



# **MOURNING AND MELANCHOLIA IN ZIMBABWEAN CULTURE AND CINEMA**

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## **DECLARATION**

I declare that the work presented in this PhD thesis is my own personal research and independent work. Referencing has been credited to all external sources used to write this thesis.

Signed

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis interrogates postcolonial melancholia and femininity through the textual analysis of literary and cinematographic works from Zimbabwe. The work is a transdisciplinary project encompassing psychosocial and postcolonial studies, as well as film and cultural studies. I define post-colonial melancholia in relation to how it has affected the postcolonial social sphere following the independence of Zimbabwe from British colonial rule in April 1980. I characterise melancholia as a loss of identity, ‘the missing object’/ lost object of affection that stemmed from colonial subjugation alongside the little remaining evidence of written Zimbabwean culture before colonialism. Today, there is a fragment of evidence that shows pre colonial Zimbabwean culture: it is forever lost. The colonial era is also relatively sparse regarding its cultural outputs, which is typical of any trauma that is ‘unrepresentable’. It is only recently that some films and plays have begun to address this head on. It is my argument that Zimbabwe is still in a state of melancholia, mourning the loss of her identity. I contend that the notion of identity is not straightforward, but rather is multifaceted and layered in trauma, tribalism, racism, class and sexism. There is, therefore, a need to re-evaluate post-colonial theories in relation to post-colonial melancholia and find the correlation it has in forming a national identity. This thesis also explores the lack of female authorship in literature and film and what this tells us of the role of women in Zimbabwean society. I argue that the black female voice has been silenced through the ions of time and is only being regained very slowly. Thus autoethnography is used here as an anti -patriachal gesture, a resistance tool against the double interpellation black women endured/ are enduring in Zimbabwe.

How can one account for postcolonial melancholia and what tools does a researcher deploy to examine it? This thesis adopts a psychoanalytical approach to account for the gaps and silences in Zimbabwean culture because of post-colonial trauma. I draw upon foundational Western scholars including Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, Homi Bhabha, Louis Althusser and Frantz Fanon, and more recent thinkers such as Agnieszka Piotrowska, Stephen Frosh, Lauren Berlant and Ranjana Khanna. I also draw upon Zimbabwean writers Alois Mlambo, Dambudzo Marechera, Robert Muponde and, most notably, Tsitsi Dangarembga, P Mbatha, Panashe Chigumadzi, Yvonne Vera and other black female thinkers and writers. These writers and scholars aid in investigating how the postcolonial narrative is created and in unearthing the notion of identity and race relations in Zimbabwe, as well as who can take charge of this narrative, and the role of melancholia in framing this narrative. This argument is executed through textual analysis of prominent films and literature produced in Zimbabwe from 1940 to the present. The thesis offers a re-interpretation of postcolonial thinking through the lens of psychoanalysis, combining the textual analysis of film and literature alongside psychoanalysis and postcolonial theory. Finally, it interrogates the silences and gaps (the lack of films, literature and academic research) through interviews conducted with prominent individuals involved in the creative industries, set alongside the evocation of my personal experience as a Zimbabwean woman and academic. This is in line with the autobiographical genre used by many scholars, notably Frantz Fanon.

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## PRELIMINARY REMARKS

I begin here by establishing the scope of this work and outlining my personal position, inspired by the works of Antonio Gramsci, who suggests that one must establish the position from which one speaks (Gramsci, 1982). Identity is at the forefront of this project, which I named ‘the missing object,’ or the lost object of affection inspired by the readings of Sigmund Freud and, later, Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok. This ‘missing object’ does not just revolve around one’s individual identity alone but is also a national identity alongside the constructs of gender and race. I explore the issue of hybridity in terms of identity and as an intellectual construct. For example, I merge and utilize the thinking of Althusser, Berlant and Dangarembga to create an intellectual tapestry designed to discuss the discourse of systems and identity in Zimbabwe.

Historically, black women in Zimbabwe were rendered voiceless, this is made apparent in works such as Doris Lessing’s novel *The Grass Is Singing* (1950) alongside Tsitsi Dangarembga’s series of novels starting with *Nervous Conditions* (1988). It is also important to note that there is little research, literature and film produced by black Zimbabwean women compared to the men in the creative sectors. To amplify the voice of black women in this thesis, autoethnography has been used to bring to life the lived experiences of women in my family, those of women I interviewed and my own personal experience. I write the following section of my preliminary remarks from an autobiographical standpoint as a way of solidifying my subjecthood in this thesis.

This thesis reflects, to a certain extent, Marechera’s statement that “African writers cannot avoid relaying the distorted and the distorting shapes of the psyche in their art” (Marechera in Cairnie & Pucherova, 2012:15). It studies the intangible notion of melancholia embedded in the psyche, not just in the body of work that is analysed, but also in the interviews conducted for this research. My position as a researcher resonates with his words. I contend that “the distorting shapes” Marechera refers to can be linked to Homi Bhabha’s theory of hybridity (Bhabha, 2012:159). The notion of hybridity is my motivation and justification for conducting this study, from tracing and questioning my identity, to finding the relationship between one’s psyche and culture.

In *The Location of Culture* (2012), Bhabha defines hybridity as “the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities [...] the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal” (Bhabha, 2012:159). Going by Bhabha’s definition, I could argue here that my own hybridity is proof of the successful subjugation of the colonial power over my ancestors. I am neither well versed in the Shona culture nor genetically linked to the English culture that I grew up in and became well acquainted with. I am a mixture of both, a master of none. Bhabha further elaborates that “colonial hybridity is not a problem of genealogy or identity between two different cultures [...] it is



that the difference between cultures can no longer be identified or evaluated as objects of epistemological or moral contemplation” (Bhabha, 2012:162). I have not lived through a colonial regime, nor have I lived in Zimbabwe long enough to say my voice is parallel with the ‘day to day’ experience of the lifelong resident Zimbabweans. My incentive, however, derives from my upbringing in a Shona speaking home that connects me to my cultural heritage.

My emotional disposition to my country of origin flows through the branches of transgenerational trauma that has passed on from my grandmother’s generation (who lived through the period of colonialism in the then-called Rhodesia) to me through the African tradition of storytelling. These stories tell what life was like before colonial times, the horrific incidents that occurred during the colonial era, and the examples of cultural morality that typically dictated societal expectations for the characteristics of men and women. I came to realise I could not identify with the people in these stories. English was my first language, I did not learn how to balance a jug of water on my head like some girls in the stories, and I questioned the reasoning behind some traditional practices I had to follow. Thus, this study features the reoccurring theme of identity, which to me is not just a theoretical construct but relates to the very notion of who I am or might yet become. As explained above, Bhabha points out that a hybrid identity is not a question of the difference between two cultures, but rather a culture created by the infusion of two different cultures into one (Bhabha, 2012:159). The point of contention derives from either the coloniser or the colonised refusing to acknowledge the intermix of the two. This is where the concept of melancholia and mourning begins.

Born at Mbuya Nehanda Hospital, Harare, to both a Shona mother and Ndebele father, I not only feel a strong connection to the matriarch herself, Mbuya Nehanda, whose story I tell below, but also connections to the memories of my grandmother. I left Zimbabwe at the impressionable age of twelve to live in Nairobi, Kenya, with my family. My yearly visits to my mother country became less frequent after the death of my grandmother in 2016. I consider here whether the dislocation I feel towards my Shona heritage and culture is due to the loss of the matriarch in my family: much as Zimbabwe mourns Nehanda as a cultural symbol and matriarch. Like me, Panashe Chigumadzi a Zimbabwean scholar and novelist, writes about her relationship with her grandmothers in her book , *These Bones Will Rise Again* (2018), inspired by Mbuya Nehanda’s last words before she was hung by white settlers.

Chigumadzi also associates her link to her culture through her paternal grandmother who also died in 2017. Identity, dislocation and struggles with cultural hybridity are some of the similarities I found between my experience and that of Chigumadzi. As she writes, “The earth pulled me down as my grandmother’s bones were taken into the ground. She was buried on 8 October 2017. The dislocation I have felt all these years comes in its full force to destabilize me” (Chigumadzi, 2018:19). The heightened sense of dislocation that Chigumadzi talks about led to me to not only question my hybridity, but to also realise the guilt that comes with it. Am I truly representing the legacy the

matriarchs desired for me? I had no idea in 2018, when I embarked on my PhD journey, that through rediscovering my grandmother's voice through memories, I would discover mine. However, as Dianne Jeater says, "I remain ambivalent about my claims to expertise" (Jeater, 2006:235). I am still rediscovering my grandmother's voice and her memories trickle throughout the pages of this research.

Antony Easthope, in *Bhabha, Hybridity and Identity* (1998), suggests that "this concept of the hybrid is a paradox. While Bhabha maintains that hybridity is dependent upon two fixed and pure cultural localities, he also dismisses the material concept of a pure culture" (Easthope, 1998:342). As one whose social upbringing was hybrid between my traditional Shona culture and the Western values obtained by mainly living in a Western society, the concept of pure culture is a haunting, unobtainable image. It is an impossible standard that most baby boomers, millennials and Generation X individuals cannot live up to, fearing the betrayal or distortion of the illusion that is pure culture. The question, therefore, is whether pure culture exists in Zimbabwe? Alois Mlambo, in his published lecture, 'Becoming Zimbabwe or Becoming Zimbabwean: Identity, Nationalism and State-building' (2013), asks the reader the rhetorical question, "who exactly is a Zimbabwean?" (3). I found this to be a sentiment that resonates with a lot of Zimbabweans. Take, for example, a poem written by Charmaine Mujeri, a Zimbabwean actress I interviewed. Her poem highlights the nature of her hybridity. I analyse the poem in depth in a later chapter, but I insert a few lines here: "I am Rhodesian, I am British, I am Zimbabwean, I am a combination of all, I am a combination of none" (Mujeri in Piotrowska, 2017:65). Is a Zimbabwean defined by race, tribe or level of patriotism? It is important here to state that for this research, I use patriotism and nationalism in order to highlight the notion that is pure culture and analyse if they are, perhaps, symptoms of melancholic reaction to a hybrid culture. Mlambo's question is echoed throughout this study through the conversations I have had with actors, film producers and directors who work in the film and creative industries in Zimbabwe. They reflect it in their creative output and bodies of work; an example here would be Charmaine Mujeri: Mujeri identifies as Zimbabwean, Rhodesian and British, and where others are afraid to embrace the notion of hybridity, she boldly declares hers. For her, being Zimbabwean is not a binary definition.

As Bhabha states, colonialism brought about the forced adoption of the coloniser's culture, from the acclimatisation of language and behavioural patterns to how people dressed. Hence, inevitably, over the nine decades Zimbabwe was colonised, the traditional African culture evolved consciously and unconsciously to accommodate the dominant colonial culture. It is my assertion that mourning the pre-colonial African culture has hindered, to some degree, the growth of a new culture and, more specifically, the development of race relations in Zimbabwe. In some instances, I am convinced that there is complete disavowal from both the colonised and coloniser, and I explore this in the following chapters. Ranjana Khanna, in her illuminating book *Dark Continents* (2003), explores the notion of colonial melancholy manifesting as violence in society or in individuals. She further explains that "while understanding that the relationship between the individual citizen or subject to the state has

frequently been understood as that between memory and history, the unconscious dimensions of national subject hood have rarely been explored in any systematic fashion” (Khanna, 2003:12). One can say that the notion of pure culture for our generation derives from the memories passed down to us from the previous generation’s historic experience. This becomes problematic if those memories are only imbued with trauma of their personal experiences.

The following quotation from Easthope aids in dissecting an important factor when it comes to hybridity, the effect it has on the person who is a hybrid, and the idea or the notion of pure culture:

a second definition of hybridity might be understood to mean an individual ‘having access to two or more ethnic identities’, somebody like Homi Bhabha himself who is brought up as a Parsee in a predominantly Hindu culture and who then takes an identity within Western anglophone culture. But again, there are problems here. Does hybridity in an ethnic definition suppose that the two ethnic identities joined together were formerly pure in themselves? Second question: What is ethnicity? Like ‘race’, ‘ethnicity’ has no agreed definition — as Hutchinson and Smith say in their Introduction to their Oxford reader on ethnicity, ‘The meaning of the term is uncertain. (Easthope, 1988:342)

There is no such thing as pure culture. I am reminded of the works of Yvonne Vera, particularly in her novel *Nehanda* (1993), where the main character tells the reader, “I see a timeless cloud of dust that will blind us all, and we shall never recover from it” (Vera, 1993: kindle location 901). She predicts the invasion of the colonial settlers will eradicate the Zimbabwean culture and as a people we will never recover from it. Pure culture never recovers. It is my experience that in Zimbabwe there is a sense of urgency to preserve its original culture and that anyone bringing Western ideologies has forgotten their roots. Many writers including Agnieszka Piotrowska (2017), Jeater (2001) and Mazarire have written on the importance of paying special attention to the oral culture in Zimbabwe.

It is important to highlight here that there is a body of work documenting what pre-colonial Zimbabwean culture was like. Works from writers like David Norman Beach *The Shona and Zimbabwe* (1980) or his journal article *The Shona History and Archaeology in Zimbabwe* (1999), Gerald Mazarire’s chapter titled *Reflections on Pre-colonial Zimbabwe* (2008) and Joe Jakarasi’s work on *Rethinking Gender in Pre-colonial Northern Zimbabwe* (2015) to only mention a few. These writers, notably Beach, use archaeological evidence and oral storytelling to bridge the gap between knowledge and history. It is my assertion however that this methodology is in its own way limiting. As Mazarire points out “Most of what today we call pre-colonial Zimbabwean history is a product of academic theories, and of ideas popularised” (1, 2008). As my thesis deals with the notion of unearthing what the Zimbabwean identity looks like at both the national and individual level, I ponder on how effective and influential ancient texts written by our ancestors either in Shona, Ndebele or Tonga etc would have been in our modern day culture. Of course oral tradition and archaeology have helped tremendously to shed light on pre-colonial history however I envision how powerful it would be to deconstruct a letter from historical figures like King Nobengula or the matriarch herself Mbuya Nehanda. This would have allowed the reader to encounter a first hand experience of what our

ancestors were like.

Mazarire describes the oral tradition specifically in the Shona tribe as a heritage. He elaborates how, “society is a by-product of human memory and interpretation of those memories” (Mazarire, 2002:424). This is crucial as some parts of this thesis are written as an interpretation of my grandmother’s memories. It is also important to note here that prior to colonialism, Zimbabwe itself was not unified but was a collection of communes and tribes with their own dialects and languages. One thing that was common among all the tribes’ traditions was storytelling. However, the tribes were not unified; thus, we could argue here that it was easier to eradicate these tribal cultures through the dominate colonial culture.

Using Bhabha’s concept of the Third Space, I identify as neither Shona, Ndebele nor English. In all three cultures, I am an outsider looking in. I could argue that this hindered the level of openness some interviewees had in sharing their experiences with me. To what extent could I identify with their experiences? My embodiment as a black woman, in some ways, worked against me. I am what is predominantly known in Zimbabwe as ‘born free’: the generation born after the war and who never experienced the bondage of colonialism. The inclination of the born free on the one hand is a very positive one: this is the generation that has never had to live in a marginalised society (racially) or faced colonial subjugation. On the other hand, in some instances, the term has negative connotations. It is used to refer to one who has lost touch with their cultural heritage or exhibits behaviours that are incongruent with the traditional Shona/African values; in extreme cases, the person exhibiting ‘born free’ characteristics is regarded as a sell-out for having abandoned the culture completely.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s TED talk on the dangers of a single story (2009) discloses how a lecturer informed her that the characters in her novel were not authentically African. The perception of an authentically African culture derives from a single story, yet a single story, according to Adichie, is the manifestation of “showing people, a people as one thing repeatedly such that it is what they became” (Adichie, 2009:09:30). Going back to Khanna’s notion of memories being understood through history, the guardians of the stories then become those in positions of power and advantageous settings. Who gets to decide if one’s Zimbabwean experience it an authentic one? There is a generation of people, like me, who liken their experiences to those of the character of Nyasha in Tsitsi Dangarembga’s novel *Nervous Conditions* (1988). Nyasha has lived in the UK and returns to Zimbabwe to finish her studies. She finds herself at odds with her own Zimbabwean, Shona culture and tradition, and is misunderstood by her own family. She is also not recognised by the white people in Rhodesia nor in the UK, whose culture she had ‘adopted’. Nyasha’s hybrid nature makes her one of the most perceptive characters in the book, as she is constantly aware of everything in her surroundings, i.e., the racist and patriarchal society she lives in: she is racially aware and culturally disengaged (Henna, 2010; Mbatha, 2009). Her story is not one dimensional but multi-layered. Like

Nyasha's character, I also bring my hybridity to the conduct of this study. Octave Mannoni, in *The Decolonisation of Myself* (1966), notes that he does not know what living in a decolonised environment looks like. Echoing this sentiment, I argue that as a black woman living in an English society, that is still working through the effects of a colonial legacy, alongside my Zimbabwean roots which are embedded in colonial trauma, Mannoni's statement holds true for me.

I would like to draw the reader's attention here to the notion of pure culture, which is the pre-colonial identity. Paralleling the notions of identity and nationalism, the concept of a pre-colonial identity in Zimbabwe becomes difficult to identify. Mlambo attempts this as follows:

Zimbabwe in the precolonial period was not yet a nation, but only one in the making. Further, it has been asserted that this process was interrupted and reconfigured by colonialism, and that the country's task in the postcolonial era has been to build a nation with a clear national identity. Like most African countries, we are essentially colonial creations and the products of the Western imperial and African nationalist. (Mlambo, 2013:52)

Mlambo furthers his argument by explaining how pre-colonial Zimbabwe was comprised of a range of distinct tribes governed by local chiefs, the majority being from the Shona and the Ndebele tribes. There was neither unification nor a concise national identity; it was different tribes living in their own communities governed by their own local chiefs. It was not until colonialism that they established the unification of all the different tribes living in the country, therefore, forming a nation. As Mlambo points out, the biggest task for post-colonial Zimbabwe is to build a nation with a clear national identity. It is my opinion that the pursuit of pure culture hinders the forming of a national identity as it completely disavows the role of colonialism in changing the culture. It is my argument here that there must be an acknowledgement and conceptualisation of the past in terms of the role colonialism played in the 'missing object' as well as the reconciliation and introjection of Zimbabwe in taking charge of the narrative of a new national identity that is hybrid and does not disavow the history of the country but paves a way forward.

Where Khanna discloses how colonial melancholy can be linked to violent manifestations, this study offers a reconceptualization of mourning and melancholia not just to the intellectual, but also to society and culture. I explore new ways to discuss the discourse of mourning and melancholia through the textual analysis of creative outputs (mostly literature and film), interviews, observation and personal experience. This is a study of my own culture, heritage and people, tackling and dealing with the colonial reminders in postcolonial Zimbabwe. In the words of Khanna, "Melancholia represents the ghostly workings of unresolvable conflict within the colonial subject" (Khanna, 2003:30) and the only way one might resolve it is to address it head on. Jill Coates, former director of the British Council, Harare, Zimbabwe stated, "What I find in Zimbabwe is that the creative sector is always at the cutting edge of social change" (Piotrowska, *The Engagement Party Documentary* 2013, 02:04). This is the power that filmmakers and writers have. The ability to shape and change the narrative of the stories told; therefore, "melancholia becomes the basis for ethico-political understanding of colonial pasts,

postcolonial presents, and utopian futures” (Khanna, 2003:30).

I close this semi-autobiographical section on this note: what I present here, briefly, is a partially autobiographical account of my experience. Inspired by theorists including Fanon, Baraitser, Frosh and Piotrowska, I adopt an autobiographical tone to ‘offer a missing story’ (Muncey, 2010) in the post-colonial field of research. Fanon’s voice gave insight to his thinking as a black man in post-colonial France through psychoanalysis, while I am able not only to voice the opinion and experiences of a black woman (black women who have been historically rendered voiceless) but also that of a millennial black woman trying to define and find her national identity in post-colonial Zimbabwe. Due to the limited academic research by black women in relation to mourning, melancholia and identity in Zimbabwe using psychoanalysis. My voice is deliberately positioned throughout this thesis alongside the amplification of other black Zimbabwean women.

## INTRODUCTION



**Figure1:1,** A picture of the statue of Mbuya Nehanda. Source: Chingono 2021

I begin with my research question: *What is post-colonial melancholia and how does it manifest itself in Zimbabwean culture and society?* Figure 1 is taken from an article released on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May 2021 on Africa day in newspaper. I set the premise to my thesis here by stating that the reaction to the erection of the statue of Mbuya Nehanda was a melancholic response. It marked an inability to formulate and express loss, stemming from the trauma of both the actual memories and the lack of knowledge of what happened before colonialism. I elaborate on this later. The article in *The Guardian*, entitled, ‘Anger in Zimbabwe at Nehanda statue amid collapsing economy. Criticism of priorities as tribute to liberation leader unveiled despite foreign food aid and lack of jobs’ (Chingono, 2021) notes that Mbuya Nehanda Nyakasikana is a national hero and treasure:

Nehanda Charwe Nyakasikana, known as *Mbuya* – “grandmother” in the Shona language – was a spiritual leader of the Shona people who led a revolt against the 19th-century colonisation of Zimbabwe by Cecil Rhodes and his British South Africa Company, whose officers eventually captured and hanged her in 1898. She is widely commemorated in Zimbabwe, in street names and on buildings, and her legacy is linked to the notion of resistance that ignited the guerrilla war – known as the second Chimurenga – that began in 1972. (Chingono, 2021)

What we see here is the Zimbabwean government, under the presidency of Emmerson Mnangagwa, using the image and the voice of Nehanda to spread patriotic and nationalistic agendas at the jeopardy of the Zimbabwean people, who are impoverished due to a failing economy. There is resistance from the Zimbabwean people, who for a long time have been struggling due to the implications of colonialism alongside the effects of the nationalist rhetoric adopted by the Zimbabwean government

post 2000s. I speak more in-depth about this later. Nehanda's voice and imagery is used to appeal to the emotions of the Zimbabwean public. The statue is an attempt to legitimise the actions of the government: asking the public to remember what was fought for and that Mbuya Nehanda died so we could have our culture and freedom. But as Tsitsi Dangarembga told *The Guardian*, this idea is absurd: "The absurdity and misguidedness of co-opting a historical figure as a partisan symbol and celebrating this symbol in a partisan manner in a way that hinders citizens' right of movement, on a day dedicated to a continental vision is so fundamental that only comprehensive transformation will improve Zimbabwe's prospects" (Chingono, 2021:online). The Zimbabwean government has not only failed to deliver on the promise of freedom to the Zimbabwean people, but it has also used fear and oppression to ensure that many do not rebel against the system. The government has been persistent in the eradication of any colonial traces but has failed to aid the Zimbabwean people to work through the effects caused by colonialism: the decolonisation of the psyche. However, it has forced people to idolise the idea of a pre-colonial identity, an identity that is now lost in memory and translation. 'The missing object' is the lost object of desire we cannot retrieve. I contemplate here whether the sense of loss has been eradicated by a fantasy. Perhaps a cruel optimism, a term coined by Lauren Berlant (2012), is used to keep the public from rebelling against the system if they buy into this fantasy.

Therefore, it is important to look at the manifestations of post-colonial melancholia in Zimbabwe. How can we as Zimbabweans be patriotic through the erection of the image of our matriarch if we are suffering and starved? Most importantly, how can we celebrate the freedom of the bones (used by Mbuya Nehanda to refer to the black people of Zimbabwe) rising again, when the bones have risen and imprisoned us. It is no secret that Zimbabwe has resembled a totalitarian state after the early 2000s, effectively replicating the Rhodesian colonial government. The sons of the soil, the black ethnic Zimbabweans, have oppressed other sons. The Zimbabwean people have not had a chance to taste freedom. Our story is one that begins with a loss.

If the heart of this thesis is the notion of postcolonial melancholia, then my research is written and considered through a psychoanalytical lens. This arguably helps to decode and analyse the complex concept of melancholia given that it is also the school of thought in which the notion of melancholia has been derived and developed. Drawing upon the readings of Sigmund Freud, I study the more contemporary writers on post-colonial melancholia such as Frantz Fanon, Homi Bhabha, Ranjana Khanna and Derek Hook to mention only a few. I also adopt Stephen Frosh's outlook on hauntings and psychoanalysis, mainly focusing on his work on trauma and apply it to the post-colonial situation in Zimbabwe to uncover and understand "what underpins much of the postcolonial critique" (Frosh, 2012:242).

As Frosh points out in his article and then book, *Hauntings: Psychoanalysis and Ghostly Transmission* (2012, 2013), although we are well into the twenty-first century, much of the cultural material remains



unworked through. This material could be colonial trauma or disavowal of systematic oppression (Frosh, 2012:242). Frosh's rhetoric on the unworked through cultural material is in consonance with Fanon's work, notably his ideology regarding race relations and postcolonial settings. Fanon urges the reader to examine race relations in order to understand the mind and the unconscious thought of the colonised. One must work through the colonial to acknowledge the post-colonial. They do not exist outside of the other. By default, the thesis explicitly explores the root cause behind the hauntings caused by colonialism, and how they manifest and still affect society post-colonialism. The hauntings here being past events and the invigoration of melancholic feelings.

I must acknowledge here aside from just psychoanalysis other methodologies have been adopted by various writers and academics to investigate the notion of trauma, haunting, postcolonial melancholia and the postcolonial situation in Zimbabwe. Relevant work includes the psychosocial healing research practices done by organisations like The Heal Zimbabwe Trust or Tree of Life Zimbabwe. Their body of work addresses unresolved traumas of loss from the liberation war, but also the damages caused by the failure to metaphorise the Gukurahundi, the 2008 political violence and the Third Chimurenga. Other genres like anthropology have been used by other writers to discuss trauma and the psychosocial state of the country, notably Pamela Reynolds whose work deals with the post traumatic spiritual healing of children after the liberation war, notably her article in the African journal titled 'Children of Tribulation: The Need to Heal and the Means to Heal War Trauma' (1990). Other notable work includes Diana Jeater's chapter on 'Ngoni spirits and healing the nation at the grassroots' in the book *National Healing, Integration and Reconciliation in Zimbabwe* (2019) which deals with psychosocial healing and how Zimbabwe as a nation can utilize the fact that "spiritual responses to national healing offer people at the grassroots an opportunity to take control of the healing process and initiate it for themselves." (Jeater in Chitando, Chikondo & Chivandikwa, 2019:9) The trauma work involving spiritual healing that is on going in Zimbabwe is fascinating, however I adopt a different framework here. I use psychoanalysis as a theoretical paradigm (and not in any way a psychotherapeutic one) following the current psychosocial research of writers such as Frosh and Piotrowska, to mention a few, in the context of my own experience.

As a Freudian myself I can not negate to mention the work of writers such as Wulf Sachs, *Black Hamlet* (1937) and responses to this work like Saul Dubow journal article 'Wulf Sachs's Black Hamlet: A Case of "Psychic Vivisection"?' (1993). In their own way both pieces of work engage Freudian psychoanalysis to analyse the lives of black people in Zimbabwe. My use of psychoanalysis here however is different to that of Sachs or Dubow, predominantly through an Althusserian lens and a Freudian lens and writers that were influenced by their work like Fanon, Lacan and Frosh to mention a few. For example Althusser paves a way for the reader to dismantle governmental and societal systems and helps to decode the

unconscious thinking behind the governing policies of these systems. Allow me to elaborate on this further below.

I align substantially with the psychosocial attitudes towards the role of psychoanalysis as a tool to unpack the hidden tropes, particularly those enunciated by Piotrowska's stance on the crucial nature of psychoanalytic, most poignantly described in *Psychoanalysis and Ethics in Documentary Film* (2014). She states that, "the unconscious is not a metaphor but a concrete reality of everyday life" (Piotrowska, 2014:11). My research is fuelled by this idea that the unconscious is reality, not an idea. The notion of the unconscious shaping reality is a trademark in Piotrowska's body of work, notably in her published journal article, 'Mourning and Melancholia at the Harare International Festival of the Arts,' re-published in *Black and White: Cinema, Politics and The Arts in Zimbabwe* (2017). Her article gives profound insight on melancholia at the Harare International Festival of the Arts (HIFA), which can be explained as a Third Space where all races in Zimbabwe interact. Piotrowska, who like some of her readers is an outsider looking in, allows the reader to journey through racial tensions and the ambiguity that precedes the mourning and melancholia felt at HIFA and, undoubtedly, in society. Her article gives insight to the harsh reality of the ambiguous yet slightly obvious racial tensions in Zimbabwe: i.e., the sometimes-difficult collaborations between Zimbabwean creatives and Western creatives that result from the nation's difficult colonial past.

Piotrowska, in *Psychoanalysis and Ethics in Documentary Film* (2014), gives the reader insight into the use of psychoanalysis from the 1960s to modern theorists, from Jacques Lacan to Laura Mulvey, to define the relationship between cinematic works, the spectator and society (Piotrowska, 2014:3). It is very clear that the foundational thinkers of post-colonial studies, including Fanon and Frosh and, more recently, Piotrowska, Baraitser and Hook use psychoanalytic tools out of the clinic to try to understand that which is hidden in the post-colonial encounter. It is this that I also attempt to do in this thesis as well as channel in the historic. The historic focuses on the facts and evidence of past events in relation to the case study of Zimbabwe. I elaborate on this further when I rationalise my use of psychoanalysis through the analysis of Freud's first lecture in *The Origin and Development of Psychoanalysis* (1910). I use psychoanalysis here to invoke the unconscious and as a mirror to reflect upon the conscious.

Alongside post-colonial theory, I utilise psychoanalytically influenced film theory, both in terms of the classic texts and more recent work such as Piotrowska's edited collection *Femininity and Psychoanalysis: Cinema, Culture, Theory* (2019) as well as her monograph *The Nasty Woman and the Neo Femme Fatale in Contemporary cinema*. Laura Mulvey's classic article, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' (1975), was and still is a revolutionary piece of work. Mulvey's work perfectly shows the patriarchal gaze in Western cinema, which is also present in Zimbabwean cinema. Mulvey shows the importance of highlighting the unconscious when she discusses how cinema plays a role in sustaining patriarchy and how societal codes help to frame the male gaze.

Despite various subsequent controversies around this article (Mainar, 1997), I argue that Mulvey's ideas hold true, and that psychoanalysis has a political potential; it can help us to understand the unconscious, the things that are invisible but there, thus enabling an understanding of human behaviour and social patterns. This, then, brings us to our focus point of post-colonial melancholia.

I now turn my attention to the discussion of the concept of melancholia, which is always connected to a sense of loss. According to Freud in *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917), melancholia is a state of painful dejection, as one loses the ability to love, exhibits delusional self-punishments, loses interest in the outside world and, instead, focuses mainly inwardly (Freud, 1917:153). He explains that one might end become a melancholic because of the loss of a loved subject or person. He furthers this by stating, "In some cases the subject or object might not have died but has become lost as an object of love" (Freud, 1917:155). He likens this loss to that of a bride left at the altar. Her lover isn't dead, but he has abandoned her. I suggest that her state of dejection is a result of a wounded ego. I explore the notion of a wounded ego below when engaging Abraham and Torok's (1972) development of Freud's ideology alongside Ranjanna Khanna's (2003) view on melancholia, which is slightly different to those of Freud and Abraham and Torok. Khanna believes melancholia is a powerful force that can turn into violence if not metaphorised. Metaphorisation is a key concept used in this thesis. It is the ability to express pain through language. So, Khanna explains that if one does not voice their pain, it comes out through violence; if the pain is not metaphorised, it can be destructive. In a post-colonial context, it can mean riots and violence in the streets among various violent manifestations.

I argue here that it is possible that the black people of Zimbabwe could have become melancholic (melancholia here being a sense of loss) because of the loss of their identity due to the dominating system of colonialism. However, like the abandoned bride, the lover isn't dead, but lost. The cultural identity that existed prior to colonial rule, before the forced adoption of Western culture, language, ideologies and customs by the British rule has become dislocated, separated in both memory and identity. What is interesting, as Freud explains, is that the patient might not be aware of what they have lost, but they know whom they have lost it to. The inability to figure out the tangible object of loss increases their melancholic feelings (Freud, 1917:155). Most people in Zimbabwe are aware of their loss in terms of their pre-colonial identity. However, none of us know in-depth what that identity looked like; we mourn and try to preserve something we do not know the original state of. Adapting some of Freud's views, Freud states that the melancholic loses the capacity to replace the mourned object, but their ego (which I liken to national pride or identity) creates an extreme devotion to the lost object (Freud, 1917:153). Freud's statement here could explain the obsession with the idea that is pure culture. By disavowing the impact of colonialism on culture, there is a false sense of devotion to pure culture and a Zimbabwean identity.

This is undoubtedly exacerbated by the political system, which appears to have replicated colonial subjugation, creating new hauntings. I also look at the concepts of interpellation, mimicry and

hybridity, and establish the difference between melancholia and mourning. I achieve this through the textual analysis of the literary and cinematic works produced in various time periods in Zimbabwe. Starting from the colonial Rhodesia era (1940-1979) to investigate and analyse how film was started and used in the colonial era, moving on to the post-independence era (1980- 2000) to better understand the post-colonial setting in Zimbabwe, then to the lost decade (2000- 2010) and 2010 to 2021 to mirror what Zimbabwean society is like in present times.

It is here that I want to acknowledge that psychoanalysis is a Western school of thought and my use of it is not without its fair share of interrogation and acknowledgement of the scrutiny surrounding it. The major scrutiny here being that since it is a Western school of thought, one could presume it is not applicable to African contexts, which is not the case. As Khanna outrightly points out, “psychoanalysis is a colonial discipline. A colonial intellectual formation disciplines a way of being as much as it establishes a form of analysis based on the age of colonialism” (Khanna, 2003:6). Most of the theorists used in this study have Freudian roots or have been influenced by his thinking, from Lacan, Frosh, Abraham and Torok, Piotrowska, Khanna and Hook among many others. Sigmund Freud’s work on psychoanalysis and melancholia has been challenged over the years by different writers. Some have criticised his misogynistic views alongside as well as his failure to mention the oriental experience in his work.

However, I propose the following two writers to further elaborate why I, as a black woman, chose to use Freud in my research. Emily Zakin, in her journal article, ‘Psychoanalytic Feminism’ (2011) argues that,

psychoanalysis develops a theory of the unconscious that links sexuality and subjectivity ineluctably together. In doing so, it discloses the ways in which our sense of self, and our political loyalties and attachments, are influenced by unconscious drives and ordered by symbolic structures that are beyond the purview of individual agency. (Zakin, 2011:1)

Khanna, in her own way, builds on this and emphasises how psychoanalysis helps in not only decoding gender, but it also “has an important role in contributing to the understanding of the psychodynamics of violence at the level of the individual and social groups” (Khanna, 2003:2).

On the other hand, if we are to discuss the notion of individual agency, this thesis endeavours to amplify the female voice in its analyses. Thus, it is plausible to assume that using a Freudian approach hinders this intention.

“While discussing the ‘riddle of femininity’ (Freud, 1968:116) or of sexual differentiation, Freud’s rhetoric impeaches women as ‘the problem’ and excuses members of his audience from this indictment by offering the hope that they are ‘more masculine than feminine’. Many feminists have been wary both of the biases contained in Freud’s oratory and of the overt content of his claims” (Zakin, 2011:1).

Many female writers such as Helene Deutsch and Karen Horney (Zakin, 2011:4), and in her own way Ranjanna Khanna, have argued that Freud’s disposition on women’s feelings of inferiority is

problematic as it depicts them as envious of the man or as having 'penis envy'. In *The Second Sex* (1989), Simone de Beauvoir challenges this notion, arguing that it is possible that women could be covetous of men because of socio-political privilege rather than the supposed colossal superiority. Perhaps psychoanalysis as an ideology rationalises that if women have some form of agency, it is at the expense of their femininity, thus forcing one to choose between them. It is also important to note that Freud barely acknowledges the 'other', as Edward Said points out in *Freud and the non-European* (2003), which in this case are races other than white race. One cannot also fail to mention that Freud was a Jewish man who was very much 'the other' in Austria. Despite his inadequacies when dealing with some aspects of gendered experience and race, like Khanna, I acknowledge the patriarchal and othering of Freud's thinking and I take the best ideas out of his work to inspire my own re-thinking and my own re-formulations on melancholia and psychoanalysis.

Despite the many discrepancies in Freud, as Zakin says:

Psychoanalytic theory challenges the rationalist, humanist ego and proposes that our ethical characters and political communities are not perfectible, exposing the precariousness of both psychic and political identity. The unconscious cannot be assumed to be inherently either a transgressive or a conservative force, but an unreliable one, promoting revolt or rebellion sometimes, intransigence and rigid border preservation at other times. (Zakin, 2011:6)

### **Why Melancholia?**

As mentioned above, I refer to the primal reason as to why I used psychoanalysis in my work: historically, clinical application of psychoanalysis has been used, one might argue, to diagnose conditions that cannot be physically seen. I elaborate on this point through the interpretation and analysis of Freud's first lecture in *The Origin and Development of Psychoanalysis* (1910). I attempt here to work out a rationale why psychoanalysis is imperative to this research and to give a better insight into the origins of melancholia. The example I am about to give might be controversial to some, however I believe it serves a purpose in illustrating the unconscious state of Zimbabwe. Freud, in his first lecture, talks about a twenty-one-year-old woman, Anna O (Freud, 1910:182), who becomes a patient of a physician named Dr Breuer after passing through a traumatic and emotional experience. On the surface the illness seemed severely physically painful; however, upon further investigation, she was found to be in an enigmatic state, a state difficult to understand. Freud simply interprets this as evidence that she is suffering from and is diagnosed with hysteria. Losing her father, who she loved dearly, triggered her melancholia. Following her father's death, she suffered from absences, a complete alteration of character and even forgot how to speak her mother tongue and could only speak English. Physically, nothing could be done to help her. However, to assist the patient in returning to equilibrium of psyche, and I use this phrase loosely here, the doctor had to get through to her unconscious.

Frosh, as earlier stated, discusses how traumatic events become a haunted memory for patients, and

these memories are then replayed repeatedly in their minds. Psychoanalysis is “the only human science that has taken haunting seriously as an object of analysis” (Frosh, 2009:241). Not negating the works of postcolonial theorists such as Fanon and Derrida, whose work is centred on silences and absences, as well as Crenshaw and Bhabha, to mention a few here, psychoanalysis has also been consistently one school of thought that has accounted for the curious silences and absences in research regarding colonial and post-colonial trauma, which I will link here to melancholia and the de-metaphorisation of Zimbabwe: i.e., the deconstruction of the silence culture present in Zimbabwe and encouraging people to express their pain through language.

Using Freud’s Anna O case study metaphorically, I liken the twenty-one-year-old woman’s experience to that of the state of Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe falls in love with the lost object of affection, which is her identity in pre-colonial times. Except this is now a fantasy living in the minds of the public. An object eradicated by the colonisation of Zimbabwe. It is important to note here that Freud does not name his subject, but history and other sources have restored her name. Freud consistently refers to her as the twenty-one-year-old girl, thus declaring her subjecthood. Her subjecthood could, therefore, transcend beyond just one person and come to symbolise the state of a people or in our case a nation. As already established, Freud describes melancholia as profound, painful dejection (Freud, 1917:243) caused by a traumatic experience; thus, a melancholic loses their ability to love, is delusional and creates self-punishment. They cannot move past their loss and holds on to their object of affection, even when the object of affection ceases to exist. In some cases, the subject cannot identify the object they are mourning.

It is important to acknowledge that, like any country experiencing the post-colonial process, the contention for a distinctive national identity is inevitable. Zimbabwe mourns the loss of her identity in pre-colonial times; she is confused about her identity because of years of institutionalised interpellation in the colonial system and, like Anna O, the only way to heal is to deal with the unconscious. Works such as the novels *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and *This Mournable Body* (2018) by Tsitsi Dangarembga perfectly embody this concept. We see Marechera’s words come alive here: “African writers cannot avoid relaying the distorted and the distorting shapes of the psyche in their art” (Marechera in Cairnie & Pucherova, 2012:15).

### **The progression of the theory of melancholia and mourning**

For decades, works such as *The Grass is Singing* (1950) by Doris Lessing, *Nervous Conditions* (1988) by Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Lobola* (2009) directed and produced by Joe Njagu and Rufaro Kaseke, *Playing Warriors* (2012) directed by Rumbidzai Katedza, *Repented* (2017) directed by Piotrowska and written by Stanley Makuwe and *This Mournable Body* (2018) written by Dangarembga have

highlighted the unspoken hidden truths that Zimbabwe, as a society, has or had been facing. This has made these works stand out in the eyes of viewers and their ability to make people reflect on societal matters after watching them is important. I note here that the mode of creativity is less important to me than what is being produced in terms of symbolising melancholia, which is why I put these different kinds of creative outputs together to make some form of tapestry, joining together different forms of analysis and ideologies inspired by both literature and film.

For example, the movie *Lobola*, released in 2009, was in protest of the dowry custom that is still being practised in Zimbabwe. Most of the younger generation do not understand it or see the significance of why it is still being practised, but it is still enforced because of cultural expectations and tradition. Whether conscious or not, the filmmakers evoked melancholia when making the film. Like Freud, they show the audience that the inability to move on from traditional or earlier customs hinders assumed growth; Piotrowska also discusses this in her analyses of the film (Piotrowska, 2017:105). Freud distinguishes this as the difference between a melancholic and a mourning patient. In this section, I develop the theory of melancholia and establish what post-colonial melancholia is through the review of Freud and Abraham and Torok, who build on Freud's work. We then move from the clinic to the historic, as shown by Ranjanna Khanna and Paul Gilroy and their work on post-colonial melancholia.

