [actually] traceable to the formation of ZANU in 1963” and was deployed mainly to deal with “internal crises” (p.10). It is instructive to highlight that the noted crises were dealt with violently. In the same vein, Muchemwa (2011:2) contends that “the divisive politics of the 1960s and their fratricidal cultures [...] persisted in the politics of the Zimbabwean postcolony.” Thus, in post-independence Zimbabwe, Gukurahundi is just a re-incarnation of a strategy that had been used during the liberation war. After independence, it was deployed by ZANU PF as a means to violently fulfil its hegemonic agenda which was the creation of a one-party state (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011) and the desire to maintain an octopus grip on power. Therefore, threats to a unitary national imaginary are not only a post-independence phenomenon since the Gukurahundi strategy was also carried out prior to independence. This further complicates the notion of oneness in Zimbabwe as unity was singularly lacking even during the war of liberation, a histrionic that the post-2000 ruling elite uses again to define the memories, sense of and futures of the nation.

While the chapter draws on Zoe’s (2013) ideas to prop up the overarching theoretical concepts on identities, nation and narration and counter-discourse by critics such as Ranger (2005), Bhabha (1994) and Ashcroft et al. (1989), I also rely on Bowker and Star (1999) and Agamben’s (1995) ideas on the classification of citizens, mostly to confirm my thoughts and strengthen my analysis. These ideas of classification unpack the way(s) in which the writers under focus contest the vision of a supposedly united nation since the classification that is evident is influenced by the political philosophy of the ruling ZANU PF party. Therefore, there is need for an examination of the idea of classification and its ramifications within the political matrix because I am primarily interested in the political dimension of classification systems.

Classification in the very general of terms relates to sorting and pigeonholing. It is concerned with the practice of putting things into different categories. Bowker and Star (1999:10) define classification as “a spatial, temporal or spatio-temporal segmentation of the world.” The critics posit further that classification systems are “sets of boxes (metaphorical or literal) into which things can be put to then be able to do some kind of work” (1999:10). Of importance to me in these contentions is the fact that the critics acknowledge that classification creates difference. The difference is implied in the idea of segmenting the world and putting things into ‘different’ boxes. This means that both the segmented parts of the world and the things that have been put into different boxes are valued differently because they have been assigned to different categories. This dimension is central to my analysis of the ethnic distinction that is explored in the texts.

An important dimension of classification worthy of our attention is the desirability of knowing the one who is classifying and the methods of classification that are at play. This is important because classification is subjective since it is filtered through language (Lakoff, 1987) and mostly furthers the agenda of the one who is classifying. The methods or technologies of classification are also almost invariably dependent on the agenda of the one who is classifying and this agenda, in turn, is informed by the political philosophy or imperatives of the classifier which resonates with Bowker and Star’s (1999:314) contention that there is a “political and ethical texturing [to] classification schemes.” Thus, Bowker and Star (1999) encourage us to see the political dynamics at play when we identify the classifier and analyse the methods of classification at play in classification schemes.

Another critical strand related to classification is that it is a form of political intervention as it is situated at the nexus between political and social struggles. This is confirmed by Bowker and Star (1999:196) in their contention that “classification systems are often sites of political and social struggles [and they are] politically and socially charged agendas.” Both critics argue further that categories are “explicit objects of political contention” (1999:316). The import of these contentions is that there is no neutrality of poise in classification since classification in the first place seeks to entrench specific political ideas. Thus, classifications are a political force and an organising rubric for complex relationships.

Lastly, classification has consequences, either beneficial or dire. Duff and Harris (2002:227) contend that classification always involves “the systemic imperatives to privilege, exclude and control”. For this reason, classification matters a great deal and hence, the need to analyse and

understand its operations. Bowker and Star (1999:312) posit that “classification does indeed have its consequences – perceived as real, it has real effect.” The repetition in the above – cited quotation emphasises the gravity of the consequences that are linked to classification. The point here is that power structures in classification systems have far-reaching consequences both at personal and collective levels. Thus, both theorists urge us to recognise and acknowledge classifications as significant sites of political work. This significance is noted in the way in which “categories of sorting can reify dominant definitions, disenfranchise subgroups by denying them the power to name themselves, and enforce powerful technologies of social [and political] control” (Casswell, 2012:2). This point resonates with Butler’s (1990) questioning of the commonly-accepted gender binary male/female in the observation that categorising reveals a hidden agenda of suppressing and silencing those who do not fit in the binary. Casswell (2012:16) explains that “sorting people by ethnic identity can have a profoundly negative (and even murderous) impact. In its most extreme form, [...] fixing of ethnic identity [...] can help fuel genocide” and this is illustrated in the Ndebele-authored texts that depict the significance of the killing of the Ndebele ethnic minority to the state of ethnic relations that I analyse in this chapter. Thus, it is clear that classification has consequences.

The above-discussed ideas on classification link well with those by Giorgio Agamben’s (1995) in his discussion on exclusion. Agamben (1995) articulates that the overarching concern or preoccupation of politics is the classification between inclusion and exclusion of citizens. This is noted in his submission that “the production of bare life is the originary activity of sovereignty” (1995:55). Agamben argues that there is a clear distinction between those forms of life that the sovereign power will give protection and those that are excluded from such protection. He terms the latter group the *Homo Sacer*, which designates a person or thing that one cannot touch without dirtying oneself because *Homo Sacer* is bad and impure. As Agamben (1995:52) further explains, the *Homo Sacer* is “an outcast, a banned man, tabooed, dangerous” and hence, worthy of extermination. Thus, Agamben (1995:55) concludes that “what defines the status of the *Homo Sacer* [...] is both the particular character of the double exclusion into which he is taken and the violence to which he finds himself exposed.” Agamben argues further that the *Homo Sacer* is excluded from the zones where protection is guaranteed and cast or banished into the so-called zones of exception. In these zones, the *Homo Sacer* is virtually unprotected and leads a bare life since he is not worthy of that protection from the sovereign authority in the first place.

In addition, the Homo Sacer is dehumanised by the sovereign authority and this makes it easy to get rid of him. On this dehumanisation, Agamben (1995:87) explains that “he who determines a value also fixes a non-value. The sense of this determination of a non-value is the annihilation of the non-value.” The import of this contention is that the sovereign authority classifies the Homo Sacer as not worthy of living with dehumanisation making it easier for those charged with the task of getting rid of him. Thus, the Homo Sacer can be assaulted, violated, brutalised, raped or killed with impunity. In other words, those who perpetrate such crimes are not punished because they are protected by the sovereign authority which authorises “the annihilation of life unworthy of being lived” (1995:87). Agamben also posits that the sphere of the sovereign decision “suspends law in the state of exception and this implicates the bare life within it” (55). In short, Agamben’s argument is that, the law does not protect those in the zones of exception. Rather, it validates the actions done against or to those who are in the zones of exception because they are damned and condemned individuals. Thus, “the life of the Homo Sacer [...] is situated at the intersection of a capacity to be killed” (p.48).

As can be clearly seen above, Agamben’s ideas on exclusion share an intrinsic connection with Bowker and Star’s (1999) ideas on classification because in the very act of exclusion there is classification. These ideas are instrumental in the analysis of the texts under focus as they also treat, in their depiction of the post-2000 Zimbabwean experiences, the ruling ZANU PF party’s strategies of exclusion. Thus, the Homo Sacer label applies to the Zimbabwean context in reference to rebellious individuals or those perceived to oppose ZANU PF who are classified as sellouts worthy of extermination. Being classified as a sellout in Zimbabwe is a death warrant as noted in the term ‘dissident’ which I focus on in this chapter and is a politically laden category - a label or mode of classification that denoted exclusion and justified the need for extermination. As a result, the category of classification, dissident, was deployed as a principal justification of the mass killings and repression that took place in Matabeleland in the 1980s as captured in the texts under focus.

Nonetheless, classification and exclusion are contested. The main reason for the contestation is that classification and exclusion are dangerous and reckless to the extent that they may lead to atrocities. This is why the writers that I analyse here contest the classificatory and exclusionary regimes sanctioned by the state. In addition, classification is contested because, in most cases “such [classification] systems operate on an underlying assumption that the categories they employ are obvious, natural delineations” (Casswell, 2012:2) yet the reality is that they are not. If anything, classifications are culturally and politically constructed categories

whose agenda is to disenfranchise subgroups and deprive them the opportunity to name themselves and to have control over their own lives.

The above-discussed ideas on classification and exclusion are important in that they feed into Zoe's (2013) formulation that the rhetoric or patriotic narrative of togetherness has to be re-examined when one analyses individual stories such as the texts that I focus on in this chapter. The evidence of ethnic exigencies, including exclusion and brutalisation that the Ndebele minority are subjected to necessitate this re-examination.

Zoe (2013) argues that the fragmented nature of notions of nation, nationality and nationness is not just a post-independence phenomenon which was a result of the Gukurahundi. Instead, she describes the tenuous unity that existed between ZANU and ZAPU during the war of liberation in her assertion that the freedom fighters from the two camps were only bonded by "the intimacies of collective experience [since] the immediacy of war, violence and danger dissolves differences" (2013:51). In a sense, Zoe obliquely characterises the relationship between the two ethnic groups as a marriage of convenience. This observation is buttressed by Zoe's (2013:51) explanation that "such collective experiences cannot be mistaken for friendship [as] the individual within the group remains isolated despite apparent unity." The implication here is that there was ethnic tension during the war of liberation, which also persists after independence.

The idea of ethnic tension that characterised the war of liberation as discussed by Zoe is also noted by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2012:1) in the observation on how "the contest between forces of ethnocracy and those of inclusive nationalism permeated the struggles for liberation, reducing them to a complex terrain of mobilisation of ethnicity and regionalism". Here, Ndlovu-Gatsheni explains the existence of ethnic classification that displaced any figment of unity between the ZANU and ZAPU freedom fighters. He argues further that this ethnic friction materialises at independence in 1980 as it was clear that "Zimbabwe was permeated by a deep Shona ethnic orientation, partly due to the fact that ZANU PF was, for all intents and purposes, a Shona-dominated political formation since its emergence in 1963" (1). Thus, he argues that Zimbabwe was not a unitary nation even at independence due to ethnic classification and exclusion that have deep roots.

Similarly, Moore (2008:32) notes the delicate and compromised unity that subsisted within the Zimbabwean liberation movement in his assertion that "if one goes back, into history of the liberation war, there is also unity of a hegemonic sort: The list of tensions is a long one." The

fact that the unity is described as achieved through hegemonic means highlights the lack of genuine and sincere unity. Thus, Moore (2008:32) makes the grim and pessimistic conclusion that “the closer one looks at the history of Zimbabwe, the more one wonders how anyone could ‘imagine’ a ‘community’ based on the nationalism exemplified by its political brokers.” Here, Moore invokes Benedict Anderson’s (1991) vocabulary in his conceptualisation of a nation as an imagined community in order to problematise the structures informing certain forms of imagining the others and inhibiting others in Zimbabwe. The lack of unity is a result of that selective or partial imagining of the nation. This idea is noted by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2012:2) in the contention that ZANU PF “modelled the state and nation around the histories, memories and symbols of the Shona-speaking citizens, alienating the Ndebele-speaking people.” This submission is at the centre of the argument that I make in this chapter where I read Ndebele-authored texts as narratives that deconstruct the fictions peddled by the ZANU-PF party of a united nation.

Ultimately, the chapter interrogates the revisionist tenor and counter-discursive thrust in the analysed texts which, to draw on Zoe (2013:21), are “deeply concerned with historical context and accuracy (the Matabeleland massacres) [...] and work towards a political point – representing those whose voices are eclipsed in the dominant social [and political] narratives.” To this end, I analyse the extent to which the texts can be read as facilitating “insurgent knowledges [...] that originate with the subaltern, the dispossessed that seek to” challenge the dominant nationalist discourse (Young, 2001:15). Expressed in another way, I seek to probe how both texts contest representational monologue (Dirlik, 2002) and are classic examples of the imaginative creative responses to the condition of subalternity and domination (Ashcroft et.al, 1989). In addition, I intend to ascertain how Mlalazi and Tshuma’s texts re-imagine Ndebele identity and contest the representations in the state’s grand narratives which depict oneness and historical continuum. Lastly, I want to probe how the writers remember and write against the grain of nationalist discourse or “patriotic master fiction” (Primorac, 2006:75) and confirm Bhabha’s (1990:170) articulation that “the nation remains a site of heterogeneity and difference” in their texts which politically mobilise around the cause of the Ndebele ethnic group.

4.1 Authoring as a gesture of resistance to the ideology of toxic classification in Mlalazi’s *Running with Mother*

Mlalazi's novel *Running with Mother*, which is quasi-autobiographical, is told from the perspective of Rudo Jamela, a fourteen-year old girl. She narrates the gruesome story of how she witnesses soldiers visit their village targeting and killing all Ndebele-speaking people. It is only because she is able to speak Shona that she survives with her mother after they are instructed to leave the village unharmed by the Shona-speaking soldiers. Together with her mother, Auntie and cousin Gift, they run away from the village and seek refuge in Phezulu mountains where they are once again caught up in the onslaught by the soldiers but, ultimately, they are spared and the novel ends with them being taken to Bulawayo which is considered by the soldiers to be a relatively safe territory for them.

This novel compels us to think about the process of authoring about the sensitive Gukurahundi experiences and how this links with a resistant engagement with the ruling ZANU-PF party's narrative and the unjustified classificatory systems which lead to the extermination of the Ndebele ethnic group. The narrative strategy that Mlalazi deploys is of interest here in that it allows him to covertly poke holes on the ruling ZANU PF elite's fictitious narratives of unity in Zimbabwe that are expressed in patriotic history (Ranger, 2005, Tendi, 2010). Thus, I rely on Werbner's (1998) articulation that writing is one way in which the Ndebele-speaking people archive their memories of state terror. I also draw on Zoe's (2013:2) postulation that writing "forms a gesture of resistance to the ideology [of classification] underpinning genocide, which aims to suppress the human and conscious condition of the individual." Therefore, I contend that writing against the grain of patriotic discourse constitutes an idiom of defiance to state discourses which have Othered the Ndebele ethnic group. By extension, Mlalazi's writerly exposure of these classificatory regimes extended to the Ndebele-speaking people disrupts the notions of oneness and togetherness that are depicted in the state's grand narratives. The section is segmented into two parts, the first of which explores the way in which the novel exposes and contests the fixing of ethnic identities in Zimbabwe by the ruling ZANU PF elite. The second section considers how the text harnesses the power of description to illuminate (and in the process covertly deconstruct) oppressive categories.

4.2 Exposing and contesting the fixing of ethnic identity in Mlalazi's *Running with Mother*

This section is read from the premise that the novel *Running with Mother* (2012) exposes the ethnic classification that takes a formal and coherent shape in post-independence Zimbabwe. The text is both a writerly exposure of the ethnic classification that is built into the very fabric and system of the Zimbabwean political narrative post-independence and an accurate as well

as searing narrative of the homo sacer status to which the Ndebele-speaking people are consigned. Thus, I draw on Ranger's (2005) ideas on classification and labelling that lie at the heart of patriotic history. In addition, I also draw on Agamben (1995) and Bowker and Star's (1999) ideas on exclusion and classification to strengthen my analysis.

Firstly, the fixing of ethnic identity is reflected in the way the narrator and her mother, both of whom are Shona speakers, are spared the brutality of the soldiers. Their ability to speak Shona makes them transcend the ethnic-cum-linguistic barrier, which is the very category the soldiers use to determine the side of the ethnic Shona/Ndebele binary one is. The use of such a category demonstrates the ethnic dynamics that are at play in the Gukurahundi operation. For instance, the narrator explains how she was "lucky that day [when the soldiers come to their village] but [her] friends weren't" (p.9) because of their inability to speak Shona. In addition, the question "why do you have a Shona name and a Ndebele surname" (p.7) that the soldiers ask Rudo sets the tone for the tense ethnic relations explored in the text. The treatment that is given to Rudo when she is told to "hurry, disappear and don't look back" (p.9) is different from that which is given to her Ndebele-speaking friends who are told to come nearer and are stripped "naked without underwear" (p.10), brutalised and potentially raped. Here, the story employs contrasting images to highlight ethnic distinction. Further, the text invokes a sympathetic tone in the sense that the vividly described stripping of the Ndebele-speaking girls points to a bleak situation. Thus, the different treatment that the girls are subjected to underscores the classificatory regimes that the story explores and confirms Harris and Duff's (2002) contention that classification has consequences.

In the same vein, Rudo's mother is also spared the soldier brutality because she speaks Shona. As she tells Rudo, when the soldiers come to their home and hear her speak Shona, "they told me to run away" (p.17). Conversely, her husband who is Ndebele-speaking is brutalised. Such different treatment, as already noted above in Rudo and her friends' case, reflects the existence of and use of ethnic categorisation. This ethnic categorisation is emblematised by the soldiers' terse and cryptic assertion that "this is a matter for the Ndebele people only" (p.9). Here, the text euphemistically refers to the violence unleashed on the Ndebele people as 'a matter' and this euphemism concretises the existence of a clear ethnic distinction. The threat embedded in the soldiers' statement gives testament to Casswel's (2012:16) contention that "sorting people by ethnic identity can have a profoundly negative and murderous impact." This murderous impact is noted in the way the soldiers are determined to exterminate all the Ndebele-speaking people as captured in their assertion that "they are just killing all the Ndebele people" (p.17).

Here, the story incorporates apt diction to reinforce the existence of ethnic categorisation. This is noted in the above quotation in the use of the word ‘just’ which suggests a wanton destruction of human life.

The novel also depicts ethnic classification through a lopsided juxtaposition. This juxtaposition serves to reinforce the existence of ethnic-based identity categories. In the story, there is the creation of two parallel groups of victims of soldier brutality. One of the groups consists of the narrator, her mother, Auntie (who apparently is Ndebele-speaking) and Gift. The other group comprises three Ndebele-speaking teachers and one white character. The ethnic tension that exists between the two groups is portrayed in the narrator’s mother’s reluctance to join the Ndebele-speaking teachers as they flee from the soldiers (p.52, 83). Her fear is also noted by Auntie when she asks her, “are you still afraid that people might not accept you and Rudo?” (p.59). This statement reinforces the idea that ethnic classification has the capacity to reify ethnic relationships even amongst the ordinary characters. Here, we note that the ordinary characters have also naturalised these ethnic definitions. For this reason, Rudo explains later that she sensed that her mother wanted them to leave the cave because “the teachers were all Ndebele and I understood her fear. I know what revenge is all about” (p.126). Rudo and her mother confirm the existence of tribal tension. Later in the story, this tribal tension reaches breaking point in the cave when Mr Mkandla orders Rudo’s mother to “leave this cave at once” (p.132) because, to him, “her people are killing our people with the permission of the Prime Minister” (p.132) and “Shona soldiers are killing our defenseless families” (p.132). The use of possessive pronouns in these quotations concretises ethnic categorisation. In addition, the fusion of a bitter and aggressive tone reflects the extent of the Ndebele-speaking people’s victimisation. Thus, the story clearly depicts a lopsided juxtaposition in the text. This juxtaposition is noted in that, on the one hand, the Shona-speaking people occupy a privileged position and, on the other hand, the Ndebele-speaking people are Othered in the Shona/Ndebele binary. Therefore, this juxtaposition is further proof of the fixing of ethnic-based identity categories in the text.

In addition, the story clarifies the notion on the fixing of ethnic identity through naming. This naming strand is critical in that, as Nyambi and Mangena (2016:13) note, “the semantic properties of names [...] not only fit into the text’s overarching style scheme but also inform certain kinds of themes, ideas and perspectives, and invite certain kinds of reading.” In this case, it is possible to read the names in the text as a reflection of a conscious or unconscious ethnic profiling. Wamitilia (1999:35) also underscores the centrality of names and naming

practices in his observation that, analysing characters' names is important because names of characters are "semiotic signs that play a very crucial role in the overall linguistic structure of a literary text." This point is explained further by Chilala (2016) in his contention that names of characters cannot be separated from the content of the text. Ncube (2016:217) buttresses this point further in his observation that there exists an intricate relationship between the names of literary characters and the ideological implications addressed by the texts. Chilala (2016:155) concludes that as writers name using their Adamic licence which he defines as "the freedom and space the author has to name characters in a particular way", they do so from a certain ideological standpoint. In other words, names are never neutral since they always signify.

Mlalazi's naming practices in the text help fix the characters' ethnic identities. For instance, those characters who carry Shona names including Rudo, the narrator, Mamvura, her mother and Uncle Ngoro (at least initially when he is spared) are exempted from the soldier brutalities. In contrast, all characters with Ndebele names/surnames such as the Jamelas are brutalised and killed thus highlighting the dynamics of ethnic-based identity categories that are hinged on names and the murderous consequences of classification (Caswell, 2012). It is also on account of their Shona names that the narrator wonders whether "mother and I have to change our Shona names into Ndebele ones, so that people would not be angry with us or blame us for the murder of their relatives" (p.98). This quotation underscores the centrality of naming to ethnic categorisation. Overall, this discussion on onomastics shows that naming is a form of identity-making speech act (Nyambi, 2016:3) and that "names are vital symbolic referents which are endowed with embedded associations and multi-layered meanings and significations" (Ncube, 2016:220). In this case, they help fix characters' ethnic identities. Thus, the story reinforces the close link between onomastics and politics or life and death as noted in how those characters who bear Shona names are spared while those who have Ndebele names are killed.

Lastly, the ethnic designation is also subtly captured in the text in the way the news is read on the radio. The reading of the news in Shona, Ndebele and English (p.34) presupposes a nation that is united in its diversity. However, the fact that "the news is *always* read first in Shona, then in Ndebele, and lastly in English" (p.34, 97) (my emphasis) confirms the existence of different ethnic groups and also smacks of a privileging of a certain ethnic group over others. Thus, it is a marker of ethnic-based identity categories.

The above-noted ethnic-based identity categories influence the way in which the soldiers in the story treat the characters. On the one hand, the soldiers are seen to be sympathetic to the Shona-

speaking people as seen in the way such characters have their lives spared. On the other hand, the Ndebele-speaking people rank lowly in the soldiers' estimation. In fact, the soldiers harbour a negative and contemptuous attitude towards the Ndebele ethnic minority because they regard them as impure. Captain Finish's comment in his conversation with the narrator's mother clearly brings out this contrasting soldiers' perception of the Shona and Ndebele-speaking people. The Captain explains that, "it was lucky that we saw those naked men climbing up the mountain, otherwise we wouldn't have freed you from their infection" (p.138). The use of the word infection highlights a tone of disgust for the Ndebele-speaking teachers because they are deemed impure. This idea resonates with Agamben's (1995) postulation that the homo sacer is bad and impure and as such, is a thing that one cannot touch without dirtying oneself. In addition, the fact that the teachers are said to be infectious reveals that they are "tabooed [and] dangerous" (Agamben, 1995:52) and hence, worthy of extermination. Thus, the distinction between the narrator and her mother on the one hand, and the Ndebele-speaking teachers who are killed by the soldiers on the other hand, makes for an unproblematic binary. This Shona/Ndebele binary is significant in highlighting the existence of ethnic categorisation and, contrary to the state-enunciated grand narratives of unity, underscores the lack of oneness in the Zimbabwean nation.

Mlalazi deliberately refuses to foreground the reasons for the targeting of the Ndebele ethnic minority by the Shona-speaking soldiers. All that the narrative depicts is that the Ndebele-speaking Zimbabweans find themselves at the receiving end of the ruling party brutality. That refusal is symbolic of the slipperiness of the reasons that provoke the government to sanction the carrying out of such heinous acts. In other words, the ethnic classification, which contributes to the brutalisation of the Ndebele-speaking people resists definition because of its flimsy nature. It is only at the end of the story that the reason for the targeting of the Ndebele-speaking people is given by Captain Finish, the soldier commanding the unit carrying out the diabolical Gukurahundi atrocities. Captain Finish first asks Gift what his name is and after being told by the narrator's mother that he is called Anovona, Captain Finish comments that it is a good name since it means "the one who sees all. It's good he has seen what we do to dissidents. Maybe one day he will become one of our brave soldiers whom will help to keep our country clean of weeds and trash" (p.138). Thus, the reasons for the targeting of the Ndebeles is as discreet as the explanation that is given and this reinforces the innocence of this persecuted ethnic minority. Nonetheless, what is clear in the above quotation are the codes of exclusion, such as dissidents, weeds and trash used to refer to the Ndebele-speaking people in

a contemptuous way and to denote them as insignificant. This then helps explain the soldiers' determination to exterminate them since they are regarded as of no consequence and their lives are not politically qualified lives. The killing of the Ndebele-speaking people reflects the ethnic dynamics that are at play in this whole political matrix and hence, the contention that the grand narrative about oneness in the nation is a myth. This confirms Macleod's (2000) contention that a plural population can never be turned into a single people because plurality and difference can never be entirely banished.

The narrative strategically incorporates the aesthetics of rhetorical questions in order to underscore the point that the victims of the brutality of the soldiers do not quite understand why they are being targeted. In addition, the story employs rhetorical questions to implicate the ZANU PF party for unjustifiably murdering the Ndebele people on the grounds of their ethnicity. The key question that the Ndebele-speaking characters in the text keep on asking relates to what wrong they have done. For instance, when the narrator is told how her father has been brutalised by the soldiers, she asks "did father commit a crime?" (p.17). Further, when the soldiers display the hand of Headman Mabhena, the narrator also asks "what kind of crime could he have committed to have his hand cut off as punishment?" (p.9). Later in the story, she asks the question "what had the people of Saphela done to make the soldiers so angry that they could chase them like this as if we were mice?" (p.112). In all these quotations, there is the assertion of the incomprehension and innocence of the Ndebele-speaking people and a veiled attack on the ruling elite which sanctions all those brutalities. Lastly, Auntie Jamela realises that her brothers and their families had all been burned to death in their houses and also asks, "what did they ever do to anybody? And to die like this. Burned alive! They were [...] just simple people looking after their families and livestock" (p.24). The rhetorical questions employed here are very significant in that they suggest an already existing perception. In addition, the rhetoricity is an articulation of the characters' and indeed the novel's stand on the ethnic question. Further, the use of a life-affirming exclamation in this last quotation underscores the innocence of the victims of soldier brutality and reinforces the image of humaneness that is reflected in Auntie Jamela's brothers. Thus, the text shows the disorienting nature of the violence in its myriad manifestations and highlights how this violence unweaves the very fabric of the Ndebele people's being.

The lack of satisfactory answers to the questions underscores the irrational and motiveless nature of the brutality to which the ethnically branded Ndebeles are subjected. For instance, the soldiers tell the narrator's mother that "they are just killing all the Ndebele people" (p.17)

and tell the narrator that “this is a matter for the Ndebele people only” (p.9). Therefore, the use of the word just in the above quotation suggests the irrational and wanton nature of the violence and indicates that the targeting of Ndebele people is linked to ethnic fixing.