The distinction between melancholia and mourning, according to Freud, is that unlike the melancholic, a mourning patient can come to terms with the reality that the loved and lost object is no longer there. The patient in mourning withdraws all affection and attention regarding the lost object. Freud acknowledges that this is a process for the patient: they slowly withdraw from the attachment they have to the object whereas the melancholic refuses to let go and is persistent about holding on to the idea of the object even though it is no longer present (Freud, 1917:245). Freud elaborates that when the process of mourning is completed, the patient's ego is free and no longer burdened. I refer to this point when I analyse the character of Tambudzai in the novel, *This Mournable Body* by Dangarembga. We can translate ego here to national and cultural pride. Certainly, for some of the characters in both of Dangarembga's novels, this is the case. The melancholic holds on to their false sense of pride, even though this burdens them and can metaphorically blind them sometimes from seeing what is in front of them. While Freud writes that, "through inhabitation the mourning patient's ego gets absorbed" (Freud 1917:245), I interpret this as the mourning patient recognising their loss and, in turn, letting go of the ego linked to the lost object of affection and realising its occupation in their psyche. Whereas for the melancholic, the loss is unconscious and unknown. Simply put, "in mourning it is the world that has become poor and empty whereas in melancholia it is the patient's ego" (Freud, 1917:246). Essentially, mourning is a bereavement that passes, and melancholia is a form of depression that can persist.

Abraham and Torok built on Freud's melancholia and mourning in their article, 'The Shell and the Kernel: Renewal of Psychoanalysis' (1972), which is inarguably crucial to post-colonial studies. They coined the terms introjection and incorporation, which I utilise frequently in this study. According to Abraham and Torok, incorporation symbolises fantasy, which is unconscious. Building on from Freud's melancholic state, incorporation ensures one is stuck in their melancholia as a result of the cruel optimism stemming from the fantasy of the lost object of affection. Whereas introjection is a process, the process where one begins to let go of the object of affection and moves from a melancholic subject to a mourning patient (Abraham & Torok, 1972:125). Fantasy being related to one's ego predates the process, thus making it a product of the whole psyche (Abraham & Torok, 1972:125). There is a fantasy that occurs when one holds on to the lost object. A romanticising of an idea of what the object is really like. It is not there but we choose to hold on to the fantasy rather than accept reality. As Abraham and Torok (1972:126) put it:

Such is the fantasy of incorporation. Introducing all or part of a love object or a thing into one's own bod possessing, expelling or alternately acquiring, keeping, losing it—here are varieties of fantasy indicating, in the typical forms of possession or feigned dispossession, a basic intrapsychic situation: the situation created by the reality of a loss sustained by the psyche. If accepted and worked through the loss would require major readjustment however, the fantasy of incorporation merely simulates profound psychic transformation through magic; does so by implementing literally something that has only figurative meaning. So, in order not to have to “swallow” a loss, we fantasise swallowing (or having swallowed) that which has been lost, as if it were some kind of thing. Two interrelated procedures constitute the magic of incorporation.

Thus, incorporation exempts the melancholic subject from the painful process of resetting or rearranging. Abraham and Torok go on and explain that the melancholic ingests the love they miss from their lost object and refuses to mourn, even though this may have dire consequences to the psyche (Abraham & Torok, 1972:127). In simple terms, incorporation is the refusal to acknowledge the full impact of what was lost, the refusal to process (introjection) the loss which, when acknowledged, could transform the person showing the gap in the psyche (Abraham & Torok, 1972:127). I discuss their article in depth in my analyses of the novel *Nervous Conditions*, where the character of Nyasha exhibits characteristics of a melancholic and perfectly embodies their extensions of Freud's concepts of melancholia, showing how they are linked to hysterical origins. Freud argues that a melancholic is torn in-between love and hate; Abraham and Torok build on this and propose that it is “inclusion and one of us has earlier called its effect preservative repression. The derivatives of the fantasy of incorporation” (Abraham & Torok, 1972:135). I build on this in a later chapter.

We have defined and discussed what melancholia and mourning look like at an individual level but what does it look like at a societal level? Paul Gilroy's profound work, in his book *Postcolonial Melancholia* (2005), builds on Freud's and Abraham and Torok's concepts, but moves from the clinical to the historic. He introduces melancholia through the societal masses. Paying special attention to race and post-colonial spaces, he elaborates that “our postcolonial environment



reverberates with the catastrophes that resulted from the militarised agency and unprecedented victimisation of racial and ethnic groups” (Gilroy, 2005:62). This can be tied to some of Frosh’s concepts mentioned above on the material that remains unresolved and unworked through. This material is embedded into the unconscious of the people: “It is not surprising that contemporary analysis of racism and its morbidities still belongs emphatically to that unhappy period. It should be obvious that critical analysis of racisms needs to be self-consciously and deliberately updated” (Gilroy, 2005:62). In order to understand race relations now in both ex-British colonies and Britain itself, one must uncover the trauma caused by the racial hierarchies in the past. Gilroy’s work is focused on postcolonial melancholia in the United Kingdom and what it means for the ethnic minorities living there. Drawing from his work, we see how pain and trauma is a widespread concept and perceive that in terms of race relations everywhere there is still work that needs to be done. Postcolonial melancholia helps us understand how the “imperial and colonial past continues to shape political life in the overdeveloped-but-no-longer-imperial countries” (Gilroy, 2005:21).

Khanna reviews colonialism through the lens of psychoanalysis and, like Gilroy, explores the historic. Very specifically, she touched on the continent of Africa and explores what haunts the post-colonial countries in *Dark Continents*. She uses psychoanalysis as an analytic tool of colonial theory but also to inquire into spaces. She acknowledges that this process includes looking at the historical, socio-economic factors along with race; she criticises Freud, recognises the issues with psychoanalysis and chooses what to take and what to leave out.

Basing her work on the readings of Jacques Lacan, who began as a Freudian before branching off into his own theoretical ideas and advances, and the Lacanian Frantz Fanon, Khanna focuses on the trauma caused by colonialism. Expanding on the hauntings of melancholia, she elaborates how the colonised mourn their identity from pre-colonial times where they dictated their value in society, which “was constituted through the colonial relation” (Khanna, 2003:25). Khanna defines ‘colonial melancholia’ and describes melancholic responses one might experience. She also emphasises the fact that melancholia leaves a void. In a melancholic response spectrum, Khanna describes it “as a lost subject swallowed as a whole” (Khanna, 2003:22). A major part of Khanna’s work is the notion of melancholia having violent triggers and tendencies. This is perfectly illustrated in both of Dangarembga’s novels, where in both books the main characters of Nyasha and Tambu’s violent manifestations leads to some form of psychic breakdown.

### **Methodology: Autoethnography**

As mentioned briefly in the preliminary remarks, I use autoethnography to write various sections of this thesis: I bring my experiences alongside those of my family and fellow women into the study. This is an academically honoured tradition reinforced by Edward Said and Antonio Gramsci. Said quotes from Gramsci and points out that “the starting point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one

really is, and is ‘loving thyself’ as a product of the historical process to date, which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory” (Said, 1978:25). As Said also notes, Gramsci concludes that “it is imperative at the outset to compile such an inventory” (1978:25). It is also important to note that many thinkers including Fanon and Hook also use this style of writing: they root their writing in their personal experiences, and as academics they apply much rigour to enforce a balanced argument rather than pushing off a perspective. Fanon writes from the perspective of his own experiences as a black man in France. I write from my academic encounter, which entails multi-differentiated subjectivity of other thinkers’ work as well as also my own personal encounters as a black woman and a Zimbabwean woman living in a Western society.

I therefore acknowledge my own pain and hybridity as a Zimbabwean woman educated in the West, which I metaphorise as the thesis unfolds. I also use my personal experience to provide a missing story and establish the gaps my research covers regarding some research done on post-colonial melancholia in Zimbabwe. I acknowledge Piotrowska’s research and notable writers such as Tsitsi Dangarembga and Yvonne Vera, whose work deals with the unconscious state of the country, and I build on their work. However, it is important to note that unlike South Africa, where writers Derek Hook and Jyoti Mistry among many other thinkers have done extensive research on the unconscious state of South Africa post-apartheid, Zimbabwe does not have a large body of work regarding research available on the psychosocial postcolonial state of the country. An exception is Piotrowska’s work. Piotrowska is, however, a white European (Polish) woman; I am one of the few black women researching melancholia and trauma in Zimbabwe. I take into consideration the social, economic state of the country and the political climate, as well as the scarcity of research in this area due, in part, to the issues previously stated.

I connect melancholia to trauma and loss, which, as discussed above, makes it hard to metaphorise or communicate. In this research, Zimbabwe is the case study and as there is scarce literature and film on post-colonial melancholia; essentially, I interrogate the absences and silences. The question now becomes, how does one interrogate silence? I do this through interviews and through a close examination of my own experience. I can confidently say I am a part of this investigation; my mind and body all became submitted to this investigation, making me a subject of my own research. I am inspired by psychoanalytic writers such as Gail Lewis whose works, including ‘Birthing Racial Difference: conversations with my mother and others’ (2009) are written using her personal experiences through autoethnography to tell us more about racism in her family. Lewis uses theory and her personal voice in one space in order to fill the gaps in her research and through this juxtaposition she creates new knowledge. I also note the work of Lisa Baraitser (2008) who, like Lewis, uses autoethnography in a generative way through combining ‘high’ theory with her personal voice, which she highlights in italics; most recently, in her new collection, Piotrowska also adopts this way of research (Piotrowska 2014, 2017, 2020).

I refer to Mary Lynn Hamilton, Laura Smith and Kristen Worthington's journal article, entitled 'Fitting the Methodology with the Research: An exploration of narrative, self-study and autoethnography' (2008). In their research, they found that autoethnography as a methodology is 'committed to the actual' (2008:22); hence, it is highly effective in critiquing and analysing culture and traditions. They write: "Auto-ethnography brings forward the shifting aspects of self and creates ways to write about experiences in a broader social context" (Hamilton, Smith & Worthington, 2008:22). My research takes the reader on a journey of discovering the social unconsciousness of Zimbabwe through the analysis of film and literary works and personal experiences. Thus, the use of autoethnography embodies me as a thinker into the research.

The ability to relate some findings of the research to my personal experiences meant I could add and produce a different rhetoric to the research already published by other writers regarding melancholia in Zimbabwe. I place myself in a position where I am able to describe the "cultural studies of my own people" (Hamilton, Smith & Worthington, 2008:23) I write about the personal and my relationship to my culture: according to Ellis, this "autobiographical genre of writing and research displays multiple layers of consciousness (Ellis, 2000). Auto ethnographers include cultural elements of personal experience. "They situate themselves, contesting and resisting what they see" (Hamilton, Smith & Worthington, 2008:23). It is important to acknowledge that this is an academic study, therefore, it is imperative that I pay attention to and follow the guidelines of using autoethnography in academic work. This, according to Hamilton, Smith and Worthington, "should follow good research practice and use a variety of research strategies like note-taking, memory work, narrative writing, observation, and interview" (ibid:23). The variety of research strategies used in this thesis includes analysis of original works by poets and writers alongside observation. In observation, I also utilize social media and journalism to a certain extent; however, I bracket these mediums as I intend to focus on less ephemeral forms of cultural expression.

For this thesis, I focused on the textual analysis of selected cinematic and literary texts through the lens of psychoanalysis, feminist film theory and postcolonial theory. In addition, I 'glean' from my own experience: a technique named by the famous filmmaker Agnes Varda, whose film *The Gleaners* (2001) offers an essayistic methodology of self-reflection (Piotrowska, 2013:21), similar to my autoethnographic approach. I take on this approach as adapting one methodology or two would not have provided enough data to fill in the gaps and missing links regarding the little academic research done in Zimbabwe on this subject matter. Most of the chapters in the thesis explore the basics of the relationship between history and literary and cinematic output. However, there is a gap found between the years 2000 and 2010 in terms of film and literature production. I explored the reasons for silences and absences in the creative output through interviews with industry professionals, as textual analysis on its own does not provide enough information to understand the causes of this lacuna. By combining these different methodologies, it is my intention to create an understanding of the effects of post-

colonial trauma on the one hand, and political repercussions on the other. Just like the philosopher Drucilla Cornell, who advocates the use of different methodologies in order to “create something new” (Cornell, 1992).

By combining autoethnography, textual analysis and interviews I am in direct alignment with what Higgins, Madden, Berard, Kothe and Nordstrom describe as ‘patch working’ in their article ‘Designing research in education: patch working methodologies with theory’ (2017). They argue that methodologies are often presented as a finished garment, a garment that “simply gathers and garbs in order to carry out a research project” (1:2017). By intertwining all the different methodologies that I use in this thesis, I initiate what Higgins et al calls ‘design,’ which involves the stitching of the different methodologies to create one big garment that harmonises: “In short, the concept of design can be understood as a simultaneous working within, against, and beyond the tailoring of methodological garments” (Higgins et al, 2:2017). I do this to “prevent the affixing of method. In this way, patchwork might be a more apt, though not perfect, figuration to explain the work we do in moving towards method as plural and productive” (Higgins et al, 3: 2017). Aside from this, I adopt patching for the various methods I use, not only to create something different but using one method would have been ineffective for this research, especially when filling the gaps of missing stories. I use many methods to create a single methodology.

Lastly here Its imperative to mention I use autoethnography not only to solidify my use of psychoanalysis but also to unravel the quilt of knowledge created by the use of the various methodologies adopted in this research. As Baylorn and Orbe mention in their research on the use of autoethnography in cultural studies, I use autoethnograohy to combine the head and the heart which Baylorn and Orbe describe as “the bridge between cultural curiosities and personal lived experiences” (2020:2). I explore ways in which story telling can be presented in research and scholarly work through the identification of my personal experience and how it informed my academic research. This of course has been done before by many theorists like Fanon, Lacan and Freud. The freedom of thought psychoanalysis encourages aided in my extensive use of it. In its on way this is an anti patriarchal and regime resistance gesture. In a country like Zimbabwe were society is patriarchal and the government resists freedom of speech and thought that deviates from the set propaganda, my use of my autoethnographical voice as a black Zimbabwean woman is indeed a gesture of resistance against interpellation into the system,

### **Analysis of films and novels**

Using a case study-based approach, I analyse films and books that give insight into post- colonial spaces in Zimbabwe and highlight gender relations in both the creative industry and in the community. I analyse these films to give the reader and myself insight into what Zimbabwean society

was like during the time periods studied in this thesis. The creative outputs used in this thesis are carefully chosen as they show important aspects of Zimbabwean society. Starting from colonial Rhodesia to present day Zimbabwe with films such as *The Two Farmers* (1948), *Flame* (1996), *Neria* (2000), *Lobola* (2010), *Engagement Party* (2011), *Playing Warriors* (2012) and *Repented* (2018), alongside the textual analysis of these literary works: *The Grass is Singing* (1950), *Nervous Conditions* (1988), *Nehanda* (1993) and *This Mournable Body* (2018).

Tsitsi Dangarembga's body of work from *Nervous Conditions* (1988), her involvement in the film *Neria* (Mawuru, 1993) and her later book, *This Mournable Body* (2018), reflect the relationship between history and cinematic output and gives insight into the background in order to understand the current situation in Zimbabwe. I will show the lack of introjection in the works above using Abraham and Torok's words regarding healing in Zimbabwe. We find that despite being written three decades apart, Tambudzai the main character in *Nervous Conditions* and *This Mournable Body* is still stuck and cannot move forward. The analysis of *Nervous Conditions*, for example, through psychoanalysis, helped to understand the trauma caused by colonialism, not just the physical trauma but also the emotional and psychological trauma. Drawing from thinkers such as Frosh and Abraham and Torok, I investigate even further this idea of melancholia being a wound. In the following chapters, I am particularly interested in exploring the idea of how melancholia is passed on from one generation to another and the effects it has on the creative industry. For this I will look at the case study film *Repented* (2019), directed by Piotrowska in a collaborative effort with Makuwe. The film offers an interesting and different outlook in terms of postcolonial thinking. I will also look at films such as *Playing Warriors* (2012) by Rumbidzai Katedza, which deals with gender relations and culture and *Escape* (2016), directed by Piotrowska in a collaboration with Joe Njagu. Doris Lessing and Tsitsi Dangarembga's novels provide a contrast in language, gender relations, culture and race and help our understanding of postcolonial spaces by exposing the melancholic effects caused by racism, sexism and the current silent 'issue' and some instances of classism.

### **In-depth interviews**

As mentioned above, alongside textual analysis, I also collected data by conducting in-depth interviews with prominent individuals in the film industry in Zimbabwe. I preface here that the interviews were done as a support element to my thesis, and I do not analyse them in any systematic way. However, they are useful voices. These interviews were semi-structured to allow the interviewee to be comfortable and free to voice their own opinions without direction or dictation. Thus, it allowed room for more information to be discussed, which helped me recognise some issues I had overlooked whilst planning the investigation of the thesis. One of the primary reasons why I conducted interviews is explained perfectly by Hamza Alshenqeeti in her article, 'Interviewing as a Data Collection Method: A Critical Review' (2014). She argues that "the value of interviewing is not only because it builds a holistic snapshot, but also analyses words, reports detailed views of

informants” (2014:39). She also draws from the theorist Berg, and states that interviews give the opportunity for the interviewee to voice their own opinions freely as well as give insight to their thought process. In addition:

with the presence of the interviewer, a mutual understanding can be ensured, as the interviewer may rephrase or simplify questions that were not understood by his/her interviewees. As a result, more appropriate answers and, subsequently, more accurate data will be reached. Additionally, this data can be recorded and reviewed several times by the researcher (when necessary) to help producing an accurate interview report. (Alshenqeeti, 2014:42)

I recorded the interviews using a voice recorder for the purpose of data storage and record keeping. All participants signed a consent form which informed them about the thesis and the intentions regarding the information gathered from the interviews. It also provided them with the opportunity to decide whether they were comfortable being taped. I took into consideration that discussing a topic regarding race, gender and the trauma caused by colonialism might be met with some resistance and denial. Sometimes this was true, but the majority were willing to be open and discuss. This could be because the interviews were conducted in a safe space for both the interviewee and myself. I conducted most interviews in a public restaurant or the interviewee’s workplace to ensure safety and comfort for both myself and the interviewee. These spaces served as mutual ground.

I also weighed in the disadvantages of adopting interviews to collect data. One major concern was ethical privacy and safety. Unlike myself, a Zimbabwean living in the diaspora, half of the people I interviewed live in Zimbabwe. I speculate here that some of the resistance I encountered may have been due to fear of being labelled unpatriotic for speaking to me on the socio-political climate of the country. Unlike me, they still must lead their day-to-day life in Zimbabwe; speaking to me might potentially make them an enemy of the state. I discuss this in the Chapter Three. Alongside this, my position as a researcher going into Zimbabwe with no connection to the creative sector, or familiarity with certain areas and language must also be considered, given this would create a level of barrier. Therefore, to overcome this, I conducted the interviews with the help of family members and Professor Piotrowska, who has made films and conducted academic research in Zimbabwe.

In total, I was able to interview eight people, however I decided only to focus on six for my research. These six people included Joe Njagu, a director who has produced films including *The Gentleman*, *Lobola* and *Escape*, Rufaro Kaseke, who notably works alongside Njagu as a producer in films such as *Lobola* and *The Gentleman*; Demetria Karonga, who worked on various film projects, most notably *The In-laws*, which is available on most Zimbabwean film streaming sites; Ellah Wakatama, who is an editor whose body of work includes Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *This Mournable Body* (2018); Charmaine Mujeri, who is the main actor in the movie *Repented* and, finally, Carine Tredgold, who is a set designer and has been working in the industry for decades. The questions I asked them centred on the following issues:

1. *In your work are you dealing with colonial trauma?*
2. *Do you think the idea of colonial trauma has affected the way the industry is run?*
3. *In your own words, describe the gender relations in the industry.*
4. *Do you think that more collaborative ventures will be possible in Zimbabwe judging from the social and political state of the country?*
5. *What do you think about the idea of transferred melancholia?*

I phrased these questions in a way that allowed the interviewees to understand the subject as I did not presume that everyone I interviewed was well acquainted with the notion of post-colonial melancholia

### **Research questions and thesis structure**

One of the major aims of this study is to initiate dialogue on the postcolonial sphere in Zimbabwe and encourage the metaphorisation of centuries of trauma caused by both the colonial regime and the Zimbabwean government as it adopted a Marxist governing style. I achieve my aims through the textual analysis of films and literature, observation and interviews. I set out to answer the following questions, starting off with my research question: *What is postcolonial melancholia and how does it manifest itself in Zimbabwean society?* My initial sub-research questions to help answer the main research question are as follows:

1. *How did the rise of nationalism cause tensions in race relations?*
2. *What was the impact of nationalism on the formulation of a Zimbabwean identity?*
3. *To what extent has the socio-political climate in the country affected the dynamics of how the industry is run?*
4. *How has both colonialism and nationalism aided in muting the female voice in Zimbabwe?*

All these questions serve as analytical tools. It is important to note that as I carried on with the research more questions unravelled, which I proposition in every chapter. In order to answer my research questions, my thesis is structured in the following way. In Chapter One, I engage in the discourse of colonialism. I start by looking at film and literature produced in the period between the 1940s and 1979: through the analysis of these works, we can examine the effects that colonialism had on the country. I also look at newly independent Zimbabwe from 1980 to the early 2000s to examine the postcolonial sphere in the country and the rise of the female voices. Chapter Two examines what is now known in Zimbabwe as the lost decade. This is from the year 2000 to 2010. I examine the rise of nationalism in the country and the implications it had not only on the creative sector but also on society. Chapter Three in many ways continues the conversation started in Chapter Two with a close examination of how both the indoctrination of colonial ideology and the nationalist ideology clashed

through hybridity and mimicry. Lastly, in Chapter Four, I examine the works produced between 2010-2020, focusing mainly on amplifying the female voice. I set these chapters in a chronological order in order to help the reader and myself better understand how each time period invigorated postcolonial melancholia in the country. The Zimbabwean story is vastly complicated: it is a story that starts off with loss. The first thing one must do, therefore, is to explore the roots of this loss. I start this investigation by discussing the colonial Rhodesia era, which I explore in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER ONE: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF COLONIALISM

Eli Park Sorensen, in his research on the relationship between melancholia and postcolonial studies, points out that it is almost impossible to ignore the correlation between the “forms of artistic genres and particular social and historical conditions” (Sorensen, 2010:3). One of the primary objectives of post-colonial studies is to zoom in on the discourse of power, rather an intense magnification and critique of rhetoric produced at the time intended. “The study of society, culture and social-economic and political conditions can be viewed as an arbitrary assemblage of parts, and not as an organic form governed by inner necessities” (Sorensen, 2010:3). I believe these inner necessities include a reconciliation with one’s past. Building on the discussion in the introduction on the effects of melancholia and ‘the missing object’, it is vital to pinpoint and search for the origin of ‘the missing’ object of affection and how it came to be lost.

In this chapter, I face the duty that Sorensen calls “the overwhelming task of voicing the history of the oppressed” (2010:4). I do this through the critique and analysis of the foundation and dynamics of culture, society and politics as depicted by films and literature in Zimbabwe from the 1940s, as this was when films and literature began to circulate fully in Zimbabwean society. It is my belief that the analysis of the historical foundation of this creative output and the laws that governed it will make it easy to establish the origins of the melancholic traits in Zimbabwean culture and society. I evoke the culturalist psychoanalytical discourse that mainly deals with the origin of cultural behaviours. This includes theoretical frameworks, such as Louis Althusser’s interpellation theory – which I set up in the introduction, but explore further in this chapter – Frantz Fanon’s post-colonial political and social theory, and Freud’s ideology on trauma developed by Abraham and Torok and later on by Stephen Frosh, among many others. It is important to note that I also touch on interpersonal psychoanalysis (one’s personal interactions and the need to protect ourselves from others) alongside structural linguistics, to reveal how language exposes the unconscious.

It is here I pinpoint the main agenda of this chapter. We can trace both film and literature in Zimbabwe back to colonial Rhodesian times, thus it is imperative to study this era alongside the liberation struggle and the birth of Zimbabwe. I interrogate race relations in the post-colonial context, both in the output and in the actual collaborative partnerships, through the prism of psychoanalysis and the notion of interpellation. Starting from the colonial era, I look at the colonial film, *Two Farmers* (1948), and analyse how colonial pathology was being spread through the medium of film and how this affected the film industry in Zimbabwe. I also analyse Doris Lessing’s *The Grass Is Singing* (1950) using Louis Althusser’s interpellation ideology, alongside Freud’s notions on desire and hysteria and Fanon’s input on post-colonial spaces. In addition, I interpret one of the most prominent novels to come out of Zimbabwe, *Nervous Conditions* (1988) by Tsitsi Dangarembga. Mindful of the crucial role of events in society, I also discuss the liberation struggle which led to the birth of Zimbabwe, and

what that meant for cinematic and literary discourse. In this chapter I also briefly introduce the works of Yvonne Vera, most notably her ground breaking novel *Nehanda* (1993), in order to talk about the notion of voice, and in particular the black woman's voice, and how that was reflected in the three novels mentioned above and in the liberation movement.

I also examine closely, with detailed textual analysis, the movie *Flame* (1996), which also pushed / challenged the gender norms and patriarchal ideals in society. This chapter, therefore, falls into two parts. The first section focuses on film and texts in colonial Rhodesia and how they were interpreted in society. The second section focuses on the liberation struggle and the first two decades after colonialism. I analyse the texts/ films for the most part in chronological order, so the reader can get a better understanding of the times in which they were set. It is my argument that the pieces of creative output chosen here mirror Rhodesian/ Zimbabwean society at the time they were set, and this is why I utilise them.

### **Colonial Melancholia**

It is here I adopt the notion of colonial melancholy, as coined by Ranjanna Khanna in *Dark Continents* (2003) and utilised it in this study. To do this, it is imperative I define what colonialism is and what this looked like in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). In her book *Colonialism/ Post-colonialism* (2005), Ania Loomba defines colonialism as "the conquest and control of other people's land and goods" (Loomba, 2005:8). The key phrase here is the control of land. This is crucial in discussing the discourse of race/ power and wealth in Zimbabwe. When the British first arrived in Zimbabwe, under the leadership of Cecil John Rhodes, Rhodes made concessions and treaties with the commune leaders, most notably King Lobengula (The Ndebele King), to mine and extract diamonds in every region of Zimbabwe. Rhodes also promoted the immigration of white settlers into the region. Slowly, black Zimbabweans began to lose control of their land, contrary to the treaties and agreements they had made with Rhodes.

Various accounts, written by historians such as Terence Ranger (1967) or David Norman Beach (1979), describe how the colonialism of Zimbabwe was met with resistance by the indigenous people of Zimbabwe, most notably the Shona and Ndebele people. I should note that, as discussed in the introduction, the first wave of resistance ('chimurenga') in the 1800's was unsuccessful, perhaps because the indigenous black people of Zimbabwe were divided into communities and different tribes. For example, within the Shona tribe there are five major subtribes that make up the whole Shona tribe: the Zezuru, Karanga, Korekore, Manyika and Ndau. Beach discusses how, before colonialism, the Shona people did not have a collective name for themselves, but occupied different lands along the Zambezi and Limpopo rivers (Beach, 1980). The Ndebele people mainly resided in the north. As of 2013, under the new constitution, it was declared that there were 16

official languages in Zimbabwe: “Chewa, Chibarwe, English, Kalanga, Koisan, Nambya, Ndaue, Ndebele, Shangani, Shona, sign language, Sotho, Tonga, Tswana, Venda and Xhosa.” (Newsday, 2012). Through the concessions and various treaties signed with the leaders of the tribes, the white settlers cunningly took control of the land, which inevitably led to resistance from black Zimbabweans. To elaborate on this further, I will briefly discuss Beach’s account of the Chimurenga, as he uses and compares the historical accounts of Ranger and Hole.

Although there had been localised resistance to individual Europeans and to Company rule from 1891 to 1896, and the resistance of Nyandoro in the east of the Salisbury district in April 1896 'was in fact the first intimation of the Shona rising', the real initiative came from the area of the Ndebele rising which had broken out in late March. There, the effective leader of the Ndebele was Mkwati, a Leya ex-slave and priest of the Mwari religious cult. Assisted by the woman Tenkela-Wamponga and Siginyamatshe, he had forged an alliance of the kingless Ndebele and their Shona subjects against the Europeans (Beach, 1979:399).

Beach discusses how Ranger’s historic account shows that spiritual mediums were important enough to the culture to be consulted on the fight against the white settlers. This allows us a glimpse into the cultural practices that were stripped away by colonialism. It is crucial, as very little information is available about Zimbabwe’s past, or the tribes which we would now call Zimbabweans, prior to this time. I would suggest here that the sense of a psychic absence is engendered by this lack of knowledge of what happened and what our identity was like prior to this time. There is a huge tie between African spirituality and the land. The land serves as more than just territory. It is a cultural heritage and one of the major links to identity. It is the link to our forefathers through the divine and I know this from my grandparents through oral transmission. The melancholic individual mourns the lost object of affection. Losing control of the land opened up the doors to melancholia for future generations.

The lost object of affection, according to Freud, is connected to one’s ego or identity. Historically, the Shona/ Ndebele people of Zimbabwe were farmers and hunter gatherers. Their livelihoods depended on the harvest of the land. Therefore, the conquest of their land meant stripping away their way of life. As Khanna says, “melancholia on a national level can result in political revolutionary violence as an unconscious response, perhaps to the loss of an ideal” (Khanna, 2003:23). The ideal in this context could be the indigenous Zimbabwean way of life before colonialism. The desire for the lost object, in this context, is the desire to be in control of the land again, the desire to restore our way of life before colonialism, which evokes a violent response.

As discussed in the introduction, Mbuya Nehanda became a symbol of resistance. She was hanged by Rhodesian soldiers for leading the resistance to British colonisation of Zimbabwe, led by Cecil John Rhodes. Her death became a catalyst for a political revolution that stretched from the 1800’s well into the liberation struggle of the 1970’s. Nehanda’s death is symbolic, as she was not just a leader but a spirit medium who was hugely influential in the Shona community. By hanging Nehanda, the white Rhodesians did more than simply kill her body; they attempted to kill the spirit behind the nation of

Zimbabwe. Her last words have echoed through the decades: “These bones shall rise again!” The bones signified the rise of the Zimbabwean nation, but also the judgment of the ancestors (see Mazama, 2009). Her words have continued to haunt the people, reminding each generation to fight for Zimbabwe. As Frosh discloses, such hauntings can lead to some form of dystopia.

In her discourse on colonialism, Loomba points to something crucial when she explores the definition of colonialism according to the Oxford Dictionary:

a settlement in a new country ... a body of people who settle in a new locality, forming a community subject to or connected with their parent state; the community so formed, consisting of the original settlers and their descendants and successors, as long as the connection with the parent state is kept up (Loomba, 2005:7).

She highlights her concerns over how this definition completely ignores the ‘other’, i.e. those who are made subject to the settlers, but is also void of the traumatic experience that the natives of the land experience, through slavery, genocide, and institutionalised segregation and racism. The definition makes the word ‘settlement’ appear innocent, neglecting to mention how the colonisers settled the countries and how the new communities (in most cases through violence) were formed. The lack of identification of the ‘other’ makes one wonder how this definition might also highlight the reason behind the disorientation of most ex-colonies’ identities. Colonialism stripped away the indigenous black people’s identity and forced them to adapt to the coloniser’s practices. Furthermore, it presented this as ‘normal’, as the dictionary definition does, omitting to mention the violence involved. However, it is imperative to note that colonialism also offered a path to modernity; Western modernity, but modernity nonetheless. I explore this further in Chapter Three, where I discuss the mimicry and masquerade that follow colonial encounters.

As we continue to explore why post-colonial studies are important, I am reminded of Mannoni’s words where he states he has never lived in a decolonised environment (Mannoni, 1966:327). This then made it impossible for him to write an article about decolonisation, as the psychological effects of colonial policies were still very prevalent in most previously colonised countries. It is safe to assume here that Mannoni, as a white European Frenchman, was writing from a place of privilege. In Mannoni’s case, this privilege was that of the white male in patriarchy. Perhaps this would account for why Fanon accused him of failing to include the role of socio-economic / material roots in the colonial encounter. In a system set up to favour Mannoni, his unconscious bias may have made him unaware of some of the socio-economic encounters people of colour endured.

In some ways, as a researcher, I can sympathise in some respects with Mannoni’s words. Let me acknowledge once more my privilege as a young middle-class black woman living in the West. However, I have never lived in an environment void of the colonial encounter, free from the traumatic repetition of the colonial experience and free from transgenerational trauma. This trauma mainly stems from the colonial ideas which were implemented as systems and in legislation. A good analogy would

be the Jim Crow laws implemented in the Southern states. These laws enforced racial segregation from the nineteenth century until 1965. In her doctoral thesis *Jim Crow's Legacy: Segregation Stress Syndrome* (2011), Ruth Miller discusses how “the racial violence that occurred was a form of systematic chronic stress, the type that has been shown to have a detrimental impact on a person’s psychological well-being” (Miller, 2011: iii). She adds “the historical and collective trauma that ensued has contributed to an intergenerational aspect of ‘segregation stress syndrome’” (Miller, 2011: iii). The trauma, if left unaddressed, is more likely to manifest itself through violence and aggression, as suggested by Khanna (Khanna, 2003:23).

It is important to note that slavery in the United States was completely different to colonialism in Zimbabwe. However, I wish to highlight the effects of institutionalised laws that marginalised a group of people and how these affected their unconscious, including the unconscious of future generations, through transgenerational transference of trauma. I will return to this theme later on.

### **The Concept of Interpellation**

I begin here with a discussion of Louis Althusser’s concept of interpellation. Althusser’s essay *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (first published in French [1970] and then in 1971 and 2001), builds on Lacanian psychoanalysis as well as Marx’s idea of ideology as “conceived through pure illusion, a pure dream, i.e. as nothingness. All reality is external to it. Ideology is thus thought of as an imaginary construction whose status is exactly like the theoretical status of the dream among writers before Freud” (2001:108). It is my belief that Althusser’s interpellation theory can help one understand the legislation and systems set up by the different regimes and how they used this legislation to control society and the country. In relation to Zimbabwe, it allows for a close reading of the colonial system. I must note here that interpellation is a very Western school of thought. Althusser was a white European man, a philosopher, and his interpellation theory is one of the main foundational theories on societal systems and the ideology behind them. His work has been utilised by many theorists, like Butler (1990) and Slavoj Žižek (2002) to mention a few. I reformulate here Althusser’s theory to analyse how the colonial system was set up and run in Rhodesia and, indeed, in post-colonial Zimbabwe as it resembled a totalitarian nation. I also analyse how each group of individuals and a collective people participated in this system.

First, I will mainly focus on Althusser’s rhetoric concerning historical heritage, social structure (class, race, etc.) and government policy. Initially an essay written in protest against capitalism and the class structure, its core focuses on subjects and the state, i.e. the government and its citizens and how citizens are governed. I use his ideas to disentangle and analyse Rhodesian society during colonial times as well as after independence. The key questions that pop up whilst examining the system are: why and how were these laws set up and implemented? We can interpret the subject here through their race, gender and class. I also examine the effects of these laws and their legacies. This is pivotal, as it

is my argument that the Zimbabwean government replicated the colonial regime two decades after independence.

I argue that therefore one can explain interpellation as the relationship between the dominant force (authority, culture, discourse) and the subject. This in turn is relevant to a discussion of colonialism, although it has not been used in this way before. An individual longs to be a subject, as subjectivity brings some sense of belonging, even if the structures are fundamentally flawed and even detrimental to the individual. Althusser argues that this takes place in any family, school, university, and in bigger structures too. When you become a subject, you are no longer an individual, a lonesome entity, but it categorises you as belonging to a certain group, giving you a sense of association and inclusion. As part of belonging, one obtains rights and acquires duties as part of the system, which can bring fulfilment. For example, in some education systems students are classed by how well they perform in school. Those that perform at the same level are usually grouped together. However, it is the system that sets the measurement of their performance. Students are classified by the regulations of the systems and, because of internalisation of the system, they do not question it. This applies to all areas of life. If the system is fundamentally corrupt, by the sheer fact of belonging to the system, one can become corrupt too, which is why it is important to resist complete interpellation.

Another example of an interpellation would be how in society people are not only classified by gender, class and race, but also beginning to identify themselves as part of a group, all of which are concepts that have been formulated for us to follow. It is important to note that one can benefit from the system, i.e. gender equality laws set up to ensure more women are hired in high earning jobs. Being a subject can be detrimental, however, for example, the racial profiling of African Americans by the police in America. We are all subjects interpellated into one system or another.

Interpellation represents in some way an unconscious desire and is therefore in some way voluntary. This is what makes unquestioning acceptance of various systems of belonging so dangerous. These systems of belonging are preconstructed - one is born into ideology and into subjecthood. You do not have a say on where you stand. The ideological apparatus of interpellation is, therefore, demonstrated or connected through the process of hailing. Hailing forces one to acknowledge one's subjecthood. Althusser illustrates this in the following scenario. A policeman walking down the street shouts "Hey, you there!" to an individual walking down the street. Upon hearing this, the individual turns, and "by this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a subject" (2001:118). By the mere act of hailing, the police officer forces the subject to acknowledge their subjecthood in the given ideological apparatus, where they stand in relation to the dominant ideology. This can be likened to Lacan's mirror stage, which suggests that when the baby first sees their reflection in the mirror, they see and acknowledge themselves. Through hailing, interpellation therefore evokes the subject's response, which is based on their position in society.

Being hailed informs you of your subjectivity in society. For example, in a Western patriarchal country where the dominant ideology is biased towards the white male, if the white man is hailed, he acknowledges his subjecthood, but his response comes from a place of privilege, therefore allowing him to challenge the hailing from said officer. However, if the subject being hailed is a black woman, for instance, her gender and race elicit a different response. Her response is not from a place of privilege, but rather a plea for mercy from the officer. I should note here that subjects do fight against their interpellation, and writers like Dolar and Žižek have discussed ways in which one can escape interpellation.

In his article 'Beyond interpellation' (1993), Mladen Dolar argues that love offers a way out of interpellation. He states that for a subject to be interpellated, they are moved through a happy transition from a pre-ideological state into ideology (Dolar, 1993:77). This transition, however, is not a hundred percent clean and remainders from subjectivity emerge. These remainders, according to Dolar, belong to psychoanalysis. The heart of the "subject emerges where ideology fails" (1993:78). I would use the example of the movie *Repented* (2019), which I will discuss more fully in Chapter Two, but will briefly mention here. *Repented* is based on the play called *Finding Temeraire*, written by Stanley Makuwe and premiered first at the Harare International Festival of the Arts (2017).

The character of Temeraire is black, but he is completely interpellated into the system of the white man, a system designed to oppress him and keep him at a disadvantage. He does not see it as a problem because he benefits from this system. He completely loses his own identity and, as a result, when we first meet him, he is totally lost, bereft of any identity. Despite being a black man in colonial Rhodesia, where the dominant ideological apparatus was racist and oppressive towards black people, he is blind to the situation he finds himself in. Temeraire's privileges prevent him from fighting back. Privilege is tempting and sometimes necessary, as it supports the system. We are interpellated into systems if they grant us a sense of belonging and some economic power, as in Temeraire's case. We then stop caring about trying to fight the system.

In colonial Rhodesia, the colonial government set up laws to keep society under control. These included segregation laws that divided the black, white and mixed-race communities. For instance, a black man was not allowed into the white-only urinals. If a black man was caught using the 'white only' urinal, he not only got fined, but faced dire consequences for breaking the law. Derek Hook writes about a similar example in his book *A Critical Psychology of the Postcolonial, The Mind of Apartheid* (2012). The book opens with an account from a white man about his experiences with other races during apartheid. Although the situation described took place in South Africa, the segregation laws there were very similar to those set up in Zimbabwe. There were certain areas that black South Africans were prohibited from visiting due to their interpellation. However, the white man – due to his dominance in the system – had much more freedom. The following scenario by Hook explains this point:

“This ... African toilet, which always smelt bad and whose walls seemed stained with piss, was a kind of infra-zone, a grey-area that somehow existed below (but within) the norms of a white suburb... The bus that dropped me home from school stopped ... a little way away ... The toilet was scary – I always wondered what it looked like on the inside of those brick walls ... [I never felt] that I would not be allowed in ... it was just that this was a black man’s place. I was frightened, a little disturbed ... always too young ... not man enough (not black man enough?) to go in there” (Hook, 2012:15).

The account acknowledges the distinctions between environments set up for different races in apartheid South Africa. The phrase ‘a black man’s place’ implies that there were also places considered for white men only. This reminds me of a similar encounter I had in 2018 in Zimbabwe. I remember setting up a meeting with Professor Piotrowska at a restaurant I had found on Google maps in Harare, to which she responded, “You do know that is a Rhodi restaurant?” I immediately understood she meant. My choice of restaurant was mainly for white Zimbabweans. Although not enforced by legislation, the restaurant was by nature not hospitable to me as a black Zimbabwean despite it being 2018. It is at this moment I related in some way to the experience of being excluded from a place because of my race and how inferior it left me feeling. A choice was taken away from me due to my embodiment as a black woman.