The story also deploys irony as an organising trope in *Running with Mother* in order to underscore further the innocence of the Ndebele-speaking people who are being tormented by the soldiers. It is quite ironic that the victims expect to get protection from those who are sanctioning their persecution. Nonetheless, the text deploys this irony for purposes of indicting the ruling ZANU PF party. For instance, the narrator’s mother comments that “government soldiers are trained and disciplined and they wouldn’t go around burning up people and children in their houses” (p.32-33). This seemingly innocent statement is, on closer examination, loaded with irony because the reality is that the soldiers that this fictional society encounter are actually government soldiers and tormenting the Ndebele-speaking people. In addition, this seeming innocence is also reflected in Auntie’s comments that “maybe the soldiers have gone wild because the Prime Minister is not here. Someone should report them to the police. They are going to rot in jail for this. We have very tough laws in Zimbabwe” (p.35). Auntie’s attempt at explaining why the killings are not news on the radio is also ironic. This is noted in her comment that, “maybe the police are keeping it a secret so as to catch these soldiers unawares. It’s impossible that our government has not heard about it with all this shooting and all those people killed” (p.97). The irony here is that the government has not only heard about the shooting and killing but is actually responsible for the deployment of the soldiers who are brutalising the Ndebele. There is a sense in which the characters seem to absolve the government and this is an ironic way in which the text actually attacks that same government. The irony that is noted in all the above quotations is also used to amplify the innocence of the victims and, by extension, underscore the wretchedness of the perpetrators of the violence. This violence is primarily informed by ethnic classification.

There are further instances of irony which serve the same purpose of illuminating the innocence of the targeted group and the cruelty of the ruling party. For instance, Auntie’s views on the possibility of war “between us black people” (p.32), are pre-empted by the narrator’s mother in her categorical statement that, “it’s impossible, I don’t think something like that can happen in this country so soon after independence” (p.32). This definitive stance captured in the quotation is ironic and it reinforces the innocence of those who are at the receiving end of the military onslaught. This faith in the government is also noted in the way the fleeing victims are encouraged by the Prime Minister’s return from Scotland. In fact, the victims become

convinced that he will act to stop the madness (p.121) as noted in this tone of relief in the narrator's mother's exclamation that "the Prime Minister has returned home [and] we might as well collect our things and go down the mountain now, it's game over for those killer soldiers. They are going to pay heavily for the pain they have caused in the villages" (p.122). She concludes by stating that "good. There is law in this country" (p.122). The two quotations above, just like the others already discussed, highlight the level of faith that the victims of the soldiers have in the government and yet it is clear from history that this was a well-orchestrated extermination project, hence the irony. The irony is a marker of Mlalazi's cynical attitude towards the government which sanctions the liquidation of an ethnic group as noted in the Ndebele teachers' narration that "the new soldiers and those in the village are one group, and they have all been sent by the government" (p.125) to exterminate the Ndebele-speaking Zimbabweans.

The narrative reveals the government's ethnic-motivated authorisation of the annihilation of lives that do not deserve to live (Agamben). It is clear in the story that the soldiers have to comply with a government-sanctioned agenda. This is noted in Captain Finish's terse statement that "we are on national duty and we don't want anything to disturb us, even our fellow tribespeople or their children" (p.139). The language that Captain Finish uses is threatening and thus, suggestive of violence. This violence is noted in the way the soldiers deploy crude techniques of torture and manipulation in their mission to annihilate the Ndebeles. These crude techniques are captured in the narrator's rhetorical question "were all those soldiers doing all those horrifying things – cutting off people's hands, burning them in their homes, stripping adults naked, beating them and herding them like cattle into a pen – were they trying to turn the Ndebele into slaves of the Shona?" (117). The suggestion that the soldiers intend to turn the Ndebele into Shona slaves underscores the ethnic dimension that the text addresses. It also illustrates the government's determination to "break down the Ndebele" (p.117) thus underscoring further the ethnic dynamics that are at play here.

Ultimately, the story's representation reveals that the grand narrative of a united Zimbabwean nation is unstable. The truth is that there is fragmentation in the nation. This is attested to by the glaring ethnic fixing that is epitomised by the way the Ndebele ethnic minority is subjected to *gukurahundi* atrocities. The Matabeleland massacres are testimony to how "one [ethnic] group's visibility comes at the expense of another's suffering" (Bowker and Star, 1999:312). In this case, the Ndebeles have been rendered a residual category through the process of

Othering. At the same time, the Shonas are the advantaged ones because their “place in [the] set of classification is a powerful one” (Bowker and Star, 1999:312).

Nonetheless, the novel contests the fixing of ethnic identities in a number of ways. Firstly, the text problematises ethnic classification through character depiction. In this case, Rudo, the narrator of the story, is used to complicate and problematise the idea of ethnic identity as an assumed, stable, biological or natural category. Rudo, described by Nyambi (2013:132) as an “ethnic and cultural hybrid”, is an exemplar of ethnic boundary crossing. Her identity is fluid because she is a product of a marriage between her Ndebele father and Shona mother and hence, she can fit in either ethnic camp. This resonates with Bowker and Star’s (1999:132) contention that “no classification can fully and accurately reflect the world that it classifies and that a classification is not in itself an explanation.” The import of this contention is that classifications do not designate natural and unproblematic categories. Thus, Rudo problematises ethnic classification and hints at the possibility of ethnic harmony. This ethnic harmony is central to the subversion of the grand narrative about oneness in that it is people-initiated. It counters the state-initiated attempts at oneness which border on compulsion. This possibility is also captured in Uncle Ndoro’s marriage to a Ndebele woman, Matshabalala, with whom he has four children (p.12-13). As a result, this marriage trope is also infused in the narrative to deconstruct the ruling elite’s inflexible classificatory regimes.

In addition, the story contests ethnic classification through the depiction of uncategorisable characters. The text incorporates ambiguity to problematise rigid ethnic definitions. This is noted in Auntie, Gift and, to an extent, Uncle Ndoro’s experiences. Auntie is Ndebele and destined for extermination but survives because her unconscious state after falling down the mountain renders her ethnically uncategorisable. The same ambiguity is noted in Gift’s experiences. His young age and lack of speech means that he cannot be labelled Ndebele. Thus, both characters’ states render them ethnic “makeshift compromises” (Bowker and Star, 1999:313). In addition, the author leaves Auntie and Gift open to multiple definitions since he portrays them (at this stage of the narrative) as “boundary objects” (316) who exist in the zones of ambiguity. They are not unambiguously categorisable and hence, the ease with which the narrator’s mother ethnically reclassifies Gift when she tells Captain Finish that his name is Anovona. The act becomes a symbolic ‘maternal’ re-invention of the child that enables the child’s survival. This confirms Bowker and Star’s (1999:220) submission that in the process of making people and categories converge, there can be tremendous torque of individual

biographies” which in this case is attested to by the way Gift, a Ndebele, is ethnically rebranded as a strategy to make him live.

One can also assume that Uncle Ngoro, a character of Shona ethnicity, gets killed because he cannot be classified since he is among the Ndebele-speaking teachers and could not speak because of trauma. As a result, while Auntie and Gift survive (because of their proximity to Shona speakers), Uncle Ngoro dies because of his proximity to the Ndebele speakers thus complicating further the ethnic conundrum that the text grapples with. This complication pokes holes on the ZANU PF narrative of the nation by exposing the grand narrative as a highly unstable and fragile construction (Bhabha, 1994). The instability and fragility are exposed in the text through the horror-deaths of innocent people which underscore that categorisations are prone to slippages.

Lastly, the story contests the fixing of ethnic identity through authorial reflection. The authorial voice is distinct and resonant in its dismantling of ethnic-based classificatory regimes. For instance, there is authorial comment in the narrator’s mother’s assertion, when she expresses her fears about what is happening, that “this country is for everybody: the Shona, the Ndebele, Kalanga, Venda, Tonga, Suthu and all the other tribes that live within our borders, even the whites and the Indians, the Chinese, coloureds, everybody. Isn’t this why we went to war?” (p.108). Here, one has the sense that it is the author’s voice that informs the mother’s comment and it is indeed the author who speaks about the need for a united nation. The author’s call for unity is informed by the exigencies of ethnic extermination that are fictionalised in the text. The author’s preferred brand of unity is one that is all-inclusive and this is noted in the inclusion of people of different ethnic and racial extraction in the above quotation. That brand of unity and vision is different from the ZANU PF-based sense of unity which operates on alterity and creates Otherness (Ranger, 2005, Tendi, 2010). Another authorial comment is noted where the narrator reflects on what is happening and asks rhetorically, “were those soldiers doing all those horrifying things – cutting off people’s hands, burning them in their homes, stripping adults naked, beating them and herding them like cattle into a pen – were they trying to turn the Ndebele into slaves of the Shona?” (p.117). It is clear that there is authorial intrusion in this instance which seeks answers on the reasons for the victimisation of the Ndebele-speaking Zimbabweans. Such a reflection and comment discursively contests the fixing of ethnic identity.

However, it should be noted that this writerly contestation of classification is not given space by the ruling elite. The writer reveals that such inflexibility (a key feature of patriotic history as postulated by Ranger, 2005) and lack of accommodation of alternative views, exposes the lack of oneness and togetherness in the Zimbabwean nation. Despite the fact that the text addresses the critical issue to do with “the human potential to form intimate bonds” (Zoe, 2013:50), the ruling ZANU PF is symbolically unresponsive to the calls for oneness and unity that is emblematised by the cross-ethnic marriage trope. The lack of response is noted in the way the soldiers disrupt such unions as seen in how they brutalise the narrator’s father and force the wife to run away. One can extrapolate from the available evidence that the disruption leads to the termination of the marriage union. Thus, there is tenuous unity between the Shona and Ndebele ethnic groups that is captured through the imagery of the small fleeing community of refugees united by the common experience of suffering but, ultimately, ethnic exigencies disrupt that pretense at unity when Mr Mkandla, one of the Ndebele-speaking teachers threatens violence on the narrator’s mother. As a result, the textual exposure of ethnic-based identity categories and the violation of the other disrupts notions on oneness and togetherness in the Zimbabwean nation as enunciated in the state’s grand narratives.

4.3 Deconstructing oppressive categories in Mlalazi’s *Running with Mother*

In this section, I draw on Casswell’s (2012:5) contention that writers “harness the power of description for the deconstruction of oppressive categories” to analyse how the story contests the state’s grand narrative of togetherness and historical continuum through the sheer power of description. Such a reading is premised on the understanding that grand narratives about the history and future of the Zimbabwean nation are both prescriptive and oppressive. This is noted in Tendi’s (2010:4) submission that “patriotic history boils down to ZANU-PF as the alpha and omega of the Zimbabwean past, present and future.” In pursuance of the same line of argument, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009:26) contends that “discourses of nation-building [in Zimbabwe] favoured unitary histories on which to base the imagined postcolonial nation.” The quotations underscore the prescriptive and coercive nature of these grand narratives. As a result, and in line with the central argument about the contestation of identities that I make in this study, these grand narratives are contested. The contestation is also partly informed by the problematics of constructing common national identities or common citizenship among people of different ethnic or racial extraction (Ranger, 1999, Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009). In addition, people of different ethnicities are differently treated by the ruling elite as noted in the text under focus, hence the contestation of oppressive categories.

I contend that the vivid description in the story is strategically deployed to bemoan the liquidation of the Ndebele ethnic group. Thus, the story depicts the Gukurahundi massacres using a vivid and compelling description which make for the generation of affective intensities and solidarities. That way, the story exposes and disrupts the myth of oneness in the Zimbabwean nation. In addition, I argue that the subversive power of the text lies in the fact that it refuses to “conceive of protest politics in terms of slogans against the ruling elite” (Vambe, 2017:109). Instead, the story makes the vivid description speak for itself as a form of protest.

Running with Mother is a descriptive novel which bears witness to the mass killings in Matabeleland in the aftermath of Zimbabwe’s independence and invites the “readers to consider the ways in which [the] author [...] encourages [his] audience to feel and take action in response to the violence depicted” (Zoe, 2014:257). The story describes vividly the brutalities of the soldiers and in the process generates affect. Firstly, the story vividly describes the horrors associated with the encounter when the narrator and her friends first meet the soldiers and Captain Finish dangles a human hand before the young girls while smiling. The narrator describes how Captain Finish, after being handed a parcel wrapped in silver foil, “unrolled the parcel, took an object from it and dangled it in front of us. I felt my heart lurch and I heard the girls behind me gasp in horror. It was a human hand. It had been chopped off at the wrist, which still glistened with blood” (p.7). We are also told of how Captain Finish smiles as he tells the young girls that “this is the hand of your Headman Mabhena” (p.9). Such descriptions of gruesome and horrific violence serve to highlight not only the brutality of the soldiers but also invite the reader to sympathise with the victims. The lurching of the narrator’s heart and gasping in horror of the other girls underscores the nauseous nature of the violence. On the other hand, the smiling of the soldier highlights his sadistic nature which is underscored further by the lack of remorse in his voice.

Secondly, text vividly describes another incident when the narrator’s father is brutally beaten and his dog shot by the soldiers. Rudo’s mother tells her that the large dark stain of blood on the ground is her father’s for “this is where they tortured him. [...] They were beating him with a stick. His clothes were covered in blood; they kept shouting that he was a dead man. I can’t tell you what else they did to him but finally their leader said they must take him away because they needed strong men to dig graves” (p.20). This description is grisly and permeated with imagery of pain and suffering. The vocabulary and register of torture is demonstrative of the soldiers’ violent bent and the blood stain a symbol of the extreme pain experienced by the

narrator's father. This draws us closer to the victim of the violence. In addition, the narrator explains that the body of their dog "was perforated with holes that oozed blood, and were infested with more flies" (p.20). Here, the imagery of murderous horror creates pathos, emphasises further the cruelty of the soldiers and hence, the text's ability to generate affect.

Another graphic depiction of this extreme brutality is captured in the way Uncle Genesis, his brother and their families are burnt to death in their huts. As the narrator's mother describes, "the soldiers locked both your two uncles and their families in their homes and then burned down all the huts" (p.17). As noted further, the description of Uncle Genesis and his family's burnt bodies resides within the realm of the macabre. The narrator tells us how she sees "in the middle of the charred floor a dark mound, like burned sacks piled one on top of the other" (p.23). There is a further description of this macabre situation when the narrator's mother and Auntie attempt to rescue a wailing baby by lifting a mound with a pestle. As they do so, the whole mound falls apart and the narrator retches as bile fills her mouth. She then describes how "what had seemed one thing was many, a mass of human bodies burnt together: charred limbs, bones shining white in the moonlight, and defaced skulls. The stench of burnt flesh was intense. My stomach heaved and I quickly knelt down and vomited" (p.27). The description here highlights the sickening nature of the violence as symbolised by the narrator's act of vomiting. By extension, the vomiting emblematises the despicable and ghastly nature of the soldiers' cruelty. Thus, the story arouses the readers' revulsion and bitterness at the cruelty of the soldiers, and also invites the reader to sympathise with the victims of the violence.

Furthermore, the narrator's mother describes the horrific situation at Mbongolo Primary School where she had gone to access a phone so as to report the brutality of the soldiers. She narrates how the soldiers who are camped at the school brutalise the Ndebeles. As she explains, the soldiers have "made a jail with a fence of barbed wire in the middle of the football ground and put people inside it. Everyone is naked: men, women and children. It's horrible. Horrible" (p.41). She narrates further that "while I was watching, some people broke free and ran away. The soldiers shot at them. Several fell to the ground" (p.41). The imagery of encampment with resonances of colonial and Nazi concentration camps underscore the cruelty of the soldiers. The people are stripped naked and shot, thus underscoring extreme form of dehumanisation, torture and cruel murder suffered by the depicted Ndebele community. This technique is also seen at play when the soldiers burn the clinic and order "the nurses to undress and [take] them all away naked, just like that" (p.26). The descriptions underscore the horrendous violation of the Ndebele people and thus, invites the reader to sympathise with them.

The narrator also describes graphically how the soldiers brutalise her father by forcing him to burn down his own home while she, her mother and Auntie watch from their place of hiding. The narrator describes how one soldier hands “a flaming stick to father and then push him towards the bedroom hut [and how] father staggered a bit, and then steadying himself, he stood still, the torch flaming in his hand” (p.44). In this instance, the story relies on suspense to intensify the feelings of the onlookers and the reader since the vivid description highlights the unrelenting nature of soldier brutality and the helplessness of the victim. The pain that the narrator, her mother and Auntie feel confirms Zoe’s (2013:2) contention that “living in proximity to suffering results in enduring empathetic identifications.” In this case, the narrator is traumatised by the brutalisation of her father. In addition, she is deeply affected by the burning down of their home to the extent that she pronounces that “it was as if a part of me had also been burned away, something I would never again recover” (p.46).

Furthermore, the narrator describes vividly a naked body floating towards them in the river. The description simultaneously arouses revulsion and sympathy. The narrator describes that, “the head was headed straight between mother and me. As if the sight of the body was not shocking enough, I saw that it did not have a head, only a neck with a big open wound at the top” (p.70). The visual imagery that the writer employs here is meant to underscore the naked brutality of the soldiers carrying out the Gukurahundi operation. In addition, the description arouses revulsion and persuades the reader to identify and sympathise with the victims through the writer’s evocation of affect.

The descriptions of all these and other scenes that depict violence, pain and helplessness are one way in which the text invokes the reader’s emotional intensities and in the process covertly underline the narrative’s subversive intent. The story’s descriptive approach “is not merely a neutral discursive form that may or may not be used to represent real events [...] but entails ontological and epistemic choices with distinct ideological and even specific political implications” (White, 1987:4). This means that Mlalazi is not a neutral describer. Instead, he uses controlled vocabularies and register to name and produce a particular narrative about the described subject (Casswell, 2012). In this case, the story clearly establishes emotional synergies between the victims of the brutality and the reader through the text’s evocation of affect. At the same time, it exposes the ruling ZANU PF party’s crisis of conscience through cataloguing the heinous Matabeleland massacres which the state’s grand narratives are silent about. Thus, the descriptive narrative that is the text *Running with Mother* thrives on its ability to generate affect and affective solidarities as postulated by Papacharissi (2015:16) in her

contention that affect “joins up individuals through complex assemblages” where complex affective states not only circulate but can become intensified emotional states (Ringrose and Renold, 2014). This affective dimension that is deployed in the text is described by Nyambi (2013) in his analysis of Vera’s *Stone Virgins* (2002), as the novel’s illocutionary force which affectively evokes the subaltern’s victimhood by simultaneously generating a compassionate relationship with the victims and disclosing the injustice of their victimisation. As one reads the descriptions of the perpetrated violence in *Running with Mother*, one is moved to sympathise with the victims, more so given their innocence. Thus, one draws the conclusion that the punishment meted on the Ndebeles is unwarranted and unjustified and, as Hemmings (2012:11) notes, “the affect itself will constitute that judgement, even if it is not transformed into action.”

Ultimately, the novel’s vivid descriptions of the state-sanctioned brutalities that the Ndebele ethnic group experiences at the hands of the predominantly Shona soldiers in the aftermath of Zimbabwe’s independence destabilise the notions on oneness and togetherness in Zimbabwe. At the same time, the novel’s unique storyline speaks to the possibility of the creation of an image of an inclusive nation where notions or ideas on oneness are revisited in the context of plural histories and difference.

4.4 Novuyo Rosa Tshuma’s *House of Stone* and the discourse of secession

In this section, I analyse some of the ways in which Tshuma’s novel *House of Stone* engages emergent forms of Ndebele particularism in contemporary Zimbabwe. The particularism is expressed in the way the narrative violently disrupts notions on oneness and togetherness in Zimbabwe. The text exemplifies that Ndebele creativity has taken a more political and radicalised turn in the aftermath of the formation of the Mthwakazi Secessionist Movement whose main agenda is to establish a Ndebele Kingdom that is separate from Zimbabwe. I read the text firstly as a radical re-description of the nation’s history and then as an overt expression of irredentism. This reading is in line with the central argument that I make in this study that patriotic identities in Zimbabwe are contested because they exclude other histories and forms of identities. The argument that I make here is informed by Bhabha’s (1994) theoretical ideas that there can never be any one, coherent, common narrative through which the nation and its people can be adequately captured because a nation is a site of heterogeneity and difference. In addition, I also rely on Bhabha’s (1994) submission that the performative necessity of nationalist representations makes it possible for all those groups placed on the margins of its

norms and limits such as those of a different ethnicity to intervene in the signifying process and challenge the dominant representations with narratives of their own. Thus, the text falls neatly within those narratives that overtly contest the ruling ZANU PF party's selective historical accounts and, as such, goes against the grain of nationalist discourses in Zimbabwe (Primorac, 2006). The text vocalises marginal knowledges of ethnicity. This function of text is buttressed by the writer in her response to a question on what it was like to write the book exploring and authorising a different and sensitive version of Zimbabwe's past. Her assertion that "at home I would have become aware of the potential dangers of what I was doing – the limits on what we are able to and how" (Tshuma, *Interview*) is instructive. The dangers that the writer alludes to are connected to the politics of authorising insurgent knowledges. Thus, unlike Mlalazi who employs oblique discourse and subterranean strategies to indict the ruling elite, Tshuma writes with abandon. In the process, she subverts the fiction of oneness and togetherness that is contained in the state's grand narratives.

The story, whose organising trope is Gukurahundi, centres on Zamani, the narrator, who is desperate to belong to a family since he does not have one. He has recently returned after a five year stay in London and is accommodated at Abdnego and Mama Agnes Mlambo's house. The hosting couple's son Bukhosi, has recently gone missing while, unbeknown to the parents, attending a Mthwakazi rally with Zamani and Dumo. Zamani exploits the chance afforded by the missing of the boy to impose and integrate himself within the family as their surrogate son. He also exploits the Mlambos' search for their son to unearth his surrogate parents' history. In doing so, Zamani brings to light Zimbabwe's (House of Stone) colonial past and tumultuous present. Thus, Tshuma's *House of Stone* traces the country's troubled political trajectory from the colonial period to the present.

4.5 A re-visioning of Zimbabwean history in Tshuma's *House of Stone*

The text *House of Stone* (2018) offers a panoramic description of Zimbabwe's history from the liberation struggle to contemporary times centering mainly on the experiences of the Ndebele-speaking Zimbabweans. The text is, to use White's (2015:3) phrase, "novelesque history" which is basically a reference to literature of fact (White, 1987:21) or stories that are inspired or deal with history. In such stories, there is a concrete portrayal of the historical trends of an epoch. I argue in this section that the imaginative re-description (as the narrator of the story terms it) (p.44, 77), and articulation of history from the subalternised perspective of the Ndebele ethnic minority are consistent with discourses on subversion as underscored by

Bhabha (1994) and Macleod (2000). The re-narration also plays an important part in developing my argument that such a re-description of history suggests the existence of parallel histories. This idea of multiple or plural histories is noted by Macleod (2000:70) in the contention that “there are as many different versions of history as there are narrators.” This is in contradistinction with ZANU PF’s patriotic history project which is narrow and insists on a singular identity for Zimbabweans (Ranger, 2005, Tendi, 2010, Javangwe, 2011). Thus, the argument is made that these parallel histories emblemise the subversion of patriotic history and underscore the contestation of patriotic identities in Zimbabwe and hence, the contention that notions on oneness and unity, as per the focus of this chapter, are fictitious. One can extrapolate from the text that the author suggests that ideas on oneness should be revisited in a context of plural histories and difference.

Ndebele history features prominently in Tshuma’s *House of Stone* and enjoys a high profile in the novel. At the same time, there is a semi-silencing or denigration of the official accounts of Zimbabwean history as told by the ZANU PF ruling elite. The novel seems to suggest that Zimbabwean history is a complex political product and space which is midwived and shepherded by the ruling ZANU PF elite in pursuit of their subjective political agenda. As such, the history is manipulated and monopolised by the ruling elite and it is this manipulation that the text contests through re-description. Thus, one of the characters, Dumo, says, “there is no such thing as truth [...] Truth is optics. And there are so many options out there these days, it’s all about choosing your flavour. You like your truth blackberry-cherry or you like it lemon-lime? There is even zero-caloried truth” (p.60). This quotation underscores the existence of different versions of history. In this way, the narrative problematises the state’s version of history in order to clear the space for the re-visioning and entrenchment of Ndebele history. Hence, the novel is preoccupied with the questions “whose history is this? Whose independence?” (Zoe, 2013:39).

The narrative is clear that the post-2000 period is the moment when history started to play a central role in Zimbabwe. This links with Ranger’s (2005) postulation that patriotic history, which is closely linked to the constitution of patriotic identities that I discuss in this study, can be traced back to the beginning of the country’s social and economic decline from the year 2000. Tendi (2010) also argues that ZANU PF started to use history more inventively in the advent of the Third Chimurenga. The history was used as a buffer against waning political support and to checkmate political adversaries. Thus, the nation’s memory was manipulated through convenient historical amnesia with the vision of the nation rendered singular and ruling

party-shaped (Ranger, 2005, Javangwe, 2011, Manase, 2016). The story's articulation of the moment when history started to play a central role in Zimbabwe underscores the reasons behind the radical re-visioning of history because the state version is considered inauthentic. The narrator bitterly reflects on how, when he returned from travels abroad after the year 2000, he "found the country living in hi-story. Everywhere, odes to the past were being composed, sung, recited, here, the past lived more vividly than the present, for there was no future that could be seen, no future to be imagined" (p.252). The emphasis in the quotation above is on the central role that the past plays in post-2000 Zimbabwe as a means to buttress the ruling party's stranglehold on power in the face of growing political and civic opposition. This centrality is also noted in the narrator's further observation that "each time somebody important [...] tried to talk about the future, they quickly became part of the past, in this way encouraging us to look back" (p.252). Here, there is a veiled reference to the ruling party's violent inclination in its bid to entrench a 'correct' political mindset in the citizenry. In addition, the narrator points out that the post-2000 period is a well-known era "when our government started controlling every facet of our lives, including what part of our history to remember and what part to forget, is proof that it's not what's true that matters but what you can make true" (p.233). This quotation underscores the constructed nature of the history and reveals it as a handiwork of the ruling ZANU PF elite. The quotation also captures the way state narratives are prescriptive since they exclude other memories.

The novel emphasises further the constructedness of the state-enunciated historical narrative in order to contest it. This is noted in the narrator's contention that the state apparatus "hijacks our hi-stories, appropriates them, rewrites them, edits out the wrinkles and then feeds back to us some real sweet-tasting shit [which] tastes so good that sometimes we're even tempted to swallow! Tsk tsk!" (p.60). There is a tone of contempt for the state-enunciated history in the quotation above because it is constructed, as emphasised by the apt diction of appropriating, rewriting and editing that the writer deploys. As such, that history is fictionally judged as false. The false nature of this history which the state has "officialised and concretised through inscription" (p.233) is noted further in the description of the same as propaganda that the state bombards the citizenry with on television (p.134). The equating of the history to propaganda suggests that it is inauthentic and biased since it is used to prop up particular political interests.

The narrative indeed rejects the state-enunciated version of history. This position is informed by the observation that there is a constant questioning of the state's version of history throughout the text. Firstly, the story questions history through fragmenting the term history

which is written 'hi-story' throughout. This fragmentation underscores an incompleteness to history. It suggests that history can neither be apprehended in absolute terms nor monopolised. In other words, history cannot claim to speak with authority or unproblematically represent the past. Nonetheless, the story reveals that the ruling ZANU PF elite captures and monopolises history. However, the term history is fragmented to underscore the point that the state's history has gaps since it excludes other histories. The fragmentation of the term, therefore underlines the story's subversive inclination.

The text also questions the state version of history through the depiction of a critical stance towards history. This critical stance is noted in the tone of aggression embedded in the narrator's rhetorical question "what the hell is hi-story?" (p.78). The narrator furthers this thread of criticism in the contention that history in reality is a reference to "things that didn't belong to anyone and belonged to everyone [but are] being claimed by someone [...], being created abracadabra and made real in the mind, and then consolidated [...] to suit not only the mood of the day but also the vision of the future" (p.78). He concludes by noting that "no truth ever mattered except that which was believed to be true" (p.78). This aggressive tone is used to subvert the ruling elite's constructed version of history.

In addition, the novel rejects the state's version of history through the deployment of a mocking and dismissive tone. This tone is consistent with discourses on subversion as argued by Young (2001) and Ashcroft et. al. (1989). The story especially mocks the jingles that are used as conduits to convey the ruling party's patriotic version of history as noted by Gandhi and Jambaya (2002:12) in the contention that during the Third Chimurenga, songs and jingles were played on air to generate revolutionary sentiment. The narrator describes how the Minister of Agriculture and Lands or some other ruling party faithful are always serenading the TV or radio air waves with "these jingles, interrupting, indiscriminately, our family viewing to educate us on our patriotic history, in their version of which the country's ruling party is the sole superhero, every other sucker be damned" (p.55). The description of the jingles as an interruption underscores their unwelcome nature. In addition, there is a tone of contempt for patriotic history because it excludes other histories and acknowledges only the ruling ZANU PF party. The story also incorporates contrast as noted in how, on the one hand, the ruling party is referred to as the only superhero and, on the other hand, everyone else is condemned as captured in the narrator's emphatic statement that every other sucker be damned. This contrast underlines a critical attitude towards patriotic history.

The novel also describes the beguiling nature of the jingles in order to expose how the jingles are a piece of blatant indoctrination designed to persuade the Zimbabweans to subscribe to the ruling ZANU PF party's version of history. For instance, the narrator explains that "they are very catchy, these ruling party jingles; I have often heard children caroling them, their voices chorusing from the street into my pygmy room" (p.55). Here, the narrator's description aptly captures the insidious nature of the jingles. This beguiling quality is also noted in the way the narrator describes further the jingles as "a familiar tinkle [...] it's a ruling party jingle, a bewitching symphony of drum and guitar, *mbira* and *hosho*" (p.55). The description of the jingles as bewitching underscores further their beguiling nature. This is also captured in the narrator's reaction to the jingles as noted in his assertion that even though he was not born yet during the liberation struggle, he falls prey to "the strumming and the drumming, feel my blood roiling with the guerilla morale of the '70s; my pitter-pattering heart yearns for a little fracas, my hands fumble about for a weapon, and my throat itches with a warring cry. O what juju tricks are these that history is playing?" (p.55). Such a vivid description of the strong feelings that the jingles arouse in the narrator highlights that the jingles have the capacity to lure and deceive. This deceptive quality of the jingles underscores the false nature of the history that is peddled by ZANU PF. Further, the equation of the jingles to juju also underscores their beguiling qualities. Therefore, the narrator has a critical attitude towards the jingles because they prop up the "jingoistic state of Zimbabwe" (p.186) and brainwash people into thinking that the only historical version worthy remembering is that authorised by ZANU PF.

The ZANU PF-enunciated patriotic history is also mocked. This is noted in the narrator's observation that while the "*mbira* summons the body, flails the limbs, discombobulates the soul and casts the spell of togetherness – together we live, together we suffer" (p.56), the reality is that "together some live better than others and others suffer more than some" (p.56). Here, there is the deployment of a mocking tone to emphasise the gulf that separates the ordinary people and the ruling elite in terms of the lives that they lead. That way, the story takes a swipe at the ruling elite and their version of history which is meant to prop up their interests. Thus, one is reminded of Zoe's (2013:51) contention about how patriotic narratives of togetherness have to be recalibrated in the face of overwhelming evidence that disrupts those notions of oneness.

Lastly, the text criticises the state's version of history through the deployment of a bitter tone that the narrator registers at his surrogate father's positive reaction to the ruling party jingles as noted in how the jingles set "[his] surrogate dada alight" (p.55). He angrily observes how

his surrogate father swallows ZANU PF's "shit, sweetened, zero-caloried or otherwise" (p.61). The reference to the ruling party's version of history as shit underscores the narrator's bitter attitude. This mocking tone is also evident in the way the narrator boldly asserts that "the glazed-over, painstakingly edited, jingled half-truths trumpeted by the peasants [...] do not fool me" (p.61). The narrator is definite that "this is not how things happened. My surrogate father is remembering not his own, but the state's memories, shoved down our throats every single day for the past several years so that they are beginning to replace our own memories" (p.61). This statement underscores how the state proscribes alternative memories and prescribes its own. The narrator then emphatically concludes that "no, my surrogate father is eating some shit" (p.61). There is a tone of defiance here and this reinforces the critical attitude towards the ruling party's version of history. This then precipitates the need to re-vision Zimbabwean history from the perspective of the Ndebele.

As already mentioned, the text addresses parallel histories. The narrative nudges history in the direction of the Ndebele perspective as noted in the way Ndebele history, which is generally sidelined in state narratives, is given more prominence in the text. Thus, the history that the text re-visions fictionally valorises the great Ndebele political personas in the mould of King Lobengula, Impikade Hadebe, Mthwakazi, Queen Lozikeyi Dlodlo and Joshua Nkomo (p.47-8). The narrator suggests that he is intimately connected to this Ndebele history in the contention that "any self-respecting man such as I who sets out on a redemptive task of redescription has to be familiar with the stories of the so-called great men who have deemed themselves makers of history. I know our King Lobengula's story enough ..." (p.45). This is an act of self-entrenchment within the Ndebele historical lineage which enables the narrator to re-describe the Ndebele history's distinct contours.

There is an extended history of the Ndebele-speaking Zimbabweans in the text in order to spotlight the instrumental contributions that they made to the coming into being of Zimbabwe. For instance, the narrator describes two famous battles that the Ndebeles fought against the British colonialists. The battles include the Battle of Galade in 1893 which witnesses the exploits of the mettlesome and valiant Ndebele warrior, Impikade Hadebe while "defending the Nation of Mthwakazi [...] when it was attacked by somebody called Doctor Jim and his troops under instruction from that coloniser Rhodes" (p.46). The other battle described is the War of the Red Axe in which the Ndebeles are led by Queen Lozikeyi Dlodlo, Lobengula's senior wife and it is the one which forces "Rhodes and his cohorts from imperial England into negotiations with the [Ndebele] Queen" (p.47). Here, the descriptions are evidence of the

central role that the Ndebele played in fighting colonialism. This portrayal runs contrary to patriotic history which overrides smaller groupings and their interests and subsumes those in conditions of subalternity (Javangwe, 2011:19) and conceives of ZANU PF as “the alpha and omega of Zimbabwe’s past, present and future” (Tendi, 2010:4).

Further, the novel describes other Ndebele political personas who played key roles during the war of liberation. These include Mvelaphi and his group, the Citizens against the Colour Bar (31), Spear the Blood (p.69), Thandi and Abednego and Zacchaeus both of whom are said to have “served together in Joshua Nkomo’s ZIPRA military wing” (p.57). All these Ndebele revolutionaries actively contribute to the dismantling of colonial hegemony in Zimbabwe. Thandi’s case illuminates another important dimension, namely that Ndebele women also actively participated in the war of liberation that culminated in the coming into being of the House of Stone (p.108). This intimate involvement is captured in the striking maternal imagery that Thandi uses in the assertion that “there are many women in the struggle, birthing the struggle, feeding the struggle, carrying the struggle, nursing and wiping the buttocks of the struggle” (p.38). In addition, Thandi vows to drag “the carcass of the liberation struggle behind [her for she is] a freedom fighter [who] shall give birth to the struggle” (p.66). This imagery of giving birth to and dragging the carcass of the liberation struggle underscores the revolutionaries’ total commitment and, as was discussed in chapter three, is significant in the subversion of “the monolithic, authoritarian (and male) version of ‘patriotic’ history by which government defines Zimbabwe’s past and present” (Veit-Wild, 2006:2).

Lastly, the narrative archives the instrumental role that Joshua Nkomo played in the liberation of the country. Nkomo is described as an ever-present influence during the war as symbolically captured in the way Thandi, one of the Ndebele revolutionaries always carries Nkomo’s photo. In addition, Thandi states that Nkomo is known by everyone since he is the “co-founding leader of ZAPU, the Zimbabwe Africa People’s Union [and] agitator against all that was holy and sacred to the nation of Rhodesia” (p.36). Nkomo’s visibility is strategically emphasised in order to give further impetus to Ndebele history. Thus, the Ndebeles are exhorted to “fight in the war and prepare for the time [their] leader Joshua Nkomo assumes power, and can restore the dignity of our people” (p.48). It is little wonder, therefore, that at independence, Thandi expresses “bewilderment in this their new leader Robert Gabriel Somebody, wondering out loud how it was that her own charismatic Joshua Nkomo had failed to hold the sway of the

masses” (p.103). The implication in this quotation is that Nkomo is the more legitimate of the two leaders and hence, the contention that Ndebele history is given more prominence. In addition, the above statement reflects the writer as poking holes in state narratives that ascribe prominence to Mugabe and not Nkomo.

The novel also partially addresses the history of the ruling ZANU PF elite in order to downgrade it and, by extension, make Ndebele history more prominent. In this instance, it is important to highlight that the text archives this history by way of incorporating what Javangwe (2011) terms narrative reductionism. That is done to underline how Ndebele history is placed on a high pedestal in the text. For instance, the narrator describes the lack of unity within the ZANU PF ranks during the war as emblematised by “rumours of coups and assassinations, and the most ferocious power struggles” (p.92). Furthermore, the narrator describes the ZANU PF party as a splinter group “which had broken away from [...] Joshua Mqabuko kaNyongolo Nkomo’s Zimbabwe African People’s Union, (PF ZAPU)” (p.92). The vivid descriptions of the war of liberation instability within the ruling ZANU PF party underscore the party’s tainted past. As such, the author suggests that the party does not have the moral legitimacy to authorise the national version of history. The fact that the party is described as a splinter group also weakens the party’s claims to legitimacy regarding the archiving of the nation’s history.

In addition, the novel also renders Mugabe, the then president of Zimbabwe and figure who most personifies the ruling ZANU PF elite, a victim of narrative reductionism in order to diminish the significance of the ZANU PF historical narrative. For instance, Mugabe is mocked for his role in the disunity that rocks ZANU PF during the war of liberation. He is described as “some eager beaver with a serious face and oversize glasses named Robert or Gabriel or some such said to be playing some sick chess moves in this breakaway party and managing to manouvre to the top of the High Command” (p.93). There is a mocking tone which is emphasised by the description of Mugabe as a beaver who wears oversize glasses and this is a marker of how lowly the author ranks Mugabe in her estimation. The text also employs a mocking tone in the description of Mugabe as “this Robert nerd-boy or angel Gabriel whatever and his breakaway what-what party” (p.95) and as “His Most Excellent Excellency” (p.56, 109) as a way of reflecting critically on the spectacularity of his power (Mbembe, 2001). The mockery that is extended to Mugabe is also noted in the way Abednego, the narrator’s surrogate father, symbolically blows his nose using a Chronicle newspaper bearing Mugabe’s picture (p.98).

Ultimately, the novel strategically re-visioning Zimbabwean history in *House of Stone*. The re-visioning valorises Ndebele history and semi-silences the ruling ZANU PF party's historical version. The novel seems to suggest that while there was disunity during the war of liberation, as noted in the narrator's contention that there was "fratricide [...] going on between the nationalist parties themselves, a battle for the people's souls" (p.91), this dissolves at independence as symbolised by Thandi's gladness despite the fact that Nkomo (a Ndebele) had failed to make it to the presidency. She asserts that she was "glad nevertheless that they were free, *they were free*, unbelievable" (p.103). However, the text underscores the short-lived nature of this unity as attested to by the Gukurahundi which happens in Matabeleland soon after independence. Gukurahundi, which I analyse in the next section, is a distinctly Ndebele historical event that has been talked about in 'patriotic' tones and undertones in state narratives, that gives impetus to the re-visioning of Ndebele history. In this way, the text problematises notions on oneness and historical continuum that are preached by the ruling ZANU PF elite since the Ndebele-speaking Zimbabweans find themselves discursively excluded from the narrative of the nation (Ranger, 2005, Tendi, 2010) and are classified (Bowker and Star, 1999) as enemies of the state who are, thus, thrust into zones of exception (Agamben). Thus, the text's re-visioning of history is strategic.

4.6 Irredentism in *House of Stone*

This section reinforces the idea about the elusive nature of nation in contemporary Zimbabwe by examining the novel's overt expression of irredentism. The text neatly fits in "discourses on and imaginings of, a seceded state of Mthwakazi established around irredentist lines" (Mhlanga and Mpofu, 2017:3). I argue that this hardline secessionist stance has its roots in the unresolved Gukurahundi past and hence, the need to analyse Tshuma's depiction of the same in the text in this section of the chapter. Ultimately, I submit that the irredentist moves by the Ndebele-speaking people of Zimbabwe overtly disrupt notions on oneness and historical continuum and envision alternative forms of nation and ethnicity that are predicated on plural histories and accommodate difference. The disruption is consistent with counter-discourse as postulated by Ashcroft et. al. (1989) in the contention that dominated literatures inevitably show a tendency towards subversion and that a study of the subversive strategies employed by postcolonial writers reveals both the configuration of domination and the imaginative creative responses to the condition of domination. I also argue that identity politics informs the coming into being of the Mthwakazi Liberation Front (MLF) that is described in the text and is a "radical political formation [which] has openly declared its political objective as fighting for an autonomous

state of Mthwakazi – incorporating the provinces of Matabeleland and the Midlands region” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2012:2). This identity politics is predicated on the notion that, as Brennan (2004:129) puts it, in the construction of identities, legitimacy and authority are no longer based on principles derived from the past. Instead, as Giddens (1991) argues, individuals have agency to authorise their own identities. Thus, I contend that the text operates at a counter-discursive level as postulated by Macleod (2000:120) in the observation that counter discourses interrupt and reveal “different experiences, histories and representations which [grand] discourses depend on excluding” since it destabilises the ZANU PF patriotic grand narratives and hence, goes against the grain of nationalist discourses in Zimbabwe today (Primorac, 2006).

As noted above, the novel is counter-discursive. It addresses concerns related to “those who have no place, who seem not to belong, [and] those whose knowledges and histories are not allowed to count” (Young, 2001:14). Thus, firstly, I take the narrative as predicated on “calls for national self-determination by those people who considered themselves to be written out of the nation and suffering economic [marginalisation] and state-sanctioned violence” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011:5). In addition, I consider Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Lindgren’s (2005) ideas that memories of Gukurahundi are giving further impetus to Ndebele radicalism and Muzondidya’s (2009:177) contention that “gukurahundi not only left deep scars among the victims but also intensified Matabeleland regionalism.” This Ndebele nationalism and Matabeleland regionalism underscore the fragmented nature of the Zimbabwean nation hence, the contention that the text *House of Stone* destabilises the state-enunciated notions on oneness and togetherness in Zimbabwe.

The story foregrounds the gukurahundi atrocities to underscore their intrinsic connection with the irredentism that the text explicitly addresses. As is the case in Mlalazi’s *Running with Mother* (2012), Gukurahundi is the organising trope in Tshuma’s *House of Stone* (2018). However, Tshuma is strident and writes with abandon and this is consistent with the Ndebele-speaking people’s secessionist aspirations (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Lindgren, 2005, Muzondidya, 2009, Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011). In fact, the author, just like Zacchaeus, one of her characters in the text, who “hadn’t the capacity for irony [or] a satirist’s bone in him” (p.88), is very direct. In addition, the author like her character, Dumo, would rather “Speak Truth to Death [than] Live a Dead Lie!” (p.10). The import of this is that the text shuns oblique discourses in the examination of Gukurahundi and advocating irredentism. Thus, we witness a shift in the political dynamic in *House of Stone* which is a result of the Mthwakazi Secessionist

Movement's demands to delink from Zimbabwe. This desire to disengage is directly linked to the Gukurahundi atrocities.

There is the deployment of the discourse of intellectual authority to define the term Gukurahundi. The intellectual definitions are consistent with the definitions given by other academic personas including Sithole and Makumbe (1997), Eppel (2004) and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2008) as discussed in the previous section of this chapter. These critics define the term as a reference to the state-sanctioned violence that was unleashed on the Ndebele-speaking Zimbabweans in Matabeleland and parts of Midlands Province between 1983 and 1987. Similarly, the text makes reference to the killing of the Ndebele-speaking people in the definition of Gukurahundi. For instance, the narrator, in the process of describing how his mother was killed explains that "Gukurahundi: the early rain that washes away the chaff before the spring shoots. They washed her away, my mama, threw her body in one of the many mass graves. She was the chaff and I am the spring shoots" (p.254). Similarly, the narrator answers Bukhosi's burning question about "what happened in the '80s, what was Gukurahundi?" (p.130) by contending that Gukurahundi "was the lead rain of our new country, Zimbabwe, sent to wash away us, the chaff. It was the state-sponsored murder of twenty thousand of your kin" (p.131). Here, the term is defined from the perspective of the narrator. However, it is clear that this is authorial comment and hence, it is the writer's perspective. These explicit definitions of the term indicate a throwing of all caution to the wind and a radicalism that flies in the face of the ruling elite who are uncomfortable with the exposure of their dark past. In addition, the definitions which implicate the state in the Gukurahundi massacres authorise insurgent knowledges (Young, 2001) in that they are in contradistinction with the state's discomfort over the exposure of this historical event. Thus, this underscores Tshuma's writerly contestation of patriotic identities.

Tshuma also unpacks the term Gukurahundi by segmenting it into distinct syllables in order to amplify the reader's emotional response and underline the story's subversive inclination. The narrator describes the word Gukurahundi as a word that one has to pronounce "slowly in order to understand its weight" (p.253). He then segments it into distinct syllables thus; "Gu – that's a hard g, like go [...] Ku – a hard k, like Kool-Aid [...], Ra – a rumble, like run [...], Hu – a huff, like human [...] Ndi – a tender n, pronounced with the tongue tapping against the soft inner palate of the mouth, followed by a hard d, like ndy, handy..." (p.253). Here, there is a poeticism to the narrative that is captured vividly in the description of the segmented syllables that borders on the onomatopoeic. The text reinforces the hard impact of the Gukurahundi

atrocities on the Ndebele-speaking people of Zimbabwe through this poetic description. In addition, the slow articulation of the word generates affect as the story establishes emotional synergies with the reader. The story's vivid description invites the reader to sympathise with the victims. At the same time, the description compels the reader to be disgusted by the perpetrators of this violence.

The narrative is clear on the reasons for the targeting of the Ndebele ethnic minority during the Gukurahundi. Primarily, the targeting is based on ethnic classification (Bowker and Star, 1999) where the Ndebele find themselves branded the homo sacer who are unworthy of protection from sovereign authority (Agamben, 1995). The narrator notes how the Ndebele are vilified and persecuted for not voting for ZANU PF in the description of the Ndebeles as “those weaselly peoples of Matabeleland, who had betrayed the baby nation by voting not for Prime Minister Mugabe’s ZANU (PF), the one true living party of the nation, but rather for that Joshua Nkomo’s (PF) ZAPU, party of traitors and losers” (p.114-5). These ideas that valorise ZANU PF resonate with Tendi’s (2010:4) conceptualisation of patriotic history as noted in the submission that “patriotic history boils down to ZANU-PF as the alpha and omega of Zimbabwe’s past, present and future.” Similarly, Ranger (2005) and Javangwe (2011) contend that patriotic history insists on a singular identity that is benchmarked on an unquestionable loyalty to ZANU PF for all Zimbabweans. Black Jesus, the commander of the 5th Brigade, also insults the people of Matabeleland as stupid because they had voted for (PF) ZAPU thereby “weakening our new nation” (p.123). The above highlight the contempt with which the Ndebele-speaking people of Zimbabwe are regarded. Terms such as weaselly, cockroaches, traitors, losers and stupid are contemptuous and denote exclusion. They are also discourses or categorisations of genocide as argued by Caswell (2012) and strategies that ZANU PF deploys in order to unproblematically target and exterminate the Ndebele ethnic minority. In addition, the Ndebeles are accused of hiding dissidents as noted in Black Jesus’ threatening statement that “you maNdebele all of you are busy hiding dissidents in your midst you are good for nothing people and what has no use must perish” (p.129). He concludes by asserting that the Ndebele people need “re-education! Extensive and thorough re-education of the cockroaches, so that they could learn a thing or two about patriotism” (p.115). The above statements highlight a tone of contempt for the Ndebele-speaking people who are deemed to be guilty by association and as an excluded group through the classification of some as dissidents which, as highlighted earlier denotes exclusion.

The text's depiction of some of the Gukurahundi atrocities that the Ndebeles experience is instructive and expands the reader's understanding of the origins of the irredentism that the novel addresses. To begin with, there is a vivid description of the 5th Brigade soldiers who unleash terror in Matabeleland as the "Dark Lord's [...] latest hybrids –wargs and orcs of beastly proportions tilting on their heads red berets with sickle-spangled emblems" (119). Here, there is the deployment of vivid visual imagery that is suggestive of a devil and death. This association with the devil and death is noted further in the description that the soldiers have been sent by the ruling ZANU PF party to "snuff out Comrade Nkomo's supporters" and are "busy executing [...] terrors unimaginable even to the most nefarious mind" (p.119). Here, the narrative registers a tone of disgust for the soldiers because of their evil bent which is emblematised by the description of how the cruelty of the most nefarious mind pales in comparison to how the soldiers brutalise the Ndebele ethnic minority. The text also describes the nature of the soldiers' cruelty by embodying it in the person of their leader Black Jesus who is variously referred to as "the beast" (p.127), "he who had no regard for the human in human being" (p.137) and as having "nothing human about him" (p.186). This naming-based description and constitution of an image of the soldier-leader beastly monstrosity aptly captures his and other soldiers' cruelty in their dealing with the people of Matabeleland. It is not surprising then that this reputation haunts the people of Matabeleland to the present. The novel describes that Black Jesus' reputation precedes him "in red carpet fashion all over the land of Mthwakazi, his shadow blotting out the tiniest suns of children, who were deemed by his Christ-like powers to be guilty-by-association" (p.131). This cruelty is most epitomised by his description as a man who was:

destined in life to be the henchman of a President, plagiarising, during that terrible time right after our independence from white rule, the most creative ways of torture: severe-beatings, hut-burnings asphyxiation falanga abnormal-body-positions rape dry-submarine electric-shocks lack-of-sleep immobilisation constant-noises screams stripping excrement-abuse sham-executions and special-contraptions-copied-from-Pol-Pot-Dacko-Amin-and-perhaps-some-elements-of-the-CIA-with-speculated-but-unconfirmed-blessings-from-jolly-Uncle-Sam (p.131).

This vivid description which is replete with double-barrelled or portmanteau terms and a staggering allusive density underscores an extreme form of torture that defies definition. In addition, one gets a sense of the fracturing and disorienting nature of the torture as captured in the stream of consciousness-like and unpunctuated description of the multiple methods of

torture that the soldiers employ. The unpunctuated description “challenges the normal sequencing of words, the linguistic categorisation of experience, by pulling together divergent concepts and metaphors to reveal a fractured worldview” (Lange and Zoe, 2010:31). Furthermore, the violation of the rudiments of syntax mirrors the soldiers’ complex methods of torture. The vivid descriptions that capture the physicality of the pain inflicted on the victims can also be read as metaphors of externally observable processes of torture. Thus, the vivid description sums up the various ways in which the Ndebeles were tortured and underscores the level of soldier brutality in their quest to bruise the Ndebeles into smallness and submission.

There is also the deployment of an implied multiple narration technique to express a communal experiencing of pain and this gives historical nuance and resonance to the Gukurahundi perspective that the text addresses. These different narratorial voices are symptomatic of “the writer’s own traumatised imagination [and form] identifications that blur the boundaries between the voices of the author, narrator and protagonist[s]” (Zoe, 2013:39). Thus, we get to know of the Gukurahundi brutalities from the perspective of the narrator but, perhaps more importantly, as told by some of the principal characters in the story including Abednego, Mama Agnes and Uncle Fani. Nonetheless it has to be pointed out that the principal characters’ narration of Gukurahundi is not easy. This difficulty is a reflection of the fact that Gukurahundi is a taboo subject. The sensitive nature of the subject is also noted in the way it is excluded from the state’s grand narratives. Thus, their narration is an intervention from the periphery in the signifying process (Bhabha, 1994). In fact, it takes Abednego’s alcohol and ubuvimbo-induced recollections, where alcohol and ubuvimbo, a magical root powder or hallucinogen which lightens the mood (p.81), are both modes of remembrance which help unlock Abednego’s memory, Uncle Fani’s deathbed confessions (p.133), Mama Agnes’ spells (p.147), trance-like or hallucinatory states and the narrator’s outright threats for the characters to disclose the Gukurahundi atrocities. This difficult narration underscores two important dimensions. Firstly, it is symbolic of the traumatic nature of Gukurahundi. Secondly, it underscores the extent to which the Gukurahundi history has been buried under layers of patriotic opacity. Thus, the multiple narration is instrumental in the collective disclosure and exposure of Gukurahundi. It also suggests the ideas of subverting mono-histories and privileging multiple narratives as argued by Raftopoulos (2004).