I note here how the white man who writes the account discussed above by Hook acknowledges his own subjecthood. The ‘African toilet’ is one he will not be able to access because of the colour of his skin. However, his subjecthood has its own benefits, as his inability to use the African toilet is due to his own prohibitions, a choice one would say, and not a crime punishable by law, which it would be if the situation were in reverse. A black person was a social subject by law under colonialism, and their actions were dictated and controlled by the colonial regime. This was the tragedy created by colonialism, which Fanon calls the inferior complex, where the black man desires to be white because of their dominant position in the apparatus. Fanon’s body of work is a resistance to the propositions created by the colonial racist systems and how they affected the minds of the colonised.

I would suggest that colonial Rhodesia used a combination of the two-apparatus ideology suggested by Althusser to push forward the colonial rhetoric and agenda. The two apparatuses are ISA and RSA. ISA, ideological state apparatus, describes the relationship of an individual to their existing conditions. Unlike the repressive state apparatus (RSA), ISA operates through the dominance and indoctrination of ideology. This is done through school education, religion and mass media, among other things. There is encouragement for individuals to engage with the system in particular ways. The issue with the ISA, as Althusser points out, is that if the ISAs work well, then the repressive systems will be kept to the minimum because the interpellated subjects will be self-controlling; they will not need to fight their interpellation. As we shall reveal below, this was not the case for black people in colonial Rhodesia, as they fought against the system. The repressive state apparatus was also used, but not as dominantly. This was done using the police and armed forces to keep the society in check and ensure state rules were followed. RSA was mainly dominant in the 1960’s with the



advent of the Chimurenga wars.

I refer to the work of Andrew Novak, whose journal article ‘Sport and Racial Discrimination in colonial Zimbabwe’ (2012) explains how, in colonial Rhodesia, racial segregation was practised in many spheres, including education, healthcare access and political participation. “Though racial segregation tended to exist on a less formal level than in Rhodesia’s neighbour, apartheid South Africa, segregationist policies were nonetheless invasive and virtually complete in some areas” (Ibid:1). These policies insured the establishment of the colonial rhetoric and institutionalised hegemony. The media was one means used to enforce these policies, as we will see in the analysis of some films and books discussed below, produced during colonial times.

As mentioned above, the ISA was the main apparatus used, and one of the avenues heavily utilised in Rhodesia was the media, including films, radio, newspapers and literature. Through the ISA, the Rhodesian government was able to convince the individuals interpellated into their system that they could build and benefit from their relationship to the system. For example, the movie *Two Farmers* (1948) was intended to inspire the African farmers to work harder and produce more food. The short film also contained the message that following the system had its benefits, while fighting the system left you in poverty. Film was also used to promote new legislation within the black community. James Burns, in his book *Flickering Shadows: Cinema and Identity in Colonial Zimbabwe* (2002), stated that “Film was expected to transform the behaviour of the Africans” (ibid:208). Film and the arts were used to support the system by enforcing the participation of individuals through a dominant ideology. They ensured the internalisation of the colonial pathology and ideology, gender roles, and class or state expectations.

### **Film in Colonial Rhodesia**

The primary driver of colonialism was economic power. However, Kedmon Hungwe presents an alternative way of thinking. He suggests that “the primary goal of the colonial government was to maintain white standards and privileges while promoting limited African development. The mission of the ‘white race’ was to civilise the Africans” (Hungwe, 2005:84). It is my conviction that “the mission to civilise the Africans,” as Hungwe poignantly points out, not only held the African population in slavery physically, but emotionally, spiritually and unconsciously. John Hartman (2000) discusses the effects of propaganda fuelled films in Nazi Germany from a psychoanalytic point of view. I use the example of Nazi Germany here to highlight the fact that propaganda films and media have been used across the globe as a technique over various time periods. During World War 1, the British government used propaganda-fuelled media to get men to join the army, increase industrial production and increase unity/growth through nationalism. A good example is the famous poster of Lord Kitchener pointing a finger at the viewer, with the words ‘Your Country Needs YOU’. The poster inspired a sense of national pride in the British public, as many felt it was their responsibility

and duty to fight for their country.

Propaganda films on the other hand according to Hartman,

Attempt to exploit irrational emotional responses to visual scenes and commentary to change attitudes, values, and behaviour in a mass setting. A link between shared unconscious fantasies and myth is offered as an explanatory concept to explain propaganda's wide emotional appeal. The German Nazi anti-Semitic film, *Der Ewige Jude*, serves as the case example of the exploitation of such fantasies in a mass setting for a political end (Hartman, 2000: 329).

Film in colonial Rhodesia started with the formation of The Central African Union (CAFU), which sponsored regional films in the country. In her journal article 'The Central African Film Unit's images of empire, 1948–1963' (1983), Rosaleen Smyth explains how "the primary aim of the CAFU was to make instructional films for African audiences, whilst other objectives were the making of tourist and publicity films for overseas, and films for Europeans in Central Africa" (Smyth, 1983:131). She also discusses how, in later years, film became a way of publicising propaganda, not just in Rhodesia but to the world as well. This is also something Hungwe discusses in his journal article 'Narrative and Ideology: 50 Years of Film-Making in Zimbabwe' (2005), where he illustrates the how and why of colonial film in Rhodesia. He argues that film making was embedded in assumptions regarding the black audience: "the primary goal of the colonial government was to maintain white standards and privileges while promoting limited African development. The mission of the 'white race' was to civilise the Africans. Some progress had been made, but there was a long way to go. Development was construed in terms of a relationships between two races that were at different historical points of evolution, with no prospect of equality in the near future" (Hungwe, 2005:84).

Films like *Two Farmers* (1948) and *Master Farmer* (1956) were part of this community development project. I discuss them further below. They served as instructional propaganda and are an example of Althusser's ISA apparatus at work, encouraging individuals to cooperate in their subjecthood in the systems. Such films aimed at 'motivating' African farmers and promoted the advancement of farming methods to produce a better harvest. However, as Hungwe points out, the message in the films was controversial due to the "economic and political context" (Hungwe, 2005:84), as many Africans owned small portions of land in impoverished areas, while others had gone from owning land to essentially being servants. Therefore, it became hard to settle the "conflicting demands of a minority white electorate that controlled the government and the political aspirations of the disenfranchised" (Hungwe, 2005:85). Going back to Hartman's argument, propaganda was used "as a regression to a ritualistic form of communication by which emotions are sanctioned by an agency of social control, an externalized conscience. Its purpose was to weaken the self-contained individual" (Hartman, 2000:330). Individuality was highly discouraged by the state. The message was: we are here to help the Africans get better 'educated.' Those who resisted this message were castigated as lazy and against

the state. If a person is interpellated into the ISA, their contribution to their subjecthood determines whether they benefit from that system. As Althusser explains, for the ISA to work well, repressive systems should be kept to the minimum, because the interpellated subjects will be willing subjects. I expand on this notion in my analysis of the short re-enactment documentary, *Two Farmers* (1948), below.

### **Two Farmers (1948)**

This film was part of the government-sponsored agricultural demonstration plot in the Chiduku Reserve near Rusape (Hungwe, 2005:231). Expanding on Hartman's notion of emotional agency being used to create social control, one can say that *Two Farmers* aimed at evoking a sense of responsibility among African farmers by persuading them that cooperation with Rhodesian officers and state officials was the best way forward. As elaborated in the section above, the notion of the Ideological State Apparatus methodology is the most applicable when it comes to explaining systematic operations in colonial Rhodesia. I would argue that Africans were interpellated into the system on the basis of their race and class. The state and the government control the system thus dictated how the system was run. One can say that *Two Farmers* was an attempt by the state to get interpellated Africans to cooperate with the government through an emotional and thought-provoking film and that, like the ISA, the movie assures individuals that there is a reward for them if they adhere to the system.

The film follows two impoverished farmers on their journey of choosing a better life. One is named Panganai and the other Washoma. The context/ moral of the story is that they are two impoverished farmers who have experienced a bad harvest. They meet a richer farmer who has had a great harvest, which is shown by how full his scotch cart is (a cart pulled by cows). The quality of his cart and harvest makes him a source of envy for Panganai, who vows to become a better farmer. Panganai and Washoma come across a class, led by a European agriculturist, that teaches the African locals advanced and modern methods of farming to obtain the best results. The film pits the two characters against each other, Panganai symbolising an individual submissive to his interpellation and Washoma as resisting his interpellation. Panganai acquires help from the African government's agricultural demonstrator to help improve his farming, whereas Washoma displays a lack of interest. Washoma is depicted as a lazy drunk who does not work and spends his time questioning the state, whereas Panganai listens to the instructions given to him and thus, inevitably, obtains a great harvest the following year. The film closes with him passing Washoma in his new scotch cart, showing the results of his hard work.

The film, which is a re-enactment (a dramatised retelling of a story), runs for just eighteen minutes. Its message was deliberately kept short and concise. The story is narrated with a voice-over by a British man who, one can say, represents the voice of the system, and it sought to promote African

advancement under the colonial government. The terms of success are essentially dictated by the narrator, who symbolises state control. One is reminded of Althusser's police officer hailing the subject with "Hey you there!" A similar display of power is present in *Two Farmers*. The British narrator occasionally hails the characters in the film directly with comments such as "You worked well and here is your reward... well done indeed Panganai, you've earned it", or "Washoma got his reward too – a lazy man's reward" (*Two Farmers*, 1948). At times the narrator also speaks on behalf of the characters, rendering them voiceless. In *One Step Ahead, Colonial Cinema* (1950) G.B. Odunton demonstrates that *Two Farmers* contains the mockery and false rhetoric that is also present in the narrator's voice. Africans are assumed to be 'uneducated' and could not comprehend a more advanced narrative (Odunton, 1950: 29). The message portrayed in the film is simple: if you do not listen to the state officials you will end up like Washoma, broke and impoverished. When Washoma shouts at the African agriculturist "you are always telling people how to do things!" it is an act of defiance against the state and of resistance to his interpellation, whereas Panganai listens to the officer and gets an increase in harvest and a change in social standing.

According to Hungwe, the movie was successful as people took the message onboard, especially in rural areas (Hungwe, 1991:231). Thus it served its purpose. The director of the short film, Peet Stephen, later admitted that "he found the film 'appallingly exaggerated' (Stephen had, in the meantime, become an acclaimed maker of BBC television documentaries, particularly associated with the long-running oral history series *Yesterday's Witness*) and 'was of the opinion that the elaborate state-funded system of farming portrayed by the film was an exaggeration of what was attainable by individual peasant farmers'" (Hungwe, 1991:231). The film demonstrates just how dominant and unjust the colonial system was regarding black people. Films like *Two Farmers* managed to dominate through propaganda. By presenting these representations that essentialised and patronised the characters in a binary of the 'good' or 'bad' farmer, the film presented the types of relationships people could have with the system if they did not resist. There was a false promise that all they had to do to succeed was work hard, when in fact structural factors meant they would always be disadvantaged, however hard they worked.

### **1970- 80's (War Film Era)**

In 1965, Southern Rhodesia declared itself independent from the British crown and became a self-governing body under the white minority governance of Ian Smith. Essentially this meant that the government could push forward more rigorous propaganda-filled content to spread their ideology as part of their domestic policy. The spread of information and ideology became part of an ongoing propaganda battle. Hungwe illustrates in the passage below what this meant in regard to propaganda-filled films in Rhodesia:

The word 'propaganda' is by no means the dirty word it is made out to be, but is in fact simply

the propagation of the faith and the belief in any particular ideology or thing and if the Information Department [is] to improve and strengthen the national ideology then indeed it is doing a worthwhile task. The strategy of using film evolved gradually. The turning point was 1972 when an armed conflict initiated by nationalist guerrilla armies escalated (Hungwe, 2005:86).

He goes on to explain that the government had targeted areas, like in the villages and rural areas, where perhaps the audiences were uneducated and would be fascinated by the idea of film.

The main battleground was the rural areas. One of several government responses was to commission and show films in the war zones in order to undermine support for the guerrilla armies. According to a Ministry of Information internal memorandum, the goal of the project was to use the medium of film to win the hearts and minds of the rural peasants, whose support for the guerrilla armies was critical (Hungwe, 2005: 86).

I can draw here on my personal experience. During the war era, growing up was always a bone of contention among the older generation in my family. There was one film in particular which Hungwe describes as 'the hyena film' (Hungwe, 2005:86). This film is said to have neither title nor credits. The hyena film was always described by my grandmother as one of the most gruesome videos she had ever watched. She recalled going to the township centre in Mutoko in her twenties, as was customary at the time whenever the government released a new film. No description or narration of the film was ever offered. However, the emotions evoked by the movie were evident. My grandmother described the film to me as "yairatidza what happened kuvatengesi, vai Chekwa maoko ne makumbo ne rurimi." It showed the punishments given to those that helped the freedom fighters. People had their hands and legs amputated and their tongues cut out. One man who had helped hide a freedom fighter was caught by the Rhodesian army. The gruesome punishment of having his legs cut off and his tongue removed is what the audience remembered most vividly.

According to my understanding, the film was propaganda against the guerrillas who were the black freedom fighters fighting against the Rhodesian government. Recalling the story line of the exact events of the film was obviously painful for my grandmother and indeed for the family. It was a ruthless display of power. A negative implication of the ideological state apparatus, it left viewers to imagine what life would be like if they did not cooperate or resisted their interpellation. It is obvious the film served as a warning to Africans to keep the rise of nationalism contained. Hungwe's account also supports this, stating

"it left the men stunned and women and children sick. In 1980, just before independence, the Rhodesian government destroyed some of the film footage used during the propaganda offensive. There is no evidence that the war films programme succeeded in undermining support for the guerrilla offensive. The Rhodesian army gradually lost control of the rural areas by 1979 (Hungwe, 2005:86).

This movie is among the many and various reasons why the older generation, who lived through this

era, still resist the idea of white dominance. I discuss in depth elsewhere how these memories serve as ghastly hauntings and a reminder of why we should resist any form of subjugation. This trauma is not always expressed.

The recollection of a painful colonial legacy is traumatic, not just for the generation that lived through it, but for the generations that came after. As a descendant of my grandmother and indeed of my mother, both of whom lived in colonial Rhodesia, there is part of me that experiences guilt for my hybridity. By thinking it is not my lived experience, I feel I invalidate their experience. I live and speak from a place of privilege my grandmother could not have and my mother had to fight for. Especially when it comes to women, how did we move from women like Mbuya Nehanda Nyakasikana, the voice that served as the heart of the liberation war, to black women being voiceless in society? This is what makes the following piece of work I am about to discuss unpalatable for some. In Doris Lessing's *The Grass Is Singing* (1950) I am confronted with what I, as a black Zimbabwean woman, would have lived through in Rhodesia, the lived experience of my grandmother. Black women are rarely mentioned and, when they are, they are voiceless. They serve as a backdrop to the main story.

### **The Grass Is Singing**

Doris Lessing's novel *The Grass Is Singing* was published in 1950. The book perfectly illustrates and embodies the systematic racism in Rhodesia in the 1940s. It follows the story of May Turner who is murdered by her black house boy, Moses. Her husband, Dick Turner, and the police officers believe it was because Moses wanted to steal from the Turners. Lessing is quick to suggest that there is much more happening under the surface. It is this that I wish to analyse here.

I acknowledge Piotrowska's analysis of the novel, which focuses on the prohibition of touch in colonial times, evoking desire and despair (Piotrowska, 2017:28). Piotrowska proposes that the black characters' lack of character development and voice in the novel is due to Lessing's inability to write the black voice; perhaps this is due to her lack of association with black people in Rhodesia at the time. The novel also depicts, and emphasises, how difficult it was in Rhodesia to have some sort of relationship between the races, be it a working relationship, platonic or, most difficult of all, romantic and physical. It is my opinion that the black characters are written from an observational point of view, and could be based on the cleaners, garden boys or house helps Lessing would have encountered in her years living in Rhodesia. It is no secret that the racial divide and perceived inferiority prohibited communication between black and white people in Rhodesia. This was an unspoken rule that was later manifested in laws that prohibited the mixing of races. I offer this as a possible explanation as to why the black women in the novel are just passive or why the character of Moses, the black house boy, does not say much in the novel. I also speculate that this could help analyse the unspoken racial

tensions in the country.

It is here that I need to return to the reformulations of colonial melancholia by Khanna, who argues that a melancholic can exhibit violent traits or that melancholia can lead to violence (Khanna, 2003:23). She restates and builds upon Abraham and Torok's notion of incorporation and introjection, which I discussed in depth in the introduction but will also restate here. In Khanna's words, introjection is "the physical assimilation of a lost object or abstraction" (Khanna, 2003:23). She goes on to say, "it's an ongoing process that allows for the assimilation of events in one's life" (Khanna, 2003:23). Introjection is no doubt a stage in the melancholic journey that can possibly lead to healing. Abraham and Torok explain that incorporation, on the other hand, can leave one stuck and stagnant in one position. Khanna develops this and states that incorporation prohibits assimilation and manifests linguistically as silence and de-metaphorisation, the inability to express pain through language (Khanna, 2003:24). Where Abraham and Torok focus on how incorporation manifests through language and silence, Khanna adds that melancholia can manifest itself in violent tendencies.

The novel opens with the murder of Mary Turner by her house boy, Moses. The language used by Lessing in the opening of the book gives us an insight into how the different races were profiled in Rhodesia: "Mary Turner, the wife of Richard Turner, a farmer at Ngesi, was found murdered on the front veranda of their homestead yesterday morning. The house boy has been arrested and has confessed to the crime. No motive has been discovered" (Lessing, 1950:9). Through the diction and language used, Lessing not only allows for a psychoanalytical reading of the text, but also gives the reader an insight into the race and political situation in Rhodesia at the time. In this section I build on Piotrowska's analysis to answer the following question: What can textual analysis of *The Grass Is Singing* reveal about the present post-colonial melancholia in the country?

I begin with an interview Piotrowska conducted with Rumbidzai Katedza in her book *Black and White: Cinema, Politics and the Arts in Zimbabwe* (2017). In the course of the conversation, Piotrowska asks Katedza if she is familiar with Lessing's novel, to which Katedza responds "I don't know the novel well, no, I have no great desire to know it, we particularly don't like reading about these times. When you think about it black people being treated as non-human? No, we don't enjoy it" (ibid:124). The idea of reading a book written from a white woman's perspective and showing the effects of colonialism not only brings up painful memories, but also shows the continuing effects of colonialism on society, the impacts still being felt today. Not only is there the issue of the inferiority complex created in the psyche of black Zimbabweans, but there is the need to decolonise the mind. As mentioned above, reading the novel forces one to relive the traumatic experiences of our ancestors. We cannot deny them but are forced to experience and confront the trauma through the pages of the book. By reading the novel I am forced to check my privilege, the privileges that the black people in this book did not have.

In the edited collection *Doris Lessing: Conversations (1994)* where Lessing speaks to Earl Ingersoll, Lessing admits that she uses realism to write her work, drawn from lived and real-life experiences. Lessing herself grew up on a farm in Rhodesia, thus it is possible to deduce that she evokes her personal experiences alongside what she witnessed in regard to racial tensions in writing the book. Lessing also elaborates that the setting of the novel is based on the region she grew up in and that she wrote about someone she knew (Lessing & Ingersoll, 1994:131). The controversy over this piece of literature stems from how Lessing's work exposed the racial inequalities/ prejudice in Rhodesian society, which led to her being persecuted and banned from Rhodesia for her liberal views. Lessing's work was a betrayal to silence culture in Rhodesia. It is a painful and profound study of the psychosis induced by colonialism. Piotrowska explains it as "in former Rhodesia prior to Independence a physical encounter with the black Other was a taboo which was heavily sexualised, but it was also illegal and used as a way of discouraging physical contact" (Piotrowska, 2017:28). Lessing expands on this further in describing the killing of Mary by Moses as a "local and private matter," which mirrors the sentiment felt in Rhodesian society at that time.

It is here I would like to explain my particular interest in analysing this classic novel. Where Piotrowska focused on touch, speaking and desire in "What would Moses sound like if he could express himself in Lessing's novel?" (Piotrowska, 2017:37) and suggests the transposition of Moses's voice from the one Lessing wrote to that of the controversial yet profound Zimbabwean writer Dambudzo Marachera, I focus on uncovering the violent melancholic traits in the novel, especially in relation to race relations, and how these might help us understand race relations in Zimbabwe now, and the notions of silence and de-metaphorisation. The latter 'issue,' which Piotrowska describes as colonial de-metaphorisation (Piotrowska, 2017:34), is something that Frantz Fanon also discusses in his work. A psychiatrist, psychoanalyst and academic, Fanon focused in his body of work on self, the psyche, the colonial condition and its effects on the colonised. Both Marachera and Fanon were vocal in their disgust regarding the colonial system, but also in their efforts to be accepted by it. It is painfully clear that their hybridity was a cause of discomfort for both men as they could never fit in, whether in their own community or that of their coloniser. They fought interpellation in both systems. In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1950), Fanon offers a profound analysis of the relationship between the white woman and the black man. Perhaps this could help in disentangling why Moses killed Mary and lead to a different interpretation of their relationship. Fanon's work is mainly autobiographical, which makes it difficult to disregard his personal experiences.

The premise of the book follows Mary Turner as she navigates through her life on the farm as the wife of Dick Turner. From Chapter One the reader learns that Mary and Dick are ostracised by their own community for being different and, as we later find out, poor. They are perceived as an abomination and embarrassment by the white farmers of the region.



The Turners were disliked, though few of their neighbours had ever met them, or even seen them in the distance. Yet what was there to dislike? They simply 'kept themselves to themselves'; that was all. They were never seen at district dances, or fêtes, or gymkhanas. They must have had something to be ashamed of; that was the feeling. It was not right to seclude themselves like that; it was a slap in the face of everyone else; what had they got to be so stuck-up about? What, indeed! Living the way, they did! That little box of a house – it was forgivable as a temporary dwelling, but not to live in permanently. Why, some natives (though not many, thank heavens) had houses as good; and it would give them a bad impression to see white people living in such a way. And then it was that someone used the phrase 'poor whites.' It caused disquiet (Lessing, 1950:10).

From the onset, the odds were against the Turners. They were poor, secluded and were in a loveless marriage. The Turners led a miserable life. Despite their privilege in the colonial system, the Turners are at a disadvantage due to their class. Lessing describes them as poor whites who had no option but to open a kiosk catering for black Africans because of where they lived. Their class isolated them from the other white farmers in the area. As a character called Charlie Slatter suggests, they are an embarrassment to the white community.

Of course, one cannot neglect to mention the racial tensions in the book that cause the unravelling of the couple. Dick, we find out, has gone mad since Mary's death in Chapter One. It is here I want to propose that de-metaphorisation, the inability to express pain through language present in Zimbabwe to this day – is as a result of the silent culture that prevailed during colonial times. Lessing alludes to this silent culture in the first few pages by suggesting that no one spoke about the incident, but that they kept cuttings from the newspapers as reminders of what not to do, or as a warning against associating with negroes (Lessing, 1950:9)

### **A Question of Power vs Subjugation**

I refer back to my analysis of Althusser's institutionalised subjugation and add to this by drawing on Derek Hook's interpretation of Frantz Fanon's position in regard to psychology and politics, in a journal article entitled *A Critical Psychology of the Postcolonial* (2005). Hook asserts that what makes Fanon's work more of a benchmark compared to other theorists is the fact that "he employed modes of experience to describe and illustrate the workings of power" (Hook, 2005:85). As mentioned before, Fanon explores the power dynamics between the black woman and the white man, and the black man and the white woman, and compares the workings of power between the two. He uses real life experiences alongside novels showing the interaction between the white man and the person of colour, be it woman or man. In his own way, Fanon could offer a hypothesis of race relations in Rhodesia and help us to decode the character of Moses.

Turning my attention to how racism was a tool used to enforce white hegemony, at its root was the control of land, power, resources and legislation, meaning that ultimately the ruling white class was at the top of the pyramid. Echoing the words of Hook above, the demonstrations of power boiled down to who owned the land. I suggest it was no coincidence that Lessing planned the plot of the book

in such a way that the drama unfolds on a farm. In most ex-colonies, land was a point of contention, and Dick Turner does not own enough of it. To the indigenous people, land meant their roots, identity and the connection to their ancestors. To the colonial settlers it meant capital, power and control of the economy. It is no surprise that the liberation struggle for the freedom of Zimbabwe was called 'hondo yeminda,' which translates as 'the war for land'.

It is here I would like to state that at the top of the hegemony of power were the white men in charge. For the purpose of illustration, I would draw the reader's attention to the character of Charlie Slatter. Slatter's character is domineering and in charge. This is brought to our attention when the chief sergeant has to report to Slatter what has happened at the Turners' house (Lessing, 1950:19). There follows a juxtaposition of the characters of Dick Turner and Slatter. I would argue that Slatter transcends the function of a mere character and comes to symbolise an ideology or system. He is a rich white man who is well known and very much in control in regards to what happens in the community, which is why he can conceal the truth of what really happened at the Turners' house and prevent it from becoming public knowledge. On the other hand, and as we shall explore below, Turner is portrayed as weak. This is even alluded to in the opening pages of the book, when we learn he has gone mad since Moses killed his wife. Compared to Slatter, Turner is a shadow of what a white man in Rhodesia should symbolise. White colonialism in Rhodesia was hugely patriarchal in a way that did not allow for other forms of masculinity. Charlie has become wealthy through the farming of tobacco in Rhodesia. His strategic plan of taking over Dick's land ultimately proves his hunger for power. This is also intensified when he suspects Mary and Moses of having had an affair, and forces Dick and Mary to leave the farm to preserve the integrity of the white community.

In Althusser's illustration of interpellation, Slatter is like the police officer. He is mainly centred on maintaining the racial hierarchy in Southern Rhodesia. We also see this rhetoric when he hatches a plan with the sergeant to hide Mary's relationship with Moses, in order to maintain the hierarchy. As I mentioned above, being a white man symbolised power and control, and Fanon acknowledged this, as did Lessing. Through the character of Slatter we, as readers, can see how the hierarchy was maintained, not to mention who ran it. Slatter stands for white control, and he is there to police it and enforce it. What Slatter symbolises here is what Fanon aspired to be when he said "out of the blackest part of my soul, across the zebra striping of my mind, surges this desire to be suddenly white. I wish to be acknowledged not as black but as white" (Fanon, 1950:45). The difference between Fanon or Marechera and Moses, then, is that the first two speak in order not to kill. Moses cannot find his voice because of people like Slatter, and so he kills.

Continuing down the ladder of subjugation in the novel, it is important to highlight the relationship between Mary and Dick Turner. The opening of the book, where the reader finds out that Dick has gone mad after the murder of his wife, suggests that her death brought him such distress that mentally he was unable to cope. However, as we shall explore below, their relationship was filled with

multifaceted layers of hardship. As Piotrowska points out and I mention here briefly, their marriage was based more on convenience than love or desire. “Mary ends up in an unsuccessful marriage with an honest farmer, Dick, her agency and life itself are slowly stripped away from her. In terms of Lacanian ‘don’t give up on your desire’, this is a tragic example of a compromise stifling development of awareness of that desire” (Piotrowska, 2017:34). Lessing subtly hints that Mary has deep-rooted issues regarding men, possibly stemming from her relationship with her father, who was alcoholic and might have sexually abused her (Piotrowska, 2017:33). Lessing highlights Mary’s inability to cohabit with any male figure through a conversation Mary overhears whilst her friends are discussing her. They label Mary as not being the type to get married, stating “she is not like that” (Lessing, 1950:40). That Mary is repulsed by the idea of a man touching her can be seen in Chapter Two. Her physical disgust leads to a break-up with her fiancée, as well as challenges when she and Dick first sleep together. Though Lessing does not state outright that Mary has been raped – she only ever hints at it – her lack of sexual agency is clearly rooted in trauma. I must note here that among the many theorists who have written about *The Grass Is Singing*, some have touched on the ecological aspect, the relationship between the environment and humans, and there have been many feminist analyses of the patriarchal nature of Rhodesia and how Mary was interpellated into this system. However, few have mentioned the prohibition of touch as discussed by Piotrowska, or the notion of the black voice, be it that of Moses or of the black women in the novel as I attempt here.

Mary is undoubtedly interpellated into the patriarchal and colonial system, which I would argue also contributes to her unravelling towards the end of the book. She is helpless and unable to fight against it. “Mary is almost literally gagged, bound and tied down by her own inability to question the male supremacy, despite knowing that it is wrong. If the black workers did not have a voice, she too had none” (Piotrowska, 2017:43). She questions some of her husband’s decisions and ultimately his authority. Over time, we see Dick worn down and unable to control Mary.

Chapter Ten of the novel is quite memorable. We see the Turners hosting Slatter for dinner. Mary’s flirtatious behaviour towards Moses is picked up by Slatter, who points it out. Mary has a hysterical episode and only Moses can calm her down. Slatter is appalled by Dick’s tolerance of the flirtatious intimate relationship between Mary and Moses. Dick inevitably is passive, which meets the disapproval of Slatter.

“Get rid of him Turner, Mary likes him was the slow response”. In both the movie and the book Dick comes off as weak and passive, the opposite of what was expected of a white male in Rhodesia. It is here I quote a passage where Slatter is conversing with the sergeant and Tony that perfectly illustrates how the patriarchy perceived women. “Nagged at him, eh? Oh well, women are pretty bad that way, in this country, very often. Aren’t they, Slatter?” The voice was easy, intimate, informal. My old woman drives me mad – it’s something about this country. They have no idea how to deal with niggers.’ ‘Needs a man to deal with niggers,’ said Charlie. ‘Niggers don’t understand women giving them orders. They keep their own women in their right place.’ He laughed. The Sergeant laughed” (Lessing, 1950:23).

According to Slatter, women aren't able to 'handle' black people, that is the white man's job. They are irrational, much like the characteristics that Mary exhibits, hence they have to be controlled. I suggest that Dick, in his own lack of agency in life, does not exhibit the proper dominance expected of a white man, hence his inability to control Mary.

Despite being a victim of the system, as Piotrowska states, Mary is also a racist (2017:34). This is especially evident in her relationship with Moses, as we shall explore below. I would like to note here, briefly, Mary's difficult relationships with other women, most notably with black women. Her disdain for them is based on their appearance and assumptions, and not on genuine interactions and encounters. It is their mannerisms that she judges them on. Her feelings towards black women can be summed up in this passage from the book:

If she disliked native men, she loathed the women. She hated the exposed fleshiness of them, their soft brown bodies and soft bashful faces that were also insolent and inquisitive, and their chattering voices that held a brazen fleshy undertone. She could not bear to see them sitting there on the grass, their legs tucked under them in that traditional timeless pose, as peaceful and uncaring as if it did not matter whether the store was opened, or whether it remained shut all day and they would have to return tomorrow. Above all, she hated the way they suckled their babies, with their breasts hanging down for everyone to see; there was something in their calm satisfied maternity that made her blood boil (Lessing, 1950:94).

As the black women are rendered voiceless and Mary does not interact with any one of them at any point in the novel, but bases her judgment on observation and societal judgments of them being "natives", I suggest her loathing can be traced to how Lessing describes black women. She describes them as peaceful and uncaring, all attributes that Mary herself lacks. The traditional pose she describes, of them tucking in their legs, is attributed to submission culturally. Mary undoubtedly sees the women as the other, both inhuman and savage. However, she perhaps also hates the way they are submissive to the patriarchy (which, we know, was not out of free will), whilst she retains an innate desire to rebel.

Though it is difficult for most Zimbabweans to read the novel, it is particularly hard for black women. The book fails to mention the double interpellation black women had to endure during colonial Rhodesia, when they were interpellated into the racist colonial system as black women, as well as being interpellated as women in a patriarchal society. Though in this one passage they are described as chatty and submissive, black women remain virtually unheard throughout the novel. Piotrowska explains this by stating that Lessing, as a white woman, could not write the voices of black women. This is also the case for Moses, the black houseboy, as we shall explore below.

Speaking as a black intellectual and a woman, I find the representation of black women in Lessing's novel painful, to the point of not being able to unpack it clearly. This could be a result of living in a patriarchal Western society where sometimes, as a black woman, I have to fight for my voice to be heard, an ongoing fight that most black women face on a day-to-day basis. As mentioned, the book is an imitation of what was happening in Rhodesia at the time. It holds a mirror to that society. I stated

before that reading the novel was indeed a hurtful reminder of the painful legacy of colonialism, the legitimacy of the trauma and pain people like my grandmother faced. As I mentioned briefly in the introduction, there is no written evidence of what life in pre-colonial Zimbabwe was like. However, Lessing presents a visceral account of what colonial Rhodesia was like. It is no longer just stories my grandmother told me, but historical facts. I would also note Lessing's use of language, in particular the word 'nigger.' This for me is very triggering, especially when the word is associated with the dehumanising of black people. One does wonder if Lessing's use of the word was intentional, so as to provoke a reaction. The intention is unclear.

When the reader first meets Moses, we are told that he has killed Mary. No explanation is offered but that of a native trying to steal from their master. He is hired by Dick to be the house boy after Mary cannot get along with any of the help employed. Moses seems to be the only one that has stuck around. As the story unfolds, we see that their case is multifaceted, a tale of unspoken desire that morphs into violence. Mary is melancholic. Her inability to express her pain leaves her chronically dissatisfied and she gradually breaks down. Her husband refuses to acknowledge her state, a common phenomenon described by Supriya Nair: "the neuroses of female subjects are not just devalued but unrecognized, either because pathological behaviours are a natural condition or because they are refused the agency" (Nair, 1995:130). The only person who seems to acknowledge Mary's pain is Moses, which is controversial, as they develop a relationship which is on the surface taboo and mixed with sexual tension. The full nature of their relationship is never disclosed. Piotrowska argues that Mary's voice is not heard until Moses pays attention and listens to her (2017:34). I would suggest that Mary feels visible at last, however despised she might be because Moses is black. Mary never acknowledges her desire for Moses, and the narrator of the novel also hesitates to acknowledge it. Her desire for Moses manifests itself in her dreams and Freud describes such dreams as repressed desire. Mary's desire for Moses begins to torment her, even in her sleep and thoughts. She acts out of character. She and Moses both seem to be repulsed by the idea of getting together.

...a white person may look at a native who is no better than a dog. Therefore, she was annoyed when he stopped and stood upright, waiting for her to go, his body expressing his resentment of her presence there. She was furious that perhaps he believed she was there on purpose; this thought, of course, was not conscious; it would be too much presumption, such unspeakable cheek for him to imagine such a thing, that she would not allow it to enter her mind; but the attitude of his still body as he watched her across the bushes between them, the expression on his face, filled her with anger" (Lessing, 1950:176).

Neither Mary nor Moses can express their feelings accurately, hence they are manifested in anger. Both of them are angry at their inability to metaphorise their desire, not to mention their consciousness of the fact that their sexual tension is a crime according to the colonial paradigm. Perhaps they are unable to comprehend what these feelings are supposed to be like.

In her analysis of the novel, Piotrowska asks the question “If Moses could speak, who would he sound like?” She suggests Dambudzo Marachera, who I briefly mentioned above, but here I would substitute the readings of Fanon, who wrote extensively on the relationship between the black man and the white woman, mostly addressing the issue of desire, which I detect here between Moses and Mary. Fanon alludes to the way every black man wants to be loved like a white man. Further to his famous assertion that every black man wants to be white, he adds “who but a white woman can do this for me? By loving me she proves that I am worthy of white love. I am loved like a white man. I am a white man. Her love takes me onto the noble road that leads to total realization. . . I marry white culture, white beauty, white whiteness” (Fanon,1952:45). Fanon elaborates that this is the ‘spirit of the group,’ referring perhaps to how black men have an unspoken desire for white women and whiteness. The notion of unspoken desire could hypothetically explain the relationship between Mary and Moses.

Both Mary and Moses desire to be seen and heard. For Mary, it is the validation she does not receive from her husband, nor from any of the white men around her. For Moses, it is acceptance by the system. Fanon reiterates that the black man is always seeking to be approved and accepted by the system, and to obtain the love of a white woman is an entry into acceptance. However, this does not happen for Mary and Moses, as Mary is unable to place her feelings properly. Therefore, she is irrational towards Moses and is constantly trying to inflict pain. Perhaps it is Mary’s inability to comprehend her feelings that leads her to inflict pain on her ‘object’ of affection.

I would draw the reader’s attention here to the passage where Moses is taking care of Mary when she falls ill and has to help her change.

“‘Drink,’ he said simply, as if he were speaking to one of his own women; and she drank. He put out his hand reluctantly, loathe to touch her, the sacrosanct white woman, and pushed her by the shoulder; she felt herself gently propelled across the room towards the bedroom. It was like a nightmare where one is powerless against horror: the touch of this black man...” (Lessing, 1950:151).

Moses behaves contrary to what Fanon calls the black man’s desire to gratify their appetite for white women (Fanon, 1952:50). No doubt the reader gets to find out that Moses, in his own way, also cares for Mary. He could have desired her as Fanon states, but he knows that acting upon it could lead to him being killed. I believe that this gives us a possible explanation as to why he kills her. Fanon gives a perfect illustration from an analysis of a French novel, stating “I love her. She loves me. We love each other. She must marry me. Otherwise I will kill myself here and now” (1952:50). In a way, the desire of Moses is responsible for both his own death and Mary’s. Moses kills Mary because he believes she has chosen the white man over him, but of course this is not true. It was a tragic misunderstanding, because they did not really talk to each other. This is a perfect example of metaphorisation. Moses killing Mary is the violent manifestation mentioned by Khanna, when one is unable to metaphorise. In recent developments, Stanley Makuwe – a Zimbabwean playwright – is

currently adapting *The Grass Is Singing* as a play, with the help of Piotrowska. He notices something which I think is important here. “Moses’s stabbing of Mary symbolises stabbing the colonial system. Mary represents what white people are trying to protect and when he stabs her right under their noses it’s an important part of ‘SPEAKING’ to the system, that I am capable of hitting you where it hurts the most.”<sup>1</sup>

To conclude this section, I revert to the question for analysis, which is what does *The Grass Is Singing* reveal about the present post-colonial melancholia in the country? I believe this piece of literature was important, as it exposed the racial injustices in Rhodesia. Hence, both the book and Lessing herself were banished from Rhodesia. The historical element in the novel helps us to understand the roots of melancholy in Zimbabwe, along with the constructs of gender and gender roles in Zimbabwean society. Power is still very much an issue, not just in Zimbabwe, but also in the whole region of Southern Africa, due to the colonial legacy. I believe the prohibition of touch Piotrowska talks about could have contributed to the limited mixing among the races; I explore this in later chapters. Lastly, this analysis also highlights the need to amplify the voices of black women, as we see that in this era, black women were rendered voiceless. This voice is only now beginning to be heard, as we shall see below in the analysis of Tsitsi Dangarembga’s novel *Nervous Conditions* (1988) released eight years after independence but set in colonial Rhodesia.

### **Post-colonial Zimbabwe**

Slowly but surely we have witnessed a rise in black female authors amplifying the Zimbabwean woman’s voice, from Dangarembga to Yvonne Vera. Vera’s astounding novel *Nehanda* (1993), which I mention here in passing, is one of those novels that really amplify the black female voice. The novel is a re-imagining of the life of Nehanda in the nineteenth century, when the white settlers first arrived in Zimbabwe. Vera gives Nehanda a poetic, powerful voice worthy of her legacy, with lines like “How can words be made still [in writing], without turning into silence? Silence is more to be feared than the agitation of voices” (Vera, 1993:location 621) or “Survival is in the mouth”. The character of Nehanda is an embodiment of words, a manifestation of metaphorisation. Vera’s work deals with encouraging black women to amplify their voice. As society fights against the woman’s voice, she encourages women to write as a way of unloading their pain. I will briefly analyse Vera’s work here in passing, as my research is centred around post-colonial melancholia, and a full analysis of *Nehanda* (which is about pre-colonial Zimbabwe) is not necessary here. However, in my brief account I will highlight the agility of the pre-colonial voice that black women possessed, as represented by Vera.

Vera’s body of work is well known for promoting metaphorisation. In *Under the Tongue* (1996) she states that “to write is to banish silence” (93). By writing *Nehanda*, Vera banishes the silence in regard

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<sup>1</sup> Stanley Makuwe (2021), in private WhatsApp conversation with Agnieszka Piotrowska.

to women which was brought about by the colonial system and patriarchal constructs. As discussed in the analysis of *The Grass Is Singing*, we see how black women were rendered silent, I would even argue were banished into silence. By writing *Nehanda* (1993), Vera reminds black women that they once had a voice in society, and through the re-imagining of Mbuya Nehanda she illustrates this. From the opening pages of *Nehanda*, we see she is an embodiment of metaphorisation. “Nehanda carries her bag of words in a pouch that lies tied around her waist. She wears some along her arms. Words and bones” (Vera, 1993:location 100 Kindle edition). Vera’s language choice here is deliberate. By describing the character of Nehanda covered by words, she draws our attention to her embodiment in pre-colonial Zimbabwe. In this space Nehanda is a woman who is free and is in charge of her words and voice. This is particularly important in the post-colonial setting, as it serves as a reminder, almost as if she says “Hey, this is where we came from!” Women in pre-colonial Zimbabwe had powerful voices that mattered and were not afraid to use them. By naming the novel *Nehanda* after Mbuya Nehanda, the woman whose voice was the catalyst for the liberation war, she allows the reader to envision the weight the female voice carried. Mbuya Nehanda’s last words have been passed down the generations. The words “these bones will rise again” have served as a reminder to black Zimbabweans to stand up for freedom and, in this instance, they can be said to be an encouragement to her daughters not to fall into silence. Where Vera reminds black women of the importance of their voices in *Nehanda*, Dangarembga – some thirty years after Lessing – writes the astonishing *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and the voice of black women is restored. However, the main character of *Nervous Conditions* struggles, owing to her hybrid identity, with the fact that the voice which emerges from her black body was educated in the UK. Interestingly, both Vera’s and Dangarembga’s works are written in English and follow a very Western structure of writing. There is an ironic compromise present here. It is possible that the novels are written this way because Zimbabwe itself has many languages and English is the common language across all tribes.