Some of the principal characters narrate the horrors of Gukurahundi in order to give further background to the Ndebele-speaking Zimbabweans’ irredentist inclinations. For instance, Abednego narrates the gruesome murder of Thandi - his wife - and children by Black Jesus at

the Mlambo homestead. He describes vividly how Thandi's belly is sliced open by a scythe, "spilling her intestines, her colon, her stomach. Spilling her spleen, her pancreas, her liver. Spilling her foetus" (p.122) and how he vomits because of that ghastly sight. This grisly description which captures the violation of Thandi's internal organs underlines the cruelty of the soldiers and is affective. This affective dimension is also captured in another graphic depiction of the burning of children in a hut. Abednego describes how "the kitchen hut was on fire [...] Inside, the burning children were screaming. The screaming children were burning." (p.123). Here, the story relies on stylistic word inversion in order to emphasise soldier brutality. Abednego also describes how his son capers out of the burning hut like "an apparition. A ball of flames [and how] Black Jesus leaned forward. Picked the boy up. Flung him back into the burning hut" (p.123). This underscores further the brutality of the soldiers and at the same time generates compassionate relationships with the victims (Nyambi, 2013). The compassionate relationship is generated further in Abednego's description of the violence encountered when he returns to bury his wife, child and the "charred little skeletons and dismantled bones" (p.179) of the children who had been burned in the hut in a very deep grave. Abednego narrates how he finds his wife's body a "black mass of flies" (p.178) and how he "wrapped a hand around his baby [...] shuddering at the cold, mushy feel of it. He picked up the foetus; it was covered in ants. He brushed them off. Its delicate half-formed flesh was now purple. It no longer looked like a foetus, like a baby, like anything" (p.179). This gory and ghastly image generates affect and intensified emotional states (Ringrose and Renold, 2014) of empathetic identifications with the victims. At the same time, the story's vivid description of the persecution of the Ndebele ethnic minority here pokes holes on the ZANU PF-based grand narrative about one nation and justifies the subsequent counter-narrative yarn about secession.

Another graphic description of the Gukurahundi atrocities is told from the perspective of Uncle Fani who recounts the torture he and his sister Khohlwa experienced at the hands of the soldiers. He describes how he was taken to the holding shed and how they "wire my thing and tie a rubber around my balls and this man Black Jesus he is shouting me in Shona saying I'm a dissident [...] Lakin is twisting the electricity and one of the killers he is coming for me with a truncheon" (p.130). A description of such extreme torture and gruesome experiences is meant to generate the reader's sympathy. This is the same reaction that the story seeks to generate in the reader in Uncle Fani's description of how the soldiers brutalise and torture Khohlwa after "they took plastic and burned it until it was hot hot hot and then they made her spread-" (p.130). Here, the author uses repetition and ellipsis-cum suspense, to depict the gravity of the cruelty

of the soldiers and the deep sense of vulnerability constituted with the victims of the Gukurahundi. Uncle Fani also narrates the extermination of his family where, after mentioning all the names of his family members, he asks, “how many is that? Yes, ten. Out of ten, zero come back and I am like to myself I must burn this place down and forget and go away and never come back otherwise I am going to die being here alone with all these memories” (p.130). Such unbridled brutalities where entire families are wiped out invoke Mbembe’s (1992) ideas that the postcolony is characterised by a tendency to excess and a lack of proportion. In addition, the brutalities are located within the realm of the grotesque and obscene which are used as means of erecting particular regimes of violence and domination. The violence amplifies the reader’s empathetic identifications with the Gukurahundi victims.

The above and other Gukurahundi-associated tribulations perpetrated by Black Jesus and the 5th Brigade soldiers serve to emphasise the soldiers’ cruelty. The murderous cruelty includes, casting children “into the dark pits of Antelope Mine where all newborn babies are thrown” (p.229), forcing a woman to prostrate her rump for a donkey to mount (p.222), beating people every day, taking women as their wives, wiring villagers with electricity, hanging them upside down and “shoving sticks up the women and saying [the Ndebele] are munts who should have gone extinct long ago” (p.129). Thus, the narrative draws part of its appeal from its evocation of affect. That way, the story establishes affective solidarities between the victims and the reader. Furthermore, this evidence of brutalisation and its traumatic presence in the psyche of the victims compels readers to put into perspective and perhaps take note of the Ndebele-speaking Zimbabweans’ patriotic fatigue as well as their secessionist aspirations.

The text also treats the government’s failure to address this contentious Gukurahundi issue and fictionally develops a strand that shows how this failure sharpens the Ndebele ethnic minority’s sense of outrage and in turn, informs and strengthens their radicalism and resolve to secede. The story uses a documentary style-cum-postmodern pastiche-like treatment of history to describe the government’s half-hearted attempts to address the issue. For instance, the 1996 Commission of Inquiry into the Gukurahundi is shown to be a sham because it has the blessings of the government and is biased. The conduct of the members of the commission invariably disappoints the victims. Mama Agnes disapprovingly comments that, “the voices of the occupants were too loud, the space too public for their harrowing, private confessions” (p.221). In addition, the commissioners throw away forms completed by the victims (p.223) thus underscoring the futility of the commission’s efforts. If there is anything that the commission of inquiry achieves, it is that it came “and awakened sleeping dogs and now the dogs they woke

up won't stop barking" (p.225). In other words, they make the victims remember the brutalities of the 5th Brigade and the whole process, as invoked in the above quotations, mediate this tone of mockery directed at the government because of its failure to substantively deal with its dark past. This same tone is noted in the narrative's indictment of the government for peddling lies at the exhumation of the "skulls, fumurs, humeri and other body parts from Antelope Mine" (p.224). The government insists that the remains are "from the liberation era of the '70s *Brave men and women who fought heroically for the freedom that Zimbabweans now enjoyed*" (p.224). However, the story's depiction reflects that this is a lie. This is noted in how the government's version is immediately contested by the victims who point "accusatory fingers aimed like pistols at Antelope Mine" (p.224) and categorically state that the remains are bones of Gukurahundi victims. Here, the itilicisation highlights the outrageous nature of the lies which reflect the government's insincerity and hence, the tone of mockery. These lies underscore the concocted nature of grand narratives and patriotic history and hence, the contestation that we witness here. The contestation of the government's version of this historical event places the text within discourses on subversion as argued by Bhabha (1994) and Macleod (2000).

In addition, the text highlights that Lawyers for Human Rights, and journalists from Amnesty International also attempt unsuccessfully to address the issue. All they do is come "asking questions nobody wanted to answer [and] it all died down, eventually, just like it always did" (p.225). This narrative, apart from underscoring the complexity associated with the resolving of the Gukurahundi, smacks of a forced historical amnesia and selective remembering that is expressed in patriotic history and hence, the sceptical attitude that the story registers.

Overall, Gukurahundi and the government's and other significant stakeholders' failure to address its associated atrocities informs the irredentism that the text addresses. Thus, the text depicts the Ndebele-speaking people's secessionist aspirations and articulation as a context-specific agenda since it is the Gukurahundi which provides the foundation for Ndebele radicalism and informs this ethnic minority's re-imagination of their ethnicity. This is in line with Bhabha's (1990) articulation that those placed on the margins of the norms and limits of the nation such as those of a different race or ethnicity are empowered by the performative necessity of nationalist representations to challenge dominant representations with narratives of their own. Furthermore, the re-imagination of Ndebele ethnicity as captured in the novel echoes Macleod's (2000:120) contention that counter-discourses reveal "different experiences, histories, and representations which [grand] discourses depend on excluding." Similarly, it

resonates with Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2012:15) submission that "the violence of the 1980s has remained as an enduring catalyst to emotional ethnicity mediated by anger, resentment and even the entertaining of irredentist and secessionist politics" and Lindgren's (2005:158) contention that the Gukurahundi atrocities have "heightened victims' awareness of being Ndebele, and a hatred for Shona-oriented groups."

The text shows a close link between recollections of state-sponsored violence and ethnic-based extermination of the Ndebele with the region's call for secession. Dumo, one of the principal characters in the text and leader of the Mthwakazi Secessionist Movement (p.10), who is described as a "cold and calculating revolutionary [...] who managed to cultivate his Gukurahundi trauma into software for his fantastical ambitions" (133), exclaims this solution; "we must secede! We can never be free, until we are allowed to mourn our dead, to acknowledge that they died, and how they died, and to exhume their bones in the unmarked graves in which they lie with strangers and perform the proper burial rites" (p.131). The revolutionary rhetoric and militant vocabularies permeating Dumo's declaration underscore the fragmented nature of the Zimbabwean nation. It is also evident here that the story goes against patriotic discourses in Zimbabwe that insist on the need to forget the Gukurahundi past. One minor character in the text contends that "the leaders of the nation have ordered us to forget [our Gukurahundi past]. To the future we must attend" (p.146) much to the narrator's cynicism. Nonetheless, this nameless character quickly points out the difficulties associated with forgetting for "who could forget a concentration camp? Memories loomed everywhere, like an accusation" (p.146). By the same token, Dumo asserts that "the greatest sin is to forget! The bitter gulp of hi-story is a necessary penicillin against the myopia of the present" (p.140). The militant register and authorial intrusion reflected in Dumo and the nameless character highlight the fictional writing and speaking against patriotic discourses. In addition, the story presents the omnipresent memory of past brutalities and trauma to the extent that the Ndebeles' memory becomes not one of continuum seeking national connectedness and oneness but that of "the time of the unmentionable era" (p.218, 225) and hence, the desire to secede from the nation of Zimbabwe.

The existence of the Mthwakazi Movement as described in the novel is indeed reflective of the irredentism that the text addresses and advocates. The Mthwakazi Movement's secessionist stance is an unambiguous demonstration of the bifurcated nature of the Zimbabwean nation. The text addresses the critical issue related with the lack of oneness in Zimbabwe and such a fictional focus goes against the state-enunciated patriotic grand narratives of unity and

togetherness in the nation. It is instructive therefore, to note that the narrative plot hinges on the missing of Bukhosi, Abednego and Mama Agnes' son, abducted while attending a Mthwakazi secessionist rally with Dumo and the narrator where Dumo was encouraging the members to secede from tyranny and the country Zimbabwe "for our brothers killed in the '80s in the Gukurahundi Genocide!" (p.10). These three characters are central to the secession movement with Dumo even referring to himself as a "respectable vanguard [who is able to] read the ink beneath the ink whenever he talked about the machinations and cover-ups of power" (p.60). This self-description and the text's description of Dumo as a "manipulator of searing and super-sharp [...] vision" (p.60), underscores his radical insight and intimate involvement in the Mthwakazi. In addition, the narrative constructs a positive image of Dumo through this description. This highlights a tone of admiration for Dumo and underscores the author's support for the secessionist movement.

The novel shows Dumo and the narrator's central role in the formative years of the movement. Both characters were involved in the Mthwakazi Movement's conception in London. The narrator even recounts that, "I was [Dumo's] first disciple [...] listening to his dream of a Mthwakazi Republic [and] it was I who helped him draft the proposals for our movement, I who helped him get funding, I who listened to his wild theories about our future" (p.284). This personal testimony underscores the narrator's intimate involvement in the movement and earns him the biblical allusion to Moses who, when he "was grown [...] went out unto his brethren and looked on their burdens..." (p.230). The biblical allusion is symbolic of the key role that the narrator plays in the Mthwakazi Secessionist Movement though there is irony at the end in that he is the one who informs on the movement's rally at Stanley Hall (a move that underscores the complicated role of individual subjectivity in collective goals). Nonetheless, the text suggests that the movement can be driven forward by committed members in the mould of Bukhosi who is praised for "his zeal for the Mthwakazi Secessionist Movement" (p.53) and is described as "possessing the recklessness of a true revolutionaire" (p53) and "over-passionate, [thus] making for a feverish Mthwakazi disciple" (p.261).

There is also the description of the first cell meeting where "the first of the future cell group leaders of the Mthwakazi Movement had been summoned [...] in Mzilikazi, that township after King Lobengula's father, the ferocious King Mzilikazi ka Khumalo" (p.265) right up to its launch rally at Stanley Hall (p.267, 286). The setting for the meetings is both symbolic and strategic for the articulation of Ndebele identity. In addition, that Gukurahundi informs the formation of the movement is attested to by Dumo who, in his dream of a Mthwakazi Republic

has pictures which chronicle “hi-stories that had been excluded from the national symbols but had instead symbolised themselves as scars on whipped backs, crippled arms, blinded eyes, women lying sprawled in the grass with their skirts pulled up, children in unnatural positions lying as though asleep” (p.284). This visual imagery reflects the Gukurahundi brutalities that the Ndebele experienced and hence, the connection with the formation of the Mthwakazi Secessionist Movement.

The story clearly valorises the Mthwakazi Movement in order to underscore the lack of unity and togetherness in Zimbabwe and links it with the larger history of postcolonial secession in order to give historical resonance and ideological anchor to the Movement. The cited secessions include South Sudan which is “busy trying to break away from the rest of Sudan” (p.267) and Eritrea which “managed it in 1993” (p.267) and these give traction to the Ndebele people’s resolve to secede. In addition, the text highlights the myriad objectives of the movement which bend the fabric of togetherness in Zimbabwe. Firstly, Dumo pronounces that the Mthwakazi Movement is “peacefully but firmly advocating for the emancipation of the Mthwakazians from the oppression and the colonial rule of the Republic of Zimbabwe” (p.266). This description highlights lack of oneness in Zimbabwe as Dumo is categorical that Mthwakazi and Zimbabwe are separate entities. This is noted further in Dumo’s emphatic assertion that “we are vehemently asking and peacefully demanding for a secession from the Republic of Zimbabwe, to form a peaceful Mthwakazian Republic, where our people can thrive in peace” (p.267). Here, there is the deployment of an oxymoron in the phrase “peacefully demanding” to emphasise the tension between the two ethnic groups.

Secondly, Dumo pronounces that that the movement seeks to create a democratic state of Mthwakazi and re-write the Mthwakazi history. This is noted in the assertion that the secessionist movement is premised on the need to create “the state of uMthwakazi which shall be characterised by democracy according to international standards and norms” (p.266) and re-write the “Mthwakazian history and the restoration of Mthwakazi pride” (p.266). These submissions indirectly indict the ruling ZANU PF party that is well-known for its flouting of democratic principles. In addition, the need to re-write history is, as noted by Thandi, one of the key characters in the novel, based on the irredentism evident in the view that, “the glory of the Mthwakazi Nation lives not in any history book, or in any official account, where we are nothing but savages without culture, without history or glory or anything worth mentioning” (p.48).

Lastly, the text portrays that the Mthwakazi Secessionist Movement seeks to bring justice to the Gukurahundi victims. This is presented as an attempt at bringing closure to the Gukurahundi atrocities. For instance, Dumo asserts that “what we are trying to do is to seek justice for our people and what they experienced under Gukurahundi at the hands of state apparatus” (p.61). This language denotes a militant agency seeking societal healing and restoration. This militant tone is noted further in Dumo’s pronouncement that “we are against the shutting up of what happened to us via that Unity Accord of ’87. What was that?” (p.267). This rhetorical question is a direct attack on the 1987 Unity Accord which is earlier described as that marriage covenant between “his Most Excellent Excellency Robert Gabriel Mugabe [...] and Joshua Mqabuko kaNyongolo Nkomo [as they] signed the past into oblivion as though it had never existed – ushering in forever-lasting peace between their two nationalist parties” (p.186). There is also a tone of bitterness and sarcasm in the above quotation and that is a reflection of the story’s lack of regard for the unity pact.

The bitterness discussed above is noted further in Dumo’s bitter observation that “we are not even allowed, after Gukurahundi to acknowledge our dead, to build shrines in their honour, to search for their bones in the mass graves. How do we bring peace to our dead, how do we restore their self-confidence as a people? Nonsense [...] Nonsense!” (p.267). This emotionally charged and militant language reflects the Ndebeles’ preparedness to engage in countless brushes with authority. Thus, the story indicts the ruling elite for its crisis of conscience as suggested by the implied bid to bury the ruling party-orchestrated dark history of the Gukurahundi by foreclosing discussion on the same. Dumo’s bitterness culminates in his defiant and emphatic proclamation that “these colonial borders are artificial. The white man didn’t understand what he was doing. They should have grouped us with South Africa, at least. Not this nonsense. Now we want the land of Mzilikazi occupied here. We want self-determination” (p.267). The tone of finality carried in this quotation underscores the irredentism that the text addresses. There is a disruption of all pretense at togetherness in Zimbabwe as reflected by this tribal antagonism. This confirms Bhabha’s (1994) contention that the nation is a liminal signifying space that is internally marked by the discourse of minorities, the heterogeneous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities and tense locations of cultural difference. This means that it is impossible to create a homogeneous people since “a plural population can never be turned into a single people because plurality and difference can never be entirely banished” (Macleod, 2000:119). Thus, the narrative pokes

holes on the grand narratives of oneness and a singular Zimbabwean history that are contained in the patriotic history project as discussed by Ranger (2005).

Ultimately, *House of Stone* (2018) portrays Ndebele irredentist articulations premised on the imaginings of a seceded state of Mthwakazi. This secessionist stance is given force by the Gukurahundi atrocities. Thus, the Ndebeles re-imagine their ethnicity by engaging in “a strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest” (Spivak, 1993:214). Expressed differently, the Ndebele ethnic minority adopt “essentialist categories in order to advance strategic goals” (Casswell, 2012:15). The text is therefore, an intrinsically adversarial narrative that categorically articulates the Ndebele-speaking people’s radicalism as expressed in their overt desire to delink from Zimbabwe and form their own Mthwakazi State. Thus, the text dismantles all pretense at national unity and that way disrupts notions on oneness and togetherness in Zimbabwe.

4.7 Conclusion

The chapter focussed on Mlalazi’s *Running with Mother* (2012) and Tshuma’s *House of Stone* (2018). Both texts are Gukurahundi-inspired and were read as narratives that disrupt notions on oneness and historical continuum preached by ZANU PF in post-2000 Zimbabwe as a weapon against past and new forms of imperialism. I employed Bowker and Star (1999) and Agamben’s (1995) ideas on citizen classification and exclusion respectively, to prop up the overarching theoretical ideas on nation and narration, patriotic history and counter-discourse by critics such as Bhabha (1994), Macleod (2000), Ranger (2005) and Ashcroft et. al. (1989) in my analysis of the texts. The central argument that I made in the chapter is that both novels are counter-representations to the notions on togetherness that are articulated in the state’s grand narratives since the texts expose ethnic classification that is built into the very fabric and system of the Zimbabwean nation.

Mlalazi’s *Running with Mother* was read as a fictional exposure of the fixing of ethnic identity in Zimbabwe. That ethnic fixing was read as an index of fragmentation in the Zimbabwean nation. The text was also read as a writerly deconstruction of oppressive categories. In this respect, the text’s vivid descriptions were taken as subversive in that they covertly authorise insurgent knowledges. The descriptions were considered as acts of writing against the dynamics of silencing and hence, a writerly contestation of patriotic identities.

Tshuma’s *House of Stone* was read as both a re-visioning of Zimbabwean history and an expression of irredentism. Both strands were considered significant to the writerly

contestations on patriotic identities in Zimbabwe. The re-visioning of history was analysed as a direct engagement with and contestation of ZANU PF's historical monologue. I submitted that the parallel histories that the text addresses challenge the notion of a singular and patriotic histories pedaled by the ZANU PF elite and suggest that the idea of a nation lies in its heterogeneity rather than a fiction of oneness as argued by Bhabha (1994) and Macleod (2000). I also submitted that the text's irredentist articulation which is informed by the Gukurahundi atrocities is reflective of the bifurcated nature of the Zimbabwean nation. Thus, ultimately, I argued that the text disrupts notions of oneness and togetherness that are contained in the state's patriotic grand narratives.

The next chapter analyses fictional narratives written by white Zimbabweans. The focus is on how their imaginaries have mutated since the advent of the Third Chimurenga and, more importantly, the symbolic resistance in living and going on with their lives in a state where they are erased from the political discourses and imaginaries of who belongs to the nation.

Chapter 5: The trope of everyday practices and defiance in white-authored Zimbabwean fiction

5.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on white-authored Zimbabwean fictional narratives that uniquely contest the grand narrative that excludes whites from the national space. While I am fully aware that this strand of white exclusion has received adequate critical attention, I intend to broaden the strand by focusing on what and how the whites feel well after the land invasions and how their everyday practices stand out as acts of resistance. I am fascinated by how some of the whites have evolved unique modes of contesting exclusionary discourses as depicted in the texts that I analyse in this chapter. This angle of analysis is in line with Bhabha's (1994) articulation that people placed on the margins of the norms and limits of the nation such as those of a different race or ethnicity, are empowered by the performativity necessity of nationalist representations to challenge dominant representations with narratives of their own. To this end, I analyse three short stories namely, "The Awards Ceremony" by John Eppel, "The Pencil Test" by Diana Charsley and "A Lazy Sunday Afternoon" by Monireh Jassat, published in the Jane Morris-edited collection of short stories titled *Long Time Coming: Short Writings from Zimbabwe* (2008).

My overarching focus throughout this thesis is on the contestation of the ZANU PF-constructed patriotic history, the associated patriotic identities and the grand narratives of oneness in post-2000 Zimbabwe. However, I frame part of my analysis of the stories in this chapter on Wakota's (2016:180) invaluable argument that "we need to understand resistance in a wider frame beyond whether or not such acts of resistance are recognised as such by the target." The central argument that I make is that some of the white Zimbabweans' engagement in everyday practices are symbolic indicators of resilience and resistance against exclusionary discourses. I argue that the everyday white experiences and aspirations depicted in the stories under focus are idioms of defiance to the grand narrative that excludes them. I also contend that even though the whites have been brushed out of the perceptions and memories of the nation, their everyday experiences and aspirations reveal that their lives are still ongoing. Therefore, it is a more nuanced and subtle contestation of patriotic identities that discreetly pokes holes on the exclusion. In addition, I premise my reading and analysis of the texts on the concept of the everyday practices, understood as errant and indirect

trajectories that obey their own logic and posited as the locus of a hidden poetics of resistance, as postulated by Michel de Certeau (1984).

However, before I unpack the everyday practices category of inquiry that informs this chapter, it is pertinent to first of all point out that white Zimbabweans have ambivalent if not conflicting attitudes towards issues of belonging to Zimbabwe. This submission is important because it forecloses the risk of generalising that whites are a monolithic block in terms of their attitudes and perceptions on issues related to belonging in Zimbabwe. Indeed not all whites want to be included in the Zimbabwean nation's scheme of things. On the one hand, there are those Zimbabweans or Rhodesians who detest the idea of belonging to Zimbabwe. They openly express their undisguised feelings towards Zimbabwe on virtual spaces where they have congregated. Such whites associate themselves with Rhodesian identities, evince colonial settler values and yearn for colonial structures of power and privilege (Gwekwerere et. al. 2017). On the other hand, there are those whites who feel very much at home in Zimbabwe. These whites do not even feel the exclusion and this group is represented by white ZANU PF supporters including, among others, Timothy Stamps, Joshua Sacco and Kirsty Coventry. Timothy Stamps, who died in November 2017, was a white Zimbabwean politician and doctor who served in the Zimbabwean government as Minister of Health from 1986 to 2002 and was for most of his tenure the only white member of government. Joshua Sacco is the current Chimanimani East (a constituency in Manicaland Province in Zimbabwe) ZANU PF Member of Parliament and was a pioneer white youth to join the ruling ZANU PF National Youth League after independence. He is also famed for his revolutionary songs in support of the ruling party. Kirsty Coventry, a former swimmer and world record holder, is the current Minister of Youth, Sport, Arts and Recreation. She was appointed to the post in 2018 in recognition of her sporting accomplishments and as a symbol of the current Zimbabwean government's inclusive outlook.

The above-mentioned category of white ZANU PF supporters is the one to which the late Denis Norman, the first Minister of Agriculture in independent Zimbabwe and for a long time the country's most popular and high profile white, belongs. In fact, Norman has even written a book, *The Odd Man In: Mugabe's White-Hand Man* (2018) which is a record of the author's life from boyhood in England to government service in post-independent Zimbabwe until he resigned in 1997. The book is critical to an understanding of the complex history of Zimbabwe particularly in the early years of independence. Despite being white, Norman writes about the political and economic developments in Zimbabwe with the knowledge of an insider owing to

the seventeen years that he spent in government service working variously as Minister of Agriculture, Transport and Energy, thus underscoring the reality that some whites feel at home in Zimbabwe. The book's subtitle, *Mugabe's White-Hand Man* is evocative and points to the instrumental role(s) that the author played in Mugabe's government. Thus, the book explains the critical role that Norman played in attempting to bring reconciliation between blacks and whites, especially in the agriculture sector, after independence. This gesture of racial tolerance highlights that Norman had a vision of racial harmony and hence, the contention that some whites feel comfortable in Zimbabwe. This feeling is attested to, further in the memoir when Norman points out that he was not for the exit option but reluctantly made the decision to leave Zimbabwe in 2003 after the escalation of the land invasions. In addition, Norman declares his love for Zimbabwe and says he wishes Zimbabwe well and remains confident that the country will prosper again and regain its political and economic stability. This love and general positive attitude towards Zimbabwe underscores the point that some whites indeed are comfortable in Zimbabwe.

It is also pertinent to underscore briefly the trajectory of white writings in Zimbabwe since the advent of the Third Chimurenga. Such a discussion is critical in that it sheds light on the distinct contours that white writing has taken at various moments in post-2000. In addition, the discussion also helps in the placement of the texts within the context they have to be read and understood. In this respect, I argue that there is a discernible shift in the way white writers respond to patriotic discourses from the moment they are discursively excluded from the Zimbabwean political space to contemporary times. This argument resonates with Pilosof's (2009:623) contention that the "changing national [...] contexts have resulted in noticeable shifts of focuses and approach of white writers in Zimbabwe [...]." These shifts account for the uniqueness of the contestation that is noted in the narratives that I analyse in this chapter.

As a starting point, it is critical to submit that a majority of white writing in post-2000 Zimbabwe is a response to the exigencies of displacement from the land through the radical land reform programme instigated by the Zimbabwean government (Pilosof, 2009, Manase, 2016). In fact, Manase (2016:135) postulates that the Zimbabwean government's land reform programme has not only influenced but "will continue to act as a prompt for most post-2000 literary productions, especially those from white Zimbabweans." This point on the exigencies that the land reform programme wrought on the whites is also noted in Chennells' (2005:135) contention that the exercise "reduced an arrogant and politically all-powerful white elite to an anxious and embattled minority." The point here is that, the advent of the Third Chimurenga

witnessed and exacerbated the plight of some white Zimbabweans and their ultimate discursive jettisoning from the Zimbabwean political space. This jettisoning manifested mostly in the way whites were labelled as “outsiders, remnants of white Rhodesian colonialism and Europeans not deserving any connection with the historically ‘black’ African nation” (Manase, 2016:130). It is critical to point out that these exigencies and exclusions “created space and the market for whites to tell and sell their story” (Pilossof, 2009:621). Thus, white writing in post-2000 Zimbabwe grapples with and responds to issues related to “the dilemmas of belonging” (Pilossof, 2009:621), a point which is also noted by Tagwirei (2014:200) in his observation that “the question of belonging is never far from articulation in white Zimbabwean narratives.”

Furthermore, the white Zimbabwean writers’ multiple responses to the exclusionary patriotic narratives in the post-2000 era in Zimbabwe is an important strand directly related to this study. This multiple nature of the responses is reflective of the shifts in the political matrix that contribute to a different imagining of and reaction to patriotic identities at various moments in the post-2000 Zimbabwean white literary trajectory. For instance, there is a critical tenor in the early 2000s white writings, which reflects the trauma resulting from the displacement from the land. Thus, it is common to find in such writings an overriding narration of victimhood (Pilossof, 2012). This position is also noted by Manase (2016:27) in his contention that there is an “articulation of victimhood” in white writings. Examples of writings that articulate victimhood and are critical of the autochthonous grand narratives include Buckle’s memoirs *African Tears: Zimbabwe’s Land Invasions* (2001) and *Beyond Tears: Zimbabwe’s Tragedy* (2002). In addition, Manase (2016:26) contends further that “white writings speak to [the] experience of exclusion from the land and categorisation as Zimbabwean, and their search for alternatives and survival techniques in the face of these exclusions.” These submissions are important to the way I frame the argument in this chapter, which is a consideration of the way(s) in which the selected stories contest patriotic identities in post-2000 Zimbabwe. However, it is evident in the stories that I analyse in this chapter that a movement away from the year 2000 yields a metamorphosis in white writing in Zimbabwe to a tenor that is more discreet and subtle in its contestation of the exclusionary grand narratives. These subtle ways are depicted in the self-redefinitions and personal re-inventions on the part of white Zimbabweans as vital counter-balances to the exclusionary Zimbabwean autochthonous grand narratives. In addition, this re-invention aims to simultaneously disrupt and complicate the way society is constructed under the ZANU PF discourses.

As already highlighted, the discourse of the practice of everyday life informs this chapter. As such, it is critical to explore and analyse this critical lens' contours. Michel de Certeau (1984:10) defines the everyday practices as "ways of operating or doing things [which are not] merely the obscure background of social activity [but concern] the operational logic whose models may go as far back as the age-old ruses of fishes and insects that disguise or transform themselves in order to survive." In pursuance of the same line of argument, Lefebvre (2002) contends that the everyday is constitutive of a critique of superior activities and the ideologies that they produce. Schilling (2003:5) describes the everyday as the routine and unconscious daily round and submits that "everyday life consists of the little things one hardly notices in time and space." This submission resonates with Blanchot's (1993) definition of the everyday as that which escapes by definition and as a reference to that which we cannot perceive. All the definitions given above seem to point to an apparent meaninglessness and insignificance in everyday life. However, the practice of everyday life gives meaning to this apparent meaninglessness. Johnson (2007:2) contends that while the everyday is fundamentally liminal, "this liminality is fundamentally corrosive to the structures of order." This perspective is buttressed by Lefebvre's (2002:97) contention that "everyday life, in a sense residual, defined by 'what is left over' after all distinct, superior, specialised, structured activities have been singled out by analysis, must be considered as a totality." This consideration of the everyday as a totality banishes its seeming insignificance and underscores its critical nature. This lends a political dimension to the practice of everyday life, which is also noted in the way the everyday is described as a critique of superior activities and in its equation to ruses that the fishes and insects engage in in order to survive.

Everyday practices are minute but their impact is far-reaching. This impact is noted in the way the everyday practices enable the subaltern to escape, resist and subvert dominant structures as I will explain later in the analysis of texts in this chapter. As Johnson (2007:5) notes, the everyday encompasses "the small, minuscule, quotidian ways people manipulate the mechanisms of order and discipline, seeming to conform and thus evading precisely by the smallness of their tactics, which are exactly small enough to escape notice." Schilling (2003:13) also contends that there are a "thousand ways in which individuals escape each and every day from the strictures of [dominant structures]. Ordinary actions should be reconsidered in light of their 'inventiveness', that is, the capacity engendering fresh styles of life within the interstices of state and class control." The emphasis in both quotations is on the smallness and liberating aspects of the everyday practices. On account of this liberating potential of everyday

practices, they can be classified under counter-discourse (Ashcroft et. al, 1989). Thus, I argue in this chapter that there is a connection between this old counter-discursive framework as postulated by critics such as Ashcroft et. al. (1989) and the new everyday-based one that I deploy in the analysis of texts in this chapter. This conflation of the old and the new is critical in that it reveals that both strands engage with the patriotic history grand narrative and the associated patriotic identities that seek to define what people think, how they think about themselves and who belongs where. Ultimately, I argue that the white writings I analyse here are testament to the resistance that is evident in the whites' everyday engagements with the ZANU PF-mapping of patriotic identities.

An important strand in the discourse on everydayness is consumption. This consumption relates to the models of action characteristic of the dominated users of a culture in any given society. The users of a culture are referred to as consumers. What is critical here is the way consumers make use of a culture that is imposed on them because, as De Certeau (1984:12) contends, “the presence and circulation of a [cultural] representation tells us nothing about what it is for its users.” The import of this contention is that consumption patterns trace indeterminate trajectories. This unpredictable nature of the behaviour of consumers persuades De Certeau (1984:12) to conclude that it is important to “analyse [culture’s] manipulation by users who are not its makers [because] only then can we gauge the difference or similarity between the production of the image and the secondary production hidden in the process of its utilisation.” This submission underscores the centrality of analysing the way(s) the dominated utilise a culture that is imposed on them. In most cases, the culture is utilised deviously by the dominated. This point is noted by De Certeau (1984:12) in his contention that consumption of a culture “is devious, it is dispersed, but it insinuates itself everywhere, silently and almost invisibly, because it does not manifest itself through its own products, but through its *ways of using* the products imposed by a dominant economic order.” The emphasis here is on the point that the dominated deviously make use of a culture that is foisted on them. The devious consumption of culture resonates with the carnivalesque aesthetic as postulated by Bakhtin (1984). Bakhtin argues that the carnivalesque, which is a form of popular low humour, is a way of life that pokes fun at how distorted meanings emanate from central government and redefines as well as celebrates existence as it is carved and lived by the mundane and very ordinary people.

In addition, an analysis of the procedures and protocols of consumption of a culture is critical in that it reveals the various ways in which the dominated users of a culture transform it. This

is noted by De Certeau (1984:13) in the submission that, as the dominated consumers of a culture use it, they “make innumerable and infinitesimal transformations of and within the dominant cultural economy in order to adapt it to their own interests and their own rules.” Expressed in a different way, consumers manipulate the mechanisms of the dominant culture and use it to achieve “ends and references foreign to the system they had no choice but to accept” (De Certeau, 1984:12). That way, the dominated deflect the power of the dominant social order without necessarily leaving it. This is made possible by the procedures or protocols of consumption where the dominated insinuate their countless differences into the dominant cultural economy. Thus, in using the cultural products of the dominant culture, the subaltern only seem to conform in order to evade. The evasion is made possible by the devious way in which they consume the dominant culture. Ultimately, the subaltern remains “heterogeneous to the systems they infiltrate and in which they sketch out guileful ruses of different interests and desires” (De Certeau, 1984:59). Thus, the devious consumption is akin to the carnivalesque aesthetic or spirit that gives the dominated a certain extraterritoriality from official order and ideology and is, therefore, a social and political force (Bakhtin, 1984).

Furthermore, consumption patterns or actions reveal a certain inventiveness that is discreet. This inventiveness demystifies the idea that the consumer is a consenting victim. In addition, the inventiveness underscores the non-conformism that is associated with consumption. De Certeau (1984:55) explains this idea in his assertion that consumption is characterised by “its ruses, its fragmentation [...] its poaching, its clandestine nature, its tireless but quiet activity.” The reference to ruses and poaching suggests that the consumer, through this inventiveness that is attendant to consumption, is a dupe to the system. Thus, the quotation reinforces the idea that consumers have their own itinerary as they use a culture. Their procedure of consumption maintains “their difference in the very space that the [dominant culture] organises” (De Certeau, 1984:57). This comes out clearly in Eppel’s short story “The Awards Ceremony” analysed in this chapter where the narrator simulates adherence to the ruling party ideologies but engages in the everyday practices of the listening and spectating rhetoric in order to discreetly contest the ruling party’s overarching sense of dominance.

Another important strand in the discourse on everydayness is the idea of tactics. Schilling (2003:11) defines tactics as sets of “ruses or feints placed in direct opposition to strategies of state control.” In pursuance of the same, De Certeau (1984:62) defines a tactic as an art of the weak and a manoeuvre “within an enemy’s field of vision [and] within enemy territory.” In addition, he contends that a tactic is linked to an aesthetics of tricks and imitation and “an ethics

of tenacity (countless ways of refusing to accord the established order the status of a law, a meaning, or a totality” (1984:52). Pertinent to note here is the idea that tactics are weapons for the weak (Scott, 1985) and they are associated with trickery. This trickery is deployed as a technique to evade and survive within dominant and oppressive discourses. This links with Manase’s (2016:26) observation made earlier in this chapter that whites “search for alternatives and survival techniques in the face of these exclusions [from the dominant Zimbabwean socio-economic and political discourses].” This point is noted in Charsley’s short story “The Pencil Test” analysed in this chapter where the protagonists devise the complexion change plan in order to contest racially motivated exclusions.

As already noted, everyday practices are tactical in character. These tactics are deployed as a means to evade or resist authority. They are also free-floating and can be deployed anytime, anywhere and anyhow. In other words, tactics do not follow a clearly defined trajectory because they do not exist in a precisely schematised form. De Certeau (1984:19) contends that “many everyday practices (talking, reading, moving about, shopping, cooking, etc) are tactical in character.” De Certeau (1984:13) notes further that the dominated engage in “a multitude of ‘tactics’ articulated in the details of everyday life”. Schilling (2003:3) buttresses this point in his observation that the everyday relates to popular tactics of resistance. Thus, tactics are inextricably connected to the everyday practices. They are a means by which the dominated cleverly interact with oppressive discourses. Moreover, De Certeau (1984) submits that tactics function freely because they are not regulated by stable local units. As he notes, tactics do not “obey the law of a place, for they are not defined or identified by it” (p.55). In other words, in De Certeau’s (1984:18) formulation, a tactic does not have a place, hence “it depends on time – it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized ‘on the wing’”.

A further distilling of the essence of the tactics embedded in the practices of everyday life reveals that tactics have manipulative tendencies. The manipulation is a result of tactics’ lack of stable local units. As argued by De Certeau (1984), a tactic can use, manipulate and divert [political] spaces (p.55) because it insinuates itself into the other’s place, fragmentarily (p.18). In addition, a tactic constantly manipulates events in order to turn them into opportunities. For this reason, De Certeau (1984:19) describes tactics variously as “clever tricks, knowing how to get away with things, ‘hunter’s cunning’, manouvres, [and] polymorphic simulations” which signify victories of the weak over the strong. Thus, there is “a partial and caricatural aspect of the revenge that utilising tactics take on the power that dominates production” (57). For instance, Jassat’s short story “A Lazy Sunday Afternoon” analysed in this chapter reveals that

white characters get away with things through engaging in everyday practices that exclude the overtly political. In a way, the white characters' neglect of the overtly political is a way of passing a judgement on the unworthy of exclusionary discourses.

Overall, consumption and tactics are central in everyday practices. Both have an intrinsic connection and they are deeply political. This is noted in De Certeau's (1984:16) contention that "the tactics of consumption, the ingenious ways in which the weak make use of the strong, thus lend a political dimension to everyday life." Furthermore, De Certeau (1984:14) clarifies that consumption patterns and tactics relate to "the clandestine forms taken by the dispersed, tactical and makeshift creativity of groups or individuals already caught in the nets of 'discipline'. Pushed to their ideal limits, these procedures and ruses of consumers compose a network of an anti-discipline." Embedded within this submission is the idea that consumption and tactics are political in character. The reference to the composition of a network of anti-discipline highlights the non-conformism that is associated with the consumption of cultures by the dominated. Schilling 2003:14) adds on to this political dimension in his contention that tactics and modes of consumption enable individuals to "free themselves from the protocols imposed upon them, making the most of their dominated position."

Ultimately, the practice of everyday life is conceptualised here as a mute process of subversion and a strategic deployment in relationships of force. It is "a radical passivity" (Seigworth, 2000:5) and "resistance without protest" (Scott, 1985:417) because it is an imperceptible and surreptitious category. The everyday reverses relationships of power and ensures the victory of the weak. This reversal is possible because the everyday space protects the weapons of the weak against the reality of the established order. The everyday also manipulates the established order from within and hence, it is a surreptitious form of subversion where the dominated use the dominant culture with personal ends in mind. Thus, the everyday has to be understood as both a place of evasion and a celebratory description of popular tactics of resistance that is, as already explained, akin to Bakhtin's carnivalesque aesthetic.

Lastly, it is important to take note of the social contradictions that everyday practices reveal and the unpredictable element in everyday practices. These contradictions, which are exposed through everyday practices, highlight the subversive bent of everydayness as a category of inquiry. De Certeau (1984) alerts us to the fact that it is not enough to give a mere description of the everyday. Instead, he explains the need for us to tease out the social contradictions that the ordinary practices bring to bear. He also emphasises the centrality of observing the element

of unpredictability in everyday practices, such as walking or reading because these remain hidden to state apparatuses of control that cannot afford to concern themselves with the micro social. Expressed differently, the everyday practices are trivialised because they are associated with patterns that usually remain below the threshold of the attention of state apparatuses. On account of their invisibility and guileful nature, everyday practices are political forces to reckon with and they constitute a subversive category. Thus, ultimately, I submit that there is in everydayness, in Taussig's (1992:142) words, "an activist, [de]constructivist bent [which] is [always] working on, [...] acting and reacting" to dominant structures or discourses. Therefore, I analyse the stories in this chapter through this subversive lens on the practice of everyday life and try to unpack how whites react to the autochthonous grand narratives that exclude them.

5.1 Spurious solidarity as an emblem of dissidence in Eppel's "The Awards Ceremony"

This section analyses Eppel's short story, "The Awards Ceremony", as an undisguised political commentary narrated by a ruling party opponent disguised as a ZANU PF supporter. The central argument that I make in the section is that the story bears testimony to a reframing of the contestation of patriotic identities in the post-2000 era that is characterised by inflexible and inward-looking political ideologies enunciated in the Third Chimurenga discourses as argued by Ranger (2004), Raftopoulos (2004) and Tendi (2010). The reframing is noted in the dissipation of the critical tenor usually associated with white writings during the same period. Instead, we see a more nuanced and subtle form of subversion articulated in the details of everyday practices. Thus, I submit that on the surface, the story just reads like a familiar post-2000 white-authored narrative that is informed by a different ideological persuasion in its critique of the excesses of and deconstruction of the ideological orientation of the ruling party. However, I argue that an in depth and critical reading of the story reveals an interesting dimension, which is that of the narrator's engagement in the everyday practice of attending a ruling party function and using the engagement as a tactic to insinuate himself into the ranks of the ruling party. That insinuation enables the narrator to critique from a close quarter while disguised as a ruling party supporter. Thus, it is a new form of contestation that is revealed in the "contradictions between overt acts and gestures made in public and the covert responses made underground" (Mbembe, 1992:3), which are articulated from inside the belly of the beast. I argue that the narrator deploys the everyday listening and spectating rhetoric in order to poke holes on the ruling party's noxious brand of patriotism.

The story, which is very short, is about an awards ceremony, which the narrator attends. The recipients of the awards are a married couple, one a police officer and the other a nurse. Both are awarded Zimbabwe's second highest civilian merit award for having terminated people's lives. They are labelled patriots and rewarded because their actions are deemed to be supportive of the cause of the ruling party. At the end of the ceremony, there is a tragedy when the little girls who have been entertaining the audience are crushed to death by the dislodged VIP box where the Minister's wife had been sitting.

Key in this story is the way the narrator strategically placed himself within the ranks of the ZANU PF supporters. It is fascinating to observe how the narrator toys with power "not just away from officialdom, out of earshot, out of sight of power but [...] within the actual arenas where they [are] gathered publicly to confirm the legitimacy of the state" (Mbembe, 1992:5). The narrator's close observation of the unfolding events is made possible by the fact that he disguises himself as a party supporter. Thus, I contend that the most significant part of the story is the parenthetically depicted allusion to Charles Baudelaire's poem "To the Reader", a preface to the collection of poems entitled *Flowers of Evil*, which was first published in 1857. The narrator initially clarifies that the audience at the awards ceremony is strictly the "paid-up members of the ruling party" (p.8). Then he describes how the Minister, after "an hour-long speech condemning those proxies of Blair and Bush who were working with unpatriotic elements to undermine the great and glorious gains of the liberation struggle" (p.8) then turns to the purpose "of this gathering of party faithful" (p.9). Having identified himself as a party faithful, the narrator is quick to caution the reader against asking him about his political affiliation or persuasion. This is presented in parenthesis and is noted in the narrator's injunction that, "(don't ask me, *mon semblable, mon frere*, what I was doing there)" (p.9). This quotation informs my reading of the story and is central to my line of argument in this section of the chapter. The quotation in italics is written in French and comes from Charles Baudelaire's poem "To the Reader". Roughly translated, the words mean, "hypocrite reader – my fellow, -my brother". Baudelaire's poem draws parallels between the persona and the reader in the suggestion that humanity is generally hypocritical and insincere. The poem also sardonically admonishes the reader and rebukes him for this hypocrisy, which the persona says he also shares.

The observations noted above are central to the narrator's immersion in the everyday practices. By admonishing the reader for his hypocritical attitude, the argument is made by extension or inference that, while it is true that the narrator suffers the indignity of being identified as a

ruling party supporter, the reader would also do likewise under similar circumstances. Thus, the narrator vindicates his ignoble action by suggesting that the reader would be as guilty as him when faced with a similar situation. This implies the idea of fake discipleship and spurious solidarity. Therefore, joining of the ruling party has to be contextualised or read as an operational logic and the “walking rhetoric” (De Certeau, 2007:162) to attend a ruling party function as well as the usage and consumption of party ideologies place the action within the realm of the everyday. Instead of it being just a banal and everyday practice of attending a political gathering, there is more to it, which reflects the tactical nature of the narrator’s involvement. Thus, in line with De Certeau’s postulation about tactics, the narrator tactfully involves himself in the ruling party’s political activities, seeming to conform, but ultimately in order to evade and covertly graft himself on that same space from which most white Zimbabweans have been discursively excluded.

The narrator’s presence at the awards ceremony is critical. This is also the same with the implied going about with party business as a supporter of the ruling ZANU PF party. The action of involving oneself is a nuanced and subtle way of extracting oneself from the web of political surveillance in a post-2000 Zimbabwean nation that has discursively branded most whites as outsiders in discourses of indigeneity and autochthony (Alexander, 2004, Schipper, 1999, Fisher, 2010). Nonetheless, it should be underscored that the extrication of oneself from political surveillance does not mean a lack of involvement in politics. Instead, it means that fictional whites have embraced more subterranean strategies to express their political point of view. Thus, the narrator’s presence at the awards ceremony and the listening and spectating rhetoric have to be pigeonholed as part of the everyday practices especially considering their tactical or strategic nature. Here, the awards ceremony is important in that it calls to mind Muchemwa’s (2010) study on galas and biras which were used as a way of setting the way such political occurrences defined the political interventions aimed at mapping the everyday in Zimbabwe in the early 2000s. That way, the white narrator’s intrusion into such Zanufied and hence patriotic charged spaces becomes similar to transgressive walks of the De Certeau urban pedestrian defying the city fathers and the architects who designed that city.

As noted above, the narrator’s involvement in the ruling party activities satisfies the classical everyday practice discourse. That is, there is an element of inventiveness in the ordinary action of attending the awards ceremony and identifying oneself as a card carrying member of the ruling party. Like fishes and insects that disguise or transform to survive (De Certeau, 1984), the narrator disguises himself as a ruling party supporter. That action is read as a tactical way

and fresh style of life within the interstices of state control (Schilling, 2003:13). What is clear in the story is that the involvement is a gambit where the white narrator appears to observe “the political and semantic imperatives” (Bhabha, 1994) of the oppressive discourse while in reality systematically misrepresenting the foundational assumptions of this discourse by articulating it. Thus, ultimately, the involvement turns out to be corrosive to the structures of the dominant ruling party discourses (Johnson, 2007).

The joining of the “party faithful” (p.9) and utilisation of the party’s ideologies are strategic. The joining is meant to establish an observation post from which the narrator can critique from a close quarter and an informed position the ruling party’s extravagant displays and dramatisation of its magnificence. In addition, I contend that the narrator’s utilisation of the ruling party ideologies is devious. His consumption of the ideologies traces indeterminate trajectories in that the narrator manipulates the mechanisms of the dominant culture to achieve “ends and references foreign to the system [he] had no choice but to accept” (De Certeau, 1984). In this case, the narrator manipulates his status as a ruling party supporter to dissect and analyse the operations of the ruling party with an unsparing eye. The joining can best be conceptualised as an infiltration since it is used as a way to get access to the inner world of ZANU PF. In addition, the narrator uses this access to mock and satirise the party and hence the assertion that the story is subversive. The subversion is articulated in the narrator’s engagement in the practice of everyday life of listening and spectating.

It is worth mentioning that the narrator is part of the gathering of the party faithful without really belonging to the fold. He enters the ranks of the ruling party with his own agenda, remains heterogeneous to the system he infiltrates and sketches out guileful ruses of different interests and desires. In a sense, the narrator reluctantly acquiesces to ZANU PF politics. He simulates adherence to the “innumerable official rituals that life in the postcolony requires – such as the carrying of the party card [and] making public gestures of support” (Mbembe, 1992:5). The acquiescence is a form of solidarity but also for personal survival. The reluctance to be really a part of the proceedings is highlighted through vivid description. For instance, we are told that the narrator sits in a “cramped position near the back” (p.7). This imagery highlights a sense of unease and is suggestive of unbelonging. In addition, the narrator has to “crane [his] neck” (p.7) for him to see that the recipients of the awards are actually holding their hands. This description, which suggests difficulty, mirrors the narrator’s lack of total immersion in the ruling party political activities. The lack of a deep-rooted involvement is later noted in the way the narrator unflinchingly interrogates the ZANU PF brand of politics and

notions of patriotism from the vantage position of an outlying insider. In other words, the narrator is an inside outsider in that while he purports to support the party, the reality is that he is not beholden to the party and does not pay homage to the same.

The narrator engages in hidden transcripts described by Scott (1985:4) as “discourses that take place offstage beyond the direct observation of the power holders” to deconstruct the ruling party’s discourses on patriotism. Scott (1985:183) also contends that such “behind-the-scenes” forms of subversion are like “infrared rays, beyond the visible end of the spectrum” and their invisibility is “by design – a tactical choice, born out of a prudent awareness of the balance of power.” Thus, it is important to assess the subterranean strategies of contestation and subversion that the story employs and to underscore that the narrator’s strategies of consumption of the dominant ruling party ideologies lie within the realm of the everyday.

It is also imperative to analyse how the narrator makes use of the political space that he finds himself inhabiting. The narrator stands out as a fake apologist who manipulates his association with the party to further his own agenda, which in this case is the exposure and deconstruction of the ruling party’s distorted definitions of patriotism. This subversion from within is made possible by the narrator’s procedures and protocols of consumption of the ruling party political ideologies. Here, it is the usage and consumption of the ruling party ideologies which is the trope of the everyday that facilitates the narrator’s mediation of such ridicule of the party’s warped sense of patriotism. Thus, it is important to underscore that the story has a satirical tone. The narrator’s chief gripe with the ruling party is its distorted, uncanny and inward-looking brand of patriotism, hence the story’s significance in using the everyday concept to expand our understanding of the criticism of the post-2000 patriotic discourses and their practices such as rallies and galas.

It is pertinent to underscore that first, the satire is noted in the incongruity between the awards given to the recipients and the circumstances leading to the awards. In other words, the actions done by the recipients do not tally or correspond with the awards given. This lack of symmetry between the deeds and the awards is noted in the narrator’s submission that “both recipients of the award had shown extreme patriotism in the execution of their duties” (p.9). Here, the story employs exaggeration in order to mock the ZANU PF brand of patriotism. One would expect something positive to be articulated by the guest of honour but the description of patriotism that follows exposes the contrary. The narrator points out that the nurse, Sister Chigaramanhenga, is awarded for “strangling five terminally ill patients at Bulawayo’s

Ubebele Hospital [thereby helping] to solve the problem of urban overcrowding, in the spirit of the by no means exhausted government initiative, Operation Murambatsvina (clear out the human excrement)” (p.9). Here, one detects a sarcastic tone in the story since the nurse is rewarded for killing people. The point is not so much that the killed are terminally ill patients but that it is due to the government-initiated Operation Murambatsvina. The operation, one of those through which the government sought to assert control, was commandist and militarist (Vambe, 2008, Hammar et. al., 2010) and characterised by politicised mass demolitions of various people’s houses and informal industries created to support their livelihoods (Hammar et. al., 2010). Thus, the story mocks the government for that exercise whose primary objective was to displace people. The fact that the exercise is by no means exhausted highlights its continual nature and the way it haunts the psyche of ordinary Zimbabweans as they engage with their day-to-day activities. In addition, the government’s reference to individuals affected by the operation as human excrement reflects their insensitivity and hence the story’s mocking tone.

The police officer, Comrade Inspector Chigaramanhenga is also given the award for “beating so severely, with a metre-long rubberised truncheon and [...] stomping so energetically with his size twelve hob-nailed boots, seven women supporters of the National Constitutional Assembly, that they later died of their injuries” (p.9). The vivid and exaggerated description here invokes a tone of mockery on the police officer as noted in the disproportionate size of his boots, which are also hob-nailed and the passion with which he unleashes violence, all reflecting the story’s subversive intent. It is ironic that the police officer’s brutal actions are also deemed praiseworthy because they help “preserve [the] country’s sovereignty in its struggle against Western-backed advocates of regime-change, like whites, coloureds, Indians, and... er... Ndebeles” (p.9). Thus, the story makes a veiled attack on ZANU PF’s brand of patriotism that is benchmarked on violence in its defence of the political edifice.