### **The Liberation struggle: Hondo Ye Chimurenga (The War for Land)**

In *The Struggle for Zimbabwe* (1981), Lewis Gann and Thomas Henriksen gives us an analytical account of what happened during the liberation struggle and military bush campaigns, between 1960 till independence in 1980. The 1960s saw a substantial amount of civil unrest among Zimbabweans. There was a growing nationalism among the people that demanded the kind of change which would give Africans access to land, higher paying jobs, better living conditions and the ability to have constitutional rights within the government, thus enabling them to decide their own fate. Nationalist groups, such as the National Democratic Party (NDP), were formed, voicing a revolutionary rhetoric which insisted on constitutional rights for Africans along with the end of white minority rule. The NDP organised demonstrations and riots in order to bring international attention to the country, forcing the Rhodesians into a position where they would have to hand over power (Gann & Henriksen, 1981:42). The Rhodesian government banned the group in 1961, fearing an uprising.



Wellington Nyangoni, in *African nationalism in Zimbabwe*, discusses the formation of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) in the year 1962, in retaliation against the ban on the NDP. ZAPU'S primary objective was freedom from colonial rule for Africans, encouraging unity among the tribes in the African community to defeat the common enemy (Nyangoni, 1979:50). The party was banned in 1963 for its radical agenda and its willingness to use violence to obtain freedom. The ban did not succeed in ending the movement, but rather drove it underground. Internal conflicts led the group to split in two, forming the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), which was more associated with the Shona people, and the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), which was associated with the Ndebele. Later on this civil unrest was to break out between the two tribes (I will come back to this in Chapter Three). The leaders at the time, Robert Mugabe (ZANU) and Joshua Nkomo (ZAPU), came to the realisation that if they remained divided, the freedom they yearned for would never be achieved. The years 1977 to 1988 saw a rise in uprisings and guerrilla warfare until the ceasefire of 1979, which was agreed at Lancaster House in England. Free elections were held where all parties participated, and all races were allowed to vote. Robert Mugabe was elected the first president of Zimbabwe in 1980. It is here I would like to analyse the movie *Flame* (1996), directed by Ingrid Sinclair, and produced by Joel Phiri and Simon Bright. *Flame* follows two women, Nyasha and Florence, who were female officers in the liberation forces against colonial rule in Rhodesia. The movie did an excellent job of giving voice to black women's opinions, but as we will see this did not come without its own share of controversy and scrutiny.

### **The Rhetoric of Race and Gender Through the Analysis of *Flame*: Who May Speak?**

I will begin by quoting Tsitsi Dangarembga who – through some of the characters in her novels, most notably *This Mournable Body* (2018) – has indicated the *neglect* by the nation of female soldiers who fought in the Rhodesian war, in media representations, histories and welfare for veterans. In Henna Ahmad's collection, entitled *Postcolonial Feminisms* (2010), Dangarembga states “a Zimbabwean woman may become militant, genderless fighter but on pain of ridicule at the national level she may not become a fighting woman. My own experiences as a young writer illuminate grotesquely the energy-depleting toll on Zimbabwean Women who grapple with their country's version of the usual sexist controls” (Ahmad, 2010:43). I would like to point out how the fear of ridicule at a national level could have been one reason Sinclair faced difficulties in interviewing female soldiers who had been part of the war. I elaborate on this later below. I also analyse below the notion of gender-based melancholia and forgotten heroes. As discussed in the introduction, the spirit of Nehanda Nyakasikana was the heart and the driving force of the Chimurenga war, but somehow women were excluded from the liberation struggle narrative. Again, we see how women – despite the newfound freedom –were still oppressed under patriarchy. There is a strong element of cruel optimism here, most notably discussed by Lauren Berlant in her book *Cruel Optimism* (2011) which I explore below but will

introduce here briefly. The notion of cruel optimism usually exists when an individual is promised something, usually by society or, in the case of the characters in *Flame*, the political system/government. The optimism is usually sustained by hope of a better life, a brighter future and, in some cases, freedom. But the reality is that 'society can no longer provide opportunities for individuals to achieve what it states are vital, upward mobility, job security, political and social equality, and durable intimacy' (Berlant, 2011:3). The movie's opening scene is set fifteen years after the war. The characters of Florence and Nyasha are not doing as well as they expected they would when they were fighting in the war. Government officials dismissed the issues of rape and abuse some female freedom fighters experienced at the camps and we see this play out in the movie. The female voice and experience are once again dismissed and shut down. My analysis here aims to answer the question, to what extent has post-colonial melancholia affected the lives and voices of women more than men in Zimbabwean literature and cinema? Can the notion of melancholia only be attributed to men? Who has the right to speak? I tackle this below.

According to Lewis Gann (1981), women played a substantial role in the liberation struggle. Traditional women's roles were subverted, and women were encouraged to join the freedom fighters in the guerrilla warfare/ Rhodesian bush war. They were also in charge of welfare duties, making sure the fighters had food and clothing. *Flame* (1996) recounts the story of two female soldiers that were part of the freedom fighter's movement. The movie is praised for being one of the first to portray African women as multi-dimensional characters with agency, and not the dogmatic single story of the domestic housewife who plays a secondary character to support her husband. The movie was also not without its fair share of scrutiny, as many felt it moved away from the consensus of the Rhodesian bush war and attacked the army of the liberation struggle. The deputy secretary general of war veterans, Richard Chirongwe, was one of the people who spearheaded the backlash against the film, stating "If this film is not stopped, it will give the wrong picture to people. The rape scene detracts from the lofty goals of the struggle for independence. What should have been emphasised was the rape and torture of civilians by the white Rhodesian soldiers" (California Newsreel, S.D.: accessed 2020).

The film's director, Ingrid Sinclair, first envisioned the movie as a documentary, but found it quite difficult as most of the women she interviewed were not comfortable being recorded on camera, owing to fears of the backlash they would receive. One thing *Flame* was able to do was uncover a traumatic injustice that many women encountered, and the government did its best to try and condemn the film, deeming it unfit and pornographic. It can be argued

the movie's real crime may have been that it exposed not just past abuses but continuing divisions within Zimbabwean society. Many of the groups which fought hardest during the freedom struggle, for example, women and peasants, have been left behind in the post-revolutionary period; for them the revolution is still not completed. The film provides an important and by no means unambiguous case study of who will control not only the depiction of the African past but

also the African present (California Newsreel, S.D: accessed 2020).

I begin here with the controversies surrounding the director of the movie, Ingrid Sinclair herself. In her recent article entitled ‘Who is the author of *Neria* (1992) - a Zimbabwean masterpiece or a neo-colonial enterprise?’ (2020), Piotrowska brings up the issue of collaborative efforts among races which haunts the creative sector in Zimbabwe to this day. “There is an incredibly high awareness of racial difference in Zimbabwe, probably more than anywhere else I know. With all the subgroups, that to outsiders would probably not seem to be different. Here it is very clear. And very noted. These days it is becoming something to try and hit people with if you feel like hitting people” (Thompson, 2013: 45, cited in Piotrowska, 2020:14). Piotrowska follows this up by explaining how Sinclair did not feel guilty about receiving funding that her fellow black collaborators would have wanted on the basis of white privilege. On the other hand, one could argue that Sinclair got the funding on the basis that she was willing to tell the story that most people in the black community ran away from. A film exposing the trauma experienced by female officers meant exposing the corruption in the ZANU PF camp, exposing how black women are interpellated at the bottom of the system.

Piotrowska points out that Sinclair was able to make this movie because she is a white British female. She will always be seen as an outsider. Sinclair elaborates that “a white person is an outsider so perhaps more acceptable politically by the black Zimbabweans and better positioned to do challenging work (‘it’s easier for us to talk to you because you don’t have any particular political attachment or background’)” (Thompson, 2013:45, cited in Piotrowska, 2020:13). I am reminded here of a conference debate I was involved in at the Birkbeck University Association for Psychosocial Studies ‘Reading conference 2019: The Psychosocial – Reflections and Developments.’ I was part of a panel that presented a talk on female desire and the postcolonial condition. One of the prominent questions raised was that of who has the right to speak. As writers, thinkers, academics and filmmakers, do we have the right to speak on issues outside of our culture, and sometimes our race. The general opinion was that we all have a right to speak, though a few people disagreed. It is here I question my own position and my hybridity. No doubt more funding opportunities should be given to black Zimbabweans to produce films that tell the black Zimbabwean story. However, Sinclair (as a white British woman, and despite owning and using her white privilege) should be able to voice her opinion. Again, my perspective is altered by my hybridity; as a Zimbabwean living in the diaspora, my view might not be in line with the filmmaker who has to live in Zimbabwe. However, I must also highlight that the idea of the outsider being able to do challenging work, especially white filmmakers, as Piotrowska states, “is a short cut for expressing the continuing white privilege that needs to be challenged” (Piotrowska, 2020:14). I end this thought on this note: as we have established in earlier chapters, the melancholic might not be able to identify the lost object of affection, but they know whom they lost it to. Sinclair’s embodiment as a white woman automatically causes stigmatisation as she resembles the coloniser.

Despite her own problematic stance, some of the backlash Sinclair received could have been because she was a white female telling a black woman's story. Before I begin my analysis of the film, it is important to note here that I mainly focus on analysis of the narration and the story line of the film. I also adopt some of Lauren Berlant's ideology on cruel optimism for my analysis. Berlant proposes that "cruel optimism exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing. It might involve food, or a kind of love; it might be a fantasy of the good life, or a political project. It might rest on something simpler, too, like a new habit that promises to induce in you an improved way of being" (Berlant, 2011:1). As addressed in the introduction, the concept of cruel optimism usually exists when an individual is promised something, usually by society or in the case of the characters in *Flame*, the political system/ government. The optimism is usually sustained by hope of a better life, a better future and, in some cases, freedom. But the reality is that "society can no longer provide opportunities for individuals to achieve what it states are

vital 'upward mobility, job security, political and social equality, and durable intimacy' (Berlant, 2011:3).

### **Flame (1996)**

The movie opens with Florence, who is the main character, going to visit her friend Nyasha in the capital city Harare after not seeing her for fifteen years since the war ended. The technique of voiceover narration is adopted in major scenes of the movie. I believe this is used to explain certain details the audience might not know about a particular scene, or to help them read the mind of the character at the time. The voiceover narration is by the character Nyasha. I would argue this is used to show the progression in the two women's relationship. Nyasha begins by telling the audience that Florence, whose war name was Flame, was her heroine. There is genuine love felt in her voice and also regret for their falling out fifteen years earlier. I suggest here that the voiceover narration was also done through the character of Nyasha because, out of the two women, she was more educated and lived a more Western lifestyle. The narration helps us to understand that this story revolves around them, but also amplifies their voices. It is these two women who are in charge of telling you, the audience, their story. It is a story of two women let down by society and the government they fought so hard for.

I begin here with an analysis of the character of Florence. We meet Florence coming from the village and going to the city to visit Nyasha. Florence's story, as we come to realise, is one of hardship and perseverance, echoed by her army name Flame. Her character development by the filmmakers is worth noting and praising. From a young age, Florence always wanted to "get married and have children" (Flame: 1996). Through her joining the war we see every layer of innocence and type cast of being a traditional African woman fall away, no doubt due to her traumatic experience at the war camp. Florence is raped by a fellow officer, Che, and gets pregnant. She is humiliated by the man she hoped

to marry, as he does not believe she was raped but rather consented to it. Lastly, she sees her abuser and son killed in an explosion and she has to pick herself up again. She channels her trauma and grief into becoming a ruthless soldier, almost genderless, as Dangarembga described in the introduction above. Most of the women who fought in the liberation struggle envisioned freedom for themselves, both from the colonial system and the domestic situations they faced. Their hopes were shattered, as most found that the lack of social equality in the army was devastating, with women sometimes being called “comfort women” (California Newsreel, S.D: accessed 2020) for the men in the liberation army. Linking Berlant’s theory with Althusser’s interpellation, one could argue that women in the army faced a double interpellation: they had to fight against the colonial regime alongside oppression and gender inequality within their own camp. The system uses their desire to trap them – the empty promises that Berlant talks about. They desired freedom and hoped by fighting for the freedom of the nation, their desire would be fulfilled and recognised by the government they fought for. Berlant puts it like this: “When we talk about an object of desire, we are really talking about a cluster of promises we want someone or something to make to us and make possible for us. This cluster of promises could seem embedded in a person, a thing, an institution, a text, a norm, a bunch of cells, smells, a good idea—whatever” (Berlant, 2011:23). Going back to how interpellation into an Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) works, we see how Berlant’s theory of a cluster of promises offered was the system’s way of ensuring that the subjects did not fight against their interpellation. For the female guerrillas, it was the right to fight as soldiers in the liberation war. However, they were denied heroine status after the war. The cluster of promises which Berlant refers to here is a neoliberal idea, but it can also be compared to interpellation.

The rape scene in the movie ultimately led to the government’s ban for ‘pornographic content.’ This was done in order to protect the dignity of the movement at the expense of the cruelties experienced by the female soldiers. One of the female fighters interviewed by Sinclair acknowledges the reality that these rape incidents did occur in real life, stating “I was raped and that is the truth. A society which denies the truth cannot develop or move forward. Saying the truth out loud is a kind of therapy and should be accepted” (California Newsreel, S.D: accessed 2020). Another female ex-combatant also echoed these words, stating that “Women went to the war to fight . . . If the war was about rape we wouldn’t have fought or won” (California Newsreel, S.D: accessed 2020). The denial by the government was a constant attempt to silence the black woman’s voice and could be the reason why there were not many female writers or filmmakers rushing to create any creative content. In Zimbabwe, the liberation army soldiers are commemorated every year and accorded the highest honour. Could such honour only be based on gender? The character of Nyasha alludes to this; when they hear that a parade is being held for those who fought in the war, Florence states “That’s for us, aren’t we heroes?” Nyasha slowly responds “No, Flame, not for women” (Flame, 1996).

It could be argued that the character of Nyasha achieves some form of success. She wanted a job in

the city, and to leave the village in the hope of a better life. Again, like the character of Tambu in *Nervous Conditions*, we see her gravitate towards education as a means to an end. Her desire for education, as Berlant would say, is a cluster of promises that makes something happen (Berlant, 2011:23). However, we quickly realise that her desire, though obtained, is partial. She does get a job, but only as an administrator in a male-dominated industry, not to mention as an ex-combat officer who is educated. Compared to other, male officers she is not where she was supposed to be. This is perfectly summarised in this quote by Nyasha: “I had to make it on my own in a man’s world... the schools whispered that all women comrades are prostitutes” (Flame, 1996). Here we see society castigating the female officers for fighting in the war. The rhetoric of them being heroes is stripped away because of their gender. Their desire for freedom is thwarted. The false freedom granted during the fight for freedom in the Rhodesian war was quickly snatched away.

### **Tsitsi Dangarembga: *Nervous Conditions* (1988)**

One cannot talk about feminism in Zimbabwe without including the work of writer and filmmaker Tsitsi Dangarembga. Her novel *Nervous Conditions* (1988) was a ground-breaking piece of literature that paved the way for African literature, not just locally but worldwide. Rosemary Marangoly, in her journal article “An interview with Tsitsi Dangarembga” (1993), gives a brief background of the writer alongside the motivations that inspire her writing. Marangoly recounts that Tsitsi Dangarembga is a woman who has experienced oppression from both Western culture (racism and patriarchy) and in her homeland of Zimbabwe (patriarchy). Born in 1959, Dangarembga moved to England with her family at the age of two. However, she moved back to Zimbabwe to finish high school. She went back to England to study medicine at Cambridge where she experienced racism. After three years, she went back to Zimbabwe, where she experienced sexism (Marangoly, 1993:309). The newly formed country was not ready for an outspoken woman like Dangarembga. Her work inspired a whole generation of other male and female writers to publish their own content. In this section, I will introduce a brief analysis of the novel *Nervous Conditions* to acquaint the reader with some of the postcolonial discourse that reverberates throughout this thesis.

### **Synopsis**

*Nervous Conditions* follows the story of the main protagonist, Tambudzai, often referred to as Tambu for short. Tambu grows up in impoverished conditions in a village and dreams of obtaining an education as a means of getting out of her circumstances. She triumphs over the gender restrictions imposed on her by her society, which gives her a sense of agency as a character. Sometimes ruthless in her motivation, Tambu discovers that her desire for an education and to be part of an elite class comes with its own downside. This is well articulated in the character of her cousin Nyasha who, having lived in the UK, comes back to Rhodesia and finds herself misplaced in a society that is meant to accept her. The hybridity she has, and which Tambudzai envied, is what leads to Nyasha’s undoing.

The women in this novel resonate with many women around the world, as they deal with issues that many face globally, like fighting against patriarchal societies, redefining gender relations and also the double interpellation of black women in marginalised societies. Henna Ahmad suggests that *Nervous Conditions* is written from a dual consciousness (Ahmad, 2010:51), based on national and colonial pathology that tries to break free from oppression. What makes the novel one of the most progressive pieces of text from Zimbabwe is Dangarembga's ability to acknowledge the oppression of women in society and culture by the patriarchal system, while also foreshadowing the possibility of a "post-colonial conceptual paradigm" shift (Ahmad, 2010:51).

It is here I come back to Althusser's concept of interpellation. Dangarembga herself uses the notion of ideology to develop both the characters and the narrative of the novel. The settings of the book can be applied to Althusser's ISA (Ideological State Apparatus) as it was set up in colonial Rhodesia, which operated systematic oppression of the Africans. Although the book has no white characters, Dangarembga is able to show the reader the effects of colonial subjugation on the characters. The effects of colonialism are not only highlighted in the book, but the state of melancholia is the undertone of the work. Referring back to Abraham and Torok (1994), they describe a melancholic as attempting to "hide, wall in and encrypt the wound" (see page 135) and hurt created. Piotrowska states that a melancholic, unlike a mourning subject, is unable to move on and there is a "natural sadness over the loss of a loved subject" (2017:48). In her essay *Melancholic Women: The Intellectual Hysteric(s) in Nervous Conditions*, Supriya Nair analyses all the women of the novel. Inspired by reading Freud's studies on the hysterical woman, she states that the book, although fictional, provides a good historical insight, suggesting that the title of the book itself, *Nervous Conditions*, reflects the women in society and stating 'a title that signifies upon the absent bodies signified, the status of the native itself is a nervous condition' (Nair, 1995:131).

Fanon puts it like this: "the colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards" (Fanon, 1952:18). Colonisation downplays the colony's culture and promotes the way the system strips away the colonised identity, replacing it with something better. Black Africans are stripped of their identity and it is a loss they can never recover from, thus creating a state of melancholia. The characters in the book struggle to choose or define who they are and what culture defines them. The women in *Nervous Conditions* are interpellated, to use Althusser's term, into two different systems, the colonial and the patriarchal systems, thus putting them under a double burden. I return to Althusser's illustration of the police officer who shouts "Hey, you there!" (2001:118) to an individual walking down the street. Althusser explains that the individual is a 'subject', elaborating on how one does not get to choose whether they are a 'subject', it is just the way they are born. In reference to the novel, one could say that the women are the subjects due to their race and gender, and do not get to choose their race or gender, as explained by Althusser. They are interpellated into the system, monitored by authority (symbolised by the police), authority here being

the coloniser and the patriarchy the hierarchy. The women are constantly being monitored. Interpellation here can be explained as ideologies (cultural values) passed on to people by those in power. Those people are expected to accept the label, hence the idea of an individual being a 'subject'. The subject internalises values and ideas and accepts them. In a patriarchal society, colonial melancholy is usually used to define the state of men. This is something that is very notable in Frantz Fanon's work. He ignores the sufferings of black women and adopts a misogynistic approach in his work. Supriya Nair states in her essay that "colonial melancholy, the condition associated with a specific history of colonialism became the ambivalently privileged position associated with the male subject. The neuroses of female subjects are not just devalued but unrecognized, either because pathological behaviours are a natural condition or because they are refused the agency" (Nair, 1995:130). So, it is no coincidence that Dangarembga's book is centred on female characters.

Set up in the 1960s during Rhodesian times, the book shows the struggles of black women under the colonial pathology and how difficult it was for them to obtain a basic right, such as education, to further themselves. Dickson Mungazi puts it like this: "colonial rule enhanced its power to control, not only education but also society itself" (Mungazi, 1989: 267). *Nervous Conditions* is "a title that signifies upon the absent bodies signified, the status of the native itself is a nervous condition" (Nair, 1995:131). Tambu's character embodies the characteristics of a traditionalist that later evolves into a progressive. She is determined to further her life, hence her fight to obtain an education, which meets the objection of her father who subjects her to the traditional domestic roles that women in that society were expected to take part in. Her father found it of no use to educate a female child, as she would one day be married and become someone else's wife, and that would be her "job" – to be a wife and a mother. On the other hand, her cousin, Nyasha, who seems to be aware of her identity crisis, does have a Western background. However, she still struggles to fit in and has problems with the fact that she is still treated like an inferior subject, that is a 'woman,' by her father; she too, despite her background, is subjected to a sexist trajectory. Nyasha wishes her mother, who is an educated woman, had more power than what is available to her.

Nyasha's family is an embodiment of contradiction. They are in the system, but they do not recognise the system. Despite having embraced Western culture, still they perceive Nyasha's anorexia as a condition that only middle-class white women suffer from. However, there is also a brilliant metaphor used by Dangarembga in relation to the body. Nyasha's body is a site of rebellion, a body which is black but her spirit wants to be white, and also not white. She wants to be a modern woman, and her beloved father and mother are in her way – forever in her way, because this is revised in her latest book *This Mournable Body* (2018) where Tambu, Nyasha's cousin, goes through the same problem.

Althusser argues that ideology is implemented through practices and rituals (2001:112). One can state that *Nervous Conditions* shows the effects of the implementation of the colonial ideology on the black Africans in Rhodesia. Colonial ideology, in simple terms, can be identified as a doctrine imposed



through racial/cultural hierarchy, dominance and supremacy over a group of people. In *Nervous Conditions*, though it lacks a significant white character, the issue of cultural and racial hierarchy is a subtle focus; what is interesting with the two main characters in the book, Nyasha and Tambu, is that although they both live under this hierarchy, they react to it differently. The release date of the book and the period the book is set in are a juxtaposition of each other. Published in 1988, eight years after Zimbabwe gained its independence from colonial rule, the story of the book is set up in the 1960's during Rhodesian times. The writer positions the book in the middle of the colonial and postcolonial era. This, I believe, is also reflected in the characters of Nyasha and Tambu.

Nyasha seems to struggle with the patriarchy of both the national (culture and tradition) and colonial trajectory, whereas Tambu acknowledges both and chooses to learn from the experiences of the women around her. Thus, she develops a more progressive post-colonial/ nationalist mentality. They are "individuals that are subjects" (2001:119) according to Althusser's ideology.

One can say that Dangarembga positions Nyasha's character as a patient. Her reflective nature, maturity and knowledge make the reader think, question and analyse the situations written in the book in a different way. Overly complicated and multifaceted, one can argue Nyasha's character embodies the effects of mixing both the colonial pathology and the national trajectory. She is highly perceptive, outspoken, and unafraid to question and challenge the patriarchy. Her perceptive nature could be due to having lived and been educated both in England and Rhodesia. As the narrative unfolds, she becomes a hysteric as well, a patient in the narrative, and it is we, the readers, who become the psychoanalysts. Following Torok and Abraham's notion of the incorporation of melancholia, her anorexia becomes the symptom of the impossibility of a quick fix for colonial melancholia as she takes it out on her body.

Nyasha has an identity crisis, thus she isolates herself, as she feels misunderstood by the people around her. The other girls do not like her because they say she behaves "too white," but she must also live in the reality of being a black woman in colonial Rhodesia. Culturally, Nyasha does not possess the cultural values that make her a "good" Shona woman. She does not speak the language, dresses differently and is rebellious towards her father. Her rebellious nature comes out in incidents, like when she gets into a fight with her father and he strikes her, and she hits him back as a protest against his orders. Her father perceives this as an act of defiance and regards it as an abomination in the Shona culture. Torok describes this kind of behaviour as aggression poured out by the melancholic due to "disappointment and mistreatment by a loved object" (1972:136), her father here being the loved object alongside her adoption of Western values, which seem to be inflicting more harm on her than good.

Althusser argues that "ideology has a material existence" (2001:112) and manifests itself through actions. Nyasha's self-destructive behaviour is confirmation of Althusser's statement. She reacts

externally (physically) to the double system that she is interpellated into: “the melancholic seems to inflict pain on themselves” (Abraham and Torok, 1972:136). Nyasha’s eating disorder is seen as a rich man’s disease and a luxury that a black woman cannot afford. Her melancholic behavioural traits are expressed through hysteria, from passive aggression to withdrawal, and anti-social behaviours. Torok adopts Sigmund Freud’s ideas on female hysteria and how it is a result of trauma that has not been properly dealt with (1972:137). Nyasha’s inferiority complex, created by her hybridity, leaves her melancholic and stuck. She is neither white enough nor black enough. Nyasha’s most memorable words would have to be “it’s bad enough . . . when a country gets colonised, but when the people do as well! That’s the end, really, that’s the end” (Dangarembga, 1988:150). Nyasha warns Tambu that her perception that Christian ways are progressive is not necessarily true, Christianity is a religion brought by the colonial settlers and was not part of the Shona culture. To her, this could have been another way of gaining control. Nyasha’s statement highlights the influence of the colonial ideologies and how they are now embodied in the psyche of the characters in the book. What is interesting, however, is her self-consciousness. She is very much aware of her struggles between fighting the national trajectory and the importance of decolonising one’s own mind (freeing oneself from the dominant ideologies imposed by colonial rule). She recognises her state of melancholia and chooses to stay there.

Tambu, just like her cousin Nyasha, is a very perceptive character. She observes the women around her and their mistakes and determines her course of action based on judging from their lives. Tambu admires her cousin Nyasha’s determination, independence and willingness to learn. However, she quickly learns that Western ideologies are not necessarily progressive or helpful to the black African. Her cousin is considered a sell-out by other girls in the mission school, because of the same characteristics Tambu admires. She sees first-hand the effects of being immersed in Western culture and how the system reacts cruelly to the Africans who adopt it through what happens to her cousin Nyasha. Thus, Tambu adopts characteristics that, metaphorically speaking, de-humanise her. Her opening statement in the book emphasises this point: “I was not sorry when my brother died, nor am I apologising for my callousness as you may define it. My lack of feeling” (Dangarembga, 1988:1). In her efforts to rise to the top, Tambu convinces herself that she has to be ruthless. The death of her brother served as an opportunity for her to gain an education. She equates education with power, neglecting to account for her double interpellation. Fanon describes how the black man wants to be white (1952:8). The white man has power and dominance and that is something Tambu craves. She sees education as her way out of her savagery; according to Fanon, “a Negro is a savage and a student is civilised” (1952:8). Interestingly, however, it is the character of Maiguru, who we find out is well-educated but still oppressed by the system. Maiguru tells Tambu, ‘What it is . . . to have to choose between self and security. When I was in England I glimpsed for a little while the things I could have been, the things I could have done if - if - if things were – different - but there was Baba wana Chido

and the children and the family. And does anyone realize, does anyone appreciate, what sacrifices were made? As for me, no one even thinks about the things I gave up.’ She collected herself. ‘But that’s how it goes, Sisi Tambu! And when you have a good man and lovely children, it makes it all worthwhile” (Dangarembga, 1988:103). She explains how she chose the traditional role of a wife and a mother, rather than going out and chasing a career and opportunities. Her choice of security shows the struggle that each character faces, which is to challenge the social and political factors that affect their lives, showing that education might not necessarily be the answer.

I will end this analysis, and indeed this chapter, by pondering on the notion of national identity. As we have seen in the analysis of the films and literature in this chapter, the roots of post-colonial melancholia stem from colonial Rhodesia. This set the tone for race relations and gender relations even after independence. One thing is clear, national melancholia, when spoken, is directly linked to the man. I explore this further in the following chapter, but I set out the premise here. The notion of nationalism, as seen in the analysis of *Flame*, is attributed to patriarchy. Despite fighting against and enduring double interpellation, black women’s fight for rights and freedom is silenced. The two decades after independence indicated the need to decolonise the mind, but also to get beyond gender norms. One thing that Dangarembga alludes to in *Nervous Conditions* is certainly the contention caused by hybridity. We see Nyasha being castigated for her hybrid nature. As discussed in the introduction, I argue that the voice of the matriarch herself, Mbuya Nehanda, was and is used to enslave the next generation. The Mugabe regime in the 2000’s ran a campaign replicating the ISA and RSA apparatus used in colonial Rhodesia to spread their nationalistic ideology. Anything that represented colonial ideology or Western development was shunned. We had to return to the Zimbabwean way of doing things, the cultures and traditions Mbuya Nehanda died protecting. However, there was a flaw in the ideology presented here. As Vera points out, colonialism is a cloud that is timeless, that we can never recover from. To ignore the effects and the psychosis induced by colonialism hinders the progress of the psyche. The melancholic is always chasing the lost object of affection. The government points towards the precolonial identity which is no longer obtainable, and the inferiority complex created by colonialism, the innate desire to be like and imitate the coloniser, still exists within the psyche. This is what we explore in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER TWO: MELANCHOLY WITHOUT THE OTHER

This chapter is inspired by Stephen Frosh's article, 'Melancholy without the other' (2006), where Frosh focuses on the "relational account that has turned into a mode of postmodernism that emphasises the productive nature of language and the importance of democratising the therapeutic process"(ibid:1). Frosh also brings an awareness of otherness as something to be both recognised and bridged" (Frosh, 2006:1). In a similar pattern, this chapter also focuses on the notion of melancholy without the other in Zimbabwe, post-independence. It looks at relationships amongst black people in post-colonial Zimbabwe and explores the grafting of a national Zimbabwean identity. As we explored in the previous chapter, melancholia is a sense of loss where the subject holds on to this loss. Any attempt to acknowledge this loss is a betrayal to the lost object of affection. As established in the previous chapter, we know that the pre-colonial identity of Zimbabwe is the lost object of affection here. As Freud explains, the melancholic is aware of who is to blame for their loss. I examine in this chapter how the Mugabe regime exploited the desire for the lost object of affection within the Zimbabwean people to promote a nationalistic propaganda and turn Zimbabwe into a totalitarian state. Frosh tells us that "there is a continuing danger of reducing otherness to something colonisable" (Frosh, 2006:1). Otherness in imperial and post-colonial spheres refers to the colonised, in this case the black people of Zimbabwe who were the other. This was asserted through dominance and power, and the subservience of the local people and culture. I propose here using Frosh's concept that melancholy without the other allows the colonised to step out of their otherness. In this situation they are no longer the other, but rather the coloniser becomes the other. In the literal sense, this happened in the election of 1979. The black majority came into power and the white people became a minority both in number and control. The black Zimbabweans gained dominance and power and anyone else was placed in the societal margins and became 'the other'. This was then invigorated with the 2000s land reform programme, where white farmers were targeted and forced from their farms by the government. This was packaged as giving the land back to 'the children of the soil,' i.e., to the rest of Zimbabwe. I acknowledge here that this story is a complex one. One could argue that the time was right for the white farmers to give up their land for Zimbabweans. However, there is no denying that the transition and the process of reclaiming the land from the white farmers was indeed a painful one for the white community in Zimbabwe. Many white Zimbabweans and foreigners left the country as it became unsafe for them. The ones that remained behind kept and keep to themselves and are not integrated into society. Unlike South Africa where post-colonial conversations are constantly being held, there is little to none in Zimbabwe.

It is important to note here that unlike her neighbour Zimbabwe did not go through some form of truth and reconciliation. No doubt the colonial system was corrupt, however, if we consider Althusser's notion of everyone being interpellated into the system. Then there must be

acknowledgement that everyone who adheres to the system are perhaps not criminals, but rather are ingrained into the system and its rules. Therefore, to move forward, the first thing is to take the system apart and for everyone to acknowledge their contribution in the system. It is my perception this was never done properly in Zimbabwe. What we found 20 years after independence is the blood bath of white farmers and a regime that replicated the oppressive nature of the colonial system.

The silence and lack of integration of the races allows for the intensification of otherness. It becomes easier to blame the other if they are not part of you. In this case, the melancholic projects the blame for their loss to the other and not towards themselves. To elaborate on this, I quote Piotrowska's work on the different ways both white and black Zimbabweans manifest melancholia in her chapter on the Harare International Festival of Arts. She states:

the white Zimbabweans unconsciously attempt to hold on to their lost object of affection i.e. not only the Western value of organisation and art but also quite obviously their dominant position in society. The black population mourns their pre-colonial past. (Piotrowska, 2018:55)

Inevitably, I believe this has created a heightened sense of protectiveness over the lost object of affection. It is important not to negate the fact that other racial groups including white Zimbabweans also manifest melancholia, although the manifestation is different to that of black Zimbabweans. For both groups, melancholia is a stumbling block to the growth of a national identity. Speaking as a black Zimbabwean, I argue here that the Mugabe regime's rhetoric of returning to our roots, tradition and culture, the 'Zimbabwean way of doing things', was and still is a huge hindrance, as it is imbued in melancholia and trauma: i.e., chasing something that is lost through the colonisation of the black Zimbabwean culture and traditions. Now if the culture was lost through generations of forced adaptation to colonial culture and we are constantly hearing that we should adopt the Zimbabwean way of doing things, using Mlambo's rhetorical question we ask, "who and what exactly is a Zimbabwean?" (2013:51). It is important to note that many white Zimbabweans supported Mugabe to begin with; some also fought with the black Zimbabweans in the Chimurenga wars. It was his subsequent corruption which later became a problem.

The account by Winston Mano and Wendy Willems in 'Debating 'Zimbabweanness' in diasporic internet forums: technologies of freedom?' (2010) elaborates how restrictive the Zimbabwean identity became post 2000s. Not only did the white people living in Zimbabwe become marginalised, but conditions were set on how to define an authentic Zimbabwean. This definition also marginalised black Zimbabweans who were either not born in the country, did not adhere to the level of patriotism required by the government or did not have strong links to the rural areas/villages. They write:

State nationalism excluded certain groups of Zimbabweans who were regarded as inauthentic and unpatriotic Zimbabweans and not considered to rightfully belong to the 'nation'. While at the eve of independence, President Robert Mugabe made a pledge for reconciliation to the white population and assured them that if yesterday 'I fought as an enemy, today you have

become a friend and ally with the same national interest, loyalty, rights and duties as myself' in the 2000s, white Zimbabweans were more and more categorised as aliens who did not have a lawful claim to Zimbabwean citizenship. Coinciding with Mugabe's numerous insults against whites, the government also introduced the Citizenship Amendment Act in 2001 which denied citizenship to anyone whose parents were born outside Zimbabwe unless he/she would renounce their claim to a second citizenship. The act not only affected white Zimbabweans but also impacted on Zimbabwe's coloured and Indian community, as well as Zimbabweans of Malawian, Mozambican and Zambian descent whose ancestors had mostly migrated to Zimbabwe to work in mines and on farms. (Mano & Willems, 2010:184)

As the daughter of an expatriate, my mother's job meant we travelled and lived in different countries. Having left Zimbabwe at the age of eleven, my family's fidelity to our beloved country and culture ensured I never severed ties to my culture. My brother, as the patriarch of the family, insisted that we always speak Shona at home and keep our Shona traditions alive. We had seen and come across many Zimbabweans whose children could not speak the language or had any knowledge of our culture. It is now that I realise that in those moments, we unconsciously questioned the authenticity of their Zimbabweanness. I recognise that we have unconsciously always been afraid of becoming those 'Zimbabweans', the ones that are Zimbabweans by name and not by nature. I believe it is this fear of having one's fidelity and authenticity questioned that has caused us to guard and conserve the little we have of our culture. However, the hybrid nature of our lives cannot be denied, more for me than the rest of my family as I have lived most of my life in the diaspora.

The Mugabe regime labelled people who left Zimbabwe to seek a better life in other countries as "not being committed to their country" (Mano & Willems, 2010:186). I believe my family and many other Zimbabweans have been fighting against this rhetoric for many years. I can only speak for myself and from personal observation/experience that there is a need to show loyalty to my culture to be called authentic. The following scenario is one of the many encounters I have had in Zimbabwe, where I felt like I have had to fight for my right to prove my authenticity as a Zimbabwean or for a national identity. Zimbabwe is among one of the many countries where getting a national identification card is compulsory. Once one reaches the age of 16, this form of identification is to be always carried. You need it for all basic things such as opening a bank account, personal verification and, the situation I found myself in, to renew your passport. Now usually this is a non-tedious process in most countries; however, since I was now over the age of 16, it meant that to renew my passport, I first needed a Zimbabwean national I.D card. As most people get their I.D card in Zimbabwe at 16, it was unusual for a 23-year-old not to have one.

Upon arrival at Makombe offices in Harare, the man doing the screenings asked me where I was born, to which I responded Mbuya Nehanda hospital Harare. In disbelief, he then proceeded to ask me where my father's village was and who was the current chief there. I did not have the answer to this. He then told me that this was the problem with all diaspora children; that we came there and had no respect for our culture and expected them to put us before the local children who had been there. He asked me how I could not know my Sabuku (village chief) and told me to go back home and come back when I

knew about my village and the chief. I must note here that this a standard procedure. Everyone who comes to the I.D office is asked about their village and who is the residing chief, regardless of whether you live in Zimbabwe. Perchance this is a way of verifying one's authenticity: if you can prove you have strong ties to your father's village, your right to a national identification is legislated; it is an informal, non-documentary means of verifying identity. I must note here that this practice is not extended to other races in Zimbabwe in particular white Zimbabweans. They are not required to state their village nor their chief. My speculation is that this is due to white Zimbabweans not being recognized as authentically Zimbabwean. Mahmood Mamdani's *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (2018) explores this notion and elaborates on how some African countries post colonialism redefined racial and ethnic identities especially in relation to the formulation of a national identity. He suggest that this is done through giving culture an authoritarian dominance and dictatorship which is exactly what we see here with reference to one having strong ties to your village and knowing your local chief.

Mano and Willems (2010) explain that people without ties to a village or a rural home were given the derogatory name of 'mabwidi emutaundi' (foolish people without rural homes) or 'manyasarandi' (183). In that moment, I found myself an outsider, denied the basic right made available to every Zimbabwean due to my dislocation and hybridity. On a literal level, the national identification card solidifies your nationality: it is your right to say I belong. The denial of one's right to an identification card takes away the legitimacy to claim a national identity. As Mano and Willems (2010) put it, "true Zimbabweans were not only those whose ancestors were born in Zimbabwe but also those who resided in or had strong links with the rural areas" (184) Despite strong links to my mother's village, this was not enough. My claiming that I was born in Harare, while also residing in a different country, invalidated my claim as mwana wevhu, a child of the soil. This was then invigorated by having to pay one of the officers to get my I.D card. I found myself deliberating how, as a people, we had created such a monolithic definition of who qualifies to be a Zimbabwean. Once again, in this moment, my dislocation was invigorated: an insider feeling like an outsider looking in.

To answer the question of who qualifies to be an authentic Zimbabwean, I revisit here Mlambo's rhetorical question in 'Becoming Zimbabwe or Becoming Zimbabwean: Identity, Nationalism and State-building' (2013). Mlambo (2013) asks:

Why had Zimbabwe failed to live up to the expectations brought about by independence of developing as a harmonious country with a common national identity? A related question is whether it had been realistic or over-optimistic for anyone to expect such an identity to develop, given the country's history. Even more pertinent questions are: To what extent was Zimbabwe ever a nation and, following that line of thinking, who exactly is a Zimbabwean? (51)

One cannot discuss the notion of identity in Zimbabwe without going into the discourse of nationalism that superseded the nation a decade after independence. I link here the concept of nationalism to one's

desire to belong. Using the Zimbabwean government's rhetoric, I define nationalism here as the coming together of the same ethnic people from the same culture and language to promote and popularise that country's interest for its population. Gatsheni and Willems (2009) discuss this in their article, 'Making Sense of Cultural Nationalism and the Politics of Commemoration under the Third Chimurenga in Zimbabwe'. They spell out that the Zimbabwean government, post 2000s, branded nationalism in a way that promoted what I have called in this study 'pure culture'. I acknowledge here that this definition is problematic: by promoting a definition of nationalism rooted in the myth of pure culture, people from different ethnic groups with different cultures were marginalised. However, I use it here to illustrate how potentially flawed the nationalism movement was/is in Zimbabwe.