The story also introduces another critical dimension to do with the Othering of minority groups in Zimbabwe’s political discourses. The Othered groups include the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) members, whites, coloureds, Indians and Ndebeles. All these have become, in Zimbabwe’s distorted political lexicon, generic names for traitors since they are deemed anti-ZANU PF. This dimension of the story confirms Muchemwa’s (2010:1) observation that this is a period “dominated by the ZANU PF narrative of the nation in which imagining the nation excludes and disposes of undesirable individuals and groups.” Therefore, the story also

addresses the problematic and contentious issues of autochthony in Zimbabwe as discussed by Alexander (2004) and Muzondidya (2007).

The story's title, "The Awards Ceremony", is very significant. The significance is firstly noted in the story's descriptions, which resonate with Mbembe's (1992) ideas on the postcolony's tendency for excess and a lack of proportion. Mbembe (1992) notes further that the obscene and the grotesque are the two essential characteristics that identify postcolonial regimes of domination. These characteristics of the postcolony are revealed in the story in the way the political elite conduct themselves and dramatise their magnificence at the awards ceremony. Thus, the title of the story is significant to the way the narrator exposes the operations of the ruling party. In this case, as the title suggests, the occasion is an awards ceremony. This setting is in line with Mbembe's (1992:20) contention that "ceremonies have become the privileged language through which power speaks, acts and coerces" and Muchemwa's (2010:1) submission that the holding of ceremonies dramatises the regime of the spectacle to establish hegemony and claim legitimacy. Further, Mbembe (1992:6) submits that "festivities and celebrations are the vehicles for giving expression to the *commandement* and for staging its displays of magnificence and prodigality." Seen in this light, the title of the story is quite significant since the awards ceremony is a bastion of patriotism and is the space where the narrator gains familiarity with the ruling party's "violence and domination in its most heady form" (Mbembe, 1992:19). Thus, the timing and location of the awards ceremony is critical to the way the narrator covertly scrutinises the operations of the ruling ZANU PF party from a close quarter.

The story's character depiction also exposes elements of the obscene and the grotesque. The Minister's wife is depicted as the epitome of the obscene and the grotesque that is characteristic of the ruling elite. Her description as "enormous" and "a pretty giantess" (p.8) mirrors "the obesity of men in power, their impressive physique [that] appeal to a people who can enjoy themselves with mockery and laughter" (Mbembe, 1992:6). There is a mocking tone in the description of the enormous physique of the Minister's wife as noted in how "the chairs in the box had to be replaced by a large settee in order to accommodate the pretty giantess" (p.8). The derision is also extended to the audience that is described as "obese – a sure sign that they were paid-up members of the ruling party" (p.8). Here, there is use of parallelism between the Minister's wife and the obese audience to underscore the ruling party's grotesque and obscene character. This parallelism is noted further in the description of the Minister's wife as "wearing a crimson velvet dress, which might once have been stage curtains" (p.8) that echoes an earlier

description of “one woman [who] was wearing a blouse the size of a double-bed sheet” (p.8). There is sarcasm in the above-quoted descriptions, which resonates with Mbembe’s (1992:8) observation that the *commandement* must “furnish public proof of its prestige and glory by a sumptuous (yet burdensome) presentation of its symbols of status, displaying heights of luxury in matters of dress and life style.” Here, the narrator mocks this obscenity and the mockery is located in the details of everyday practice of consumption and usage as postulated by De Certeau and is consistent with the subversion of the ZANU PF grand narratives.

Another fascinating aspect in the description of the Minister’s wife is her grand entrance and the careful attention that she gives to her food. The careful attention parallels the narrator’s everyday watching and listening. She moves, upon entrance, to “the separate compartment known as a box, which is reserved for dignitaries” (p.8) and is “holding a *Kentucky Fried* drumstick in one hand, and a glass of *Coca Cola* in the other” (p.8). This fascination with food confirms Mbembe’s (1992:8) observation that “pomp and extravagance are [...] classical ingredients in the production of power” and that “to exercise authority, [...] is to demonstrate publicly a certain delight in eating and drinking well.” These are the charms of majesty, which reveal the power of the ruling elite. The wife’s obtrusive obsession with food is noted at the end of the story when the six girls who have been entertaining the audience are crushed to death. Instead of mourning for the dead, she bounces back to safety and calls out, “where is my tub of Kentucky Fried?” (p.9). This unseemly and abominable remark reflects an astonishing lack of sentimentality. Therefore, the remark resides within the realm of the obscene and the grotesque and it summarises the ruling elite’s lack of conscience, which is a lack that the narrator invokes us to criticise. In addition, the narrator exploits the watching and listening rhetoric which are critical elements of everyday practices. The narrator’s silent spectatorship composes a manifold story that is “shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces” (De Certeau, 2007:158) and covertly criticises the politically abominable.

It is interesting that the narrator’s involvement in a ceremony, something that the ruling party of this fictional Zimbabwean event has made normal and an everyday political event, enables him to bear witness to, as already noted, “society of the spectacle” (Debord, 2002). This is because the awards ceremony demonstrates state power’s extravagant display of authority and thirst for prestige and deference. I read the narrator’s witnessing or spectatorship here as a subversive everyday activity that facilitates his exposure of the grotesque and obscene inclination of the ruling party. For instance, the extravagant display and thirst for prestige that the narrator witnesses are noted in the omnipresence of state power since it insinuates itself

everywhere. The omnipresence confirms Mbembe's (1992:18) contention that state power "is always nearby. You wear it. It is on people's bodies as is the case with women who wear the party cloths." In the story, this is noted in the instance where one woman is seen wearing a blouse "which sported the slogan: OUR PRESIDENT FOR LIFE" (p.8). The capitalisation that is employed here is a definitive articulation of sycophancy. It glorifies the president and creates a personality cult. In addition, it is a vote of confidence in the president. The vote of confidence is also noted in the slogan "NO VACANCIES WITHIN THE PRESIDUM" (p.8) that resonates with the post-2000 Zimbabwean patriotic discourses that define Mugabe as the epitome of Zimbabweanness and nationness (Ranger 2005 and Tendi 2010). However, it is pertinent to note that this imagining of the Zimbabwean nation changes after the 2017 coup that toppled Mugabe from power and this underscores further the constructed and shifting nature of patriotic identities.

Further, there are other slogans, which are as varied as they are fascinating. The narrator points out that "there were slogans on shirts, dresses, and even trousers all over the hall" (p.8). The bulk of the slogans are consistent with the Third Chimurenga exclusionary discourses. Slogans such as "PASI ne BLAIR" and "PASI ne BUSH" (p.8) which literally mean "down with Blair" and "down with Bush" are reflective of the ruling party's inward-looking and exclusionary brand of politics. Thus, the slogans confirm Muponde's (2004:177) contention that "the Third Chimurenga is a revival of essentialist and nativist politics." In contrast, the slogans "PAMBERI ne ZANU PF, PAMBERI ne CHIMURENGA THREE, PAMBERI ne GRAIN MARKETING BOARD" where the phrase "PAMBERI ne" literally means "forward with" prop up the ruling party's patriotic discourses and re-energise its patriotic metafiction (Muchemwa, 2010:1). Here, I contend that the narrator's witnessing is an important part of the everyday and argue that his witnessing of these everyday occurrences or ceremonies that celebrate the obscene violence and sloganeering invokes our mockery. Thus, there is an overall tone of mockery in the slogans and this underscores the story's subversion of ZANU PF's distorted brand of politics and definitions of patriotism. The capitalisation in the slogans reinforces the story's critical stance towards such sloganeering, which is premised on loyalty to ZANU PF.

The story also centres on the Minister's speech that the narrator listens to at the awards ceremony. Here, I consider the listening rhetoric as an important part of the everyday practices. The speech helps the narrator understand the operations of ZANU PF. The hate speech that he delivers is located within exclusionary discourses. The Minister digresses from the purpose of

the awards ceremony for an hour and launches into a speech “condemning those proxies of Blair and Bush who were working with unpatriotic elements to undermine the great and glorious gains of the liberation struggle” (p.8). This statement is both backward and inward-looking in the sense that it casts a backward gaze to the war of liberation and creates boundaries and demarcations between insiders and outsiders. The speech is permeated with exclusionary rhetoric that defines “the content and form of [the] Pan Africanist message [that is delivered and reiterated] particularly in the face of Empire offered by the Bush-Blair axis” (Raftopoulos, 2004:161). Thus, those who are perceived as enemies of ZANU PF are branded unpatriotic. Furthermore, the alliteration noted in “great and glorious gains” emphasises the centrality of the war of liberation to the nation’s coming into being as enunciated in ZANU PF’s grand narratives of the Third Chimurenga and patriotic history as Ranger (2004:215) contends. This also proclaims the continuity of the Zimbabwean revolutionary tradition using terms that undermine opponents of ZANU PF as agents of imperialism bent on reversing the gains of the liberation struggle. Thus, the narrator exploits the everyday listening rhetoric to analyse the contours and defining characteristics of the ZANU PF politics.

The Pan Africanist message referred to above is also evident in the Minister’s strategic reference to other Southern African countries. He proclaims that “the fight against Zimbabwe [...] is the fight against us all. Today it is Zimbabwe, tomorrow it will be South [er] Africa... it will be Mozambique... it will be Angola... it will be any oth [er] African country” (p.8). Here, the message is tailored in a way that appeals to and generates support for the beleaguered Zimbabwean nation from other African nations. It is patriotic rhetoric of sovereignty and anti-imperialism that is addressed not only to Zimbabwean citizens “but also regional leaders and other international constituencies” (Hammar et. al., 2010:2). The Minister’s statement creates demarcations between insiders and outsiders in the ruling party’s Pan Africanist vision and the message is consistent with ZANU PF’s anti-imperialist rhetoric in post-2000 Zimbabwe as noted by Raftopoulos (2004). The anti-imperialistic and patriotic rhetoric is also noted in the Minister’s oblique reference to the nation as strong in his statement that “any gov [er] nment that is p [er] ceived to be strong, and to be resistant to imp [er] ialists, will be made a target and will be und [er] mined” (p.8). This statement with its laboured pronunciation is an indirect comment on the nation’s supposed strength, which makes it the envy of imperialist machinations. The anti-imperialistic stance is predicated on calls for African unity as noted in the Minister’s exhortation for African countries “not [to] allow any point of weakness in the sol [er] darity of the SADC, because that weakness will also be transf [er] red to the rest of

Africa” (p.8). It is interesting that in a reality where the everyday soundscapes reverberate political rhetoric of division, one, as emblematised in the story, the narrator should seize the moment and listen but with the mockery that this deserves. Thus, the tonal shift evident in the inappropriate pronunciation of words, such as solidarity and “sov [er] eign” (p.8), which is said to have been used “no fewer than sixteen times in the course of his diatribe” (p.8), is instructive. It is indeed indicative of a travesty of the metaphors meant to glorify state power and the fact that an ordinary citizen and consumer of such discourses reads the gaps with reality in this lends a subversive dimension to the story.

The story also reveals that the churning out of patriotic rhetoric is not only limited to the Minister. We are told that the Minister’s diatribe is the kind of rhetoric that “people even higher than he in the ranks of power churned out” (p.8). This reflects the straitjacketed nature of the patriotic narrative that defines the ZANU PF brand of politics during the Third Chimurenga (Raftopoulos, 2004, Ranger, 2005, Tendi, 2010). In addition, it reflects that patriotism is the bedrock of “economies of patronage” (Alexander and MaGregor, 2013:749) in ZANU PF politics where the leaders have the thirst for honours, prestige and deference (Mbembe, 1992) and patriotism is exaggerated “not just to please the despot [but] for profit or favours” (Mbembe, 1992:20).

Lastly, another important strand that the story addresses relates to the use of honorific titles. As Nyambi (2016:139) contends, titles are a cache of identity ascriptions and forms of names, which are inherently communicative. In addition, Nyambi (2015) submits that naming is a cultural and political act in ZANU PF’s patriotic discourses. This is the same argument that Ncube (2016:217) makes in the contention that “there exists an intricate relationship between the names [and titles] of literary characters and the ideological implications addressed by the texts.” The story’s onomastic style exploits the ZANU PF patriotic rhetoric. This is noted in the multiple and compound titles of honour that are given to the medal awardees. The two are referred to as “patriots” and “a glorious son and a glorious daughter” (p.7). Further, they are referred to as “the hero and the heroine” (p.9) and are addressed as “Comrade Sister Chigaramanhenga” and “Comrade Inspector Chigaramanhenga” (p.9). All these endearing titles are consistent with ZANU PF’s definitions of patriotism and are “vital symbolic referents which are endowed with embedded associations and multi-layered meanings and significations” (Ncube, 2016:220). In addition, as Ncube (2016:217) further contends, such naming or titling is “a socio-political praxis for re-imagining social relations in Zimbabwe during the post-2000 period that is characterised by socio-political and economic turmoil and

crisis.” Therefore, the titles or names are ideologically contaminated and rigid and as a result, they spur an everyday subversive reaction from the citizenry as they listen to or call out the names. In this case, one detects a note of satire in the story’s utilisation of the titles that underscores the impact of the narrator’s everyday listening rhetoric. Nonetheless, it also has to be pointed out that the titles are reflective of political profiling in discourses of inclusion and exclusion. The satire noted in the titles is instructive in that it reflects the story’s overarching concern, which is the exposure of the ruling party’s distorted patriotic benchmarks. The titles reflect on ZANU PF’s itinerary in one way or the other.

In conclusion, the story reveals how the narrator exploits his engagement in the everyday practices of the listening rhetoric and “usage and consumption” (De Certeau, 2007:162) after attending a ruling party function in order to critique its failures and shortcomings from the vantage point of a party ‘insider.’ The ‘party insider’ tag reveals the narrator’s spurious solidarity and simulated adherence to the party. The narrator’s engagement in the banal activity of attending an awards ceremony as a way of subverting the dominant political order from within is born out of a prudent awareness of the delicate balance of power. It is a tactical way in which the narrator insinuates himself within the ranks of the party faithful and then clandestinely pokes holes on the ruling party’s grand narratives through satire. Through his critique, the ruling ZANU PF party is cast in a different kind of imagery and seen in a different light because of its esoteric and shameful categories of patriotism. Thus, I argued that the practice of everyday life is a new form of subversion enacted, not through rejecting, but by using ZANU PF’s political space with ends and desires foreign to the system that the narrator purports to support. In light of this, I argued that the listening and spectating rhetoric that the narrator engages in is not innocent but designed to mock the ruling party. That way, the watching and listening rhetoric come out as resistance to ZANU PF grand narratives.

5.2 Diana Charsley’s “The Pencil Test” and passing off as a subterfuge in political contestation

This section analyses Charsley’s short story “The Pencil Test” as a narrative that covertly contests politically motivated racial exclusions in a post-2000 Zimbabwe that is dominated by inward-looking discourses on race, nativism, nationhood and citizenship (Raftopoulos, 2004, Ranger, 2005, Muzondidya, 2007). The story is mainly read in relation to ZANU PF’s discourses about indigenisation and economic empowerment, as part of the Third Chimurenga and final closure in the decolonisation project, seeking to empower Zimbabweans (Mamdani,

2008, Manase, 2014). The central argument that I make is that the story's protagonist who passes off as a coloured, makes this move in response to the post-2000 racial exigencies and trajectories. As such, I read the passing off subterfuge as a dominant trope of everyday life that is legitimated by exclusionary politics and disparities in power and privilege. Thus, my thesis is that the protagonists' choice to continue residing and speaking rhetoric as a way to appropriate places and spaces, are encapsulated in the concept of a resident who walks the city differently to the way the city fathers designed that city and thus create counter-discursive articulations as postulated by De Certeau (1984) also informs my analysis of the story.

In brief, the story describes a white character, Dawn's experiences as she deals with the threats of seizure of her clothing shop owing to the government's price controls and the indigenisation and empowerment bill. The empowerment bill does not allow Zimbabwean-born whites full ownership of businesses because they are labelled as both instruments and beneficiaries of colonialism. Furthermore, it ensures that the greater part of any business in which whites are involved is owned by indigenous people. Dawn gets assistance from Darlene, her coloured friend, to save the business after the latter advises her to pass off as a coloured. The story ends with Dawn having 'transformed' her racial identity and ready to face the enforcers of the indigenisation and empowerment bill.

The story addresses the crucial issue concerning who is a Zimbabwean as enunciated in Zimbabwean grand narratives and legitimated through rhetorics of patriotism in post-2000 Zimbabwe (Alexander, 2004, Pilosof, 2012, Manase, 2016). Thus, the story is partly read through Mbembe's (1992:43) conceptualisation of the postcolony as that space where "the postcolonial subject has had to learn to bargain in this conceptual market place." In addition, I argue that the story reflects that the postcolonial subjects, as Mbembe (1992:4) further contends, "splinter their identities and [...] represent themselves as always changing their persona [and] are constantly undergoing mitosis, whether it be in official space or not." I read the change in persona and mitosis noted in the protagonist's 'racial transformation' as reflective of the subversion of exclusionary discourses through the practice of everyday life.

The passing off stratagem is critical to my analysis of this story. I locate this stratagem within the details of everyday life and argue that it is incorporated by the protagonist in order to deal with the slippery and problematic "exclusionary autochthony" (Dunn, 2009:114). In the story, the protagonist finds herself in a space that is fraught with contradictions and challenges as emblematised by the looming dispossession and displacement which are "intimately related to

statecraft and redefinitions of the nation, citizenship and belonging” (Hammar et. al., 2010:5). The redefinitions render her position precarious and, in turn, this generates new modes of logics and thinking that are located in the practice of everyday life. In other words, her situation stimulates an “unexpected and inventive strategy[y] for survival” (Hammar et. al., 2010:6). Thus, the protagonist’s engagement in the banal practices of ‘racial transformation’ and residing rhetoric are inventive and tactical ways in which she dupes and resists the system that excludes her.

The racial conundrum that the story addresses (as symbolised by the title) is framed by a description of the government’s price control operation. Though this operation is not racially motivated, it is nevertheless mired in political arithmetic. Thus, the brutal crackdown on businesses that we witness at the beginning of the story foreshadows the looming racially motivated displacement and dispossession that lie at the heart of the story. It has to be underscored that this “metaphor of [dispossession] is broad and evocative in many ways and can thus act as a revealing prism through which to understand the personal, political, economic, and cultural transformations brought about by crisis conditions” (Hammar et. al., 2010:5). In addition, it allows “existential meanings to be discussed in combination with and in relation to, strategies of control” (Hammar et. al., 2010:5) and is linked to sovereignty and state-making. Thus, the dispossession and displacements that the story addresses are racially motivated and they impact on the personal lives of the whites.

The price control operation exposes the vulnerability of the victims. The story’s opening suggests this vulnerability as noted in the protagonist’s body language. She is described as staring “at the floor, with her arms wrapped tightly across her chest” (p.90) and this betrays mental violation and brutalisation. The body language also reflects what Hammar et. al. (2010:6) evocatively labels ‘miserabilist’ epistemologies that shroud individual and collective agency and forms of both resilience and resistance. The shop assistants’ commiserations add on to this miserable outlook, which is then completed by the imagery of the “dark cold” that they disappear into. The dark cold imagery is also symbolic of the looming dispossession.

In addition, the price control operation exposes the violence of the state machinery. The description of the price control task force’s cars as “a roaring entourage of navy blue Defenders, followed by a seven-tonne truck and an assortment of gleaming late model sedans and SUVs” (p.90) creates an image of a ruthless efficiency. The image also mirrors the violence with which those deemed undesirable, in the nation’s identity matrix, are disposed of. In the story, we note

how the task force shouts at Dawn and accuses her of treason. Further, “the policemen tore through her files for evidence of economic sabotage while the policewomen confiscated the best dresses for exhibits” (p.90). The tearing that is captured in this statement suggests the unit’s violence.

The treason and economic sabotage charges that are levelled against Dawn reflect ZANU PF’s labelling of perceived enemies as excluded groups in the post-2000 era (Schipper, 1999, Alexander, 2004). The labelling is consistent with the exclusion of whites from the nation’s economic set-up. Hage (1998:53) notes that there are groups who are seen as “more national than others because they possess greater ‘national cultural capital’ [and are] seen as the arbiters of the national culture and space [and can therefore] access the material benefits of group membership (for example, citizenship and welfare rights) and define the conditions of belonging.” The essence of exclusion captured in this quotation is at the heart of the story where we witness the invocation of identity politics in the state’s authoritarian nationalism (Muzondidya, 2007).

The instructions given to “trembling saleswomen to mark down all prices by sixty percent” (p.90) and the “task-force groupies’ shopping orgy” (p.90) are also significant here. Both evoke Mbembe’s (1992:20) ideas on the postcolony where there is “an undisciplined army of dishonest police [who] coerce common people blatantly and seize what they have no right to seize.” This is evident in the story where, after the forced reduction of prices, “the customers, many regular, shopped happily apart from one or two spats over the same dress (the most ornate one split down the middle after a heavyweight tug-of-war)” (p.90). The tug-of-war imagery that is depicted in parenthesis in the above statement is symbolic of a fight for the spoils. Here, there is a tone of contempt for the state apparatus. The contempt is also noted in the biblical allusion to “Solomon settling a baby dispute” (p.90) that underscores the unreasonable nature of the enforcers of the operation. Thus, the violence and extortion confirm Mbembe’s (1992:21) contention that “enforcing regulations and forcibly confiscating goods that have been hoarded and selling them off [are] characteristic of a situation where there is summary violence as well as looting and extortion, whether it be in the form of cash or products” and hence, the story’s critical tone.

The above discussion on the commandist price control operation is significant in that it, as already noted, foreshadows the racially motivated economic exclusions. In addition, it allows for a broader dissection of the reactions of the affected white Zimbabweans that the story

addresses. The depicted threat to take over white businesses that are non-operational gives background to the dispossession of whites. For instance, in her discussion with Darlene after returning to her shop after “paying a hefty fine to avoid a night in the detention cells” (p.91), Dawn describes how “one of those political heavy-weights, a former customer, came in here and wanted to know why I had nothing for her” (p.92). After Dawn explains that it is because textile mills are closing down, the unimpressed politician impresses it upon Dawn that “all shops not operating would be taken over by people who had the capacity to make them productive” (p.92). An authoritative and threatening tone in the above statements is consistent with ZANU PF’s economic and political rhetoric that excludes whites during the crisis period post-2000.

The politician also sneers and tells Dawn that even if she “did stock up again [she] would have the indigenisation and empowerment bill to think about” (p.92). The sneering denotes disrespect for Dawn. Yet, as Darlene explains to her, the bill is enacted “to correct all the political wrongs of the past. According to this law, fifty-one percent of a business must be held by indigenous persons” (p.92). This statement is central to my reading of the story. The language of redressing past political anomalies reflects that the bill is backward and inward-looking. The bill’s inward-looking dimension makes one compare it to Malaysia’s economic trajectories in the 1970s and Uganda under the dictatorship of Idi Amin. It is premised on racially and politically-motivated exclusions of those who are denied autochthony, citizenship and belonging to the nation as discussed by Raftopoulos (2004), Ranger (2005), Tendi (2010) and Fisher (2010). Thus, whites find themselves occupying a liminal space in the nation because their identities are excluded from these fixed and supposedly stable categories (Bhabha, 1994). Their situation also confirms Bhabha’s (1994) contention that the concept of nation is built upon the exclusion, or even extermination, of those who are described as not belonging to the nation.

It is also pertinent to underscore that the indigenisation and empowerment bill as explored in the story questions and complicates the idea of nationness and belonging in Zimbabwe. The questioning arises from its imprecise and over-generalised definitions. This is noted in Dawn and Darlene’s discussion on the implications of the bill on white Zimbabweans. Dawn is convinced that she qualifies as an indigenous person because “I was born here, and my father” (p.93) but Darlene points out that:

according to this article, you are only indigenous if, before 1980, you suffered on the basis of race [and] that includes us coloureds. As for you, the Minister says ‘A Zimbabwean-born white cannot qualify. He has to prove that he has been disadvantaged by the colonisation (p.93).

There is a narrow conception of indigeneity in the above quotation and that makes the bill susceptible to contestation. The language employed in the definition of indigeneity denotes racial exclusion. Thus, the narrow conception of indigeneity influences racist politics and has given birth to “exclusionary autochthony” (Dunn, 2009:114) as noted in the black/white binary that defines the state of being indigenous in Zimbabwe. Magure (2014:22) notes that exclusionary politics have been anchored on these binaries. Thus, the bill has functioned as an instrument of exclusionary politics at racial levels and ensured the dispossession of critical resources and assets from those labelled foreigners in the country as noted in Dawn’s case where she is about to lose her business because she is not considered Zimbabwean.

A further focus should be made on the tactical character of Dawn’s ‘racial transformation’ into coloured identity in the contestation of patriotic identities in post-2000 Zimbabwe. The conversation that Dawn has with Darlene is critical to the way Dawn ‘transforms’ her identity. The deployment of extensive dialogue in the story renders the verbal exchanges significant speech acts, marking a different trail or discourse to the state’s grand narrative, which are constitutive of the everyday. This is in line with Mbembe’s (1992:5) contention that verbal acts are excellent indices of what can be considered commonplace (and hence banal) and De Certeau’s (1984) submission on the centrality of banal or everyday acts such as speaking, which have an enunciative function and are processes of appropriation. In this case, Darlene proposes that in order to overcome the racial conundrum Dawn faces, they have to “pursue a second option” (p.93). This is a metaphor for alternative ways or means to navigate around the predicament at hand in a way resonating with De Certeau’s notions of a residing rhetoric and a local authority discourse that makes places hospitable. Thus, the second option is read here as part of the poetics of engagement in the practice of everyday life in the sense that it is an ordinary action that lies below the threshold of the attention of the dominant order but corresponds to manipulations of the basic elements of a constructed political order. Further, the second option has a tactical nature and it is a strategy to contest racially motivated exclusions. It opens up clearings and allows a certain play within a system of defined places and “authorises the production of an area of free play on the checkerboard that analyses and classifies identities” (De Certeau, 1984:133).

The title of the story sheds more light on the “second option” that Darlene proposes for Dawn and is significant in the articulation of identity politics in the story. In fact, the title gives resonance to the exclusionary identity politics addressed in the story. The pencil test is a historical allusion to the apartheid South African test constructed within the internal logic to adjudicate cases where race stubbornly refused to fit the desired classification system (Bowker and Star, 1999). In the story, it is defined as that law which was “passed in 1950 to make sure that everyone knew their place – the population registration act. Once you knew who you were, you also knew where to live” (93). In addition, Darlene who is a product of an inter-racial sexual union (p.91) explains to Dawn that “the pencil test was for the hair [because] some of us looked quite pale and some of the Afrikaners looked like us, so, if they couldn’t decide what we were by colour, [they used the pencil test to make a determination]” (p.93-4). The pencil test as noted in the above statement reveals the challenges associated with classifying people on the basis of skin colour. Nonetheless, what is pertinent here are the parallels between apartheid South Africa where “race classification [...] provided the bureaucratic underpinnings for a vicious racism” (Bowker and Star, 1999:195) and post-2000 Zimbabwe where race is a vital point of reference in identity politics and is therefore key in determining belonging, citizenship and autochthony.