However, as we explored in the introduction, Zimbabwe was not one united nation of the same ethnic people pre and post colonialism, and I reiterate here Mlambo's (2013) words, "what exactly is a Zimbabwean?" (51). What are the qualifications for one to be a patriot of the nation? Ndlovu (2009) argues that the Zimbabwean identity is particularly hard to define, stating:

like all historically and socially constructed phenomena, Zimbabwe is exceedingly difficult to define. It is a complex mosaic of contending histories and memories, making it as much a reality as it is an idea, a construction not only moulded out of precolonial, colonial and nationalist pasts, but also out of global values of sovereignty, self-determination and territorial integrity. It is an idea born out of continuing synthesis of multi-layered, overlapping and cross-pollinating historical genealogies, and contending nationalisms, as well as suppressed local and regional sovereignties. (46)

Expediting the already established fact that the pre-colonial identity of Zimbabwe is hard to define, as there was no one united nation but rather different tribes that lived divided in their own communes, it is safe to say, like all scholars before me, the Zimbabwean identity is hard to ascertain. Zimbabwe is still discovering who she is as a country. A question I have often encountered at conferences and seminars is whether I think Zimbabwe will ever recover from her colonial past. It is imperative to note here that there is no straightforward answer to this question. The desirable answer here would be 'yes', but that would fail to account for the traumas caused by nearly a century of colonial oppression alongside the many years of oppression under the Mugabe regime and its successor. The colonial regime forced black Zimbabweans to adopt colonial culture and to identify as an English man without the right to belong to Rhodesian society; the Mugabe regime forced black Zimbabweans to identify anything related to the coloniser's culture as a betrayal of the authentic Zimbabwean culture pre-colonialism, and in doing so they alienated many Zimbabweans with such a narrow construct of the Zimbabwean identity. I believe the answer to whether Zimbabwe can recover from her colonial past lays within her identity. This perhaps is a starting point.

It is my argument that Zimbabwe has had a hard time formulating a national identity. This is partially due to the refusal to acknowledge the infusing of colonial culture and the African culture, the hurt and trauma caused by colonialism, as well as the civil war and the oppressive government regime. Going



back to my initial research question for this thesis, “What is postcolonial melancholia and how does it manifest itself in Zimbabwe?” I believe the lack of a definite national identity is a symptom or perhaps a different manifestation of post-colonial melancholia. I invite the reader to ponder the following questions: 41 years after independence, can Zimbabwe heal from her colonial past? Is 41 years enough considering the political climate in the country? How has incorporation hindered the process of a national identity forming post-independence?

Where Mlambo and Ndlovu focus on the historical aspects on the nation’s identity and political developments, exploring how they affected the nation, in this chapter I take on the discourse of nationalism and identity in postcolonial settings through the lens of psychoanalysis and the textual analysis of films and literature. I reiterate here that film and literature help in understanding and revealing the ethos of culture, in denoting the social norms and values and, lastly, in some cases, acting as a mirror to society. Once again, using scholars such as Lacan, Fanon, Bhabha and Panashe Chigumadzi, among others, I explore the post-colonial condition in Zimbabwe and its role in the rise of nationalism including the ways it affected creative outputs such as film and literature. I am particularly interested in the concept of melancholia without the other. I look at the relationships between the black people of Zimbabwe after colonisation, the gender asymmetrical relationships and, most notably, the role of pure culture in the rise of nationalism. As Ndlovu and Willems point out (Ndlovu & Willems, 2009) in the 2000s, the government enforced the rhetoric of cultural nationalism using music and various forms of media to “attribute new meanings to concepts such as independence, heroes and unity” (2009:i). Therefore, it is imperative that I mention, be it in passing, the first decade of the millennium (2000-2010), better known as the ‘lost decade,’ as film and literature in Zimbabwe was not produced to the same standard or pace compared to the 1980s and 1990s. Not that film or literature was not being produced, however, most of the work was either heavily censored by the government or was government propaganda or served as informative pieces for non-governmental organisations to promote a message.

To understand the reasons why the country is where it is now, we must analyse the ‘lost decade’. The brief account I offer below is to help the reader gain understanding of internal circumstances that occurred in the country, which inevitably hindered the growth of a national identity, and how this was then reflected in film and literature.

### **The Impacts of The Land Reform Program and Gukurahundi (Civil war)**

Due to the scope of this study, I do not go into great historical detail; however, I offer a brief summary of the historical events that occurred in Zimbabwe to give the reader a better insight into events that led to the invigoration of hostile race relations and xenophobia among the native Zimbabwean tribes. This account is based on the works of historians such as Terence Ranger (2004), Darnolf and Laakso (2003) and Gatsheni Ndlovu (2012). In different ways, the land reform programme and the

Gukurahundi not only disrupted the forming of a national identity but were also contributing factors to the paucity of film and literature that was produced in the decade 2000-2010. In the edited collection, *Twenty Years of Independence in Zimbabwe: Liberation to Authoritarianism* (2003), Staffan Darnolf and Lisa Laakso recount how, although in 1980 the political oppression of black Zimbabweans stopped, this did not mend the race and social gaps, especially regarding the economic standpoint of the black majority (2003:15). As discussed in chapter one, land was a big factor in terms of its contribution to the economy. The Lancaster House Agreement of 1979 stated that the new Zimbabwean government was not to acquire land for resettlement for the next 10 years after independence (unless on a willing-seller willing-buyer basis). The British government, under Margaret Thatcher, promised the Zimbabwean government that they were to finance the land reform programme 10 years after independence. They did this in principle to give the white community time to decide whether they would wish to stay Zimbabwe or relocate elsewhere (Darnolf & Laakso, 2003:18). Relations between the black Africans also became strained as civil war, infamously known as the Gukurahundi, translating to 'the early rain that washes away the chaff before the spring rains' (Ndlovu, 2012:4), broke out between the Nkomo and Mugabe factions in January 1983. It is said that thousands of Ndebele people died during this war, which occurred between 1983 and 1987. Mugabe, with the help of the Fifth Brigade, unleashed violence, torture and murder, which others term as genocide, during this period (Darnolf & Laakso, 2003; Ndlovu, 2012) Mugabe was hailed as a hero by the Western governments for 'preventing a civil war' in Zimbabwe during this period, while the Ndebele people blamed the West for turning a blind eye to their plight.

Many believed that Mugabe had forgotten the plight of his own people and the major reasons they went to war - the land. Many farm and landowners resided mostly out of the country, contrary to what was agreed upon at Lancaster House. Ten years after the Lancaster House Agreement, no compensation was made, and the white minority still ran the economy. Mugabe came under immense pressure from his people to take the land without compensation; hence, the war veterans led people to occupy the white-owned farms haphazardly. The occupations were violent, and many white farmers and their families were displaced, tortured and some were even murdered. Mugabe let this situation prevail for two reasons. First, he was angered by the way the British government refused to 'honour their promise'; second, he also did it for selfish reasons because he feared losing elections as the war veterans were threatening to remove him from power if they were not allowed to occupy the land by force. The land reform was condemned by human rights groups and resulted in most donors taking their investments out of Zimbabwe. This also included the film industry, as most NGOs moved out as Zimbabwe was deemed unsafe and sanctions were placed on the country by major economic powers such as the EU, America and Canada, among others.

Analysing these events through a psychoanalytic lens, I re-emphasize one critical point I made at the beginning of this chapter; reconciliation was neither the heart nor the driving force of Chimurenga,

thus, little effort was made to resolve and integrate among the races after the liberation struggle. However, I note here that when Mugabe first came into power, he appeared very conciliatory, as seen in the speeches he made in the early years of his presidency (Mlambo, 2013), and he had the support of many white Zimbabweans. His reconciliatory tone did not last long, resulting in a replica of the colonial repressive system where fellow black Zimbabweans suffered in the Gukurahundi and there was a blood bath of white Zimbabweans. This is an example of the violent manifestations of melancholic remainders that Khanna identifies.

### **The Implications of Gukurahundi and Land Reform Programme**

Zimbabwe, a relatively young nation, now had to not only deal with a declining economy, but also the social psychological issue of decolonisation as well as division among the races and the tribes. Compared to her neighbour South Africa, whose national identity was now rooted in being a rainbow nation post-apartheid, a nation of many ethnicities, Zimbabwe found herself in a different predicament. There was a double interpellation of trauma, one from colonialism aided with the mourning of the lost object of affection, and the oppression exerted by the government. As mentioned before, there are few publications, discussions or conversations on decolonising the psyche of the nation post colonialism. By insisting that we do things the way our forefathers used to, the Mugabe regime failed to account for the lost century under colonial subjugation. They failed to consider that the Rhodesian way of doing things was what many generations had been born into. This was certainly the case for my grandmother and my mother. How can we go back to a place we do not fully know? The reminder of the displacement is daunting. The haunting feeling that something is missing. The demetaphorisation is also highlighted here: the inability to express this pain through language. I recognise that there is also a need for the Zimbabwean people to step out of the identity of the colonised. This is very important: an identity that was not forced upon us, but one that is organically ours. However, the trauma and civil unrest, in the words of Ahmad (2010), “makes physical decolonisation complicated” (57). Ahmad explains that decolonisation is not necessarily a physical process, but one that must be done mentally and emotionally. People still fight against the idea of the colonial trajectory being projected: a trajectory that shows white people in charge of their livelihood and person. Following the economic crisis in Zimbabwe after the land reform, it was easy for the government to project and blame the country’s failing economy on the sanctions placed on the country, coining it as the West trying to control Zimbabwe, rather than looking for a solution internally (Ndlovu, 2012).

The Mugabe regime incited fear that made multinational or racial projects difficult. The white man in Zimbabwe became the other. Although many white Zimbabweans had been born and had lived in Zimbabwe their whole lives, there was a disavowal of their national identity. I reflect here on a story I was told by an old friend whose mother’s side of the family is white Zimbabwean. After having their

assets seized and being kicked off their farm, her grandparents were adamant about staying in Zimbabwe, as it is the only home they have ever known despite the negation of their Zimbabwean identity, which led to discrimination. In the end, the grandparents could not afford to have their grandchildren visit them, as life became difficult in Zimbabwe and their source of income had been seized and eradicated. I contemplate how the grandparents could hold on to their old national identity, which is connected in both memory and experiences. Interestingly, this is also translated onto the big screen and in literature. Aside from Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing* (1950), which is written from the point of view of a white Zimbabwean, which I acknowledge is quite controversial as the country was still under the colonial Rhodesian regime, there is a finite mention of white Zimbabweans on screen or in literature produced by some black Zimbabweans. For example, in *Nervous Conditions* (1988) white people are mentioned in passing, almost as a backdrop to the main story. Further, in the film *Repented* (2018), old footage symbolising memories of the past is used to describe the white characters. However, we see a change in the novel *This Mournable Body*, (2018), in which the character of Tracey, who is one of the major characters, is white.

The Mugabe regime utilised fear and trauma to cause distrust among the races. For example, as discussed previously, ZANU PF campaigned mainly in the villages where there was the voting majority with the tag line that if people did not vote them into power, the country would go back under colonisation. I reiterate how melancholia and trauma were utilised to gain support for the regime. Most of the demographic in the rural areas and villages are older people who have experienced some form of trauma, whether personally or through a family members' experience. They remember the haunted experience under colonialism and who is to blame. By weaponising public traumatic experiences, the government created a second imprisonment of the people's freedom through haunted and ghostly memories.

If we are to explore the notion of melancholia without the other, then a reflection on the relationships among black Zimbabweans must be put at the forefront. One could argue that the civil war or Gukurahundi, as its best known, alienated the Ndebele tribe in Zimbabwe. Not only did they have to deal with the complexities of decolonisation but also xenophobia from their fellow black people. Briefly, I contemplate my subjecthood to my research once more. My father's side of the family is from Gokwe: a town where many Ndebele people were killed during the civil war. It has been my experience that in some areas up north in the Matabeleland, there is deep distrust among the Ndebele people for Shona people, not just up north but within society as a whole. Duduzile Sakhelene Ndlovu's doctoral thesis, 'Let me tell my Own Story' (2017) discusses how Gukurahundi memories are evoked in Zimbabweans living in Johannesburg due to the xenophobia they encounter as Zimbabweans living in South Africa. Among other methodologies, Ndlovu uses textual analysis to analyse two films made on the topic of Gukurahundi. They write: "Two artworks produced to document the atrocities; a film, *The Tunnel* (2010), written and produced by an 'outsider' white South African filmmaker and

musician, *Inkulu lendaba*, written and performed by victims of the violence, were used as case studies; to answer questions about the meaning, role and appropriate form for remembering Gukurahundi in Johannesburg today” (2017:i) The film *Inkulu Lendaba* (2009) is particularly important as it was written and performed by victims of Gukurahundi. This film is an expression of the pain they went through. Sakhelene’s major argument is “how a history is narrated, plays a significant role in maintaining global inequality and continuing forms of colonialism” (2017: i). It is my argument that the signing of the Unity Accord of 1987 between Robert Mugabe and Joshua Mukomo, though it was an attempt to forge peace, never fully dealt with the implications Gukurahundi had for the nation. It was simply swept under the rug. The Zimbabwean government has maintained its silence regarding this issue.

In line with my argument on reconciliation and acknowledgement, Sakhelene argues that socio economic location is important when it comes to healing, alongside the acknowledgement of traumas passed on through generations. The silence surrounding Gukurahundi made the stories of the victims less authentic due to the lack of recognition by their fellow countrymen. Being part of both the Shona and Ndebele tribe, I acknowledge there is an uneven amount of representation in films and creative outputs. Most of the films I analysed in this thesis have some form of Shona roots. I reflect on Mlambo’s (2013) rhetorical question whether the idea of representation reflected the ruling tribe. Robert Mugabe, in a state address, once mentioned that Zimbabwe was a natural Shona state. By stating this, he inevitably marginalised every other tribe and race in the country. Mlambo (2013) puts it like this:

This is, obviously, a self-serving oversimplification of the country’s past meant to legitimise ZANU-PF rule as the logical and rightful successor to Zimbabwe’s precolonial rulers of what was then, ostensibly, a united Shona nation. The reality is very different. Indeed, as the Zimbabwean scholar Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009a) has asked, do Zimbabweans exist? (51)

I ponder once more the notion of ‘pure culture’. Using Mlambo and Gatsheni’s line of argument here, one could propose that there was not/is not a common sense of nationalism or identity. Pure culture promotes, in its own way, a nationalistic narrative and agenda. If simplified, it would be the ‘Zimbabwean way’ of doing things. However, as discussed above, there is no coherent construction of a national identity. By blanketing and calling Zimbabwe a Shona nation, it ignores the practices of other tribes. Even within the Shona community, there are different types of Shona people who have their own dialects and practices. Inevitably, at some point, one will find themselves at odds or in contention with pure culture, as it has no unified foundation. We need to consider the different traditional practices of the different tribes in Zimbabwe. These practices might be similar in nature, but they are not the same. However, it is important to note that all tribes were influenced by colonial culture. This assimilation is one thing we all have in common. Hence, I argue that, at its root, the notion of pure culture is fragmented. We must acknowledge the hybridity within the culture: a

disintegration occurred. It is the failure to recognise this that makes the country melancholic. Because the government rooted the nationalism campaign on the notion of pure culture as its driving force, it inevitably failed in its purpose of bringing the nation together.

### **Psychoanalysis in Totalitarian Regimes**

I want to introduce briefly the notion of psychoanalysis perceived as rebellion in totalitarian states, which Zimbabwe became after the early 2000s. Psychoanalysis, by nature, is revolutionary. It encourages free trains of thought, which leads people to be innovative and question things around them. This goes against the aims of most totalitarian regimes, as they want to mould the minds of the public into thinking in a certain way. It is safe to presume, as we shall explore below, that one probable reason that there is a lack of psychosocial research in the country is because of the regime. Ruth Leys (2016), in 'Post-psychoanalysis and post-totalitarianism' (2016), discusses how psychoanalysis was and still is controversial in academia, even in places where it is more accepted such as America and the United Kingdom. Historically, we know that writers and thinkers including Freud and Lacan were banned in most totalitarian regimes. This was certainly the case in most eastern European countries during the cold war under Soviet Union rule (Leys, 2016).

I introduce briefly the thinking of Slavoj Žižek in *Did Someone Say Totalitarianism?* (2002); in particular, I focus on his chapter titled, 'Melancholy and the Art' where Žižek argues that totalitarian regimes frame a national identity for the people. This is especially important when a country is melancholic and is mourning the loss of her identity, as Zimbabwe is. Žižek argues that "the melancholic link to the lost ethnic object allows us to claim that we remain faithful to our ethnic roots" (2002:149). As we shall explore below, the Mugabe regime did indeed push for a national identity in attempts to mould the people's way of thinking. I further this by arguing that the lost object of affection can be weaponised by the regime by using the people's incentive to remain faithful to their ethnic roots. The traumatic experiences that my grandmother's generation endured were weaponised by the government as melancholic reminders of what the coloniser 'had stolen'. If trust was not given fully to the Mugabe regime, they would come back again. This was mainly executed through inciting fear, as the government knew that most of the older generation had encountered and witnessed the cruel conditions black people suffered through colonialism. Ndlovu (2009c) discusses this extensively in his article, 'Making Sense of Mugabeism in Local and Global Politics: "So Blair, Keep Your England and Let Me Keep My Zimbabwe"'. Ndlovu discloses how one of Mugabe's obsessions was "with the ever-existing threat of the British agenda of re-colonising Zimbabwe in general and concern over Tony Blair's interference in Zimbabwe's national sovereignty in particular" (Ndlovu, 2009c:1139). This was then weaponised through fear and communicated to the masses in the forms of national propaganda. I end this thought on this note: I address how trauma was used as a tool to reject everything Western but was also used by the government to oppress the Zimbabwean people. This is what

Piotrowska (2017) meant when she described, “critical nationalism that emerges as melancholic reminders” (135).

I am reminded of Abraham and Torok’s (1972) thoughts that the melancholic remembers to whom they lost the lost object of affection. They remember colonialism and what it did to them. However, in this case, the government replicated the oppressive nature of the colonial regime. Perhaps the melancholic, despite acknowledging the pain caused, would rather accept inflicted pain coming from within rather than it being caused by external forces. I have heard shared sentiments in passing conversations with many Zimbabweans, particularly the older generation, where they express that it is better for us to suffer, but we are in charge. Whereas the younger generation view it as bondage. In particular, I mention one quotation from Facebook, and for privacy reasons I do not mention the name: “Zimbabwe is 40 years, but I still feel like we live in bondage”. As a young Zimbabwean woman, I acknowledge that the younger generation’s fidelity to our beloved nation is consistently questioned. Unlike our forefathers, whose fidelity to the Zimbabwean identity is tied to trauma both by memory and experience, this is not the case for the younger generation. As someone born in the 1990s, I observe that the younger generation has been fighting a different war. It is the war of survival. Surviving a failing economy, oppressive government and dealing with a national legacy handed over to us imbued with trauma. We are not oblivious to the plight of our ancestors and how they fought so we can have freedom; however, the question is where do we go from here as a nation from here? If there is policing of the freedom gained, it is not freedom at all.

### **Nationalism in the Media**

I now turn my attention to the way the nationalism campaign was exerted through the media in Zimbabwe. Terence Ranger (2005), in ‘The rise of patriotic journalism in Zimbabwe and its possible implication,’ explores how the idea of nationalism could be and has been detrimental to Zimbabwe’s society. He explains how being patriotic about your country, in this case Zimbabwe, somehow led to the loss of freedom of speech and expression in the Zimbabwean media. He writes that “Zimbabweans ought not to be asked to tolerate destructive journalism in their country today because the Rhodesians used to do much the same or because the Western press is prejudiced” (Ranger, 2005:9). Using Zizek’s argument that a totalitarian state moulds a national identity for the people and tells them what to believe, the resemblance of the system built by the Mugabe regime to the Rhodesian system is uncanny. In both systems, black Zimbabweans lost their right to freedom of speech or expression and were encouraged to distrust any news sources that were not Zimbabwean because of Western bias. The major difference between the two is that the Mugabe regime used the masses’ desire to regain the lost object of affection to take away their freedom, followed by oppression to keep them under control. Ranger also aligns with this train of thought and argues that the way the Rhodesian government used destructive journalism to control the masses was the same as the Zimbabwean government today.

In the year 2002, the Minister of Information, Jonathan Moyo, introduced a policy he called the 75% percent local content (Maodza,2013), which is also discussed by Piotrowska (2017). This meant that most content on TV, radio and in newspapers had to be local content and was controlled by the government. This was one of the many ways that propaganda was produced by the government to control the people. Truth and freedom were no longer at the heart of journalism or the expression of creative outputs. There was a limitation to how far one could express themselves through art. The state viewed people who dared to question the government as traitors. Zizek explains that one way to implement a socialist ideology is not by shared beliefs but shared guilt. The shared guilt is the fear of betraying the lost object of affection. Ranger (2005) explores how this guilt was invigorated in the Zimbabwean media by discussing one newspaper heading which stated “Traitors Do Much Damage to National Goals.” (11). Ranger elaborates how the definition of sell outs and traitors had changed as “the characters on either side of that same line have changed greatly in forty years” (Ranger, 2005:11)

The political situation in Zimbabwe drove away most foreign investors, creating an almost impossible environment for people of different races, mainly white people, to voice their opinion with the rise of nationalism. The post-colonial context in Zimbabwe was supposed to breed sovereignty, a new positive national identity; instead, an anti-colonial nationalism emerged. In *Some Kinds of Childhood*, Muponde (2015) explores the definition of postcolonialism and post nationalism and what it means in Zimbabwe. He discusses the resistance to the term post nationalism and the negative connotations regarding the ideology of post colonialism stating:

in the Zimbabwean context, the militant, masculinist and narcissistic narrative of the nation extols the sacrifices and loyalties of the sons of the soil and children of resistance. Now called war veterans castigates those who do not reside within the ambit of this patriotic narrative as sell-outs, terrorists, puppets of the West and the lost children of the revolution. (144)

The invisible undertone here could be said to be that if one is to be deemed patriotic, you must push the national rhetoric being pushed by the government. Westerners were welcome if they did not voice their opinion.

### **Framing and Shaping Identity Through the Lens of Creative Outputs**

In this section I tap into my experiences as a Zimbabwean who was living in Zimbabwe in the era now known as the Jonathan Moyo local content era. I acknowledge that in many ways the indoctrination that Ndlovu and Willems (2009b) coin as cultural nationalism in their article, ‘Making Sense of Cultural Nationalism and the Politics of Commemoration under the Third Chimurenga in Zimbabwe,’ was a movement that entranced many Zimbabweans including my family. Ndlovu and Willems disclose how among various other mediums, music was used as a driving force for the nationalism agenda. Music galas and concerts became very popular and were used to promote unity



and the cultural independence of Zimbabwe from colonial rule. I acknowledge the impact this had on me. I was once asked what was the one thing that makes me feel connected to Zimbabwe. My answer is always Zimbabwean music. The strongest tie I have to my beloved country is through music. I am not ambivalent to the fact that this, perhaps, stems from the indoctrination of cultural nationalism. However, it something that I attribute to being Zimbabwean, some form of cultural heritage. Ranger (2017) discusses how Jonathan Moyo used the language of music to promote propaganda:

his jingles [were] incessantly repeated on TV and radio; his concerts and CDs. The revolutionary message had been transmitted 'through the language of music' and such music 'will always be recognised and loved by true patriots'. Great artists 'noticed nobility behind the efforts of the Department' and gave it a voice. But if the message is claimed as global, its expression has adopted the rhetoric of heroes and 'sell-outs': in the 2000s the voice comes as it did in the 1960s (but not in the 1980s) from that patriotic place of last resort. (12)

Using this line of thinking, I suggest that although Moyo's policies were propagandistic, they also achieved what they set out to do. They particularly gave the young generation something to hold on to that was Zimbabwean: from new genres of music, now popularly known in Zimbabwe as urban grooves, to local TV dramas that portrayed modern day to day lives in Zimbabwe such as *Studio263*. This would perhaps would not have happened if the 75% local content rule had not been placed. There is no negating Ranger's argument here that music was used to draw in the masses and conform them to the patriotic message being sold by the government. However, I argue, as one who was perhaps interpellated into this system at the time, that there was some form reciprocation from the people. In order to be in the system, there must be participation. It is my perception that this era gave birth to a move in Zimbabwean music that is still being enjoyed by many Zimbabweans globally despite their political affiliation. It forced Zimbabweans to recognize local talent which we might have otherwise overlooked. Now one of the many way Zimbabweans at home and in the diaspora celebrate their culture is through a shared love of music. This is one way, perhaps, that the nationalism movement in Zimbabwe had a positive impact

The decade infamously known as the lost decade (2000-2010) saw a decrease in the once promising film and literature being produced. The few writers who have written about this period, including Piotrowska (2017), cite the decrease as a result of the obvious political, economic and financial circumstances surrounding Zimbabwe at the time. One thing I must note is that despite people's passions, the government provided little training for young filmmakers. As Piotrowska (2017) notes, a "new generation of filmmakers are not being trained and most people do not even know how to dream anymore about films they would like to make" (100). I must note, however, a few films were made in this decade, films such as Dangarembga's *Kare Kare Zvako: Mother's Day* (2005) and *Pamvura* (2005), also directed by Dangarembga. I use these two examples to illustrate how finances may have also played an important role in the lack of films being produced. Dangarembga is a well-established novelist who could have had access to funds that some other Zimbabwean filmmakers did not have.

I must admit that I re-evaluated my definition of the purpose of film, literature and, in some ways, television, due to the scarcity of the outputs produced. Not negating the fact that the quality of the creative outputs produced, be it literature or film, was below par when compared to works such as *Neria* (1991) and *Flame* (1996), to mention a just few. Perhaps despite the lack of funds and quality, what mattered was the rediscovery of the Zimbabwean voice. Zimbabwean stories which were told in local TV soaps such as *Gringo* or the famous *Studio 263* (2003) did not gain international recognition, but they were Zimbabwean. They were a representation of Zimbabwean society at the time.

Seeing that there was scarcity of film and literature produced, television also played an important part in cultural nationalism. Regarding series such as *Gringo Ndiyani* (2002, 2005) and *Studio 263*, which became TV sensations in many Zimbabwean homes, one cannot reflect on Zimbabwean culture in the early 2000s without considering how these series became staples in our culture. Of the two, *Studio 263* was more modern and showed aspects of hybridity in Zimbabwean culture. The actors mainly spoke in English and the script reflected the tribulations of young people in Zimbabwe at the time. Nevertheless, these series had to abide by propaganda set by the government. For example, in *Studio 263*, many loved the main character, Vimbai, played by the late Anne Nhira, as she embodied the perfect moral compass expected by society. She was not promiscuous and was respectful of her parents among many other qualities. It is interesting to note that the series embraced hybrid qualities, which always outraged those who are purist. For example, an episode that caused quite a commotion was when Vimbai kissed Tom Mbambo, played by Ben Mahaka. This was a first for the TV series, as the idea of expressing sexuality was and still is, to a certain extent, taboo in society, yet alone being depicted on screen. We see here art imitating real life, as art highlighted the contention between pure culture and hybridity. Moyo's policies inevitably became ineffective as most people began to subscribe to satellite television such as DSTV or what was known as WEE satellite, which gave viewers access to South African and Botswanan television channels.

The turn of the decade marked a slight rise in independent films made in Zimbabwe. Notable examples are Joe Njagu and Rufaro Kaseke's *Lobola* (2010), which Piotrowska (2017) discusses in depth, but I mention here briefly. The film taps into the issue of identity, traditions and culture. Both men said they found it ridiculous that the customs of Lobola, which is the tradition of paying a dowry, is still practised in Zimbabwe today. At the turn of the decade, beginning in 2010, there was an influx of independent film makers emerging from Zimbabwe. For example, Njagu and Kaseke's creative output reflected the mind of the people and not the government. It is my argument that alongside the brief slight improvement in the economy, the increase of independent films reflected the fact that the people did not completely accept the government's nationalist ideology. Many people, mostly the young people, embraced their hybridity, which they were taught to disavow. There is an embrace of a global

identity, but this is never without guilt. As Muponde (2015) mentions, we have become the lost children of the war, lost children of the soil; we have forgotten the reasons why our forefathers went to war. This is where the guilt comes from; however, there is a recognition among the young people to move forward, I explain this further below.

It is important to note that *Lobola* became popular again in June 2020, as the government introduced a marriage law which exempted those who wanted to marry but who could not afford the Lobola fine. This law was met with mixed reviews as many took to social media platforms to air their grievances. Some condemned the government's callousness in abandoning an intricate part of our culture, while others rejoiced in the abandonment of what some called a backward practice. It is important to note that age groups also influenced the divide in opinion. The older generation seemed to condemn the abandoning of the culture, whilst the younger demographic praised it. It is my argument that the older generation tend to be more melancholic than the younger generation. As Žižek (2002) suggests, the melancholic should use their melancholia to retain their identity. He suggests that if you adopt mourning, which he identifies as "a kind of betrayal, the 'second killing' of the (lost) object" (141). Whereas the younger generation is perhaps not stuck but going through introjection: a recognition for the need to move forward and to free be from the shackles and hauntings caused by melancholia.

As more people begin to recognize the need for incooperation, the most important question becomes how to begin the process. I refer to my original intention for this chapter, which was to look at the relationships among black Zimbabweans in postcolonial settings. As discussed, we see that unity among black Zimbabweans was very difficult. The formation of a national identity was difficult because of the government's repressive state apparatus, alongside the mixture of ideological state apparatus. The government replicated the colonial system. Inevitably, many Zimbabweans reacted to the postcolonial settings in a different way, as we shall explore below.

### **Mourning without The Other: *Repented* (2019)**

The film *Repented* (2019), written by Stanley Makuwe and directed by Agnieszka Piotrowska, embodies the process of introjection : the process of a melancholic subject letting go of the lost object or object of affection to mourning, releasing it and recognising that it is never coming back. This is also, feasibly, a different approach to the postcolonial situation in Zimbabwe; most notably, between genders and just among black people in general. What we see in *Repented* is a dialogue among black Zimbabweans without the coloniser but still acknowledging the effects that they caused. I refer to an earlier point where I stated that mourning without the other helps the colonised to step out of their otherness and the coloniser becomes the other.



**Figure 3:1** , A poster of the film *Repented*, Source: [agnieszkapiotrowska.co.uk](http://agnieszkapiotrowska.co.uk).

Although *Repented* was released in 2019, it highlights a different approach to nationalism and the postcolonial experiences of black people after colonialism. It is also important to note, seeing that the film was released in 2019, how long it has taken for such a piece of work, directly dealing with how colonialism impacted relationships among black people, to be produced. *Repented* takes the viewer through the recovery of the shattered pieces, trying to put things back together. The story of *Repented* allows us to envision what Fanon (1952) calls the lived experience of black people. The two main characters live and experience life in colonial Rhodesia, but now have the task of decolonising their postcolonial psyche. There is a reconciliation that happens in the film that, perhaps, symbolises what needs to happen in the nation.

*Repented* was a collaborative effort between Piotrowska, who produced the film, and Zimbabwean award-winning playwright, Stanley Makuwe. Makuwe originally wrote the story line of *Repented* as a play titled

*Finding Temeraire* (2017). In Piotrowska's article (2021), 'Repented Flora and Dambudzo', we learn that Makuwe's inspiration for writing this play was "to explore the legacy of colonialism in romantic relationships, not just in black and white encounters but also between black Africans" (1). It is vital to note that most written works had focused on how the legacy of colonialism affected the cross-cultural/cross race relationships. I argue that what makes *Finding Temeraire* and *Repented* unique are their ability to explore how black people's relationships amongst themselves were affected by colonialism. It is important to note that Makuwe wrote this play when he had left Zimbabwe.

Referring to Bhabha's concept of the Third Space, I propose that there is proven validity as to how one can reflect upon leaving one's country and encountering a different way of thinking. The Third Space allows us to ask questions which a previous environment might not have permitted. There is room for discussions and reflections that enable cultural evolution and evaluation. This was certainly the case for Doris Lessing when she wrote *Grass is Singing* after leaving Rhodesia, as for Dangarembga with *Nervous Conditions* and Makuwe with *Finding Temeraire*. In the literal sense,

being away from Zimbabwe allowed the writers to not look at the country through the gaze of nationalism but through the gaze of the Third Space: a space that allows one to reflect and even recognise errors in one's culture while also engaging in dialogue that allows for cultural evolution. We cannot ignore the political climate, especially the totalitarian state in Zimbabwe under the Mugabe regime. Alternative thinking was labelled unpatriotic; therefore, to break away from this herd way of thinking one had to physically move away.

Lastly, it is interesting to note that when it came to producing the play, Makuwe approached Piotrowska to produce it (Piotrowska, 2021). It is my understanding that Makuwe approached Piotrowska, who was a foreigner in Zimbabwe to produce the play because, unlike some Zimbabwean producers or directors, she was not bound by the chains of nationalism. She was able to tell the story certainly not without fear, but in its authenticity, without holding back. This brings me back to chapter one, where I discussed the notion of voice for Zimbabwean creatives. Perhaps it is not that we do not want to creatively voice our opinions, but for some the cage of nationalism is a barrier. It is the loyalty to what Freud calls the *imago*, which is related to the ego, and in this case can mean national pride, which keeps us stagnant. Piotrowska (2017) discusses this extensively in her chapter, 'Mourning and Melancholia'.

The screen play that started as *Finding Temeraire*, which became *Repented*, the narrative can be summarised as reconciliatory. On the surface, this reconciliation is between two ex-lovers who have shared a night of passion. Piotrowska (2021) summarises it as follows:

In *Finding Temeraire* and then *Repented* Makuwe explores the feminine power through writing a voice of a black maid, meaning somebody who in the original colonial context had no power whatever and no voice. In his writing, Makuwe restores Primrose's voice, which then delivers some kind of redemption to the two characters as well as the harsh judgement on the colonial and postcolonial system.

Against the background of an actual mining place Mashava, Makuwe's two hander depicts colonial relationships in which there was a place for a black man like Temeraire who, through his plumbing skills and his personal charisma, earned a place at the Master's table. Primrose was in this system the lowest of the low: she was a maid with no power, except her sexual power, namely that of a young, attractive woman. That leads her to moments of ecstasy with her lover Temeraire, but also it is her tragic downfall. In a harrowing monologue, Primrose confesses that she is the mother of his son, a mother who, faced with his coldness and the indifference of the world, had a psychotic breakdown and murdered her baby soon after his birth. (2)

I would like to expand on the concept of reconciliation I mentioned earlier. As Makuwe (Piotrowska, 2021) explains, he wrote the work to explore how the postcolonial sphere impacted relationships, in particular black relationships. *Repented* allows room for that dialogue to ensue. The anger that Primrose feels is not unwarranted. Taking an Althusserian approach, Primrose has to fight both the patriarchy and a racist colonial society. She gets the short end of the stick when it comes to the fruits of their moment of passion.

Temeraire completely abandons Primrose; not only is Primrose rejected by her object of affection, but he leaves her in the hands of the system to be punished for something they had done together. She ultimately says to him, “you cannot afford to look away this time. Face your demons” (Repented, 2018) In confronting Temeraire, Primrose takes back her power and her voice, which had been stripped many years earlier. It is important to note that Primrose is desperately in love with Temeraire, but she also recognises that many other people/women are. She is in love with him as the personification of the successful black man. Temeraire is a perfect embodiment of what it means to benefit from being interpellated into the system and not resist your interpellation. Primrose forces Temeraire to watch her breakdown and recognise the pain she has had to endure. Interestingly, Temeraire notes in his narration that after her breakdown, Primrose does not leave but keeps coming back to him. Even though she has metaphorised her pain, she is still stuck.

From the opening sequence, it is clear to the audience that both Primrose and Temeraire are stuck. There is a gloom that precedes them. Temeraire is in what looks like a run-down house filled with cockroaches; his demeanour is that of a drunk person who is defeated. Primrose lets the viewer know that Mashava, where Temeraire lives, used to be a thriving place in the good old days. It is made known that Temeraire was quite popular and had white friends despite being a black man and a plumber. Almost in disgust Primrose asks, “Where are all the white people?” to which Temeraire responds in a sombre way, “they left”. There is a sadness regarding this state of affairs. As the white people leave, Temeraire is left with nothing. His depression is a manifestation of postcolonial melancholia. It also shows how the nationalism movement in Zimbabwe failed to account for the black people like Temeraire, who had benefited from the colonial system. Their story was, perhaps, not one of trauma and haunted memories.

There is a clear difference in the treatment Primrose receives from society compared to Temeraire. However, that is superseded by the way that Temeraire abandons her. It is painfully obvious to both the viewer and Primrose that Temeraire misses the position he once occupied in society. Temeraire is black but he is completely interpellated to the system of the white man. He does not see it as a problem because there are benefits for him in this system. These benefits cause him to completely lose his own identity. As a result, in postcolonial Zimbabwe, when all the white people have left, he is totally lost he is bereft of any identity. Unlike Primrose, Temeraire feels some sense of belonging in the colonial system, which also comes with some form of economic power. No doubt this elicits some form of resentment from Primrose.

The climax of the movie comes as the viewer discovers that Primrose has killed their child and ends up in jail. She ties Temeraire up and begins to torture him; perhaps this is the only way he will listen or pay attention. Primrose elicits what Khanna (2003) describes as the melancholic exhibiting violent triggers. The difference here, however, is that Primrose releases Temeraire after airing her grievances. She realises her lost object of affection, which is her dead child. Where the melancholic recognises

who is to blame for their loss, Primrose blames both Temeraire and the colonial system for her loss. We see this when she takes Temeraire to the place where she buried their son: in the white only sewer. The visceral realisation here is the fact that her hate for Temeraire and his devotion to the system is so great that she buries their child in white men's faeces. Temeraire's recognition of her pain enables Primrose to begin the process of introjection, to let go and move on. This illustrates how engaging in discourse makes room for some form of release; thus, it brings me back to my initial aim for my thesis, that is, to encourage the initiation of dialogue in relation to post-colonial melancholia and how we view the discourse.

I conclude this chapter on this thought. It is important to recognise how most of the postcolonial writers allude to the breakdown in the psyche of black people because of the traumas caused by colonialism; this is the case with creatives from Dangarembga in *Nervous Conditions* and *This Mournable Body* and Makuwe in *Repented*. This, perhaps, is a call to recognise the importance of decolonising the psyche. As Mlambo (2013) states, the 2000s presented an opportunity for a harmonised formation of a national identity; however, as we discussed in this chapter, this was not the case. The government's nationalist propaganda, which was implemented through a replication of the colonial repressive state apparatuses (RSA) and Ideological state apparatus (ISA) ideology's, created further problems in bringing us together as a nation. The nationalist movement, if executed correctly, avoiding totalitarianism and promoting unity, would have been a great start to the decolonisation of the black Zimbabwean psyche, recognising rather than denying the implications of colonialism on society. However, nationalism brought about contention and confusion, as the ideology behind the movement neglected to take on board that mimicry and hybridity of colonial culture had now become embedded in our psyche. Mimicry and hybridity, in a way, aided the fight against the interpellation forced upon black Zimbabweans in the Mugabe regime. I explore this in the next chapter.

### CHAPTER 3: MIMICRY, MASQUERADE & HYBRIDITY

This chapter continues the discussion started in the previous chapter on nationalism, pure culture, and hybridity. In Chapter Two, we discussed how the nationalist movement disparaged any hybridity within the culture and society. In this chapter I elaborate and analyse how flawed this approach is with respect to post-colonial theories such as hybridity and mimicry. What began as mimicry of the colonial culture resulted in the hybridity of both the colonial culture and Zimbabwean culture. The Mugabe regime's nationalist movement failed to consider what Fanon calls the inferior complex, which had developed in the psyche of black Zimbabweans because of colonialism. Mimicry and hybridity became integrated into our traditions and culture. From the outset I argue that mimicry perhaps became a way of resisting interpellation into the totalitarian regime. There is also an ironic compromise taking place here. It is this compromise that I explore in this chapter.

When dealing with the psychoanalytic, at a certain point or stage one inevitably becomes a subject encapsulated in the research. In my case, the words making the *unconscious conscious* become personal and synonymous with my research. In the introduction to this study, I briefly mentioned the discourse of hybridity and pure culture, and how that affects one's identity and defines the notion of nationalism. It is here I elaborate further on the notion of identity and hybridity. Inspired by Gramsci, I acknowledge and establish the position from which I speak (discussed in Piotrowska, 2017:8) which in this chapter is the disposition of my hybridity. According to Bhabha, hybridity also involves the mimicking of a culture different to one's native culture. I expand on this in the following paragraphs.

I identify with the writings of Magda Schmukalla in her unpublished PhD thesis entitled *Artistic Ruptures and Their Communist Ghosts* (2017, Birkbeck University, London) where she describes her family's journey, her father's in particular, in communist Poland. Like myself, she draws on the art of storytelling from her father to bring to life these lived experiences of her loved ones. The haunting in her memories is transparent, and through what Frosh described as the vertical, which is when haunted memories pass from one generation to the next: in this case through oral story telling. Inevitably, as descendants of this past generational trauma, we are also patients, subjects unmasking our conditions (see Schmukalla, 2017:8). The word unmasking here is key. In *Womanliness as a masquerade* (1929), Joan Rivière discusses how women who exhibit strong masculine traits might don a womanly mask to avoid being feared by men. In my discussion of the discourse of hybridity, mimicry, and the inevitable contention with pure culture, I ponder on the idea of a masquerade for one who is of a hybrid nature, which is the essence of hiding part of one's identity. In post-colonial Zimbabwe one might put on a mask to mimic the idea of what one thinks will be accepted based on individual interactions. For fear your hybridity will stick out, you mask it. The mask here signifies a momentary identity. This is the "camouflage practiced in human warfare" (Lacan in Bhabha, 2012:121),



where to camouflage is to hide a part of yourself in order to engage with society.