This second option is a covert contestation of exclusionary grand narratives. It is a negotiation for political space within a political system that values racial exclusions. The negotiation confirms Bhabha’s (1990:6) contention that “negotiation is what politics is all about. [...] we are always negotiating in any situation of political opposition. Subversion is negotiation; transgression is negotiation.” Thus, in keeping with this negotiation or subversion, Darlene tells Dawn that “we’ll just have to make you one of the new elite” (p.93) and that “I’m going to give you the honour of becoming one of us” (p.94). Here, Darlene implies that they have to change Dawn’s complexion so that she looks like a coloured. Thus, there is the weaving of a texture of a particular racial category that disrupts the biographical trajectories of those fixed and supposedly stable categories. Seen in this light, therefore, the second option is an unorthodox means of ensuring that Dawn does not lose her business and hence the contention that it is covert contestation of exclusionary discourses.

The plan to change Dawn’s complexion which is constructed through the speaking rhetoric is constitutive of the everyday practices. Her passing off as a coloured is tactical and a manoeuvre within enemy territory and indeed within the enemy’s field of vision (De Certeau, 1984). The manoeuvre is also in line with Bhabha’s (1994) articulation that when a new situation formulates

or presents itself, it may demand that one should translate one's principles, rethink them and extend them. In this case, "the ultra-conservative Dawn" (p.95) finds herself racially marooned and with no option but to, in Bhabha's formulation, translate her principles. Here, there is an involvement of new understandings of space and time, characterised by a shift from orthodox practices to unorthodox ones oriented towards short-term survival. Thus, discourses of necessity are invoked to justify any kind of political act, which in this case is the identity/complexion change tactic so as to fit (in a mischievous and displacing sense) in the political scheme of things in post-2000 Zimbabwe. The way she fits in helps us "see beyond static dichotomies or linear trajectories of victors and victims" (Hammar et. al., 2010:6). In other words, it blurs the boundaries between victors and victims and hence the contention that the identity change is a subtle contestation of rigid political and racial categories and a creative political dynamic that emerges from demanding circumstances (Young, 2001:14).

Another fascinating strand that the story addresses is that both the dominant and the dominated are inscribed within the same episteme. This is clarified when Dawn explains to Darlene that, unlike her friend who can leave any time she wants, she is "stuck here" (p.91) because she and her father were both born in Zimbabwe (p.93). The diction stuck is suggestive of a constraining order. Nonetheless, the story reveals the protagonists' creation of a space in which one can find ways of using the constraining order (De Certeau, 1984:55). This is made possible by the incorporation of tactics, which are interventions that open a space of agency within constrained systems (Smith and Watson, 2001). De Certeau (1984:55) explains this point further in the contention that "without leaving the place [where] one has no choice but to live and which lays down its law for him, he establishes within it a degree of plurality and creativity. By an art of being an in-between, he draws unexpected results from his situation." Thus, the protagonists deploy transverse tactics to manipulate the space in which they are constrained.

The story captures the protagonists' creativity in the banal speech act reflected in the exchanges between Darlene and Dawn. Darlene explains to Dawn that "with this water we are getting through our taps these days – once a week if we are lucky – all you have to do is soak around in that for an hour or so and no one could tell the difference" (p.94). This comment reveals the inventiveness that is characteristic of the everyday practice of speaking. In this case, the speech act is meant to carve out a strategy that can be implemented in order to surreptitiously and imperceptibly situate Dawn within the acceptable political and economic grid. In addition, the above comment reveals a tone of mockery directed at the ruling elite for its failure to address water challenges. Furthermore, the advice for Dawn to soak around in dirty water, change her

hair with “black dye and tight perm” (p.94) and “to wear sunglasses all the time” (p.94) makes Dawn imagine “that woman who came in this morning finding the business under new management” (p.94). Here, there is a tone of contempt for the woman politician who both protagonists are convinced “would be fooled [by Dawn’s new appearance] so long you don’t open that larny mouth of yours” (p.94). This statement extends the tone of mockery noted above. This time, the mockery is directed at politicians who can be easily duped by resistant everyday practices.

As noted earlier, the negotiation of a new identity is framed within difficulty (Bhabha, 1994). The difficulty is emblematised by the stream of consciousness-like and rhetorical questions that characterise Dawn’s agonising over “the drastic measures needed to save her business” (p.95). She ponders, “would it work? How would her friends and family react? Dawn, the ultra-conservative. [...] Why not? Dawn thought – it’s not as if the transformation would be permanent? And the family? Well, they would just have to see her in different light” (p.95). The rhetorical questions in the above quotation underscore the difficulties associated with the identity change since Dawn will have to be answerable to a wide constituency including her family and friends. Nonetheless, her resolution to go ahead with the identity ‘transformation’ confirms Giddens’ (1991) contention that identities are personal projects over which the self is responsible.

The identity change is read here as an operational logic akin to age-old ruses of fishes and insects that disguise or transform themselves to survive (De Certeau, 1984:10). We note how Dawn, after immersing herself in a bath-full of potassium permanganate and drying herself, stares at her reflection, “fascinated with her new image” (p.95). In addition, she feels as if “she had thrown off her mousey self and could now stand up to anybody. Even ‘that woman’” (p.95). The new image noted in the above quotation reinforces the idea of identity transformation. There is also a sarcastic tone in the description of the woman politician as that woman. The sarcasm is reiterated in the daring and provocative conclusion to the story where Dawn, after informing Darlene that she will soon be “off to the hairdresser to finish the effect” (p.96), declares that “I can’t wait for ‘that woman’ to come back” (p.96). Here, there is a radical inscription of a new identity as a contingency to deal with exigent racial pressures. On the surface, it would appear Dawn has carved her new identity and located it within the grid of the politically acceptable in a post-2000 Zimbabwean body politic that emphasises and valorises issues of indigeneity. However, a more nuanced reading of the story reveals that the identity change in fact constitutes new structures of authority and new political initiatives. The authority

is noted in the way she is ready to contest ruling party versions of autochthony as symbolised by her guts to challenge the woman politician. Dawn further declares that she now “had balls, as Darlene crudely put it” (p.95). This imagery of balls is crude but appropriate nonetheless because it confers masculine attributes on Dawn. This masculine trait is significant in her subversion of exclusionary discourses. She is empowered by the identity change to “stand up to anybody. Even that woman” (p.95). There is a tone of defiance in Dawn’s statement and that buttresses the argument that whites have moved beyond the imagery of victimhood and engage in the practice of everyday life to contest inflexible racial categorisations.

Lastly, it is important to highlight that the passing off subterfuge is a partially secret interactive process and it requires ad hoc mixtures of prototypical classifying and confrontations with Aristotelian categories of law (Bowker and Star, 1999). This is confirmed in the story by the veneer of legality that is provided by Darlene in her emphatic explanation to Dawn that their identity documents reveal that they both “share the first two numbers, 08” (p.95) and “the last two numbers after the letter. They are 00” (p.94-5). Darlene even jokes that “we must really be joined at the hip” (p.95). Darlene’s statements underscore the inventiveness and creativity that is associated with the banal speech act in the process of constructing alternative identities that contest the black versus white identity categories as depicted in the story. Thus, the passing off, with its legal veneer, is a ruse or feint that is placed in direct opposition to strategies of state control.

In conclusion, it is important to emphasise that what defines the postcolonial subject is the ability to engage in baroque practices that are fundamentally ambiguous, fluid and modifiable even in instances where there are clear and precise rules (Mbembe, 1992). In addition, ordinary actions, such as speaking and changing one’s complexion, should be re-considered in light of their inventiveness, which is the capacity engendering fresh styles of life within the interstices of state and class control (Schilling, 2003). Thus, Dawn’s passing off subterfuge, with its associated residing rhetoric and local authority discourse, as postulated by De Certeau (1984), is a quintessential expression of the everyday practices that deflect the power of the dominant order without necessarily leaving it. I argue that the inventive tactic or strategy enables the protagonist to be a dupe to the system and it is a unique way of contesting racially motivated exclusions in post-2000 Zimbabwe.

5.3 Playing possum in Monireh Jassat’s “A Lazy Sunday Afternoon”

This section analyses Jassat's short story, "A Lazy Sunday Afternoon", as a narrative that configures "new ways to fight back" (Lara, 1998) and authorises a new form of insurgency. I argue that the fictional white characters engage in the practices of everyday life that exclude the political as a symbolic refusal to be captured and devaluation of the political processes that exclude them in post-2000 Zimbabwe. I contend that the story's mode of contestation is in line with Terdiman's (1989) submission that the operation of postcolonial counter-discourse is dynamic and not static. The dynamism is reflected in the way the story evolves unique textual strategies to expose and erode dominant discourses. In addition, the story's subversive strategy reveals the imaginative creative response to the condition of domination (Ashcroft et. al., 2007). The central argument that I make here is that the story's representation of the white characters' lives as ongoing, despite their having been brushed out of the image of the nation and its imaginings in the state's grand narratives (Chennells, 2005, Fisher, 2010, Manase, 2016), constitutes the story's counter-discursive thrust. I contend that the white characters react against the grain and that their pretense of political death as noted in their disregard for political imperatives that are enunciated in patriotic narratives is a subtle contestation of patriotic identities in post-2000 Zimbabwe. Further, I submit that the sidelining of the political is a tactical move that is linked to an ethics of tenacity that is described by De Certeau (1984) as the countless ways of refusing to accord the established order the status of a law, a meaning, or a totality. Thus, I read the everydayness of their experiences particularly their everyday ways of thinking and acting that exclude the politically overt as poking holes, in a mischievous and provocative way, to their exclusion.

The story is about the narrator and her mother who intent to host a party to thank their family and friends for standing with them during the tough times brought about by the passing on of the narrator's father. However, the party does not happen as planned as the narrator and her mother and three friends experience an attempted hijack before they travel to the party venue. However, they manage to resist the hijacking and the story ends with the police, called to assist, taking statements from the victims.

One remarkable feature about this story that succinctly expresses its inventive insurgency is that it keeps politics at a measured and chiseled distance from the characters' lives. In other words, the story does not dwell on matters political and this makes it an 'unconventional' post-2000 white narrative. The unconventional character of the story is due to the fact that, unlike other post-2000 Zimbabwean white writings in which political victimhood is almost invariably the organising trope, the story concentrates on a depiction of the everyday white experiences.

In this case, the story just describes the fictional white characters' anticipation for a party and their fight with hijackers. Thus, the story's representations are not consistent with the general trajectory of white writing in the post-2000 era where politics of belonging is the overarching concern (Tagwirei, 2014). I read this unconventional texture of the story that is emblematised by a rejection of the dynamics of victim politics that is valoried for purposes of claiming legitimacy and relevance, as reflective of the story's subversive inclination. Thus, I argue that this neglect of political issues is covertly subversive. While Fisher (2010:158) argues that whites are "distanced [...] mentally and physically from external political realities [and] retreat into the private or domestic domain" as noted in the way they lead increasingly circumscribed lives, I contend that this is a tactical way in which they contest exclusionary discourses.

The title of the story is in keeping with the contemptuous disregard for politics and patriotic discourses. A lazy Sunday afternoon is suggestive of a perfect and pleasant day. It also evokes images of relaxation and being at ease. In a way, the story's title obliquely trivialises and pays no attention to the political. The depiction of the serene atmosphere on the Sunday in question, as captured in the title of the story, underscores that the characters are happy and contented. The joy is noted further in the characters' settling into "eager anticipation" (p.72) as they await the celebrations. Such a happy posture is a taunt at the ruling elite and flies in the face of patriotic narratives that systematically jettison the whites from the image of the nation. Thus, the title deliberately overlooks the political in order to poke holes on exclusionary discourses.

The story operates on a metaphorical plane and is full of symbolic resonances. This is central to the story's subversion of patriotic narratives. For instance, there is the incorporation of the metaphor of celebration as noted above in the description of the eager anticipation for the party. The metaphor of celebration is linked to the aesthetics of victory and this is noted in the narrator's utterance that they plan to host a party "in honour of our survival and in gratitude to the women who had been there for us" (p.72). The imagery of survival as captured in this statement suggests the existence of difficulties, which are linked to the death of the narrator's father. However, on a metaphorical plane, the father's death is symbolic of the end of the old order where whites were in control of their destinies and the arrival of a new order in which whites are politically disempowered (Chennells, 2005). Thus, bearing in mind that the celebration is taking place within this context of white disempowerment, the everyday activity of hosting a party and celebration is read as a nuanced and provocative subversion of the kind of state-enunciated dictum of galas and celebrations as noted in Eppel's story analysed earlier in this chapter and as discussed by Muchemwa (2010).

In addition, the reference to the narrator and her mother as “still standing” despite having “gone through much” (p.72) is symbolic. Here, it is critical to note that the ordinary speech acts, as De Certeau’s (1984) transgressive walker in the city, contrast in the discourses of national patriotism such as that exhibited by the police officer and nurse in Eppel’s story discussed earlier in this chapter. As a result, the contrasting statements and the associated images of remaining standing under demanding circumstances highlights the white characters’ resilience and resistance. The resilience and resistance are made possible by the fact that they are propped up along the way by “an extensive network of family and friends, all of whom had helped to lighten our load [and] lend a sympathetic ear or simply jolly us” (p.72). This statement underscores the collective instinct that defines white existence in a post-2000 Zimbabwe that excludes them. Hence, this collective instinct is instrumental in the whites’ contestation of exclusionary discourses.

The negative images depicted at the beginning of the story foreshadow the hijacking that happens later in the story. For instance, we are told that there is a “general malaise” (p.72) and feelings of unease that assail the narrator and her mother. In addition, there are descriptions of the “dark and dreary way” (p.72), “a heaviness and gloom” (p.72) that hangs in the air and the use of pathetic fallacy as noted in the “dull and overcast sky” (p.72). All these images conjure up a bleak vision and portend doom and danger. However, there is a sense in which the story downplays this negativity and gives prominence to the anticipation and survival. The survival and resilience that the story seems to celebrate is later confirmed when the characters overcome the hostile hijacking incident. The victory is significant in that it metaphorically mirrors their ability to rise up to the challenges in one’s life, in this story paralleled with constant state discourses calling for the exclusion of whites.

The hijackers are also symbolic of an evil and superior order as emblematised by the weapons that they carry. This classification of the hijackers as a higher authority is important in that it sheds more light on the tenacity of the white characters in their resistance to the superior order. The description of the leader of the hijackers as “aggressive” and “a bit ‘mental’ and possibly on something” (p.75) underscores their image as a superior force. In addition, the gun that the leader is carrying and the group’s covered faces (p.75) reinforce their evil intentions. The description of the hijackers is important in that it provides the frame within which to understand the resistance of the white characters. Thus, it is critical to note that the white protagonists are unfazed by the superior order. If anything, they fight the hijackers as equals. Hence, it can be

argued, by extension or inference that the fight with the hijackers is symbolic of the contestation of patriotic identities that the whites engage in.

The story is indeed permeated with images and rhetoric of defiance evident in the fight between the hijackers and the white characters. During the fight, the narrator's mother demonstrates a stubborn refusal to surrender and a dogged determination to resist the hijackers. The mother's "instinctive resistance was met with a fist slammed straight into her face" (p.73) but instead of giving in and letting herself be dragged out of the car, she "tightly curls up her arthritic hands and with a look of stubborn fury on her face, [throws] a punch right back" (p.73). The descriptions in these statements underscore the mother's courage to contest the unjustified violence they are subjected to. Her determination is noted further in the way the hijacker "returned with a second punch, only to be met with an equally solid reply by Mom, who was not going down without a fight" (p.73). In addition, even after she is assailed "with a volley of punches and kicks" (p.74), she gathers "what strength she had left and aimed a kick squarely at his balls" (p.74). The above descriptions underscore the violence and cruelty of the hijacker and the resilience and tenacity of the mother. The mother's tenacity is captured in how her bruised and battered body does not deter her from fighting back. Thus, by extension, this suggests the resilience of the whites in the face of grand narratives that discursively jettison them from the Zimbabwean body politic as symbolised by the hijackers who want to push them out of their car.

The fight with the hijackers is, therefore, significant to the story's articulation of dissidence in that it confers a sense of authority on the white characters. There is a whole social and political order that is created by this fight. It is instructive to note that the white characters, though bruised, emerge victorious. Thus, there is a break in the texture of invincibility associated with the supposedly superior order symbolised by the hijackers. The fight alludes to the contestation of patriotic identities in post-2000 Zimbabwe where whites engage in subterranean strategies articulated in the details of everyday life.

Another interesting dimension that the story reveals is the centrality of the blasé attitude to the practice of everyday life. The blasé attitude is one of mental reserve with its overtones of hidden aversion (Simmel, 1995). It is linked to De Certeau's (1984) conceptualisation of the everyday in that it transgresses the trajectories it speaks, is related to surreptitious creativities and is an account of spatial practices and a modern art of everyday expression. It also suggests indifference and repulsion. In the story, the blasé attitude is related to the involvement of the

police. The police's response to the hijacking where they display "remarkable promptness" (p.76) and arrive a few moments after being called is out of character. This explains why the story seems not to give priority to their swift reaction given the controversy associated with the state apparatuses in the subjugation of the white minority in post-2000 Zimbabwe (Ranger, 2003, Raftopoulos, 2004, Rupiya, 2004). The story's valorisation of the blasé attitude is intrinsically connected to the practice of everyday life. This attitude is characterised by detached, calculative and transactional associations (Simmel, 1995). In this case, the hijacking makes it obligatory for the white characters to have a social intercourse with the police and they relate purely on professional terms. As Simmel (1995) further contends, the blasé attitude is linked to aesthetics of anonymity and it is through this anonymity that the interests of each party acquire an unmerciful matter-of-factness, coldness and heartlessness. In the story, this blasé attitude is symbolised by the narrator's mother's determination "that as much as possible be done to catch the people who had so badly violated her person" (p.76) and the kindly faced police officer's explanation that the maroon *Cressida* "was the gateway car" (p.76). Their exchanges are purely contingent upon the clumsy and discomfiting experience of the hijacking incident and executed with a ruthless and professional matter-of-factness that characterises the blasé attitude. This blasé attitude can be linked to the general indifference and aversion that the white characters have towards political processes that exclude them.

Ultimately, the argument in this section is that the white characters formulate new forms of insurgency in response to the post-2000 Zimbabwean grand narratives that exclude them from the nation's political space. In this regard, I contend that there is a willful political blindness where whites only attend to those facts that corroborate their existing model of reality – the model by which their lives operate with the lowest degree of friction. The story indeed reveals that the practice of everyday life is a form of contestation where not writing, talking or commenting about politics is symbolic of a devaluation of the political processes that exclude them. The whites' silence on issues political constitutes a judgement that declares the exclusionary discourses unworthy and reflects the contempt with which they regard the ZANU PF grand narratives. Thus, they engage in the practice of everyday life to drive home the point that the ZANU PF exclusionary discourses are not worthy their attention and hence, the contention that the everyday practice is a creative and inventive subversion of grand narratives.

In conclusion, the story reveals that whites embrace the practices of everyday life, which, as Scott (1985:4) submits, are hidden transcripts and "discourses that take place off-stage beyond the direct observation of the power holders." Scott (1985:183) notes further that the everyday

are invisible and 'behind-the-scenes' forms of subversion whose invisibility is "by design [since] it is a tactical choice, born out of a prudent awareness of the balance of power." The story reveals the potent impact of the everyday entities in the subversion of grand narratives. In this case, the subversion is articulated in the deliberate overlooking of political imperatives in the white characters' lives. It is an editing out of politics in their lives akin to convenient amnesia. Nonetheless, I also argued that whites' seeming lack of concern with politics is in fact a way of subverting the politically objectionable. Their lack of reaction to matters political is provocative and flies in the face of patriotic narratives that demand that citizens pay homage and show loyalty to the ruling ZANU PF party (Tendi, 2010). It reflects that the fictional white characters think in ways that are antithetical to the controlled and ZANU PF-mapped sense of everydayness where the party is the alpha and omega of the nation's past, present and future (Tendi, 2010) and provides the yardstick for the legitimation of issues of belonging. In addition, I submitted that through the practice of everyday life, whites extricate themselves from the political grid and extract themselves from the web of political surveillance in a nuanced way. Thus, I argued that whites pretend not to be involved in politics as an adaptive behaviour and in order to discreetly advance their interest, which, in this case, is the going on with their lives in an environment that marginalises and excludes them.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I analysed white-authored Zimbabwean fictional narratives that uniquely contest Zimbabwean patriotic identities in the post-2000 period. I argued that the stories reveal that white Zimbabweans have moved beyond the imagery of victimhood and embraced new and creative responses to the post-2000 grand narratives that exclude them from the nation's political space. Furthermore, I submitted that the everydayness of the white experiences depicted in the analysed stories is an idiom of defiance to exclusionary grand narratives. This argument resonates with De Certeau's contention that the city walkers follow indeterminate trajectories that obey their own logic and hence, the link between the everyday practices and subversion. The defiance was noted in the way the white characters continue with their lives despite the fact that they have been brushed out of the image of the nation.

I read Eppel's "The Awards Ceremony" as a story in which the narrator exploits the practice of everyday life of attending a ruling party function disguised as a supporter in order to comment on the party's shortcomings from the vantage position of a 'party insider.' I read the spurious solidarity or simulated adherence to the ruling party as a tactical way in which the

narrator insinuates himself within the ranks of the party faithful. I also privileged the watching rhetoric by which the spectator adopts a scopic gaze and composes a gigantic rhetoric of subversion. Thus, I argued that the ruling party cannot escape the imaginary totalisations produced by the eye of the spectator and that the watching rhetoric enables the narrator to discreetly, but satirically, poke holes on the ruling party's grand narratives of patriotism.

I then analysed Charsley's "The Pencil Test" as a story that deploys passing off as a subterfuge in the contestation of politically motivated exclusions from the national space in post-2000 Zimbabwe. I argued that the protagonist's passing off as a coloured is a tactic located in the practice of everyday life that enables her to dupe the system that brands her an outsider in the Zimbabwean political matrix.

Lastly, I analysed Jassat's short story "A Lazy Sunday Afternoon" as a narrative in which the white characters formulate new forms of insurgency located in the details of everyday life to contest exclusionary grand narratives. I argued that the story reflects that, there is a willful political blindness and a deliberate disregard for politically sanctioned patriotic identities in post-2000 Zimbabwe, where unquestioned loyalty to the ruling ZANU PF party is expected from citizens (Tendi, 2010). In this regard, I submitted that white Zimbabweans' distancing themselves from the politically overt is tantamount to a devaluation of the political processes that exclude them. This links well with De Certeau's ideas about the transgressive urban pedestrian who walks in a way that defies the architects who designed the city. In addition, I read the silence on issues political as a judgement that declares that the exclusionary discourses are not worthy their attention and hence the submission that it is a new and creative way of contesting patriotic identities.

The next chapter concludes the study.

Chapter 6 Conclusion: Subversive proclivities in post-2000 Zimbabwean literary productions

The study's key thrust was to examine how the selected Zimbabwean writers have, in line with Anderson's (1991) conceptualisation of a nation as an imagined community, re-imagined patriotism as a mechanism of re-inventing the nation. It was largely informed by the observation that the concept patriotism is seriously under-researched. The study was specifically aimed at demonstrating how a literary approach enriches knowledges about how the concept of patriotism has been and continues to shift as we move further and further from 1980. Thus, the study was located in a historically specific temporal and spatial context – the post-2000 and Third Chimurenga era in Zimbabwe and, as such, the analysis of the selected texts was done in relation to the political and economic specificities of that context. In other words, I adopted an approach that, among other frameworks, feeds from and relates to Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope in order to highlight the way the texts reflect on the post-2000 crisis time space and connect with the post-2000 Zimbabwean crisis.

In addition, the texts analysed in this study were selected on the basis of their counter-discursive inclination. I argued that the texts' counter-discursive thrust is broad and evocative in many ways, and can act as a prism to understand the writerly and personal responses to political and economic circumstances birthed by crisis conditions. Thus, I examined how the selected writers consider the idea of the nation and patriotic identities, and contest dominant and state-based narratives in Zimbabwe during the post-2000 era.

A major finding established in this study was one on the provisional nature of identities (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, Smith and Watson 2001, Woodward 2002, Brenna 2004 and Hunt 2010). Here, I noted that there are no fixed identity categories since identities are always in a state of flux. In addition, the study established that identities are deeply political and complex. As such, I argued that the identity matrix is a complex terrain that is characterised by contending discourses that articulate different identity indices. This argument was made in line with Phimister's (2012) observations based on a study on narratives of progress, Zimbabwean historiography and the end of history that identities are contextual, contradictory, contested and ambiguous. This line of argument was critical to the way I read the texts that contest patriotic identities. Here, I submitted that no dominant discourse is ever a monologue since there are always counter-narratives that transgress it and strip it of its claims to moral authority and legitimacy.

I argued that the bulk of the study's texts are predicated in variously similar political and economic circumstances. In this regard, I argued that the texts are writerly responses to adverse political and economic situations. I submitted that the texts adopt an adversarial stance marked by contestations on various forms of exclusions and marginality drawing on the political, economic, gender, ethnic and racial in order to counter toxic political processes and debilitating economic circumstances. This line of argument was an extension of analytical threads developed by critics such as Nyambi (2013), in his analysis of the crisis that affected Zimbabwe from 2000 to 2010 and how, in turn, the writers responded by inscribing an alternative version of the prevailing state of affairs in contradistinction to state accounts, and Mangena (2015), in her discussion of subversive tendencies in Zimbabwean Literature in multiple contexts, including gendered representations and the silencing of voices in nationalist discourses. Hence, the study analysed texts written by black males, black females, Ndebele-speaking Zimbabweans and white Zimbabweans. Nonetheless, the study was constantly aware of the fluidity and porosity of these categories of marginality. In other words, the study noted that there are numerous boundary crossings and transgressions of these categories of marginality. Thus, for instance, in Chapter Four, I went further than the gender categorisation of texts that I had deployed in Chapter Three and prioritised ethnic designations. This enabled me to analyse both male and female-authored narratives and underscore how both male and female Zimbabwean writers of Ndebele ethnic extraction are at variance with the Zimbabwean patriotic history project. Similarly, Chapter Five, which analysed narratives written by both white males and females was based on the racial category and not gender dynamics. Thus, I submitted that the specific forms of political exigencies that impacted on the writers contributed to, informed and shaped the writers' vision and the narratives' ideological orientation.