Derived from colonial culture, I explore the tension between the desire for and protection of the missing object (as identified in chapter one, this is the authentic Zimbabwean identity or pure culture), mimicry (of western culture alongside the forced adaptation of colonial culture) and hybridity. To demonstrate how this is reflected in society and culture, I conduct a textual analysis of *This Mournable Body* (2018) by Tsitsi Dangarembga in which I explore the potential dangers of mimicry and hybridity. I also evoke my personal experiences along with interviews with Joe Njagu, Charmaine Mujeri, and Ellah Wakatama to answer the following questions: What can the textual analysis of a text, be it film or literature, reveal about postcolonial melancholia in Zimbabwe? How is the discourse of mimicry and hybridity perceived in a postcolonial context?

It is important to note that my understanding at the beginning of the research was that hybridity and mimicry were indicators of what it meant to be a global citizen. However, as my research has progressed, I have found in postcolonial spheres that this is not the case. My disposition on hybridity and mimicry was void of any historical background in relation to my family and nationality. One could also say I negated to factor in the effects of the transgenerational trauma of colonialism and how this affected my way of thinking. There was a complete disavowal on my part. This research has uncovered the unconscious, although of course the unconscious can never be fully unearthed. In this chapter, I attempt to combine my understanding of Homi Bhabha's foundational work with my experience, which I evoke in an auto-ethnographic mode. My aim is to elucidate the manifestations of mimicry, hybridity, and identity in the postcolonial setting and their role in compounding the melancholic climate in the country.

### **The Concept of Mimicry**

Homi Bhabha's complicated yet insightful chapter on 'Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse' (1984, 2012) begins with a quote from Jacques Lacan who identifies mimicry as the "technique of camouflage practiced in human warfare" (Bhabha, 2012:121). Camouflage gives the impression that mimicry is something that hides in plain sight and can be construed as a negative concept if it needs to be hidden. I offer the example of the army uniform. Made of a material called the disruptive pattern, the brown, green and cream on the material resemble the natural colours of the earth. The primary aim is to camouflage the soldiers against the terrain and surrounding environment. The soldiers thus hides in plain sight. This is a tactic that has been used in many wars, including WW2 and the guerrilla war in Zimbabwe. However, although they try to harmonise with the background, they remain visible. Upon close inspection of the background, one can tell the soldiers are not part of the terrain but mere imitators of it. We cannot hide mimicry. It will always be there, brooding in the background. Mimicry is not authentic but merely a copy.

We can define mimicry in postcolonial discourse as the imitation of the colonial culture, language

and, in most cases, ways of thinking by ‘the other’ or the colonised. Mimicry predates hybridity. Unlike the latter, which involves the adaption of said culture, mimicry starts off with pure imitation. Bhabha defines colonial mimicry as “the desire for a reformed, recognisable other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (2012:122). Perhaps the aim of the forced adaptation of colonial culture was to create a recognisable other who remains inferior and does not have the same political, systematic, and racial privileges. I believe Bhabha’s definition highlights the disparity in the ‘other’. The emphasis is on the difference. Although the other becomes like the coloniser, there is always a difference. Although Bhabha does not explicitly mention it, the difference lies on the surface. The other can change their mannerism, language, and ways of dressing to mimic the coloniser, but their skin colour remains the same. They will always be not white. This is the difference that creates the disparity. Briefly, I note that this correlates with the discourse of embodiment. Rather than embodiment bringing visibility, the black body is invisible. Joshua Hall, in his article ‘Revalorized Black Embodiment: Dancing with Fanon’ (2012), discusses how the black body is both objectified and a subject. He asserts that “as opposed to being a meaning-making subject, the black person in an antiblack racist society is delegated to being part of the furniture of the white world” (2012:279).

To elaborate on this further, I refer to my analysis of *The Grass is Singing* in Chapter Two; I noted here that the violent tendencies exhibited by Mary to Moses are a result of the unspoken sexual tension between the two characters. As Piotrowska describes it, this is fuelled by the prohibition of touch, the inability to express and act on these desires (see Piotrowska, 2017:34). However, on a literal level, Mary slaps Moses for answering her in English. She perceives him as mocking or mimicking her. In Rhodesian society, the black man should not be able to speak perfect English but just enough for a white Rhodesian to understand. Building on Piotrowska’s notion of the prohibition of touch, I suggest that by speaking, Moses steps out of his invisible embodiment and becomes visible. It is possible that Mary begins to see Moses as a man and not just a black man; this validates her feeling towards him as she sees he is there, visible and human. Her violent assault is then triggered by this realisation alongside sexual desires she cannot act upon.

Circling back to the notion of how, in the discourse of mimicry, emphasis is placed on difference, such as the difference between the coloniser and the colonised, Bhabha further argues that the difference is ambivalent and a contradiction. In order for successful mimicry to lead to hybridity there must be “slippage”, which is a loss. The loss in this case pertains to culture, traditions, land, and power. This loss leaves the colonised uncertain as to their identity. One could argue that this slippage allows the coloniser to have power over the other; however, it could also be subversive. It is this subversiveness which I explore.

One of the ways of explaining how slippage causes the colonised to be subversive is to relate it to the idea of desire. I argue that mimicry can derive from desire, a sense of longing to be part of something.

You see something and you like it; hence you imitate it. This can be linked to the Lacanian *l'objet petit* – the object *cause* of desire. Jacques Lacan, in his seminar VI (1958) *Desire and the interpretation of desire* discusses the notion of desire and fantasy, while more recently Lewis Kirshner in his article 'Rethinking Desire: The Objet Petit A in Lacanian Theory' (2005) builds on this notion of fantasy and desire. Lacan argues that human beings are on a quest to fulfil the hopelessness and emptiness they feel, the objet petit he posits is built as a fantasy to fulfil this desire. As Lacan explains, "The *objet petit a* is a fantasy that functions as the cause of desire; as such, it determines whether desire will be expressed within the limits of the pleasure principle or "beyond," in pursuit of an unlimited *jouissance*, an impossible and even deadly enjoyment"(in Kirshner, 2005:83). Bhabha, who himself is also a Lacanian, also touches on how mimicry can be the highest form of flattery, the desire to be wanted and seen. I also refer to Fanon (1952) where he talks about how black men want to be white; he elaborates further and says that the aforesaid black man, when he arrives from the colonies to France, attempts to mimic what it is like to be the perfect French man, abandoning any creole slang or traditions in the hope of fitting in. The problem is one of authenticity; the creole man by race and tradition is not French.

It is therefore possible to question whether the flattery engendered by mimicry lies in free will or choice. If all ex-colonies were under a colonial system, were their actions not a result of their embodiment in the system? Returning to Althusser's notion of interpellation, if one is a subject of the system it is therefore safe to presume one's actions are premeditated by the system because of subjecthood. For example, if a civilian gets stopped by the police, they have to exhibit mannerisms that prove to the officers they are innocent. Their action is not a choice but a precautionary measure. That type of mimicry is established through violence or farce, thus colonial mimicry cannot be flattery. This also applies in the post-colonial world. Fanon's body of work is geared towards the colonisation of the psyche in a post-colonial world: he recognises the effects of the colonial systems on the psyche and the unconscious of those colonised after colonialism and how this influences people's behaviours and ways of thinking. They remain dependent and indoctrinated with the coloniser's way of thinking. A quote from Sir Edward Cust who was a member of the British parliament elaborates on the point made above, "to give to a colony the forms of independence is a mockery; she would not be a colony for a single hour if she could maintain an independent station" (Bhabha, 2012:121), Ironic compromise and uncertainty thus shadow the discourse that is mimicry.

### **From Mimicry to Hybridity**

Bhabha expands and concludes his argument on mimicry on a rather sobering note. He contends that mimicry is a failed concept as it produces imitators and not "real English men". This is where it becomes subversive and the power of the coloniser is weakened. If the goal was to make the colonised resemble the coloniser, then the system and ambivalence work to dismantle this goal. As slippage

slowly strips away the colonised identity, it leaves them with a hybrid of the identity they are mimicking and parts of their own. Bhabha expands on his theories from 1984 and explains how mimicry leaves the colonised uncertain. It is in their otherness, I believe, that the subject must find their identity.

The ambivalence of colonial authority repeatedly turns from mimicry a difference that is almost nothing but not quite to menace a difference that is almost total but not quite. And in that other scene of colonial power, where history turns to farce and presence to a part, can be seen the twin figures of narcissism and paranoia that repeat furiously, uncontrollably. In the ambivalent world of the not quite/not white, on the margins of metropolitan desire, the founding objects of the Western world become the erratic, eccentric, accidental *objets trouvés of the colonial discourse- the part-objects of presence. It is then that the body lose their representational authority.* (Bhabha,2012:131).

The ambiguity Bhabha refers to here lies in the way in which the coloniser's culture now resembles the colonised but is not quite the same. It is less like their own culture and more like the coloniser's. Undoubtedly there is ambiguity in our culture, including language and certain traditions in Zimbabwe. Some of this is a result of Western and Rhodesian infusion /forced adaptation. For example, in most government offices, parliament, public courts, and places of business, English is the language used. Other Western traditions such as white weddings are now a huge part of the culture and a societal norm that was not the case in pre-colonial Zimbabwe. In precolonial Zimbabwe, only the Lobola ritual, among other traditional steps, symbolised the union of two families in Zimbabwe. Nowadays, most people observe both traditions.

I refer here to the definition I gave in the introduction regarding the discourse of hybridity. Bhabha defines hybridity as "the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities...the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal" (2012:159). The productivity of the colonial power lies in how well they infuse their own customs and traditions into the colonised. They assert their domination by allowing the colonised to be recognised not as equal but subversive, submitting to the dominant culture as superior. Bhabha elaborates that, "colonial hybridity is not a problem of genealogy or identity between two different cultures... it is that the difference between cultures can no longer be identified or evaluated as objects of epistemological or moral contemplation" (2012: 159). Bhabha's definition derives from his argument of subversion, which denotes an undermining of the power/effect of the colonial system, where the colonised were educated with the intention of producing a reformed other. Through the process of reformation, the other becomes fluent in the culture, sometimes more so than the coloniser.

In contrast to Bhabha's argument, I refer to Farjana Ferdous' article 'Hybridity and Mimicry: The Location of Culture and Identity in V.S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr Biswas* and *The Mimic Men* (2015), where she argues that, "In multicultural societies, hybridity implies the mingling of separate and discrete ways of living. In [an] idealised point of view, hybridisation occurs on a level ground of equality, mutual respect and open- mindedness"(Ferdous, 2015). In Bhabha's notion of 'idealised

hybridisation' he neglects to consider the circumstances that led to the infusion of the two cultures. If the hybridisation of two cultures is due to forced mimicry, which then leads to hybridity, it is possible that hybridity becomes the centre of contention due to the slippage caused by forced mimicry. I suggest that hybridity is despised by some because it was birthed through the compromise of pure culture. This occurred not on the grounds of equality, but of oppression. Pure culture needed to be dormant to ensure that colonial culture thrived. No doubt there is some form of tension between pure culture and the colonial culture.

We can define pure culture here as untampered cultural traditional practices preceding the indoctrination of colonial culture. However, it is important to note that it is the imaginary state of perfection that does not exist and, much like Lacan's *l'objet petit*, is built out of fantasy. If the lost object is pure culture/identity, then the melancholic will always hold on to the slippage or an idea of it. Embracing another identity will be a betrayal of their object of affection. Bhabha himself states that colonial identity always brings about anguish and trauma. This echoes Frantz Fanon's sentiments, which I discuss further in the following section, where he focuses on the trauma the colonised endure when they realise, they can never attain the whiteness they were taught to desire. Thus, the melancholia here is in a double bind, losing both pure culture and in chasing the colonial identity, an object of desire that will never love you back.

### **Different ways of Embodiment**

In this section, I consider Charmaine Mujeri's poem, which focuses on her identity and echoes the theme of mimicry and hybridity. Mujeri, a brilliant actress, performer, and writer, and Piotrowska's long-term collaborator, was among the people I interviewed when I went to Zimbabwe over the Christmas period of 2018. Open-minded, free spirited, and fearless are just some of the words one could use to describe her. In a country where freedom of speech does not exist, her words were refreshing. I analyse one of Mujeri's poems that Piotrowska published in her book *Black and White* (mentioned above) and is also documented in *The Engagement party in Harare* (2013) documentary as part of a show Piotrowska and Mujeri collaborated on with other performers. I acknowledge Piotrowska's analysis of this poem in her book, and here add a theoretical perspective through the readings of Bhabha and from a personal and psychoanalytical point of view.

*I am light; I am dark*

*I am black; I am white.*

*Silence and noise*

*Allow me to raise my voice*

*To be silent by choice*

*I am a student of life's university*

*All and none are my teacher*

*I am you*

*You are me*

*We are not each other!*

...

*I am Rhodesian*

*I am British*

*I am ZIMBABWEAN*

*I am a combination of all*

*I am a combination of none*

*So I stand before you*

*Bearing, EMBRACING the gifts my... Ancestors, forefathers, colonial masters*

*Teachers, preachers. mother,*

*leaders, father, students, children gave.*

*Emancipated African Empress*

*A warrior princess, No longer a slave.*

(Mujeri in Piotrowska, 2017:65)

I begin by establishing the position from which Mujeri speaks. She was born in Zimbabwe and has lived her entire life there. Despite having relatives in the diaspora, she has lived nowhere else. Mujeri argues that her hybridity stems from an environment fuelled by a colonial legacy alongside her native Shona heritage. As Bhabha argues, hybridity is not necessarily a bad thing. It has certainly enabled and made globalisation easier and possible. I believe it also expresses one's awareness of the external environment. We cannot explain away colonialism in Zimbabwe and the effects and impact it had on society and culture. I say this because of the issues raised by some as a result of their disavowal/refusal to accept this reality. We see a prominent example of this in Piotrowska's documentary *The Engagement Party in Harare* (2013). Piotrowska takes the audience on the performer's journey of

putting on a play at the Harare International Festival of Arts. We see Mujeri rehearsing the poem in front of her other cast mates. One of her colleagues, (a man) raises an issue with what I perceive to be the highlight of the poem. “I am Rhodesian, I am British, I am ZIMBABWEAN!”. He centres his argument around people’s perception of her, saying she is Rhodesian and British is problematic given the nation’s painful colonial legacy. Identifying with the coloniser’s identity was and is social suicide. There are those guardians of ‘pure’ culture who view those that take on board a hybrid nature as unpatriotic and a sell-out. In line with Khanna’s notion that the melancholic might be violent, the man tells Mujeri that the public might stone the actors if they perform her skit. Violence manifests in order to protect the object of desire. Here I am reminded that the melancholic cannot go through introjection to mourning as they refuse to acknowledge history and the damage it has brought. By the mere refusal to mention the effects of the colonial regime on our culture and how it affected us, the memories remain repressed and the hauntings may stay alive.

Mujeri’s poem, like Bhabha’s mimicry theory, also highlights and acknowledges difference. This is alluded to in her poem when she says, “I am light, I am dark, I am black, I am white, I am you, you are me, We are not each other!” (Piotrowska, 2017:65). We are the same, yet different. Perhaps subversiveness by the colonised creates equality. It is worth noting that this also oppose her embodiment; despite being black, Mujeri also feels white.

I believe the significance of this poem also hinges on the fact that she performed it at the Harare International Festival of the Arts (HIFA) and in the middle of the streets of Harare (shown in *Engagement Party 2013*). I talk in depth about the HIFA later, but I will just briefly mention a few points. On the surface, Mujeri’s hybrid poem is in line with what HIFA aimed to achieve, which is a space where unity and collaborations among the races in Zimbabwe thrive, finding a common ground in this case through the arts (like Bhabha’s Third Space which I return to shortly). By performing this piece, she created an open space in which to engage in a topic perceived as taboo and encouraged a dialog. This took the form of a metaphorisation. She exhibits the ability to express her pain through language. The audience in the streets of Harare seemed to agree as people did not stone Mujeri as implied by her fellow performer. Instead, some clapped while others who had stopped to watch the performance continued on their way.

I evoke here Bhabha’s stance on mimicry emerging “as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal” (2012:126). Mujeri identifies with the different cultures, including the colonial culture: “I am Rhodesian, I am British” (Mujeri in Piotrowska, 2017:65), verifying the very notion of disavowal, of a disowning. As mentioned previously, mimicry encompasses slippage, which relates to loss. I argue that the disowning here is perhaps not of the national identity which was lost but the notion of a single ‘pure’ culture, It is my belief that Mujeri’s poem develops the discussion from mimicry of the colonial or brutish culture to acknowledging hybridity within the Zimbabwean

culture (see Piotrowska, 2017:46).

I refer to Abraham and Torok's notion of introjection, which occurs when one acknowledges that the lost object has gone and is therefore unretainable. I argue that the tension felt in society regarding pure culture, mimicry, and hybridity is caused by a failure to acknowledge the past. It could be argued that mimicry and hybridity are a compromise and hindrance to the formation of a national identity; however, the history of colonial subjugation and its effects on the Zimbabwean culture cannot be ignored.

In *The Engagement Party*, Mujeri explains her thought patterns regarding the poem. She asserts that she is British and Rhodesian because her parents lived through that era and transferred the customs and traditions to her, including the trauma they endured. As mentioned in earlier chapters, Frosh calls this *the vertical trauma* which refers to what "gets transmitted from one time period to another, from one generation to another, so that those who have no direct experience of an event may nevertheless be affected by it" (2016:242). I briefly evoke my personal experience to elaborate further on the notion of the vertical. Freud in *Dream Psychology: Psychoanalysis for beginners* (1920/2020) begins by establishing that repression is the major cause of dreaming. This could be the repression of fears, desires, and unpleasant memories we want to forget. This, he further explains, leads to the forming of the unconscious, "dreams may be thus stated. They are concealed realisations of repressed desires" (2020:36).

As a young girl visiting my grandmother in my mother's hometown of Makosa Mutoko, I mentioned to my grandmother a dream I had, which involved one of my friends the night I arrived. In the dream we had been playing, chasing each other around until I fell and twisted my ankle. Distressed, I told my grandmother I did not want to break my ankle again as it had happened before. *Murungu here? Ndoziva kuti kuchikoro kwenyu kwakazara varungu, is she white? I know your school has a lot of white people....* The question and the statement that followed it were irrelevant and confusing to my young mind. Still ambivalent with regard to the past trauma my family had endured during colonial Rhodesia, this was my first contact with transgenerational trauma. My grandmother then explained that dreaming of a white person in my culture was seen as a sign of witchcraft and a bad omen, even though I knew the person. Looking back at this through a psychoanalytical lens, her traumatic experiences during colonialism moulded not just her perception but those of the surrounding community. It was and still is (in some villages) a bad omen to dream of a white person. Whenever the Rhodesian soldiers showed up, there was bloodshed in the village. The white man became synonymous with death, power, and oppression. "If we subject the content of the dream to analysis, we become aware that the dream fear is no more justified by the dream content than the fear in a phobia is justified by the idea upon which the phobia depends"(Freud, 2020:54). This repressed fear caused by the conditions in which she grew up resulted in the vertical transmission. She then transferred this fear on to the next generation via the traditional art of storytelling and folk tales. Frosh



describes this as society carrying the active ghosts of previous times (2016:242). I must note here that my hybridity is perhaps a plausible reason as to why I did not comprehend my grandmother's response to my dream as I had had positive encounters with white people who are my friends, colleagues, and so on. I acknowledge the vast contrast in our lives and the environments in which we grew up. The story would perhaps be different for my cousins, who have not had the same experiences as me; cousins whose only encounter with a white person is through the stories that they hear.

To close this section, I note that a piece of art like Mujeri's poem can be deemed unpatriotic and she can be perceived as a sell-out by the regime as it does not subscribe to their monolithic construct of the Zimbabwean identity. This is important in terms of how the discourse of nationalism was disseminated in Zimbabwe, namely by encouraging the abandonment of anything that resembled British culture. These are some of the conflicts that arise according to Bhabha's argument on hybridity.

Bhabha states that mimicry presents an 'ironic compromise' and Mujeri's poem can arguably be perceived as very self-aware in that she realises one cannot just strip away the colonial ideology that was dominant for over nine decades. She defiantly embraces all the elements of her personal history and the history of the country. However, the notion that the colonised cannot recognise themselves without tapping into the coloniser's identity takes away the sense of independence and power one might have. I refer once more to the statement by Sir Edward Cust mentioned previously, "to give to a colony the forms of independence is a mockery; she would not be a colony for a single hour if she could maintain an independent station" (Bhabha, 2012:121). To advance this discussion, which I develop in the following section, I argue that perhaps the discourse of mimicry and hybridity, especially in a country like Zimbabwe as the years progress, moves from the imitation and inclusion of the colonisers' culture to masquerade. I refer to the notion of the masquerade mask by Rivière, which I introduced earlier in the chapter. One of the few things I observed in Zimbabwe and in any society, in fact, is this idea of putting on an identity depending on who you are talking to. You can put this on like a mask depending on the class, gender, and race of the person you are conversing with. I now explore this further.

### **Masquerade: Mimicry and Hybridity Through Language**

As established at the beginning of this chapter, Bhabha based some of his arguments on the foundational work of Fanon. The title of this section is inspired by Fanon's book *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952/2008), the common notion here being the mask that symbolises a farcical identity, one that is put on as an imitation or show. Fanon's theories revolve around the psychoanalytic and the black experience of living in ex-French colonies and France itself, where the black inferiority complex is the result of a racist society that coerces the black minority to adopt white standards. The black people face psychological challenges as they are unable to attain the level of whiteness they hope to

achieve. I return to this later.

In this section, I focus on Fanon's chapter one, entitled 'The Negro and Language' where he discusses the relationship between language and the colonised. I start by recognising the similarities in Bhabha's concepts of mimicry (which have been influenced by Fanon's work) and Fanon's ideologies. For example, both Fanon and Bhabha elaborate that despite the colonised speaking the coloniser's language, they can never attain the same social status, even though language is fundamental with regard to adopting the coloniser's culture. Fanon explains that "to speak a language is to take on a world, a culture. The Antilles Negro who wants to be white will be the whiter as he gains greater mastery of the cultural tool that language is" (1952:25). Bhabha argued that mimicry of the colonial culture only produces imitators and not true Englishmen. Fanon examines how this then affects the unconscious of black people who are unable to attain the desired level of whiteness and what living with that kind of ambiguity and conflict does to one's mind.

Fanon begins the chapter by establishing why language is important, "mastery of the coloniser's language affords remarkable power" (1952:9) as the colonised can now speak a language above their status. By speaking the language, the Negro sees themselves as closer to the whiteness they wish to obtain; however, he or she quickly discovers that language will also disappoint as the French person is ambivalent and indifferent towards them.

"For the moment, I want to show why the Negro of the Antilles, whoever he is, has always to face the problem of language. Furthermore, I will broaden the field of this description and through the Negro of the Antilles include every colonised man. Every colonised people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonised is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle" (Fanon, 1952:9).

I now analyze an interview conducted with Joe Njagu, an accomplished director whose body of work includes *Lobola* (2010) and *The Gentlemen* (2011). Alongside producer Rufaro Kaseke, he has worked with Piotrowska on various projects such as *Escape* (2016), *Lovers in Time* (2011), and his latest work *Cook Off* (2018), of which he was the producer. It is worth noting that *Cook Off* became the first Zimbabwean movie to stream on Netflix, a major milestone for Zimbabwean cinema. My conversation with Njagu enabled me to develop and explore Fanon's theory in relation to language and how language is one of the biggest factors that continues to generate tension regarding the notion of mimicry, hybridity and pure culture identity. Njagu, residing in Zimbabwe, was able to give illustrations that enriched my knowledge of the practical things in Zimbabwe. Expanding on the notion of ambivalence in mimicry, I refer to Tsitsi Dangarembga's novel *Nervous Conditions* (1988) where Nyasha's character is despised for being and acting and sounding 'white'. However, most of the characters in the book all acknowledge that to progress in life you needed an education, education

in this setting meaning that they needed to learn the customs and beliefs of the colonial system. The harsh reality of uncertainty still haunts society.

In post-colonial Zimbabwe, one might argue that the English language carries greater dominance, respect, and sometimes more power than the native languages. I wonder here if the failure to decolonise the country's psyche the reason English is also holds such respect. It is perhaps a sign of our inferiority complex; as Fanon argues, it is evidence of our dislocation and separation from our culture (1952:14). We pride ourselves on being the most reformed other. Every Zimbabwean at some point in their life has heard these sayings before: "Zimbabwe has the best education in the world. We speak better English than any country in Africa, sometimes even better than the British themselves."

Dwelling on the idea of respect and power associated with the English language, most formal events and communications in Zimbabwe, like political rallies, congress, workplaces, and newspapers, use written and spoken English. Returning to my interview with Njagu, Njagu is known for his numerous collaborations with foreigners and white Zimbabweans. I was keen to know about people's reaction to his films and his collaborations, most notably *Lobola* (2010), which was a collaboration between him and Rufaro Kaseke and *Escape* (2017), a collaboration with Agnieszka Piotrowska. Having done my research, I was aware of several reviews I had seen on online Zimbabwean newspaper forums, most notably regarding *Escape* as this was more recent. *Escape* received rave reviews, but also some condemnatory ones. Some deemed the movie to be culturally insensitive and inappropriate for a nation that has strong Christian moral and cultural values. I expand on this further in chapter four when I give a detailed analysis of the movie.

Njagu described a press conference he attended after the release of *Escape*. He was shamed by a famous columnist who accused his latest work of being disrespectful to the Zimbabwean culture, explaining, "yes, Agnieszka [Piotrowska] got a lot of heat from the press but so did I because people thought I had no respect for my culture". His response to the columnist had some profound truths that I unpack here. "I will start respecting the culture as soon as we are able to have this conversation in Shona" fully displays the ironic compromise of mimicry. If the aim is to promote or preserve pure culture, we cannot simply adopt the English culture and reject the customs that come with it. If subversiveness, as explained by Bhabha, involves dismantling the power of the established system that was set up by colonialism, the colonised will take back the power rather than use the same system to police each other. The inferiority complex being that you can speak English, but you cannot behave like an English man.

To elaborate on this, I present a scenario which can be perceived as my encounter with the ambivalence caused by mimicry and hybridity. Many years back, Zimbabwe boasted about its successful education system. The high level of literacy and number of graduates was one element of Mugabe's legacy that remains untarnished. When deciding where I would go to continue my high school studies whilst attending a British boarding school in Kenya. I had a conversation with one of

my uncle's friends, who is now a retired professor in Zimbabwe. I expressed my intentions to apply to a British private boarding school in Kenya to further my education. He voiced his disapproval by explaining to me the rhetoric that the Zimbabwean government had been feeding the public for years. "Zimbabwe has the best education in the world. We speak better English than most of the ex-British colonies in Africa. You will get the best education at home, not anywhere else". This is despite that it was the year 2007, when Zimbabwe was on the verge of an economic collapse and the lack of resources was apparent not just in schools, but society in general. This conversation made one thing apparent, by boasting that Zimbabweans speak better English than most ex-colonies, he subscribed to the notion that we are the best imitators. The ambivalence here is drenched in his melancholia as his patriotic nature prevented him from admitting that Zimbabwe was no longer the successful country it once was. It is the pride in mimicry whilst still being in a position of repudiation that is ambivalent.

In Njagu's situation, he is besieged for his collaborations by a columnist who runs the newspaper the same way as it was run back in the colonial times, the paper is published in English. Despite there being sixteen languages spoken in Zimbabwe, English is the standard as it is understood by most communities. One sentence that stood out whilst interviewing Njagu was when he described how the media reacted when he collaborated with Agnieszka Piotrowska to make the film *Escape* (2017) "*unoziva kuti Joe anoshanda nevarungu*" which when translated means "you know Joe works with white people". This leads to the assumption that if one works with a white person, it inevitably leads to a compromise of one's cultural identity and customs. I believe this is the 'ironic compromise of mimicry' that Bhabha describes as manifesting itself differently. This is an aspect Dangarembga explores in *This Mournable Body* (2018).

The incongruity here is how mimicry begins with how we speak and communicate. We then translate this into actions. Therefore, hybridity becomes a manifestation of mimicry embedded in the unconscious of the colonised psyche; the inferior complex is therefore intensified as we begin to fight our hybrid nature. This happens in two ways: by the disavowal of one culture and by seeing one culture as better than the other. There are those that think being more Western or English is better than the traditional Zimbabwean culture and there are those that disapprove of anything western. Both forms are melancholic.

I return to Rivière's masquerade ideology which was introduced earlier is being more of a feminist construct but is utilised here to prove a point. Fanon argues that the black man has two forms. He acts one way with his fellow black man and another way with the white man. He hides parts of himself in order to mask the other identity. "A Negro behaves differently with a white man and with another Negro. That this self-division is a direct result of colonialist subjugation is beyond question. No one would dream of doubting that its major artery is fed from the heart of those various theories that have tried to prove that the Negro is a stage in the slow evolution of monkey into man" (Fanon, 1952:8). It

is this self-division that I assert leads to a masquerade. The English language is 'put on' to symbolise formality, a standard by which to uphold and run society. The coloniser is not there but you can still feel their presence, their impact; you are never really free. It is painfully obvious here that an ex colony may never be void of mimicry and hybridity.

In line with Piotrowska's understanding of Khanna's theory on de-metaphorisation, which she defines as "an inability to symbolise trauma through language" (2017:49), I suggest that language can also inhabit trauma and evoke melancholia. I examine this through the literal translation of Zimbabwean languages, Shona in particular, and the words used. Fanon points out that when a black man gets to France, he only speaks French. There is an element of shame and repudiation associated with the black man's tongue. Fanon argues that the black man wants to be white, but can never be so despite sounding like the white man. His inferiority haunts and taunts him. It is important to note that in every culture, the way a language is spoken is very important, as it dictates class, level of education, and experience. Fanon argues that how well one speaks French and behaves like a proper French man becomes a yardstick with which to measure social status. This is the same inferiority imposed by the coloniser on the negro. The black man then employs the same yardstick to measure his brother. The satire underlying this paradox, however, is that measuring one's intelligence or class by their ability to articulate the English language is the same measure used by the Rhodesians in Colonial times.

Bhabha describes this as *repetition*. A re-occurrence of "what emerges between mimesis and mimicry is a writing, a mode of representation, that marginalises the monumentality of history, quite simply mocks its power to be a model, that power which supposedly makes it imitable. Mimicry repeats rather than re-presents" (Bhabha, 2012:128). I present the following scenario as I believe it highlights melancholia in my native Shona language. Whilst on my research journey in Zimbabwe, I visited an old friend of my mother. The much older gentleman introduced me to his work colleagues using Shona slang, stating 'uyu murungu wangu uyu' which literally translates to 'this is my white person over here'. I noticed that one would say this as a high form of flattery, it can mean the person is their boss or that the person is of a higher class or simply that they have money. Therefore, calling someone 'murungu' (white person), even someone of the same race, somehow implies they are elevated from their lowly state to that of a white person. This implies a white person is more important than a black person. Perhaps the fact that I was a PhD candidate aided the 'elevation' of my status, as in an instant I may have moved from being a student trying to learn to something greater by the person who was 'raising my status'. It was in this moment that I was reminded of Fanon's words, "society refuses to consider them genuine Negroes. The Negro is a savage, whereas the student is civilised..... You're us, and if anyone thinks you are a Negro he is mistaken, because you merely look like one"(1952:50). I believe scenarios like the one mentioned above provide an insight into the effects of colonialism on the mindset of some black people in Zimbabwe, even four decades after independence. It is in the

mundane everyday associations that we see the effects of colonialism

To further explain this, I include below a quote by Dangarembga from an interview conducted by Piotrowska for the Harare International Festival of Arts.

I think it is a social issue, where white people felt entitled and although not conscious anymore, I think there is still an element of that in people's thinking not only the white people but in black people's thinking. (The Engagement party documentary, Tsitsi Dangarembga, 2013: 22:10)

It is here I admit that Bhabha's notion of mimicry being a high form of flattery is without merit, especially if one is on the receiving end. However, it is subversive in that by mimicking the English man to perfection, I earn some flattery from society. I acknowledge my family's economic advantage as, inevitably, growing up it was not unusual to me to be called 'murungu' as a sign of my hybridity or social standing. I acknowledge that the 'compliment' was and is met with no objection. In fact, it inflated my ego, making me feel 'different' or special compared to everyone else. The slang word used often to 'big up' someone or elevate someone is a back-handed complement to our own people. We cheer one's success by unconsciously comparing it to that of a white person because, according to the system we were interpellated into, only white people could reach that level of greatness. I also reflect on my gender as a woman in a society dominated by men, as being elevated to this 'status' gives me power that is otherwise not available to the black man. However, among white groups, my embodiment initially trumps my education and I am perceived as a black woman. My hybridity only becomes apparent later. I ponder on Fanon's words when he speaks of how whiteness is the goal for the black man. The complex of inferiority created by colonialism and the state of melancholia and mourning that stem from this are issues I explore further in the next section.

### **The HIFA conversation**

"There are potholes on the streets and potholes in the psyches of the people here,"

Brett Bailey (quoted from the documentary *The Engagement Party in Harare*, 2013: location 03:23)

One thing that was abundantly clear during my visit to Zimbabwe in December 2018 was the division between races. This is something that has always existed, but I became conscious of it because of my research and the exposure I have had since leaving Zimbabwe as a child. Apart from the affluent shopping malls, schools, and restaurants, you rarely see the races mix. Most people I randomly spoke to dismissed race. It is almost as if the hush culture that existed during colonial times is still in place. The conversation I describe here was invigorating for that same reason.

Panting and out of breath as I almost missed my connecting flight from Johannesburg to London Heathrow, I slowly put my luggage on the overhead carriage and smiled at the old lady sitting next to me. She had greyish blond hair and piercing bright blue eyes. Folding the book she was reading, she

allowed me to pass, and I sat on my seat still panting but thankful I had made it. I slowly reflected on my trip and all that I had achieved to gather information to write this thesis. Despite the many interviews and places I had visited to gather information, the iron curtain between the races was something I was and am still yet to understand. I admit that maybe at the start I had pre-set expectations of how the conversations were going to go and not all went the way I thought.

An issue Lessing addresses in *The Grass Is Singing* is the concept of silence culture that was present in Rhodesia. The notion of a racialised society was never acknowledged. If something was to happen, it was made to disappear and kept a societal secret. We have replicated this way of life into the postcolonial world. As I brought out Piotrowska's book *Black and White*, hoping to obtain further insight and inspiration from her chapter on memory and melancholia, the elderly lady next to me observed me for a while, and then pursued a conversation that I am guessing was initiated by the title of the book. She asked, "are you Zimbabwean?" I gave a gentle but hesitant nod. "Great, I am Zimbabwean too!" Upon finding out the reason for my visit to Zimbabwe, she said with great enthusiasm, "it is great that we have young people returning to do research in Zimbabwe, that means there is hope for the country". Unlike some people I had spoken with in Zimbabwe, she was not afraid to talk about the invisible but apparent racial divide in the country. Hesitant at first and fearful that I would make the next nine hours of my flight awkward, I wondered if she had any knowledge of postcolonial melancholia. Seeing her enthusiasm for my work I cautiously proceeded, aware that race is a very touchy subject to address, and asked her, "are you familiar with the term postcolonial melancholia?" She paused for a minute then answered, "I am, yes, in fact I consider myself a melancholic too..." After a long pause she then explained the traumatic events that triggered her melancholia. "You see after the great economic crash of 2008 our business shut down and we had to move into a smaller house. My children all live in the UK now and I visit them from time to time. My husband and I never left; we really love Zimbabwe despite everything. I have friends who had their farms taken away from them [I assume during the Land reform era] and have had to ask their kids to send them money for their upkeep from the diaspora."

It was at this point I realised that when I investigated post-colonial melancholia, I only related it to the black people of Zimbabwe, thereby neglecting other races. And while my focal point is to define post-colonial melancholia among the black people of Zimbabwe, especially black women. This thesis specifically deals with the black African identity in the post colonial and specifically the Zimbabwean setting hence why I focus on a lot of black Zimbabwean writers with the exemption of writers like Lessing's whose work speaks so well to that of Dangerembga and explores the 'unrepresentable', the inter-racial desire. I cannot, however, deny that even the white Zimbabweans were and are also prone to the condition that is postcolonial melancholia. I am reminded here of a quote from Piotrowska where she explains that, "the white Zimbabweans unconsciously attempt to hold on to their lost object i.e., not only the western value of organisation and art but quite obviously their dominant position in

society. The black local population mourns their pre- colonial past position in society” (Piotrowska, 2017:55). Both mourn a lost object of affection. Although I do not look at what post-colonial melancholia looks like for white Zimbabweans it is imperative to acknowledge the body of work that deals with melancholia among white Zimbabweans both scholarly and literature. Works such as Peter Godwin’s memoirs most notably the book *Mukiwa :A White Boy in Africa* (1996) or Alexandra Fuller’s *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight* (1975), Kate Law’s most recent published book, *The Decolonisation of Zimbabwe* (2018). Whilst there are clear traces of postcolonial melancholia in the words of Godwin for example one could argue that the works occupy a different sphere, more in line with nostalgia, political criticism and a longing for the past. This would be interesting to consider as a separate project. In this thesis build on postcolonial melancholia in the psychoanalytical context in line with Piotrowska’s work in particular her chapter on Mourning and Melancholia at HIFA (see Piotrowska 2018).

Upon arriving at Heathrow airport before rushing off to border control, she turned, looked at me and said, “hopefully I will see you at HIFA soon”. Slightly confused and jet lagged I did not understand what she meant until I re-read Piotrowska’s chapter on Mourning and Melancholia at the Harare International Festival of Arts and watched the documentary *The Engagement Party* (2013). In the words of the creator of HIFA, ‘HIFA represents what Zimbabwe could be’ (Piotrowska, 2017:55), a place where people could share experiences and be more than just their race. Presumably she knew that the only other place in Zimbabwe our paths would cross, or we would have any social interaction would be HIFA. It is sad to say that as of 2019 they have cancelled the HIFA festival. This takes away one of the shared spaces in Zimbabwe where the conversation I had with this woman could be held. A space like HIFA is what Bhabha coined the Third Space; a place where the borders that separate cultures meet, a place where hybrid identities thrive, and a place where we can initiate dialogue between cultures (See Bhabha 1994:1). This recalls the readings of Gillian Straker where she talks about alienation not being unique for race relations: “I am convinced about the importance of acknowledging white alienation, not least because this experience is in contrast to a delusion of phallic fullness and omnipotence, a delusion historically associated with whiteness. This delusion, which amplifies a refusal to accept one’s own vulnerability and limitation, is one of the factors that drives the exploitation and oppression of others” (2013:50). Piotrowska argues that HIFA is in its own way melancholic, describing it as ‘an expression of a sense of loss over the dominance of white power’ (2017:50)

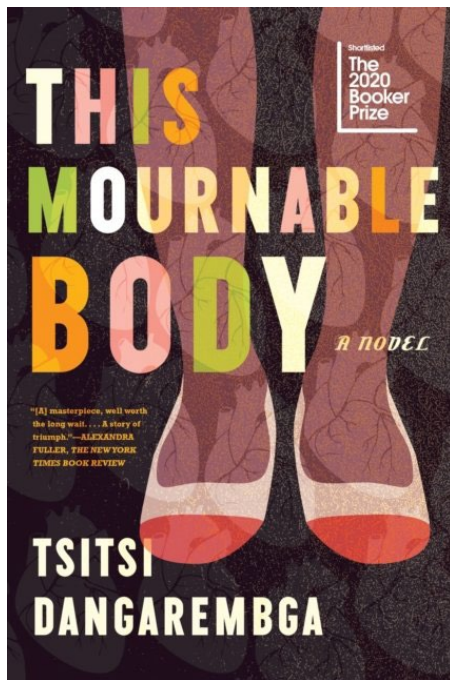
*The Engagement Party* documentary, despite being shot in 2011 and released in 2013, continues to shed light on the race situation in Zimbabwe. In it Piotrowska interviews artists, producers, writers, and people from different walks of life at the Harare International Festival of Arts. The festival, as one writer interviewed in the documentary puts it, comprises a white majority in a country with a



black majority. I speculate that its deep-rooted imperialistic traits are also a defining factor as to why most people in attendance are white. At this point it is pertinent to point out that, as mentioned in the documentary, there are many black people who are better off than the white people in Zimbabwe, but most of the poor people are also black. Piotrowska herself called the festival melancholic, which is echoed by Maria Wilson, one of the executive directors of the HIFA festival. During the events of HIFA 2011, a lot of controversy ensued from Bret Bailey's opening show. Wilson stated, "what the opening show created was this, talk to each other for goodness' sake!! What do you think about this?" (*The Engagement Party*, 2013). Although this sentiment encourages unity, the documentary also presents opposing views. In particular, I was intrigued by what some black writers had to say about the play, especially Marion Kunonga who played the character of Florence in *Flame* (1996), which I analysed in chapter one. As someone who has worked with foreign directors and producers and fellow white Zimbabwean film makers like Sinclair, her state of mind is reflected in the following statements made in the documentary regarding inclusivity: "a foreigner had come in to talk about the Zimbabwean situation..... for me the last part of the opening show was just... a lot of people have been coming into Zimbabwe and they don't have respect! They read all these things in the newspapers and the internet and they just, and they come with this attitude of mph! I am going to meet a dictator! This is a dictatorship and they come in and say we are going to tell this guy what to do, No! you will be beaten up by the police if you have no respect!" (*The Engagement Party*: location 06:40)

Being Zimbabwean myself, I understand the value my culture places on respect; however, how can one be an advocate of violence when it comes to dealing with people with opposing views? I am reminded of a conference I attended at Birkbeck University on psychoanalysis. In one session, a discussion ensued about who may speak or write about incidences. Can white people have a say regarding the situation in Zimbabwe? To what extent can foreigners tell another person's story without it becoming disrespectful or intrusive to the other race or culture? I believe these questions will help make room for a more creative and collaborative environment in the future. At the root of these responses, I believe, is a fight for identity, a fight against the ambiguity created by the ironic compromise that is mimicry.

### **The Unravelling of Tambudzai**



**Figure 4:1,** Book cover of the novel *This Mournable Body*

In this section I attempt to establish the relationship between mimicry and melancholia through an analysis of women's experience in Zimbabwe. Trying not to generalise, I base my findings on an analysis of Tsitsi Dangarembga's most recent book *This Mournable Body* (2018), an interview with the editor of the book, Ellah Wakatama, and findings from a conference I attended in December 2018 in Zimbabwe. Although my focus is to highlight the 'dangers' mimicry and hybridity pose in Zimbabwean society, I also zero in on the hypocrisy. I also touch on other vital issues such as mental health and gender roles. In 2018, Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988) was included in the BBC's list of the 100 most influential books that changed the discourse of time. The book was followed by two others, *The Book of Not* (2006) and *This Mournable Body* (2018), all of which centred around the life of the protagonist Tambudzai. My analysis is based on the character progression of Tambudzai through a comparative analysis of *Nervous Conditions* and *This Mournable Body*. In order to articulate what I focus on, I revise the concept of 'vertical trauma' which as Frosh describes in his work *Hauntings: Psychoanalysis and Ghostly Transmissions*, is something that is transmitted from one time period to another (2013:242).

In *Nervous Conditions* (1988) Tambudzai is introduced as a teenager eager to escape her family's impoverished economic situation. Her eagerness to work hard and fight for her right to an education makes her a resilient character, determined to uplift her hero status by obtaining a good education while not getting lost or whitewashed in the process, unlike her brother Nhamo who had lost his roots and despised his village. Tambu is passive and basically keeps her head down when it comes to issues like gender inequality and race. To her, education was the end goal. As Tambu becomes more established in her life at the mission school, she embraces attitudes and beliefs different from those

of her parents and her traditional upbringing. Nyasha, ever the voice of reasonable dissent, warns Tambu that a wholesale acceptance of supposedly progressive ideas represents a dangerous departure and too radical a break with the past. This ultimately leads to her unravelling in *This Mournable Body* where Tambu's inability to confront any social injustice leads to her feeling trapped and helpless. She goes from being a hero of her own story to looking for someone to rescue her.

Teju Cole's article entitled *Unmournable Bodies*, which was published in 2017 is the inspiration for the novel. This article poignantly addresses free speech and how public opinion in western countries often chooses not to recognise the victims who speak out against the power of their own state. It is worth noting that Judith Butler's work, most notably *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (2009) or *Bodies That Still Matter* (2019) address the issue of which bodies are worth crying over and for what reason? They inspired both Cole and Dangarembga's work. In *This Mournable Body*, the title suggests that the body itself is in a grievable state. This points to both the physical and psychological wellbeing of the character of Tambudzai. Dangarembga's decision to name her novel after Cole's article could be an attempt to call attention to the passiveness of the west regarding the oppressive regime in Zimbabwe, the nature of which now resembles the oppressive colonial regime. Although not mentioned explicitly, some of the struggles Tambudzai experiences are because of a failing economy and a patriarchal society. We see frustrated civilians who fought for the independence of Zimbabwe leading lives that do not reflect the freedom or prosperity they fought for. The book continues with similar themes that were introduced in the first novel, such as misogynistic violence against women (gender inequality), a failing education system, unhealed trauma, class, and hostile race relations. It is here that I am reminded of the following words by Stephen Frosh, "Is it the past, back to haunt us, or the future, threatening us with what we might become?" (2013: 244). Tambudzai's passive nature in *Nervous Conditions* eventually catches up with her, leading to her unravelling in *This Mournable Body*. She ultimately moves from being a nervous condition to a full blown melancholic. Her state is what Freud would describe as stuck and unable to move, a deplorable state and a shadow of her former self.

I begin by discussing the notion of education. In *Nervous Conditions*, Tambudzai is determined to better herself by obtaining a western education. This is how she elevates herself from her lowly state. As Fanon puts it: a student is refined, a negro is barbaric. In line with Fanon and Bhabha's theories, we meet Tambudzai in *This Mournable Body* coming to the realisation that despite having the same education as the white colleagues she went to college with, she is still inferior and feels inadequate. Her education has not propelled her to the heights she thought she would attain:.

Thinking this induces a morass of guilt. You have failed to make anything at all of yourself, yet your mother endures even more bitter circumstances than yours, entombed in your destitute village. How, with all your education, do you come to be more needy than your mother? End up less than a woman

so dashed down by life that she tried to lean on her second daughter—a daughter who requires support herself, after losing a leg in the war, and now fends for two liberation struggle babies, your nieces, seen only once when they were toddlers. Your uncle, who intervened to keep you from your mother’s fate by sending you to school” (Dangarembga, 2018:37).

Tambudzai’s faith in the Western education system has let her down. At school, despite being brighter than all her classmates, she was always second best to her classmate Tracey, who ends up being Tambu’s boss in two different jobs. In the words of Fanon, “the feeling of inferiority of the colonised is the correlative to the European’s feeling of superiority. Let us have the courage to say it outright: It is the racist who creates his inferior” (1950:69). According to Fanon, the colonial legacy of racism creates a racial hierarchy that is embedded unconsciously over time in the psyches of black people. Bhabha supports this by arguing that despite the other imitating the coloniser’s language and culture, they will never reach the whiteness they desire. Ultimately for Tambudzai, her western education does not work out as well for her as it does for her classmate Tracey. We cannot, however, dismiss the possibility that perhaps Tracey was more brilliant than Tambu. Tracey appears to have managed her life better than Tambu; however, that might have been a result of structural disadvantage. We do not know. Tambu, when we meet her again in the novel, is mentally unstable at best and violent at worst—she might blame her condition on the structural issues of society. If Tambu was second best, it means she outsmarted other people to be in the best position. Nevertheless, that was not enough to ensure her success. This may be because she could not sufficiently negotiate her internal sense of depression, guilt, and indeed melancholia. I propose that Dangarembga employs Tracey as a symbol or motif of racialised societal problems.

To enrich this analysis further, I interviewed Ellah Wakatama, a Zimbabwean born writer, editor, and literary critic who owns her own publishing company where she lives in the UK and understands both Zimbabwean culture and western culture. She was the editor of *This Mournable Body* and is well versed in African literature. I briefly mention parts of our discussion conducted on February 8<sup>th</sup> 2019. I explicitly asked her if Tambu’s display of melancholic traits was because of the trauma caused by colonialism. Her answer was slow but eloquent which caused me to think more broadly than I was at that point in time: “I suspect Tambu would have been troubled regardless, I myself am a bit ambivalent about defining ourselves by that colonial period, that’s not to say we ignore the trauma caused by colonialism but we shouldn’t use it to define ourselves” (Wakatama, 2019).

I immediately reflected on why Dangarembga’s books are so powerful; in her own way I believe Dangarembga built the character of Tambu in a way that transforms her from a melancholic position into a mourning subject, although this happens in the last few pages of the book. There is a progression in the narrative from a colonial paradigm to a postcolonial space. Dangarembga acknowledges the country’s painful colonial legacy but also creates an alternative way for the narrative to shift so it does

not just revolve around the dreaded legacy, almost as if she is saying we should stop pointing fingers and start reflecting from within. Dangarembga tells the Zimbabwean woman's story, but also describes a trauma that resonates with all women worldwide. Echoing Wakatama's words, even without having to deal with postcolonial trauma Tambu would have been troubled. She is a woman living in a patriarchal society, a country with a failing economy, she is not married, in her 30s, has no job, and is at odds with her family. These are situations numerous women across the globe battle and resonate with. However, there is also the issue of working through various traumas we all might experience – the recognition of these issues is always the first step.

One thing that becomes painfully clear as the reader progresses through *This Mournable Body* is Tambudzai's passive behaviour, which eventually leads to her breakdown. I believe this is also an issue of avoidance, an inability to metaphorise which, as explained before, is also a societal problem. Tambudzai battles her own inner thoughts to fight for justice where there is injustice, especially towards other women. It is possible that Tambudzai is struggling with her guilt; this can be traced back to *Nervous Conditions* where she states she was happy her brother died. For anyone to say this is a big deal. Often, she is a matriarch sustaining the oppression of other women. For example, in chapter one, where she joins the mob in stoning her hostel mate Gertrude for wearing a miniskirt, or her harsh treatment towards her female students because of their 'promiscuous nature', Tambudzai's perspective on her fellow women is competitive. Perhaps Tambu's resentment is without merit, perhaps it is displaced. From being thrown out of her dormitory for being too old, and her younger dorm mates being less than fond of her, Tambu feels the harsh reality that spinsters endure in society. As *This Mournable Body* unravels we see that at every turn Tambu faces the shame of her age. For instance, the matron tells her that the board will revoke their license if they found out she were keeping someone of such 'antiquity' (Dangarembga, 2018:6). There is also the constant shaming from her younger dorm mates, who call her Sisi Tambu which means older sister and, in some cases, can symbolise an old maid. I am reminded of the words of Chimamanda Adichie in her 2013 TED talk '*We Should All Be Feminists*' (Adichie, 2013) where she talks about how women in society are made to view each other as competitors not for jobs but for the attention of men, instead of supporting each other. Dangarembga elaborates on this point, as Tambu seems envious of her younger dorm mates and perceives herself as almost inferior to them, thus resulting in her behaving coldly towards them. For instance, when Tambu's dorm mate Gertrude is sexually harassed by a builder at the taxi rank for wearing revealing clothes, no one in the taxi helps. Even when Gertrude looks to Tambu for help, she looks away and does not help her. It is almost as if she agrees with Gertrude's harasser that she should not be wearing revealing clothes and is complicit in the patriarchal system.

Her passive, helpless behaviour continues when she moves into the widow's home. One of her housemates tell her that the man in the room next to Tambudzai raped her. Instead of helping her flatmate, she is indifferent "There is nothing you can do or say since it is already done" (Dangarembga,

2018:54). Her passive nature is her defence mechanism. Perhaps if she does not get involved, she will not get hurt. A character flow I believe that stems from the prequel, Tambu condemns her cousin for going against the system yet here we see her suffer under the same system and still she chooses to do nothing about it. I believe this is the *vertical trauma* at work that gets transmitted from one time period to another (Frosh, 2013:242), in this case Tambu's passive nature comes back to haunt her. Tambu's behaviour reflects that of most of the characters in the book and Dangarembga is perhaps using this as symbolic of how some issues were left unresolved, hence they are reoccurring now: "is it the past, back to haunt us, or the future, threatening us with what we might become?" (Frosh, 2013: 244). This is also the reoccurrence and repetition caused by mimicry.

Tambu's unravelling continues as she contemplates seducing one of the widower's sons so she can become his wife, saving her from a dire situation. Observing from her room, we see Tambu convincing herself that she can snatch the widow's son from his wife, saying to herself, "It is going to be easy to take on that kind of woman" (Dangarembga, 2018:45). This is a big shift in the character of Tambu in the prequel, where she was adamant that getting married was not all a woman can do, thus her sheer determination to make it on her own has disappeared.

To elaborate further on this notion of Tambuzai's silence, I evoke my visit to Zimbabwe during the Christmas holidays of 2018 during which I attended the 'Power FM campaign on gender-based violence in Zimbabwe in connection to the Zimbabwe council of churches' which was held in Harare at the Anglican Cathedral in Samora Avenue. A very progressive discussion ensued on how to achieve equality among the sexes in Zimbabwe. One prominent quote that remained with me was from a young woman who advocated for more equality for women in society; when asked why women do not voice their opinions or express what they are going through, she stated, "women historically were not allowed to talk or argue against a man, therefore as a result women do not use their voices but they act out; for example, in relation to sex if a guy initiates sex and the girl says no the guy will stop pursuing her, however, girls might say no when they mean yes but have a fear of being seen as easy". The first half of this statement I quickly identified as a reoccurring problem: it is also conveyed in *Nervous Conditions* as depicted by the character of Nyasha or in Doris Lessing's novel *The Grass Is Singing* where the female black characters are rendered voiceless and only their actions are described. Tambu's inability to voice her struggles could be a symptom of the environment she grew up in, which clashes with the progressive western education lessons she received. Fanon explains that this is not just an individual exhibition but the exhibition of an entire group of people. "The neurotic structure of an individual is simply the elaboration, the formation, the eruption within the ego, of conflictual clusters arising in part out of the environment and in part out of the purely personal way in which that individual reacts to these influences"(Fanon 1952:59).

The second half of the statement I found quite confusing and contradictory yet was rendered valid by the numerous murmurs of agreement from both men and women in the crowd. It was at this

moment I realised how outdated my view of Zimbabwe was. Admittedly, my own Christian values challenged by my perception of Zimbabwe as the nation and society that was and is rigid in relation to women's sexuality and desire. At this point I note my unconscious pre-set, my inability to let go of something that I never had or experienced but is ingrained in my mind through the vertex. At a British Association of Film, Television and Screen Studies (BAFTSS) conference held at Birmingham University in April 2019, one of the panels focused on the national identity and diaspora, touching on the perception of the diaspora nationals as more rigid than the people living in their native country. One of the main examples given was of a Palestinian father who made peace with an Israeli neighbour despite the ongoing struggle in the Middle East. This reconciliation was a point of contention between the Palestinian father and his son as the latter strongly opposed it, but the son lives in the diaspora not in Israel. Physically, his object cause of desire, Palestine, no longer exists. Instead, it exists in both memory and desire. His father's actions are to him a betrayal of the lost object of affection. Perhaps those of a hybrid nature or those who live in the diaspora are more fixated on the idea of culture and national identity, something uniquely ours. Unconsciously the thought of the missing object as attached to one's ego therefore one must defend it is present here. I refer back to the Introduction chapter of this thesis, where I discussed Abraham and Torok's ideology of the ego as that which prevents a melancholic from mourning and letting go of the lost object. National pride is a manifestation of one's ego. However, if one becomes aware of the issues tied in their ego, perhaps it is possible to undergo introjection. The process of letting go.

Sexuality in most African communities is a taboo topic for the girl child. The wholesome girl who is perpetuated by the system should not reveal she has sexual desires. This has been played out repeatedly in films and books over the threads of time. A good example is that of Nyasha in *Nervous Conditions*, as discussed in chapter one. Her father beats her for merely flirting with a boy. Unconsciously, the censorious nature of the country had become embedded into my psyche and most definitely in the character of Tambudzai. Similar to the prequel, Dangarembga's approach regarding race relations is more intentional in *This Mournable body*. Although other characters in the book do talk about ethnicity, Tambudzai's perception of race seems to have developed. Her obsession with Tracey, her white course mate later turned boss, is a cause for concern. It embodies envy, jealousy, plus Tambu's own inferiority complex as she later realises Tracey can be the only one who can help her. Tambudzai has a mental breakdown which leads her to beat one of her students, resulting in her being placed in a psychiatric home. We can view this as violence triggered by her inability to metaphorise her pain through language. The injury to her student is symbolic as she becomes deaf, representing the permanent trauma and the manifestations of melancholia. It is the result of the melancholic refusal to go through introjection.

As she undergoes therapy, Tambudzai realises that her inferiority is the reason for her unravelling.

“What happened? She asks quietly when you fall silent again. You cannot tell her that things keep repeating, that this time too it was as with your mother, and that you were not recognised because it was necessary to prefer another, your white classmate” (Dangarembga, 2018: 107). Tambudzai experiences what Fanon alludes to as the disappointment of the realisation she cannot obtain the life she envisioned for herself because of her inferiority. Extending this further, I envision this is what Bhabha calls the repetition caused by mimicry. The ironic compromise will always create problems. One is in a state of uncertainty and begins to lash out. We see here that what leads to Tambudzai’s breakdown is her inability to de-metaphorise and express her pain through language, even to herself. Her inferiority complex evokes violence towards her innocent student, a symptom of melancholia. Her hatred and anger are directed towards the wrong person, which could be because she knows the student is subject to her. In the education system, Tambu holds power over her student which she abuses just as Tambu herself feels abused by the system she is interpellated into. But because she cannot attack those who she perceives as responsible for her deplorable state, she transfers that aggression to someone else.

As stated in chapter one, the melancholic might not recognise what the lost object looks like but knows to whom they have lost it. This is further invigorated because despite having and adopted western traditions, Tambudzai is still not accepted. She is conflicted and at odds with her feelings regarding white people. On the one hand she feels the need for them to see her, she wants to be visible in the white man’s world, a recognition that Fanon talks about, but she also despises the fact she is made to feel inferior.

This is perfectly illustrated in the following passage.

You relate episodes from Steers et al. where you worked. You want to explain what it really did to you. The words crawl slowly into your throat, for the hurts of adulthood have not assailed you as violently as those of childhood. Nevertheless, this lesser assault is too much and again you cannot speak of Tracey Stevenson, the eternal favourite at school, who, you discovered with dull resignation, was your boss at the advertising agency. “I saw a woman at a disco who looked like Tracey. You know, Tracey that girl at school,” you say, in the end, judging you have offered just enough to throw dust in the doctor’s eyes. You go on evenly to see what the doctor will do, “I wanted to beat her up.” “It seems to me that you don’t like white people,” the doctor says. “Of course, I do,” you respond. “Anyway, it’s neither here nor there,” you continue with one of your shrugs. “They never see me. It doesn’t make any difference who they are. Nobody sees me. (Dangarembga, 2018:107)

Tambudzai says she is indifferent towards white people but would have beaten Tracey had she seen her. This is because she does not feel she has the words to express her anger and frustration. Once again, her melancholia is evoked through violent tendencies and her inability to metaphorise. One key thing that could have bettered Tambu’s situation is the issue of class. We see that despite having ‘bettered’ herself with all her education, Tambu’s situation remains the same. She is poor. She feels entitled alongside the general belief that if people are highly educated, they should lead better lives. She is also poor because she cannot fit in anywhere, she has no business ideas, is driven by envy, and



is not likeable, which is most unfortunate as there is only Nyasha to help her. This is a complete contrast to the person we are introduced to in *Nervous Conditions*. In his book *Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Fanon coined the phrase ‘colonial bourgeoisie’ which here can be associated to Tambu. He describes the state of the bourgeoisie as being in a trance or state of control they cannot simply just snap out of, “the people stagnate deplorably in unbearable poverty: they slowly awaken to the unutterable treason of their leaders. This awakening is all the more acute in that the bourgeoisie is incapable of learning its lesson” (1961:167).

Over fifty years later, the character of Tambu feels betrayed and bitter towards the system and her own country. In an ideal world, a woman of Tambu’s achievements would have been in a better position than she attains in the book, however her age, race and class seem to work against her at every turn. One thing that is consistent from the prequel is that the shame she carries regarding her background is apparent. She describes her village and her mother with a certain amount of disdain because they represent a part of her she is trying to forget. Thus, it is no surprise that she is ready to betray her own people once she is re-hired by her old boss, Tracey, to conduct ‘ghetto village getaways’ and what they call village eco transit. This brings jobs and result in new buildings being constructed in the village; however, this comes with its own share of compromises. Tambu convinces herself she is doing the right thing, stating to herself “you have brought jobs, activity, and innovation to your village following decades of devastating peasant hood” (Dangarembga, 2018:268). She thus deludes herself that she is the saviour of her destitute village. Ironically, she tries to benefit from the one thing she has been running away from. “In the future, I might become what I have always been, but have never been able to see: the one who frequents ‘painted women’” (Freud, 1919:237).

In the climatic ending to the book, Tambu who views herself as ‘elevated from her savage status’ because of her education, tries to convince the village women to wear the revealing traditional clothes that Tracey insists they should wear. Outraged at this idea, the women agree to do so because of the money they are being paid. The point of escalation comes when Tambu’s mother is the one who gets naked and the entire village is shocked. Tambu is then forced to confront her own self when her mother has a breakdown in front of the entire village after the tourists began taking pictures and seemed to enjoy what they were seeing. Tambu’s mother essentially asks her daughter if this is how she sees them, as savages with no clothes? Tambu’s own emotional collapse becomes a moment of self-awakening, with her mother’s words echoing in her mind, “now is when you want to cover your mother Tambudzai?” (Dangarembga, 2018:279) This could also be interpreted as a complicated acknowledgement of the ‘civilising’ effect of colonialism. Everybody is shocked but in African culture there is actually nothing wrong with walking about bare breasted. It was the missionaries that asked women to cover them.

As discussed in chapter two, the Mugabe government insisted that the authentic true Zimbabwean is linked and has strong roots to their village. It is these same roots and links that Tambudzai

despises and is ashamed of. Tambudzai makes a mockery of her own culture by organising eco tours. The brilliance of this last chapter in the novel is that Dangarembga highlights the ironic compromise brought about by mimicry and hybridity. Tambu (although under orders from Tracey) insists that the women of the village dance topless for the tourists. She sells the modesty of these women for money. She reduces them to the other, a fetish to feed the outdated perceptions of African women by the tourists.

Returning to my discussion with Ellah Wakatama in the last chapter of the book, Wakatama insists that Tambu had to see that “she had a past before colonisation” and is forced to recollect that memory. As Freud phrases it: “lost truths keep coming back to haunt her, and they demand recompense” (1919:234). To a certain degree I believe Tambu is a personification of the country of Zimbabwe. However, it is a very distorted and negative vision. We must acknowledge the past and where we came from to move forward. As a melancholic, Tambu is stuck and refuses to let go of her lost object. The issue, however, is that her lost object of affection has evolved. It is no longer just her African identity but also the rejection she feels from the western culture. She wants to embrace her hybridity but feels stuck. As Wakatama says, hybridity “doesn’t always have to be a problem”. Nyasha demonstrates in the book how hybridity does not always have to be a point of contention.

I end this chapter with a summary of the key points discussed. Using the character of Tambudzai as an example, I liken her to the nation of Zimbabwe. Tambudzai’s inferiority complex keeps her bound. She resembles a matriarch who is silent when the system is oppressing the people but also wants to be set free from the same system. As she explains to the therapist, she hates white people but looked to Tracey to save her. The ironic compromise was that she desired an education but her western education failed to elevate her. The concept of mimicry and hybridity in Zimbabwe hinges on the notion of ironic compromise. There is an ambiguity surrounding what is acceptable and what is not. If we pride ourselves in being good imitators but despise and fault one for being too good an imitator, then the system is flawed. The rejection of hybridity and mimicry in society has created the discourse that in this chapter I called the masquerade mask. As Fanon says, the black man has two dimensions he lives by. He does not reveal his authentic self in both dimensions.

Perhaps one way to overcome the contention brought about by hybridity and mimicry is to create more Third Spaces. By acknowledging the effects of colonialism on pure culture we begin the introjection process, therefore making room and spaces for more dialogue to be pursued in relation to deracialising the social margins. This is an obstacle in the creative sector, as inter-race collaborations can prove difficult. Hybridity and mimicry can perhaps be a way to fight against interpellation of the nationalistic ideology established by the Zimbabwean government post colonialism. It may constitute a way for us to claim we cannot be defined by one factor only as there are different dimensions to the Zimbabwean identity and culture.

## CHAPTER 4: FEMALE AUTHORSHIP, VOICE & REPRESENTATION IN POSTCOLONIAL ZIMBABWE

I begin this chapter by revisiting one of the principal aims of my research: to give a voice to the voiceless, to amplify the African female voice that in some ways is still overlooked and silenced. It is here that I will speak of the importance of female authorship in Zimbabwe, mainly addressing ideologies like feminism, the development of the female gaze and women finding their voice in a male-dominated field, like film and the arts. One thing that was brought to my attention whilst conducting my research was the fact that women seem to excel when publishing literature, compared to leading/ curating a film crew as a director or producer.

I must point out here that movies have been produced and directed by women, like *Mother's Day* (2005) directed by Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Playing Warriors* (2011) directed by Rumbidzai Katedza and *Flame* (1996) directed by Ingrid Sinclair, to mention just a few. However, this is a small percentage compared to the films produced by the male counterparts in the country. No doubt societal gender expectations have been a hindrance to the female voice progressing, as it is the norm for men to be the head of a team, especially in a country as intensely patriarchal as Zimbabwe. One could argue that women are more successful in individual projects, like writing novels or scripts, as these require little team effort. In that space, society cannot dictate what their voice should sound like; they can be their authentic self.

I believe that this is definitely the case for writers like Dangarembga, who is also a filmmaker, but her literary work has been more successful than her films. Arguably, we could put this down to the female voice being perceived as not having potency. It is important to note here how the female voice has been silenced throughout the ages. As discussed in Chapter One, in the analysis of Vera's novel *Nehanda* (1993), she portrays the character of Mbuya Nehanda as someone who is full of words. "Nehanda carries her bag of words in a pouch that lies tied around her waist. She wears some along her arms. Words and bones" (Vera, 1993:location 100 Kindle). Not only is the matriarch full of words, but her voice carries weight and influences society. However it is important to note culturally the nature of most Zimbabwean tribes is patriarchal thus only a few women even in the times of Mbuya Nehanda had potency. This was further invigorated with the introduction of the colonial patriarchal system, where black women were interpellated into the system twice over. Their interpellation meant that they were at the very bottom of society. As discussed in the analysis of Lessing's *The Grass is Singing* (1950), we see how black women were rendered voiceless and just a backdrop to the story. Independence did bring about the rise of female writers and thinkers, but this was short-lived as the nationalism movement was instigated. It is important to note here, as discussed in the analyses of *Flame* (1996), how female war veterans are often overlooked and left out of the liberation war hero

narrative, despite them fighting physically in the war. An article published in *The Herald*, 'Remembering the Heroines' (2018), discusses the heroines of the liberation war. However, I note that most of the women on the list are either wives of war veterans or related to war veterans; women like Sally Mugabe, Julia Zvogbo and Joanna Nkomo. I do not deny that these women contributed to the liberation war, through protests and taking care of their husbands, but my point here is to highlight the government's failure (as seen in *Flame*) to celebrate the women that physically fought in the war. There is little representation of the female soldier/ guerrilla.

To elaborate on this point, I refer in passing here to my conversation with Joe Njagu, who described the film industry in Zimbabwe as being a community where one needs connections. To my understanding, these connections are made with people in possession of equipment, finances and ways to aid the filmmaker in their project, etc. Not always, but most of the time, people in these positions are male. A female filmmaker might encounter a few difficulties in trying to form these networks based simply on her gender. I reiterate here that this is not always the case, as there are many upcoming female filmmakers in Zimbabwe that may not experience this. It is also worth noting here that the government, despite being totalitarian in nature, does have a significant number of women working for it (these women have been influenced or corrupted by the system in some way) and in roles of power, which Piotrowska also acknowledges (see Piotrowska, 2017) - women like the retired Olympian Kirsty Coventry, who in 2018 was appointed as Minister of Sports, Arts and Recreation. It is important to note here that, since the film industry is more of a community than an industry, familiarity and class play an important role in excelling in the community. Who one knows and how they can help you can be vital. I wonder whether there is space perhaps for the not so wealthy independent filmmaker trying to break through in the community. We cannot rule out the role that class plays.

It is here I am reminded of Litosseliti's chapter in the collection (2006) *Constructing Gender in Public Arguments: The Female Voice as Emotional Voice*, where she alludes to the female voice being taken on as an emotional voice. Emotions can bring to the table a different way of interpreting strength and courage. However, they are more often associated with hysteria in women. This was something I picked up in my interview with Charmaine Mujeri (see Chapter Three), where she described the reputation of one director who, for privacy reasons, I shall not name. "She gets a bad rep in the circle for being difficult, but I don't think she is at all". In a country where, historically, black women were doubly interpellated, first for the colour of their skin and second because of their gender, I wonder if perhaps the way to be heard is to speak even louder or to become a nasty woman, as coined by Piotrowska. Not that she wants to be nasty, but society makes her that way. It is my perception that, in order for the female voice to become more audible, it should be freed from the stereotype of hysteria or governing from the patriarchy gaze, the gaze that views women as either overtly emotional or cold hearted. In both these scenarios women are perceived as difficult to work with. This is also seen in some

of the character tropes played by women in movies. I will elaborate on this point later on in the chapter.

In this chapter, I am particularly interested in exploring the idea of the new woman emerging from Zimbabwe and what her voice sounds like. Looking at films like *Playing Warriors* (2011) by Rumbidzai Katedza and *Escape* (2016), a collaboration between Agnieszka Piotrowska and Joe Njagu, I not only look at the development of the female gaze, but also the idea of the femme fatale. This notion is well developed in *Escape* (2016). The two main female characters own their sexuality, something we do not necessarily see in most Zimbabwean films, along with the recognition of female desire. Essentially, the two films in their own way allow the viewer to see things from a female perspective, drawing attention to female desire. It is my argument that social constructs – such as class, African morality and religious beliefs – also play a part in holding women back from properly voicing their opinions, but also from taking charge and leading projects. I explore this in depth below.

### **Is there such a thing as the African Christian Feminist?**

“In Zimbabwe, to define yourself as a feminist is a dangerous and unattractive project”

(Piotrowska, 2017:124)

It is here that I acknowledge once more that my voice is not in any way a fair representation of the average Zimbabwean woman who lives day to day in Zimbabwe. I acknowledge my privilege and hybridity in this situation, as a PhD student living in the United Kingdom. However, I would like to draw on my own personal experiences as a Zimbabwean woman living in the diaspora and elaborate on some similarities that are parallel to some women that I know in Zimbabwe and those I interviewed. A consistent question I often got asked after explaining that one of my research aims was to amplify the female voice was whether I identified as a feminist? It is my experience that amongst some African communities, feminism is perceived as a dirty word. Perhaps this stems from the stereotypes that have come to surround the feminism movement, the generalisation that all feminists hate men or are perhaps immoral women. This is important, especially in a country like Zimbabwe where morality stems both from the African tradition and religion, mainly Christianity, and places importance on the meek moral woman. Identifying as a feminist for me is a terrifying notion. Going back to my hybridity debate in the Introductory Chapter, I find myself at odds with the culture that I love. Perhaps it is the fear that most people in my position often feel, the fear of betraying my own culture. Embracing Western ideologies often separates you from the fold, thus I find I cannot outrightly call myself a feminist.

Another key element here is that, as a devoted Christian, identifying as a feminist is a contradiction. The irony here is that, despite Christianity being a religion brought by the white missionaries during

colonialism, it has been embraced and is one of the biggest religions practised in Zimbabwe. I note the irony here of how my encounter with Christianity was through my grandmother. She was the first person to take me to church and taught me how to pray, despite always having resisted everything related to the white man due to her experiences in colonial Rhodesia. Her devotion to Christianity is worth noting here. This is something I often ponder upon and have no definite answer to. Therefore, I personally view the divine as transcending ethnicity and culture.

Where the Bible teaches the submission of wives to their husbands and encourages moral meekness in women, many perceive the religion to be rooted in patriarchy. Thus, I argue here that my motivation transcends my religion, ethnicity and culture, but is rooted in my own personal convictions. For women's equality to be achieved, issues like equal pay, stopping the justification of domestic violence towards women and abolishing traditions like child brides and inherited brides have to be tackled. It is justice for women I seek, a world where women can voice their concerns and be heard, a world where women can have jurisdiction over their own bodies. I am reminded here of the famous line from Martin Luther King's speech – which, coincidentally, also came from the Bible, from the Book of Amos – where he says:

“But let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream” (Amos 5, vs 24, Holy Bible).

Justice here is for those marginalised by society and it is no secret the fight for women's rights, especially women of colour, in Western or even in non-Western countries still has a long way to go. The fact that a law like the Marriage Bill passed in June 2020 allowed women to be married without the groom paying dowry shows that there is still a lot of work to be done in regard to the voices of women (Murwira, 2020). I begin here by tackling the ideology of feminism and the African woman, inspired by writers like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie who, after giving her amazing TED talk, *We Should All Be Feminist* in 2012, later turned it into a book-long essay published in 2014. Adichie, like myself, got her education in the West and also lives in the West. I am also inclined to think her writing is of a hybrid nature too, stemming from being part of two different societies and cultures. I refer back to the point I made earlier, in the chapter about feminism being perceived as a dirty word. In her book, Adichie describes two particular scenarios which I believe would home in my line of argument here.

“In 2003, I wrote a novel called *Purple Hibiscus*, about a man who, among other things, beats his wife, and whose story doesn't end too well. While I was promoting the novel in Nigeria, a journalist, a nice, well-meaning man, told me he wanted to advise me. (Nigerians, as you might know, are very quick to give unsolicited advice.) He told me that people were saying my novel was feminist, and his advice to me – he was shaking his head sadly as he spoke – was that I should never call myself a feminist, since feminists are women who are unhappy because they cannot find husbands. So, I decided to call myself a Happy Feminist. Then an academic, a Nigerian woman, told me that feminism was not our culture, that feminism was un-African, and I was only calling myself a feminist because I had been influenced by Western books” (Adichie, 2014:8 Kindle edition).

It is the notion of feminism being perceived as un-African that I would like to highlight here. Feminism did start in the West, and no doubt the academic woman Adichie describes here perceives the adaptation of feminist views as a betrayal of the pure African culture. This, I believe, is one of the challenges that comes with being of a hybrid nature: the constant battle to balance one's personal convictions and not to betray the culture you love so dearly. I could argue here that this is the main reason why many African women do not outrightly label themselves as feminist. To give an example, I refer to Piotrowska's interview with director Rumbidzai Katedza, which I mentioned in a different chapter but will briefly discuss here. "In Zimbabwe, to define yourself as a feminist is a dangerous and unattractive project..... I ask Rumbi if she is a feminist, she hesitates, saying she does not like labels" (Piotrowska, 2017:124). However it is worth noting there is a big wave of African feminism and indeed from Zimbabwe. Works that include Clenora Hudson-Weems *Africana Womanism* (1993/2020), Ebunoluwa, Sotunsa Mobolanle 'Feminism: The Quest for An African Variant'(2009) and most notably here Fainos Mangena 'The Search for an African Feminist Ethic: A Zimbabwean Perspective' (2009). It is Mangena's argument I magnify here. She suggests that "while women in the West have fought for their place in society resulting in developing 'the ethics of care', women from Africa are still struggling to find their feet. The African woman's moral point of view is still far from being respected because of the whims and caprices of patriarchy which is camouflaged in the communitarian philosophy of hunhu or ubuntu." (Mangena, 2009:18) It is the notion of hunhu that I highlight here which can be translated to our traditional culture and values/ moral compass. I believe this is deeply rooted in the idea of pure culture being used to police women. As discussed in previous chapters we have seen the patriarchal nature of both the current Zimbabwean regime and Rhodesian regime. It is therefore my argument here that it is difficult for a woman to label herself as a feminist without feeling like she is going against her culture, or the philosophy of hunhu, as Mangena points out.

It is the idea of labelling here that I believe is very important. This, in its own way, highlights the importance of the female voice and how sometimes voicing your opinions, especially in a society like Zimbabwe, could be social suicide. I am reminded here of the conference I attended in Zimbabwe aimed at raising awareness of domestic violence within society (see Chapter Three). As discussed before, one of the women noted that women tend to act out their desires rather than voicing them. I reflect on this statement here as I think of Katedza's statement on labels. One could argue that her feature film *Playing Warriors*, as we shall discuss below, is very pro feminist. Described by some critics as the *Sex and The City* version of Zimbabwe, the film is centred around four women who are successful in their own right. They are progressive and act on their desires, and move away from the traditional, general narrative of the meek African woman who is either too submissive and does not have a say in how her life goes, or the rude and loud woman often portrayed as a nag. Perhaps, rather

than outrightly saying it, Katedza's work tells us where she stands. However, the notion of the female voice is diminished. Society is still not in a place where the female voice is prominent. It is worth noting here that the notion of the voice – especially in post-colonial Zimbabwe, where society is still somewhat Marxist (even with the change of regime) – is still a struggle for both men and women, but more so for women due to the patriarchal nature of the system.

Carrying on from my last point, I analyse here the notion of being anti-African culture if you are pro-feminist as Adichie describes it. Because it is a Western school of thought, should we automatically dismiss it? As mentioned in my introduction, as an academic I strive to obtain information from everywhere, across cultures, in order to enrich my thought patterns and see how different people think and perceive things. At the heart of feminism is equality for all, equality for women to be able to work in the same jobs as men and get the same pay, equality in treatment and not to be seen as second-class citizens or, in vital cases in Zimbabwe, as property, which is something the movie *Neria* did so well, which I will discuss here briefly.

*Neria* (1993) was one of the biggest feminist films to come out of Zimbabwe and southern Africa at its time of release. It is still the highest grossing film to come out of Zimbabwe. Directed by Godwin Mawuru, it was produced by John and Louise Riber and the writing of the movie was credited to the novelist Dangarembga, who wrote the novella which Louise Riber translated into the screen play. *Neria* follows the story of a widowed woman who finds herself navigating the harsh realities of life after her husband passes on. Her husband's brother, Phineas, who symbolises patriarchy, tries to strip Neria of everything that she and her husband had worked for, including their home, children and savings. Most importantly, Phineas tries to inherit Neria herself as property, justifying this by how he helped his brother in paying for her dowry/ lobola. Neria's fight is not just for her possessions, but ultimately for the rights to her own body and being able to make her own decisions. For obvious reasons here, the movie was really popular amongst women, as many finally felt seen and heard. In a recent documentary by Piotrowska entitled *Who is the author of Neria (1992) - a Zimbabwean masterpiece or a neo-colonial enterprise?* (2020), Piotrowska interviewed Jesese Mungoshi who played the main character of Neria. Mungoshi recalls women coming up to her after the movie was released and thanking her for the movie, but also sharing with her similar stories that had happened to them. For these women, *Neria* symbolised that someone was not only seeing them, but that their voice was being heard.

Simply put, *Neria* achieved what it set out to do, to bring about a change in society. Upon its release, a law was passed giving women the right to inherit their late husband's property and protecting them from mistreatment by their late husband's family. It is important to note here that the tradition of *Nhaka/ inheritance* as it is formally known in Shona was an African custom set up to protect women; however, some people began to abuse the system. In former times, many women stayed at home



whilst the husband went to work. If the husband was to pass on, then the husband's brother would take on the responsibility of his late brother's family and estate. However, some saw this as an opportunity to inherit the late brother's fortune and sometimes inherit his wife. As the times progressed, women began also to go to work and contribute to the household earnings. As seen in the movie *Neria*, the traditional practice became outdated as many women were capable of taking care of their families and bringing in an income.

In a recently published article entitled 'Gendering Cruelty: an investigation of the depiction of the cruel male in Godwin Mawuru's *Neria*' (2018), Phebbie Sakarombe suggests that *Neria* is an extension of colonial film. She argues that where colonial film in Rhodesia taught Africans how to behave (see Chapter One on the psychology of colonialism), *Neria* disintegrates the notion of the African man, thus telling the audience that the best way for a man to behave is to be more Western. Piotrowska also addresses Sakarombe's line of thinking and states that "scholar Phebbie Sakarombe advances quite an extraordinarily hostile reaction to the iconic film, suggesting that its portrayal of hegemonic masculinity, here in the African context, was skewed by the white producers in order to undermine the African man and therefore the very core of African identity" (Piotrowska, 2020:302). Piotrowska suggests that Sakarombe's attitude could be due to past colonial abuses, which resulted in hostility towards white people working in Zimbabwe alongside the indoctrination of the Mugabe regime after the 2000's, which presented white people as the enemy (see Piotrowska, 2020:302). It is my argument here that Sakarombe's view is based on the sentiment of pure culture. As explained in Chapter Two, I acknowledge that it is important to represent and guard whatever little of our culture we have left. However, it is my perception that she overlooks the fact that colonialism did in fact alter our way of living. Choosing to ignore or deny the hybrid nature of what our culture has evolved into is indeed melancholic in its own way.

In the short film *The Two Farmers* (1948), which I discussed in Chapter One, a distinction is made between the two African males, the one who refuses to listen and adapt to the Rhodesian way of doing things and the one who adapts and is better off because of it. "The colonial objectives of Rhodesian film, which were merely to teach Africans to 'behave', have evolved into a "media for development" trope that arbitrarily separates African men from African women, and, more importantly, separates some African men from other African men"(Sakarombe, 2018:23). My disagreement with Sakarombe's argument here is not in the notion that the depiction of African men in *Neria* is very limited, with which I can concur to a certain degree as you cannot sum up a group of people in just two tropes, but the notion that the film is a colonial piece of work. To elaborate on this, I revisit the notion of who may speak, which really relies on recognition and whom the recognition comes from. The country's colonial legacy no doubt makes it difficult for cross culture/ race collaborations due to the notion of voice being an important aspect. There is an assumption here that the person who is of Western descent is always going to have a dominant position, which thus dictates how the voice

should sound. Piotrowska explores this notion and recounts some of Said's arguments on flexible positional superiority, suggesting that a "Westerner can engage in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing the relative upper hand" (Piotrowska, 2020:289). Tackling Sakarombe's argument, the assumption here would therefore be that, because the film was directed by the Ribers who are American and who got funding from a Western NGO, their voice and ideologies are more prominent in the film. This, of course, is a big misconception, as *Neria* was written by Godwin Mawuru based on the real-life experiences of his mother. The criticism Sakarombe makes of the portrayal of masculinity in the film becomes void as we find out that these male characters are based on real people who exhibited these traits and Mawuru played a part in constructing these characters.