In addition, the study noted that all the texts analysed perform multifaceted forms of deconstructive acts. Here, I drew on Derrida's (1976) theorisation of deconstruction in the contention that it entails the overturning of essentialist hierarchies. I argued that this overturning shows the resistance that is inherent in deconstruction. I argued further that deconstruction dismantles, contests and subjects to critical scrutiny. It also reconfigures relationships between those placed at the centre and the periphery, and hence my argument that deconstruction serves as a platform for subversion and defiance. In this respect, I argued that the selected writers write in idioms of subversion and defiance. As a result, one remarkable aspect noted in the analysis is that the texts evolve and employ multiple and unique textual strategies to contest hegemonic discourses or Zimbabwean grand narratives that

simultaneously authorise and prop up patriotic identities. For example, Hoba's stories employ satire and parody to contest the grand narrative of black empowerment. In addition, the strategies expose and erode dominant discourses. Thus, for example, my analysis of Mlalazi and Tshuma's texts in Chapter Four showed that the texts expose the fiction and grand narrative of oneness that is peddled by the ruling ZANU PF party. The analysis indicated that the textual strategies that are used include exposure, disruption, deconstruction, satire, parody and an engagement in the practice of everyday life. These various textual strategies were read as symbols or idioms of defiance and resistance to various forms of marginality. Thus, the analysis of texts revealed the different ways in which fictional narratives interrogate and subvert the official narratives of the ruling party.

In brief, Chapter One provided the background to the study, review of literature related to the study and provided the theoretical framework employed in the study. The chapter focused, through its extended literature review, on the context in which to understand the constitution and contestation of identities as depicted in the texts that I analysed. The chapter engaged further in a broad and extended analysis of the Third Chimurenga discourse precisely for the reason that the study is predicated on writerly responses to Third Chimurenga discourses, and in particular, notions on patriotic identities. Finally, the review of literature related to the discourse was also done in order to unpack and have a deeper understanding of the circumstances prevailing during the crisis time space. Here, I noted how the period witnessed the proliferation of ruling party-based grand narratives of patriotism to curb and contain political dissent and how, in turn, the Zimbabweans and the international community variously reacted to the Third Chimurenga discourse.

The chapter reviewed key concepts on nation and narration by critics such as Bhabha (1994), Macleod (2000), Ranger (2004, 2005) and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009) in order to have a deeper understanding of the constitution of patriotic identities. I particularly noted Ranger's (2004) ideas on patriotic identities as quite critical because they inform the study's thrust. Thus, I was able to draw the conclusion that the construction of the patriotic identities that are contested in the texts I analysed were a product of the ruling ZANU PF elite's response to political and economic exigencies. I noted further that the patriotic identities' political texture (as noted in their rigid and inflexible bent) derives from the fact that they are a response to those political and economic circumstances. In this regard, I argued that ZANU PF manipulated history and used the Third Chimurenga to carve and consolidate patriotic identities. In line with this argument, I noted the significance and centrality of the 1990s political and economic

trajectories in mapping the background to the way the vision of the nation and identities is imagined and contested in the post-2000 period.

The chapter also argued that the ZANU PF-crafted patriotic identities are “highly fragile and unstable constructions which can never produce the unity they promise” (Bhabha, 1994:139), and hence their contestation as noted in the texts that were analysed. The fragility and instability of patriotic identities manifested in the way they thrive on the creation of demarcations between insiders and outsiders. I argued further that the exclusionary bent of patriotic identities renders them prone to contestations. Thus, I also argued, based on the texts analysed in the study, that there exists a body of post-2000 literary productions which refuses to pay allegiance to the aesthetic and semantic imperatives of patriotic discourses. Here, the counter-discourse theoretical paradigm as postulated by critics such as Terdiman (1989), Ashcroft et. al. (1989), Young (2001) and Lara (1998), was considered critical and deployed to probe and interrogate patriotic identities as a contested space.

In addition, I read the literary productions that I focussed on in this study as “modes of combat” (Terdiman, 1989:11) that are deployed to contest dominant narratives and author symbolic resistances. I submitted further that the texts selected for the study have the capacity to express “insurgent knowledges” (Young, 2001:15). As such, I read the counter-narratives that I focussed on as “emancipatory narratives [that] configure new ways to fight back against injustices thus making institutional transformations possible” (Lara, 1998:5).

Furthermore, I observed from the literature review that the selected texts have a deconstructionist bent and revisionist tenor. I developed the argument that these texts are consistent with the counter-discursive thrust that I set out to explore in the study. This observation confirmed Ashcroft et. al.’s (1989) contention that a characteristic of dominated literature is an inevitable tendency towards subversion that reveals both the configurations of domination and the imaginative creative responses to this condition. Thus, the texts were deemed to be at variance with “the contemporary official demands for patriotic behaviour and writing” (Muponde and Primorac, 2005:xv).

Chapter Two analysed fictional works by creative male Zimbabwean writers. The works analysed include Chinodya’s short story “Queues”, Madanhire’s short story “The Grim Reaper’s Car” and selected stories from Hoba’s collection titled *The Trek and Other Stories*. All the stories analysed in this chapter were read as counter-discourses to state narratives as enunciated in the Third Chimurenga discourses. I argued that the texts subvert the patriotic

metafiction that is benchmarked on loyalty to ZANU PF. The writers were chosen as representative of the defiant attitude towards patriotic identities because they portray an intimate picture of the prevailing state of affairs in the nation. The authors have been in Zimbabwe all along and, more importantly, experienced the effects of the Third Chimurenga crisis time space. Thus, their stories were critiqued on the basis of how the creative writers responded to the debilitating economic, political and social situation in Zimbabwe. This was done in line with Felski's (2008) contention that literary works actively engage with their historical and social contexts. Ultimately, the texts were considered counter-discursive because the writers write against the grain of nationalist discourse in Zimbabwe.

The chapter analysed Chinodya's short story "Queues" as a narrative that refuses to affirm the Third Chimurenga discourse. The reading and analysis of the story was premised on Nyambi's (2016:219) contention that in the state's grand narrative of the Third Chimurenga, Zimbabwe's post-2000 economic challenges are viewed as a result of punitive sanctions imposed by Western governments to avenge the compulsory acquisition of white-owned land and the subsequent jettisoning of whites from the national imaginary. I argued that the story uses a critical realist approach to explore the causes of the post-2000 economic and political problems in Zimbabwe. I argued further that the story is woven in the form of historical fiction and traces as well as name the origins of the social, economic and political challenges that affected Zimbabwe post-2000 and culminated in endemic queues literally witnessed throughout the country.

As a result, the story was read as an antithesis of the state's version of the crisis and hence its subversive proclivity. Indeed, it was read as a literary rebuttal of the state's account of the cause of the political and economic crisis unfolding in Zimbabwe in the post-2000 era. The story locates the blame for these political and economic exigencies on the ruling ZANU PF party as shown in the comparison between the colonial and post-independence periods in Zimbabwe, with the earlier being depicted as better than the latter which is characterised by predominantly abysmal political and economic policies. Thus, it critiques official narratives while "confronting the tendency by ZANU PF government to prevent other [alternative] pasts from articulating themselves" (Alexander, 2006:105). The story, thus, shifts the blame from the Western governments and indicts the one currently presiding over the state for driving the country into a political and economic morass. Ultimately, the story was considered an anti-patriotic narrative that shuns the state-centred perspectives of the crisis. Its refusal to endorse the ruling ZANU PF party's anti-West rhetoric was read as a significant counter-discursive

strand that flies in the face of the ruling party that is obsessed with notions of patriotism in post-2000 Zimbabwe.

The chapter also analysed Madanhire's short story "The Grim Reaper's Car" as a narrative that openly expresses dissent to the Zimbabwean patriotic grand narratives by depicting the ruling party-induced grinding poverty in an urban space in post-2000 Zimbabwe. I argued that such an exposure is deemed unpatriotic behaviour by the ruling elite who downplay the impact of the post-2000 economic meltdown and have infinite impatience with narratives that paint negative images of, and draw pessimistic conclusions on the prevailing state of affairs in post-2000 Zimbabwe. Here, I noted how the story uses symbols such as rats to underscore the wretched conditions under which Zimbabweans live in post-2000 urban spaces, and to interrogate the ruling party's version of history. Thus, I argued that the subversion lies in the exposure of the ZANU PF-induced economic malaise and the satirisation of the president who is symbolically depicted as the Grim Reaper and insisted that the story has a "radical agenda [...] to reject the unbearable conditions of inequality and poverty [...] and to demand equality, dignity and well-being for all the people" (Young, 2001:25).

I deduced from my analysis of the story that its dissidence lies in the treatment of subjects that are considered sensitive or taboo in post-2000 Zimbabwe. The story's mockery of the president through description is subversive and insists on the need to name the architect of the people's miseries. In this case, the story is evidently unequivocal and unambiguous in its insistence that it is the president who is responsible. Furthermore, I invoked Said's (1978) ideas on representation to cement the idea that the story mocks the president. The mockery is seen in the description of the president as a predator that is ruthless, murderous and devilish. Hence, such descriptions are subversive in the sense that they highlight the story's refusal to pay allegiance to post-2000 Zimbabwean political imperatives that require that the president be deified. Thus, the story re-configures patriotism in a manner that is not benchmarked on loyalty to the president, but the imperative to tell the 'truth'.

Lastly, the chapter analysed selected stories from Hoba's collection of stories where I noted that the stories are products of a radically informed postcolonial consciousness linked to the writer's belonging to the third generation writers in Zimbabwe. The works by third generation Zimbabwean writers are characterised by dissidence and employ sardonic humour and satire as some of their defining characteristics (Manase, 2014). Hoba's stories were read as narratives that interrogate the ZANU PF discourse about empowerment and hence their subversive

inclination. The observation from my analysis of “The First Trek – The Pioneers”, “The Travelling Preacher”, “Maria’s Independence”, “The Second Trek – Going Home”, “Specialisation” and “The Third Trek – Resettling” is that all stories specifically deconstruct the ZANU PF party’s grand narrative about land reform. These stories portray the realities on the farms as telling a different story to the state narratives’ glorification of the exercise. I further argued that Hoba judges the programme by reference to textual reality and hence concluded that the stories do not portray a compassionate account of the land reform programme. Instead, the stories satirise the programme because they consider it an abysmal failure. In addition, the stories critique the government’s myopic empowerment vision. Hence the conclusion made is that such criticism is subversive as it runs contrary to the state’s accounts of the programme which is vaunted for its success.

I submitted that the stories reveal an interesting dimension to the programme, namely that unsuitable beneficiaries have been empowered. I argued that the beneficiaries lack equipment, expertise, zeal and the drive to meaningfully engage in farming. It is on account of this that the programme is revealed to be a sham. The subversive inclination of the stories is noted in the exposure and satirisation of the hollow nature of the programme. I argued that the stories indeed lambast the programme because it is a bald empowerment initiative. Hence, I read the stories as counter-discourses to the land reform programme which is celebrated in state narratives such as Hanlon et. al.’s *Zimbabwe Takes Back its Land* (2013) and Mugabe’s *Inside the Third Chimurenga* (2001).

Chapter Three of the study analysed female-authored Zimbabwean fictional narratives, that is, Nyamubaya’s short story “That Special Place” and Gappah’s two stories “The President Always Dies in January” and “From a Town called Enkeldoorn” in order to determine how the texts transgress state-circumscribed boundaries of national identity and deal with taboo subjects in the political domain. I argued that the stories reflect the writers’ agency to transgress politically motivated exclusions from the national narrative. I observed that the stories’ stylistic approach helps in their articulation of a subversive meta-narrative that discursively deconstructs patriotic identities.

I also analysed the texts in this chapter using the third generation writerly subversion optic and drew on the discourse on the speaking of the unspeakable. Both strands were considered critical in shedding light on the stories’ subversive proclivities. I drew on third generation writing characteristics such as dissidence, satire, parody and sardonic humour in my analysis of the

stories analysed in this chapter. In addition, the speaking of the unspeakable also gave anchor and lent another subversive dimension to the stories. Even though the thrust was to analyse the texts from the premise of shifts or growth in writing against patriotic discourses witnessed in the post-2000 era, the main argument that I made is that the texts are intrinsically dissident.

Nyamubaya's short story "That Special Place" was read as a narrative that exposes and contests the gendered politics of Zimbabwe's war of liberation. In addition, the story was analysed as an exposure of the ruling elite's dark past. In pursuance of both strands, I noted that the story articulates dissidence and subversion. In this regard, I argued that the story adopts the velvet hammer approach to deconstruct the post-2000 Zimbabwean patriotic essence. The analysis of the story was predicated on the understanding that the narrative of the nation as outlined by men in power has been rendered patriarchal, monolithic and authoritarian. As a result, I noted that in this whole matrix, the female figure's participation in the national narrative and space is peripheral, and it is this gender marginalisation that the story contests.

I argued that the story which broadly falls within the realm of life narratives bears testimony to female participation in the liberation struggle. Such a recounting of national history is antithetical to state-narratives that downplay or exclude female participation in the war of liberation, and hence the story's subversive inclination. Thus, I read the story as belonging to the firming canon and one of the female-authored texts re-gendering the liberation war. I argued that the story indeed contests the distinctly male Zimbabwean historiography by inscribing the female narrator's active participation in the war of liberation.

In addition to the above, the story was analysed as an exposé of the ZANU PF ruling elite's dark past. The story depicted the cruelty of the leadership during the war of liberation as emblematised by the beatings and rape that some of the freedom fighters were subjected to. Here, I read the subversive element of the story as lying in the way the story calls for a recalibration of patriotic narratives of togetherness and unity when one examines individual stories (Zoe, 2013). The argument here was that the story demonstrates, contrary to state narratives that insist that the freedom fighters were united during the war of liberation, the fictitious nature of that unity. Thus, I argued that the story operates at a counter-discursive plane as it deconstructs that semblance of unity that is authorised by the ruling elite in state narratives.

The chapter also analysed Gappah's stories in relation to how they authorise "insurgent knowledges" (Young, 2001:15) in the form of iconoclasm and political derision. I argued that

the stories refuse to pay allegiance to the correct objects of reverence in post-2000 Zimbabwe. I submitted that the correct objects of reverence include the institution of the presidency and the grand narrative of the war of liberation that is deemed central to the coming into being of the Zimbabwean nation. Thus, I argued that Gappah's stories poke holes on these institutions, and hence in typical third generation writing tradition, the stories' subversive proclivities lie in the way they satirise and ridicule the so-called sacred institutions. I indeed read the humour and satire as some of the linguistic protocols used in the stories to deconstruct both the image of the president and the discourses considered seminal to the founding of Zimbabwe.

I analysed Gappah's short story "The President Always Dies in January" as a narrative that tests the image of the president as a champion of democracy and the Third Chimurenga. I argued that the story is intrinsically counter-discursive in that it counters the notion that allegiance to the president is the quintessential expression of patriotism in post-2000 Zimbabwe. The story was read as a deconstruction of the veneration of the president as noted in the way it puts into sharp focus the magnitude of revulsion that the president arouses in ordinary people. For instance, the main protagonist Fortune and the Keyboard warriors congregate on virtual spaces to mock the president. Thus, the story uses parody and satire to express serious misgivings over the veneration of the president as preached in state narratives.

I argued further that the story's counter-discursive bent is noted in the way it treads on the unspeakable territory. In this case, I submitted that the writerly courage to attack the person and office of the president as depicted in the story is subversive. The personal attack on the president is noted especially in the cynical reference to his genital organs described by the main protagonist as being the casualty of the armed struggle for independence and had been returned to him through special surgery in China after having been cryogenically frozen. In addition, I argued that the story's deployment of parody and satire to mock the imaginary of the war of liberation, which is dubbed the Second Chimurenga in patriotic discourses, is also subversive. Thus, I concluded that the story transgresses and pushes boundaries of personal and political taboos, and hence its subversive inclination.

I also analysed Gappah's short story "From a town called Enkeldoorn" in relation to its experimental form and dissidence. I argued that the tech-based narrative form employed in the story is significant in determining and underlining the dissident narration of the story about the nation in post-2000 Zimbabwe. I argued that the innovative, non-conformist and unconventional nature of the story is a metaphor for the deconstruction of the ZANU PF grand

narratives about the nation in post-2000 Zimbabwe. The observation here is that the story's nuanced form reflects its subversive nature. I argued further that that departure from formulaic or mainstream story-telling is consistent with third generation writing which is associated with an avant-garde style and non-conformism. Thus, this avant-garde approach captures the story's political implications which in this case are a symbolic attack on the location of the grand narratives about the nation and patriotism in old aesthetics that do not conform to the present.

I argued further that the subversive element in "From a town called Enkeldoorn" is located in the rigor of its satirical commentary. The story subverts the authority of both the colonialist and new nationalist centres as both discourses are revealed to be evil. In light of this, I read the story as a double narrative movement (Bhabha, 1994) that, on the one hand, indicts colonial discourses and on the other hand, subverts, through caricature, mockery and ridicule, the Zimbabwean postcolonial ruling elite for causing the collapse of the economy and instituting undemocratic political processes. Thus, I argued that the subversive proclivity in the story is located in its skillful deployment of humour, caricature, parody, irony and satire, all of which are characteristic of third generation writing.

Chapter Four of this study analysed Gukurahundi-inspired narratives written by Ndebele-speaking Zimbabwean writers. The chapter analysed Mlalazi's *Running with Mother* and Tshuma's *House of Stone* in relation to how they authorise a disruption of oneness and historical continuum propounded by ZANU PF in post-2000 Zimbabwe as a weapon against past and new forms of imperialism. It was submitted as an entry point into the chapter that the 'unity in diversity' conundrum that the texts address and prove to be a myth has also attracted interest in cultural studies. The basic argument that was made in the chapter is that the texts deconstruct the grand narrative about togetherness in the Zimbabwean nation. To this end, the chapter, in addition to the key theoretical concepts informing the study, deployed ideas on citizen classification by Agamben (1995) and Bowker and Star (1999). I argued that the novels depict that there is a clearly defined ethnic divide in the nation, and hence the contention that the authors write against the grand narrative of oneness in Zimbabwe.

I first analysed Mlalazi's *Running with Mother* as a story that exposes and contests the fixing of ethnic identity. I argued that the textual realities compel us to think about writing the sensitive Gukurahundi experiences as a resistant literary engagement with the ruling ZANU PF party's narrative of togetherness and the unjustified classificatory systems that lead to the extermination of the Ndebele ethnic minority. I argued further that the story pokes holes on the

ruling ZANU PF party's fictitious narratives of unity in Zimbabwe that are expressed in patriotic history. Thus, I contended that the story speaks against the grain of patriotic discourses and submitted that the counter-narrative constitutes an idiom of defiance to state narratives. Furthermore, I argued that the grand narrative about togetherness is unstable given the ruling party's authorisation of the annihilation of the Ndebele ethnic minority as depicted in the story. Thus, I submitted that the subversion lies in the textual exposure of ethnic-based identity categories and the violation of the perceived other. I argued that such an exposure of blatant ethnic categorisation runs contrary to the articulations in state narratives that depict harmony and 'unity in diversity' in the nation, and hence the novel's counter-discursive thrust.

The chapter also analysed Tshuma's *House of Stone* in relation to the discourse on secession. The novel was read as a narrative that violently disrupts notions on oneness and togetherness in Zimbabwe given its open engagement with emergent forms of Ndebele particularism in contemporary Zimbabwe. I argued that the particularism manifests in the discourse of secession that the text addresses. The text was analysed in line with the study's major thrust that patriotic identities are contested because they exclude other histories and forms of identities. Thus, I analysed the story from two strands. Firstly, I considered the story as a re-visioning of the nation's history and then as an expression of irredentism. I argued that the story is counter-discursive because it authorises and valorises Ndebele history. This is unlike the portrayal of history in state-based narratives where Ndebele history is silenced. Thus, I argued that archiving and cataloguing this excluded history is a subversive act.

Secondly, I argued that the story's re-visioning of history is strategic in that it makes Ndebele history enjoy a higher profile than the ruling party version, and hence the story's counter-discursive inclination. This line of argument was mainly informed by the understanding that the ruling ZANU PF party considers itself the alpha and omega of the nation's past, present and future (Tendi, 2010). Nonetheless, I argued that the text disrupts that historical version through prioritising Ndebele history and semi-silencing the ruling ZANU PF party's. Thus, I underlined that the articulation of history from the subalternised perspective of the Ndebele ethnic minority is consistent with discourses on subversion.

I also submitted that the novel is predicated on calls for the Ndebele-speaking Zimbabweans' attainment of national self-determination. I suggested that this is an act of writing against the grain of nationalist discourses in a Zimbabwe where patriotism and unity are preached and advocated. It is thus evident in my analysis that the novel foregrounds the Gukurahundi

atrocities based on citizen classification in order to highlight their connectedness to the irredentism that the text addresses. Furthermore, I submitted that the writerly exposure of the Gukurahundi brutalities and the government and other significant stakeholders' failures to address its associated atrocities is subversive because the Gukurahundi is talked about in 'patriotic' tones in state narratives. Thus, unlike that patriotic portrayal in state narratives, the text reveals the horrors associated with the occurrence, and hence the contention that the text counters the state-enunciated representations of the Gukurahundi. Moreover, I established the link between the Gukurahundi atrocities and the call for secession that the text explores as noted in the existence of the Mthwakazi Secessionist Movement that seeks to delink from Zimbabwe. I argued that the secessionist aspirations are reflective of the lack of oneness in Zimbabwe. Hence, the contention that the text goes against the patriotic grand narrative of oneness and togetherness in Zimbabwe.

Chapter Five analysed fictional narratives written by white Zimbabweans. The analysed stories are Eppel's "The Awards Ceremony", Charsley's "The Pencil Test" and Jassat's "A Lazy Sunday Afternoon". The chapter's main argument is related to the symbolic resistance in living and going on with life in a state where whites are generally erased from political discourses and imaginaries of the nation. My analysis indicated that the whites have had to contend with the autochthonous grand narratives that exclude them from the national space in post-2000 Zimbabwe. The central argument that I made is that whites' engagement in everyday practices has to be viewed as a new form of resistance against exclusionary discourses. Thus, I located the subversive thrust in the stories in the practice of everyday life that the whites engage in as a way of dealing with problematic narratives of autochthony. Thus, in addition to the major theoretical ideas that inform the study, I premised my reading and analysis of the texts on the concept of the practice of everyday life as postulated by Michel de Certeau (1984).

Firstly, I analysed Eppel's short story "The Awards Ceremony" as a narrative that authorises dissidence through the depiction of spurious solidarities. I noted that the story deploys the everyday practice where the narrator engages in the everyday practice of attending a ruling party function as a tactic to insinuate himself into the ranks of the ruling party. I submitted that that insinuation enables the narrator to critique from a close quarter, while disguised as a ruling party supporter. Thus, I argued that it is a form of contestation that is located in the practice of everyday life. The contestation is revealed in the "contradictions between overt acts and gestures made in public and the covert responses made underground" (Mbembe, 1992:3). I also argued that the story's subversive inclination rests in its articulation of resistance to an

exclusionary system without leaving that system. Here, the argument was made that the narrator simulates adherence to the dictates of the ruling party but only in order for him to expose the party's failings from within. Thus, ultimately, I argued that the exposure of the wretched nature and failings of the ruling party is made possible by the engagement in the practice of everyday life.

I also analysed Charsley's short story "The pencil Test". Here, I made the central argument that there is also the deployment of the everyday practice of passing off as a subterfuge in political contestation. I read the story as a literary contestation of racially motivated exclusions in post-2000 Zimbabwe. I argued that the story counters the notions of indigeneity and citizenship that are characteristic of the Third Chimurenga and post-2000 era in Zimbabwe. I submitted that the protagonist's passing off as a coloured is located in the details of everyday life and is legitimated by the exigencies of exclusionary politics and disparities in power and privilege. The counter-discursive element of the story was also noted in the ambiguity and fluidity of the baroque practices that the protagonist as a postcolonial subject engages in so as to deal with the problematic narratives of identity. Thus, I ultimately argued that an engagement in the practice of everyday life has the capacity to deflect the power of dominant discourses as was depicted in the text where the protagonist contests exclusionary racial categories.

Lastly, I analysed Jassat's short story "A Lazy Sunday Afternoon" in relation to the white characters' engagement in the practice of everyday life in order to underscore one of the ways in which whites react to ruling party-enunciated patriotic and autochthonous discourses that have framed them as outsiders. I argued that by creating a distance between themselves and the overtly political, whites carve out different discursive spaces for resistance. I submitted further that the white characters' disregard for the overtly political is a subtle contestation of patriotic identities in the post-2000 era. In addition, I argued that not commenting about politics is equivalent to a contemptuous devaluation of the exclusionary political processes. Thus, I observed that the whites engage in the everyday practices that exclude the political as idioms of defiance to grand narratives that exclude them, and hence the story's counter-discursive proclivity.

Overall, the study is critical to Zimbabwean literary studies in that it adds on to the existing body of knowledge on counter-discourse but from the angle of the relatively under-researched focus on patriotism. I argued that the writers selected for this study are at variance with the patriotic history project that was authored, sculpted and polished by the ruling ZANU PF elite.

This patriotic history is the one that gave birth to the patriotic identities that I focussed on in this study. Hence, the overarching submission in the study was that all the works analysed run contrary to the patriotic literary trajectory that the state expects writers to follow. I explored how the texts variously depict alternative perspectives on Zimbabwe's political, economic and social landscape. I argued further that the writers selected for this study construct and authorise an alternative vision of the nation and patriotic identities that is in contradistinction to the patriotic identities advocated by ZANU PF. I also noted how such literary interventions are crucial in demonstrating that the national space is a contested arena that is "internally marked by the discourse of minorities, the heterogeneous histories of contending peoples" (Bhabha, 1994:148). Thus, I demonstrated that the literary texts examined in this study are liberated spaces for the enunciation of democratic ideals. In addition, I submitted that because the writers articulate their views from the margins, they confirm Bhabha's (1994:169) contention that "the national memory is always the site of the hybridity of histories and the displacement of narratives." However, I acknowledge that the study did not dwell much on how democracies die and what facilitates the coming into being and entrenchment of hegemonic tendencies as emblematised by the patriotic identities that are contested in the texts that I focussed on. In light of these observations, I suggest that future research explore literatures about hegemonic systems and how they get entrenched. In addition, future study should explore how the so-called counter-narratives, in their attempts to carve new forms of identities, may end up replicating what they contest in grand narratives.

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