One of the biggest selling points of the movie was the fact that it was directed by the young Godwin Mawuru, who was 20 years old at the time and became the first black Zimbabwean male to direct an award-winning movie on such a big scale. There have been many debates on the authorship of the story and some controversies surrounding the royalties of the film (which Piotrowska writes about extensively – see Piotrowska, 2020); however, I choose to focus here on the notion of the voice. Godwin Mawuru himself sought out the Ribers with this story, which was the story of his family. There are two things to highlight here. One is how Mawuru used his voice to amplify and speak on behalf of his mother. Where she was not able to speak up, he did it for her. This is the sentiment I believe Adichie conveys in *We Should All Be Feminist* when she elaborates (and I paraphrase here) that we should get to a place in society where we will not need feminist activists, but the notion of standing up for equality will be second nature to us.

Where people have argued that the film dismantles African traditions and subscribes to Western feminist ideologies, I offer here an opposing view. As discussed in Chapter Three, Zimbabwean culture in the 90's was hybrid in nature, infused with both Western and traditional African values. The character of *Neria* was a modern working-class woman who made more money than her husband. Perhaps *Neria* offered a modern solution to a modern society.

We cannot neglect to take into account that the traditional inheritance systems were put in place to protect women, and judging by the number of women that co-signed and related to the movie, not just in Zimbabwe but some parts of Africa where this traditional way of doing things was practised, it is safe to say that there was a patriarchal abuse of the system. I do not deny the fact that the solution presented in *Neria* was Western in nature, but as Sakarombe points out, there are ways to resolve such issues in our traditional culture, to resolve such disputes, like going to the elders etc. However, it is my argument here that *Neria* presents an alternative solution. It does not disregard the traditional way of thinking but offers an alternative if the traditional way is corrupted. In the movie, we see *Neria* pleading with her in-laws after her husband's death, their disregard for her position having left her

with no option. We see the contention between pure culture and Western ideologies being played out in the movie as people start telling Neria that she is going against culture and tradition by taking her brother-in-law to court. This shows how society perceives the adaptation of certain Western ideologies. Simply put, using Maponde's words, Neria behaved like the lost child of the soil. It is here, as I end this train of thought, that I must acknowledge that *Neria* is a feminist film and that the discourse of feminism is a very Western school of thought. It is perhaps one of the many reasons why some might dismiss it, as some ideologies might not work in an African setting. Feminism has been criticised for overlooking black and ethnic minorities within the movement. Allow me to elaborate on this below.

In their recently published article, Stuart Coles and Josh Pasek use the term "Intersectional invisibility" (Coles & Pasek, 2020) to explain how "black women are often overlooked in people's conversations about racism and sexism even though they face a unique combination of both of these forms of discrimination simultaneously, this 'intersectional invisibility' means that movements that are supposed to help Black women may be contributing to their marginalization" (Coles & Pasek, 2020). Coles and Pasek draw upon a study they conducted in the US which, I must acknowledge here, works completely differently when it comes to translating it to an African society. If African American women whose culture is more similar to Western white women feel marginalised in the movement, no doubt African women have difficulties aligning with the movement as it overlooks some important aspects of their struggle, which include traditions and culture.

Coined by Audre Lorde and later developed by Kimberly Crenshaw, intersectionality helped in bridging the gap that isolated women of colour from the movement. I recognise here that it is indeed a Western school of thought. However, like the Third Space, I acknowledge intersectionality and its origins, but also take what is best out of it. Alternatively, here I consider whether the modern-day feminist has a parallel voice to that of the African woman. No doubt the African woman can identify with the struggles, but perhaps might not have some privileges that, for example, a white woman would have in the West. In a country where the oppression of women is sometimes presented as culture and tradition, it becomes harder for women to fight against it. Fighting means going against your own culture, betraying your roots. To place more emphasis on this, I refer to Tsitsi Dangarembga's keynote talk at the Feminart Arts and Books festival held in Lilongwe Malawi in November of 2019. Dangarembga's discourse revolved around what it is like being a feminist in a conservative country. This, I find, is one of the ways the experiences of feminists in the West and in some African societies differ. In particular, in Zimbabwe – being a conservative country – African women lack some of the freedoms of feminists in the West, due to the nature of the society we live in. To elaborate on this, I refer to some of Dangarembga's words in her keynote:

"We should not be surprised, however, that feminists too often are unable to congregate as we do during Feminart, for the purposes of mutual support, celebration and discourse building. We

should not be surprised that too often feminists are unable to carry out the work that is so vital for themselves, their families, their communities and nations. We should not be surprised that the care and sustainability of feminists as individuals and in their communities is universally under-prioritised. Feminists are too often undermined in our being, thwarted in our work and hindered in our progress because, most commonly, we are women. The construction of the world today is patriarchal. Patriarchy is inherently flawed because patriarchal systems lead to conservative, unequal societies. The subjugation of women is a normative constant in all patriarchal societies” (Dangarembga, 2019).

Dangarembga mentions how the patriarchal system puts women in a position of power. Women they know will be matriarchs and not oppose the system. This does indeed make me wonder if the reason behind the lack of female authors and directors and producers in the industry is parallel to Dangarembga’s argument. Perhaps it is not that women do not want to curate or lead projects, but that the patriarchal and conservative nature of the country makes it difficult. It is those that adhere to the instructions from the system that are allowed to speak. Therefore, the female voice is still not free, but is controlled. Dangarembga reiterates that women are still assets, hence their voices are controlled. I would emphasise once more that this is not always the case, but tends to be the case for some people.

I refer here to Judith Butler’s work in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990). Picking up on the work of Lacan, she insists that gender is not biologically determined. The mere fact that you are a woman is not a guarantee for any ethical stance. Often quite the opposite is the case. In keeping with Dangarembga’s stance on the patriarchal limitations placed on women, Butler argues that gender is non-binary and quite often the embodiment of any gender lies beyond cultural interpretation. Butler argues that

“Because there is neither an ‘essence’ that gender expresses or externalizes nor an objective ideal to which gender aspires; because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all. Gender is, thus, a construction that regularly conceals its genesis. The tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions is obscured by the credibility of its own production. The authors of gender become entranced by their own fictions whereby the construction compels one’s belief in its necessity and naturalness” (Butler, 1990:522).

Butler’s argument on how gender is a performance is what I highlight here. In a literal sense, I refer to Dangarembga’s speech where she highlights the hypocrisy inherent in patriarchy whereby women in power can still be subservient, especially in regard to their gender roles in their matrimonial home. She calls out what Butler ascertains as gender performance, which is very much applicable to the patriarchal nature of Zimbabwean society. Dangarembga discusses the issue in the following way:

“Please don’t get me wrong. I am not saying that cooking for and bringing things to and carrying things for one’s husband is inherently wrong. However, when women in positions of power and influence deploy the “Although I have attained this high position, I still do these things” narrative, I am disturbed at several levels. Firstly, I am disturbed because the statement categorises different kinds of women. It divides women into binary categories. Such statements divide women into the categories of women who kneel and so forth to husbands,

and those who do not. We may call this the category of marital genuflection. Those statements also divide women into the category of women who have risen to high positions of power and influence in patriarchal society, and those who have not. In addition to these divisions, the statements go on to relate the category of marital genuflection to the category of personal achievement. The statements frame this relationship between kneeling and achievement in such a way as to present subservient wifely marital genuflection as a desirable behaviour for women to exhibit” (Dangarembga, 2019).

One thing is clear here: there is a constant battle between culture and change. In order for women to use their voice, the patriarchal chains holding them down need to be loosened first.

### **The Female Gaze (Playing Warriors)**

I begin this section with a brief recollection of my interview with Ella Wakatama Allfrey, which I explored in great detail in Chapter Two but will mention here briefly. Wakatama is a very accomplished woman in her own right. She is an editor who has worked with novelists like Dangarembga, but she also owns her own publishing firm, Indigo Press. She is also a senior research fellow at Manchester University. During our interview, Wakatama reminisced about the moment when she described her various impressive achievements to her family and the overwhelming support she got from them, fondly recollecting her father’s comments in particular. He was not surprised, but told her “Of course uri va Chihera,” which translates to “Of course you are a Chihera”. The sentiment around this statement is indeed a powerful one. Chihera is a totem mainly associated with the Eland animal. Women called va Chihera are natural born leaders, strong willed, assertive, hard workers and high achievers. Wakatama embraces being va Chihera, but also recognises the shift that our culture has taken. She acknowledges the colonial past, but reiterates to me that we cannot simply just remain there, we have to move on. I am of the opinion this is the notion portrayed in *Playing Warriors* (2011). The film portrays what life is like in postcolonial Zimbabwe.

In a community influenced by Western film ideology, most of the films made in Zimbabwe were made from the perspective of the male gaze. There are a few exceptions, like the movie *Neria* (1992) and partially in its own way *Lobola* (2010). However, *Lobola* was shot from a male perspective, challenging the patriarchal cultural law on bride price and dowry. As a consequence, it indirectly challenged the notion of paying for women as if they were assets.

Since its release in 2011, there have been no similar movies that mirror the concepts portrayed in *Playing Warriors*. Katedza managed to show that it was possible to live in a hybrid culture and find balance. The women in the movie are bold and in charge, their voices are prominent. Before I progress further, I would like to discuss briefly the notion of the gaze in film and make a distinction between the male and the female gaze. In her ground-breaking essay ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ (1975), Laura Mulvey cemented the discourse of the male gaze. She discussed in depth how, when it comes to film (particularly in the 1950’s and 60’s, the classic Hollywood cinema era), women were

often not the makers of meaning, but were given meaning by their male counterparts. Women were simply present to represent the “Unconscious patriarchal nature” of the system (Mulvey, 1975:57). She elaborates how films are often filmed from the perspective of the male gaze. This is often seen in the shots and angles the director chooses to utilise, but also in the storytelling. It is often stimulating to the straight male viewer, patriarchal in nature. Mulvey states that she uses psychoanalysis here – mainly the works of Freud and Lacan – as “political weapons” (Mulvey, 1975:58) to dismantle patriarchy. Thus, she categorises the two different modes of the male gaze: the voyeuristic, which shows women as objects of desire to be looked at, and the fetishisation of women, which can be rooted in the fear of women. It is important to note here that, despite the essay being published over three decades ago, it is still relevant in today's society and applicable to our case study. The conservative patriarchal culture of Zimbabwe often portrays women as signifiers on screen: “woman then stands in patriarchal culture as signifier to the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman and is still tied to her place as bearer of meaning not maker of meaning” (Mulvey, 1975:58).

In response to Mulvey's male gaze theory, the term female gaze was coined. In recent times this has been employed when speaking of films that have female directors and producers alongside the lead actor being a woman. It focuses on the female perspective, and also female spectatorship and the fact that the audience might identify with the main female protagonist. On the basis of this definition, one can therefore argue that the female gaze is utilised in *Playing Warriors*. The storyline of the movie follows three modern women who juggle to find a balance between tradition and their modern lifestyles. Nyarai, who is the main protagonist, is an accomplished advertising executive who also takes care of her family and sister, her best friend Nonto who gets married to a man she met at church and Maxi, who has an affair with a politician and ends up pregnant. In their own right these women are strong, independent to a certain extent and in charge of their own lives. The bold stance Nyarai takes at the end of the movie, cutting off her relationship and choosing to be her own warrior and prince charming, is a refreshing challenge to the status quo and society. Piotrowska explores the notion of playing warriors as a “political gesture” (Piotrowska, 2017:136). My understanding here is that it is perhaps a statement saying it is okay to have both traditional and modern/ Western values. A good example would be how Katedza chose to play out the story of Maxi. In a conservative patriarchal society like Zimbabwe, single mothers are often shunned and castigated as immoral women, but Katedza takes a bold stance by making the character of Maxi keep the baby, disregarding what society will say by making the decision to keep it for herself.

The notion of female desire in this movie is not as prominent as it would be in a Western film like the *Sex and the City* franchise. However, it is still there, but in subtle ways. Maxi's character chooses to

pursue a relationship with a married man, going against all the moral precepts set by our culture and tradition. We know the relationship was a sexual one. Maxi is a lawyer and a successful one at that, so it is possible to assume that money was not why she was in a relationship with a politician, but perhaps power and influence, or simply the fact that she wanted to be with him without having the attachment of being a wife. Regardless of the reason, it was still her choice. Katedza tells Piotrowska during the interview that she wrote the characters based on the women who surround her in Zimbabwe. During my recent visit to Zimbabwe in 2018, whilst stuck in the tedious Harare traffic, I heard a story reported on Capitol FM Harare about a mother who found out her daughter had a 'blesser' who was sponsoring their lifestyle. A blesser, as I found out, is similar to a sugar daddy but not as old. He is more like a Christian Grey, a rich young man who takes care of young ladies on the basis of a non-commitment relationship. Many other people called in to the radio station to tell their story or of someone they knew who was also involved with a 'blesser'. Could it be this is an example of women finding a way to take advantage of patriarchy for their own gain and exercising some form of sexual freedom in a conservative society? I must emphasise that this is by no means an endorsement but, as Katedza does through the character of Maxi, I make room for discourse saying this is happening in our society. Instead of sweeping it under the carpet, let us discuss the embodiment of female bodies and the policing of their desire.

On the other hand, at the beginning of the film the main character, Nyarai, is in a relationship with a younger man which she leaves to be with the handsome, older, mature and more accomplished Lesley. One could argue here that she is very much in charge of her desires.

This is perfectly illustrated in one scene where she jumps on Lesley, the innuendo here being that they have sex. The film does not say this, but it is implied. This is very different to how most women are portrayed on screen, as timid, waiting to be seduced by the man.

At first Lesley is charming and wins her over. However, as time goes by Nyarai quickly learns how traditional and patriarchal Lesley is. He expects Nyarai to conform to the traditional gender role women in society are expected to uphold. Piotrowska discusses the big debate in the film between the two characters that ultimately leads to the demise of their relationship. Lesley expects Nyarai to cook for him and tells her he has never had to cook before in his life, the women in his life always did it for him. Piotrowska suggests here that this transcends a mere food debate and who makes it, and "is a signifier of power relations" (Piotrowska, 2017:137). There is a tug of war between the two characters as they both expect different things from each other. Nyarai wants an equal partnership, a very Western ideology devoid of traditional gender norms, whereas Lesley despite – being well off and exposed to different ways of doing things – is still stuck in his traditional way of thinking. I would like to note here that there is nothing wrong with a woman choosing to be a traditional housewife or working professional, but my discourse here is about voice and the woman's ability to choose.

Dangarembga shares this sentiment and argues against the binary embodiment of women, stating

“Please don’t get me wrong. I am not saying that cooking for and bringing things to and carrying things for one’s husband is inherently wrong. However, when women in positions of power and influence deploy the “Although I have attained this high position, I still do these things” narrative, I am disturbed at several levels. Firstly, I am disturbed because the statement categorises different kinds of women. It divides women into binary categories. Such statements divide women into the categories of women who kneel and so forth to husbands, and those who do not. We may call this the category of marital genuflection. Those statements also divide women into the category of women who have risen to high positions of power and influence in patriarchal society, and those who have not. In addition to these divisions, the statements go on to relate the category of marital genuflection to the category of personal achievement. The statements frame this relationship between kneeling and achievement in such a way as to present subservient wifely marital genuflection as a desirable behaviour for women to exhibit.

My second concern is that such marital genuflection statements indicate adherence to patriarchal norms on the part of the women who utter them. Included in these patriarchal norms is the norm of women’s non-achievement. In essence, such statements declare that “I should not be achieving in this way as a woman. Therefore, in spite of my boldness against patriarchy outside the home, I still concede to patriarchy inside the home.” It is as though women come to plead that they have not denied the essence of patriarchy because, in spite of public ascent to power and influence, they still subscribe to patriarchal norms in the private sphere. This points to the domestic space as a bastion of patriarchy and also reinforces my earlier observation that patriarchy is built upon a concept of women as private property designed to enhance masculine experience. Such marital genuflection statements thus amount to an acknowledgement of deviation from patriarchal norms and a petition not to be punished for this deviation because the norms are upheld for the benefit of the masculine entity in the private sphere” (Dangarembga, 2019).

It is the idea of being a feminist and a woman of great achievement outside the home and conceding to the patriarchy inside the home that I believe Katedza questions here, in a subtle way, through the character of Nyarai. Nyarai is an accomplished woman in her field who, as a result of her success, is taking care of her parents and her younger sister. Being with Lesley, one could argue, is a betrayal of who she is. She fights for her freedom, including that of her sisters, to go and play basketball overseas alongside her studies. It is the notion of the woman feeling guilty regarding her success so that she needs to conceal it in her matrimonial home that I challenge here. I know many women, including some in my family, who were forced to abandon their careers after getting married, not by choice but because they were required to by their husbands or they were told by a matriarch in the family that they would scare off their husband if they continued working. Katedza’s film shows how the female voice can be silenced in a matrimonial home. Marriage, which is supposed to be a union of safety and equal partnership, thus becomes another way to embody women as assets and not individuals. It is important to note here that Katedza, too, is a Western-educated person, hence her thinking could be said to be as a result of her Third Space encounters.

To conclude this section, I go back to the thread on class which I mentioned above. Benson (2017), argues that the discourse of the female gaze is classist in nature; it marginalises the experience of ethnic minority women and mainly focuses on white middle class women. It is important to recognise the role that class plays in a setting like Zimbabwe and perhaps the film does ignore the plight of other



women who are not so well off. No doubt the women in Katedza's film are working middle class women and are doing well for themselves. In the interview with Piotrowska, Katedza acknowledges that the women in her film are based on women she knows in real life who are doing well for themselves (see Piotrowska, 2017:138). One might ask whether, by focusing on these middle-class working women, many other women were marginalised who perhaps do not have the same kind of privileges that these women have. However, Katedza herself states that her work symbolises a transitional phase, and much work still needs to be done. In this feature film she manages to show how one can embrace Western ideologies and traditional values and find a balance. The character of Nonto is perhaps a good example. She meets the man she marries at church and goes through the traditional lobola system as well as a white Christian wedding.

There is an element of compromise here, as Nonto goes through the traditional process of her husband literally paying money for her as an asset and having a white church wedding, which in itself is a very Western custom. I am reminded here of my interview with Ellah Wakatama when she mentioned how her daughter, despite being mixed race, chose to honour the traditional practice. Wakatama received *mombe yehumai*, which is a dowry in the form of a cow given to the mother when the daughter is getting married. By doing this she honoured her mother culturally, which is another side to the dowry system. However, the big highlight here is choice. For some women, lobola is not a choice but a requirement by their family. They have no choice or say in the matter. I conclude here with a similar thought to the one I have expressed in previous chapters. I suggest that there is enormous pressure on women to be custodians of our tradition and culture. Society tends to be more judgmental with regard to the woman who adopts Western ideologies or ways of thinking compared to the man. Perhaps this is because women are the matriarchs, they give birth and teach the next generation. If they are Western in nature, they cannot be trusted as the custodians of a pure culture.

### **Tackling Female Desire in a Conservative Society**



**Figure 5:1**, Festival poster for the movie *Escape* (2016)

Based on sheer observation, the rhetoric of female desire is one that many female writers avoid. We

see this in Tsitsi Dangarembga's novels, where she hints at some levels of intimacy but never goes into great detail, or Katedza's work where she makes the viewer guess whether Lesley and Nyarai sleep together but does not explicitly say it. I feel a disclaimer here is necessary, as there are other films and works by Zimbabwean writers that explore the discourse of female desire, but I have chosen to focus on those creative outputs more popular / recognised in the community. I must also note that female desire does not have to be provocative or racy; perhaps not Samantha from *Sex and the City*, as we must take into consideration that the society, tradition and culture in question are conservative by nature. I associate desire with the acknowledgement of female agency outside of the patriarchal boundaries, and the right to choose and act on that desire. Once again, I am compelled to ponder my position here: I am a Christian woman who, some might argue, is conservative by nature. Nevertheless, the notion of female desire cannot be dismissed. Certainly, as discussed above (with reference to the blesser conversation) there is a new type of woman emerging within our society and I use this to initiate some sort of discourse.

One movie that did get people to engage in the discourse of desire and sexuality in the Zimbabwean film community was the movie *Escape* (2017), co-directed by Agnieszka Piotrowska and Joe Njagu. A film noir fairy tale, it follows the character of Charles (played by Jose Marques), a mixed raced man from the UK who goes to Zimbabwe in search of his father. The audience gets to journey with the character of Charles as he discovers his roots, learns about Zimbabwean culture and falls in love. Charles is the perfect illustration of embodiment through hybridity, here brought about by being mixed race, the cultural hybridity of his father being black Zimbabwean and his mother a white British woman.

However, in this section I choose to focus on the semi-controversial character of Tsitsi that Charles engages with. The character of Tsitsi, played by Nothando Nobengula, can be identified here as a femme fatale. She is the young wife of the old owner of the hotel Charles stays in when he first arrives in Harare. Her attraction to / infatuation for Charles is immediate and only grows as the film progresses. Charles also has a relationship with Anna, played by Selma Mtukudzi. Anna is a modern working woman, accomplished in her own right. There is a stark difference between the two women, but they have one thing in common: Charles. The agency of these two female characters is probably why the movie was such a success, as I unpack below.

I begin here by acknowledging how *Escape* was a ground-breaking film upon its release at the Zimbabwe International Film Festival (2016). It was also the first film Joe Njagu had made since *The Gentleman* (2011). After a quite challenging decade in the community in terms of collaborative film, the feature film was praised by many for pushing the envelope and setting a new standard for the Zimbabwean film community (see Ndlovu, 2016). The film received many awards, including a standing ovation during its premiere. However, the film was not without its critics. *Escape* became

the first ever feature film in Zimbabwe to feature racy sex scenes. As reported by The Herald online newspaper (Zimoyo, 2016), some critics condemned the movie on the basis that it was against our tradition to show sex scenes/ intimate scenes on screen. The film was a bold gesture; not only did it push the envelope, but it had two women who were not passive but had some form of agency. They were not afraid to talk about their sexuality, a stance that conservative Zimbabwe was not be ready for. When asked in an interview about the racy nature of the film, Njagu (who was a co-director) stated,

“This is where we go wrong because we don’t think outside the box. There was no real sex on camera, but it’s implied sex. Even in Hollywood, movie actors have such scenes and there is nothing wrong. They are called simulated scenes. This will be one of the first Zimbabwean films with such scenes, and the outcry is a surprise considering how we consume similar Western films. Here people say it’s a taboo when people kiss. We hope to demystify that notion in local production,” he said. He said the film will be released on DVD and in cinemas in Zimbabwe with a round on major festivals across the world. Njagu said he was inspired by the urge to keep pushing the bar high for local products. We need to move with the times to match up with international standards. For how long will we keep holding on to the past? “Zimbabwe is blessed with talented actors, film producers and directors. Apart from resources which are lacking, why not embrace their ideas and give them opportunity not only to shine, but to prove their magic,” he said (Joe Njagu, Zimoyo, 2016).

One of the biggest takeaways here from Njagu’s statement is the painfully obvious hypocrisy that we consume Western films that have more nudity than what is shown in *Escape*. However, we are offended when such scenes are portrayed in our local films. I remember watching *Escape* for the first time in 2018, at a screening held at the University of Bedfordshire during a conference. My initial thought and reaction to the movie was “this probably offended a lot of people”. My disposition here was influenced by my awareness that Zimbabwean society can be very conservative. I imagined my aunties and male family members in my family back in Zimbabwe saying, “we don’t do that here... it is not our culture”. I reiterate here what I discussed in Chapter Three regarding the differences between the younger and the older generations. Owing to the culture of silence present in our society, the discourse of sex and intimacy is treated as a taboo subject that should not be discussed publicly. I find the younger generation are more receptive and willing to engage in this discourse compared to the older generation.

### **Analysis of the character of Tsitsi**

I begin here by defining what your classic *femme fatale* is. She is usually a subversive female character on the big screen who possesses a seductive charm, energised and sometimes desperate. Tsitsi is indeed strong-willed, mysterious and does possess a seductive charm. She is also desperate, after being married off to an old man at a young age, for some form of freedom. It is important to note here that the notion of the *femme fatale* is very Western in nature. Therefore, I would like to refer to Piotrowska’s work on the nasty woman as it will be more applicable here. The nasty woman, as described by Piotrowska, is applicable to all cultures and societies even though it is of Western origin.

In every culture / society there is a woman perceived as nasty. Putting this into the Zimbabwean context, the nasty woman can be an immoral woman, a woman who stands up against the patriarchy, or a 'loose woman' – the term used to suggest a woman who sleeps around. "She is not an action woman, or a heroine of a horror film. The nasty woman discussed here is the creation of a woman writer, director or producer, and she is recognisably like the rest of us – at least to begin with. She is not a fantastical creature, although I suggest here that her characterisation draws from some classic archetypes" (Piotrowska, 2019:2).

Tsitsi tells Charles "I dream of being free from this prison, he came to Chitungwiza looking for a young bride, he came like a hunter or a client looking for a prostitute". The viewer learns that her father gave Tsitsi to her husband when she was only 14 years old. For Tsitsi, she was an asset transacted from her father to her husband with lobola/ dowry as payment. She is trapped by religion, poverty and culture. Perhaps her relationship with Charles is a welcome distraction, a moment of release as she can act upon her own desire outside patriarchal constrictions. Tsitsi by virtue of this is a nasty woman in the literal sense. Her femme fatale attributes are what makes her the villain of the movie in the end. However, I reiterate here that she has become nasty because society makes her that way. She is a symptom of her environment and experience. Society made her who she is. Munya, the receptionist, warns Charles to stay away from Tsitsi, telling him "she is a bad woman, she sleeps around especially with hotel guests, she is bad news". I am reminded of the mother who called the radio show to discuss how her daughter had a blesser. The mother felt helpless and mentioned that the daughter should do what she perceived as necessary to feed the family. We see a similar situation play out in the movie. Tsitsi's mother is in no position to protest the fact that her fourteen year old daughter is getting married to an old man. Instead, she tells Tsitsi to consider herself lucky she gets to marry a rich man for a better life. Thus, for Tsitsi men become a means to an end. Her husband was her financial means and Charles was her key to freedom. In the verbatim sense here, we see a scene where Charles goes to Tsitsi's mother's house to confront her about her alleged lovers. Tsitsi's mother lays there, motionless, perhaps symbolising her passive nature when it comes to her daughter and her affairs. The character of Tsitsi in the movie is obviously damaged by the system which has not allowed her to develop and grow. She has become evil, drawing on a fairy tale tradition of an evil woman who gets punished.

The escalation point of the movie comes when Charles runs out of money. He slowly begins to unravel and Tsitsi persuades him to kill her husband so they can finally be together when she inherits his business. When Charles refuses, she begins to taunt him almost in a haunting way. She embodies your classic femme fatale here, as she almost leads Charles into a trap to kill her husband who, we later on find out, is Charles' uncle. Tsitsi finishes the job by killing her husband herself after Charles fails to do so and tries to frame him for it. Tsitsi, one could argue, is very manipulative and uses her body to get what she wants. The development of the female characters in this film is one of its best attributes.

Tsitsi is far from your average passive character. Her story, I believe, serves as a warning, a warning to the broken corrupted system of lobola and the possible effects on the psyche of child brides. Tsitsi, I would argue, is melancholic; perhaps not your average melancholic, but she exhibits some characteristics. The lost objects of affection here could be various things: her freedom, which she ends up taking through the brutal killing of her husband, and her sexual innocence. I would suggest that her obsession with having sex with Charles (or other men, as Munya suggests) is perhaps her own way of regaining her sexual agency, something that she never had control over when she got married at 14. With her other lovers she is in control, something she does not possess with her husband. As Khanna suggests, the melancholic exhibits violent tendencies and we see here Tsitsi ultimately killing her husband, the one she believes is the cause for her lost object of affection. I contemplate here that the nasty woman is a creation of the female writer. Piotrowska's character development of Tsitsi was done in conversations with Nothando Nobengula the actress who plays Tsitsi, as a result the character is proficient. It is my argument that Tsitsi's character forces the viewer to contemplate and reflect on our society. Tsitsi is a victim of the culture, a child bride who finds a way to survive. I reflect on some of the reasons why it might be hard for black female writers and filmmakers to write a character like Tsitsi. In doing so, we challenge the patriarchy around us. These people may be our fathers, uncles, brothers and friends. I cannot neglect to mention the issue of funding here. Most women are not well positioned to acquire funds that will enable them to make such a film. As Dangarembga proposes,

“The reason is that patriarchy invests heavily in amplifying voices that configure women as assets. It is my experience in my work that astute African feminists engaged in the amplification of African feminists' voices struggle in their work of amplifying these African feminist voices. I have noticed that rather than amplify voices and create a socially accessible feminist narrative, emphasis is on building up bureaucratic institutions that do not engage at the level of narrative that is accessible and therefore impactful on the public” (Dangarembga, 2019).

I conclude this chapter with these thoughts. One of the questions I asked at the beginning of the chapter was why female writers excel more in literature rather than film. My theory is a cross between the lack of funding and training opportunities for female filmmakers. But also, the patriarchal nature of the society hinders the growth of most female filmmakers. As mentioned above, society tends to be harsh on the female gender compared to the male gender when it comes to the upkeep of traditional value systems. A female filmmaker who finds herself going against the narrative set by the patriarchy might encounter some hindrances. I believe many choose to remain silent rather than face the patriarchy. Perhaps women excel more in literature than in film because with literature one has the ability to write in freedom, outside of the boundaries of the patriarchy. It is an individual project and requires little or no money. I end on this note: one key element from Dangarembga's keynote seminar was the division of voices among women. I believe that this also plays a part in hindering the growth of other female filmmakers. It is not that we must all agree, but in African countries where the female voice is being amplified to raise awareness on child brides, domestic violence and freedom, it is important that the female voice be united.

## CONCLUSION

I begin this chapter by revisiting my research question for this study which is What is post-colonial melancholia and how does it manifest itself in Zimbabwean culture and cinema? At the outset of this work, and in order to help me answer this question, I also set up sub-research questions, which explored the notions of nationalism and how it has affected race relations in an independent Zimbabwe. I also wanted to interrogate the extent to which both colonialism and nationalism as deployed by contemporary politicians in order to aid the project of subjugating women and muting the female voice in Zimbabwe.

The overall aim of this study has been to initiate a dialogue on the post-colonial sphere in Zimbabwe and encourage the metaphorisation of centuries of trauma caused by both the colonial regime and the Zimbabwean Marxist government. As demonstrated throughout this thesis I have deployed textual analysis of films and literature in order to examine the issues under consideration. I have also used mixed methodology in the form of observation and interviews. As mentioned in the introduction, I am the only black Zimbabwean female scholar to have taken up the challenge of discussing the issue of post-colonial melancholia and the psyche in Zimbabwe. I therefore argue that one of the many ways in which I have contributed to knowledge is simply through using my scholarly voice alongside my embodiment as a black Zimbabwean woman. I also amplify the voices of Zimbabwean women through the textual analysis of films and literature, as well as through the analysis of the interviews conducted, and memories passed onto me from other black women.

As metaphorisation is a major theme in this study, the notion of the voice is highly significant. I have defined metaphorization, following classic psychoanalytical definitions (see Khanna, 2003) as an ability to express trauma in spoken or written language. In the introduction I begin by illustrating why a study such as this is necessary and vital, as I discuss the controversial erection of Mbuya Nehanda's statue in April 2021. Mbuya Nehanda's voice was used as the heart of the liberation struggle and has now been weaponized to further the nationalistic agenda of the current government. I argue that the matriarch, whose voice cried out for the freedom of her children, was and still is being used to silence her children. Her voice has been corrupted. Many writers such as Mlambo, Ndlovu and Willems among many others discussed in this study, demonstrate how, at its core, the nationalism agenda pushed by the Zimbabwean government, was and is corrupt to its core. Nationalism in Zimbabwe allegedly sets out to promote the Zimbabwean way of doing things, going back to our pre-colonial identity. However, I argue that this is an identity that we as a nation are ambivalent about. My contribution to knowledge here is that whereas many writers discuss the implications nationalism has had on society, I go further by discussing how it has affected the nation's psyche. I advance this argument in order to look at how nationalism has weaponized what I called the 'lost object of affection', the nation's identity in pre-colonial times. The use of Mbuya Nehanda, be it her likeness or her voice, has been utilized by the government to support their actions in the name of doing things the Zimbabwean way. I argue that a desire to hold onto political power is behind this drive. As Žižek explains, the refusal of nationalistic propaganda is perceived as a

betrayal of the 'lost object of affection', and our longing for a clear-cut national identity has been used against the Zimbabwean people. However, many Zimbabweans are slowly beginning to recognize how the government has corrupted the voice of Mbuya Nehanda to fit their agenda, whilst many of her children suffer (Chingono, 2021). As a result, many are beginning to speak out about the metaphorisation of their pain, which is something that this study aims to evoke.

The nationalism movement was a reaction to a colonial system that had subjugated black Zimbabweans for over nine decades. In Chapter One of this study I discuss how the notion of post-colonial melancholia is rooted in the implications of what occurred during colonialism. My combination of Althusser's interpellation and state apparatus theory and Lauren Berlant's cruel optimism theory to form an ideological analysis leads to a form of innovative thinking through the work of these very different scholars. I argue that it is possible to combine their thinking in ways which contribute to our understanding of colonialism in Zimbabwe and elsewhere. Althusser discusses how, in interpellation, a person or a people are indoctrinated into a particular system through exploiting a human desire to belong. The system is run through apparatuses which, in the case of colonial Rhodesia, both the ideological state apparatus (which mainly involves indoctrination into the system through education, media and religion) and the repressive state apparatus (which involves the use of the army and police to keep the masses in check) were used. I argue that how one reacted to their interpellation usually determined how much one gains from the system. We see this in the analysis of *The Two Farmers* (1948) and in the character of Temeraire in *Repented* (2019). There is a surrendering that occurs among the black characters due to the promise of gaining from the system. However, as Berlant points out, there is a cost to their interpellation, a cruel optimism of promises that are fulfilled to a certain extent. The characters in these films will never fully excel into the system, as the system is not meant to cater for them but rather, in the instance of Rhodesia, caters to the white patriarchal man.

Both Chapters One and Four discuss femininity and the restoring of the female voice. I am one of a handful of people who have written a detailed analysis of Dangarembga's *This Mournable Body* (2018). I discuss how the female voice, which was prevalent in society before colonialism, as seen through what we know of Mbuya Nehanda and also in Vera's reimagining of Mbuya Nehanda in *Nehanda* (1993), was eradicated through the patriarchal colonial culture, and how black women were rendered voiceless, as addressed in Lessing's *The Grass is Singing* (1950). Slowly after Independence, we see black women taking back their voice through works such as Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988). However, this was short-lived as the totalitarian regime took over in the early 2000's. As a result, notions such as feminism are perceived as being radical, Western and un-African. It is not part of our culture. This in a way has hindered the progression of the female voice back to a place of strength.

In Chapters Two and Three I discuss nationalism, pure culture, hybridity and mimicry, and analyze how nationalism and hybridity clashed in post-colonial Zimbabwe. In many ways I dismantle the notion of

pure culture and discuss how this is now a fantasy. The monolithic definition of nationalism in Zimbabwe discounts many of the ethnicities, cultures and traditions that are found in Zimbabwean society. As a subject of this study I, as a thinker, acknowledge how cultural nationalism, as coined by Ndlovu and Willems (2012), has influenced me and some of the younger generation. Through the use of music and local TV soaps such as *Studio 263* and *Gringo*, something has been created that I could attribute to Zimbabweanness. However, my hybridity elicited some form of discrimination and questioning of my authenticity as a Zimbabwean. I refer here to the I.D. story discussed in Chapter Two, where my hybridity was used to reject my claim to a national identity card. My approach to the discourse of nationalism here is different. I approach it as a young Zimbabwean who has lived in Zimbabwe and who is now situated in the diaspora. I also approach it through my considerable experiences of how my hybridity is a source of contention to the notion of what 'pure culture' might be. Where many thinkers offer the factual analysis of the discourse of nationalism in Zimbabwe, I discuss the implications of nationalism on the nation's often unarticulated desires. The replication of the colonial system by the Zimbabwean government has not only strengthened the traumas caused by colonialism, but have given traumas to a new generation which it has to work through alongside the decolonization of their psyche, and has passed on trauma through the memories of the previous generations who lived through colonial Rhodesia. Lastly, I interrogate the idea of 'melancholy without the other' (Frosh, 2006), through the analysis of *Repented* (2019). I set up a hypothetical situation with regard to what would happen if we, as Zimbabweans, came together as a people and talked about the impacts of colonialism. This might generate a dialogue that does not deny, but encourages, the decolonization of the psyche. I also suggest here the need for a dialogue addressing Gukurahundi, which I acknowledge is a very painful subject for most Zimbabweans. There is a lack of truth and transparency in terms of what really occurred, and a lack of a reconciliation initiative unlike the situation in South Africa.

In line with the discourse of acknowledging how the decolonization of the psyche does not involve denying the colonization of the Zimbabwean people and culture, we recognize how our culture has been impacted. This directly contradicts the notion of 'pure culture' which the Zimbabwean nationalism movement is based on. This is what I address in Chapter Three. By combining hybridity and mimicry I offer a discussion that shows how there are flaws in the nationalism movement. For example, I discuss in some instances that hybridity traits automatically elevates the person who possesses them. I use the example of how people often use the word 'murungu' - white person - when referring to someone who is of a higher economic and social class to them. This of course is meant as a form of flattery to the person it is directed to as success is attributed to whiteness. As Fanon suggests, this inferiority complex it is what the government has failed to consider in terms of the nationalism movement. It is the issue of how colonialism has not only impacted our culture but also our way of thinking. Whereas the nationalism movement promotes a Zimbabwean way of doing things, the pre-colonial identity is met



with an inferiority complex created by the idea that colonialism and the colonial culture was more important and better compared to the Zimbabwean culture.

To conclude this section, I offer an answer to my research question *What is post-colonial melancholia and how does it manifest itself in Zimbabwean culture and cinema?* I define post-colonial melancholia here as a grievous response to the loss created by colonialism. In particular here the loss is the pre-colonial identity of Zimbabwe. As discussed in this thesis the manifestations include silence/ the de-metaphorisation of a people as demonstrated through the textual analysis of the novels *The Grass is Singing* and *Nervous Conditions*. There is the silencing of the black female voice which in pre-colonial Zimbabwe, the female voice was a source of strength. There is also the silencing of Zimbabweans in general through the Marxist Zimbabwean government which has oppressed the people into silence. Another manifestation here is violence, violence mainly directed at oneself or other people as illustrated in *Repented* and by the characters of Nyasha and Tambu in both *Nervous Conditions* and *This Mournable Body*. Lastly the nationalism movement in Zimbabwe was and is a manifestation of post-colonial melancholia. Based on retrieving the lost object of affection, which is the pre-colonial identity, nationalism in Zimbabwe not only intensified hostility among the races in Zimbabwe in particular black and white people. But it also excluded other cultures present within Zimbabwe. Most importantly nationalism made people believe in the fantasy that is pure culture negating to factor in how mimicry and hybridity caused by colonialism affected our identity as a people. I must note here that these are not the only ways post-colonial melancholia in Zimbabwe manifests however I note down the major ways. Having answered my research question directly, I will now, below, reflect more broadly upon my research journey in its contexts.

### **The Ruling Bourgeoisie**

“We are not a British Colony; you must know that!!!” Robert Mugabe (Eye Of Gambia, 2021)

In recent months, a video of Robert Mugabe at the EU-Africa summit held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2000 in Cairo Egypt, began to circulate on WhatsApp platforms while going viral on Tik Tok as a meme. At the time the video was taken, relations between the UK and Zimbabwe had become strained as a result of the land reform programme which led to the killings and forced evacuation of white farmers in Zimbabwe. In the video, a British reporter approaches Mugabe to question him on the issues to be discussed at the summit, at which point Mugabe launches what is almost an attempt to attack the reporter and is restrained by his security detail. He proceeds to say “We are not a British colony! You must know that!!!” (Eye of Gambia, 2020: online video). My fascination with this viral clip was not in terms of what the late Robert Mugabe said to the journalist, but how people engaged with the video online in particular on Tik Tok and YouTube. The Tik Tok video has since been taken down as hate speech under the social media site regulations. As mentioned in the introduction, I engage with social media partially to interact with different perceptions of Zimbabweans, alongside learning about the different

experiences Zimbabweans encounter, especially those living in Zimbabwe, given that I live in the diaspora. It is important to note that the age demographic that engaged with the video in question is a younger one, ranging between 12 and 40 years of age. This is the generation known in Zimbabwe as ‘born free’, in terms of being born free of colonial rule, which makes the second reason for my mentioning this clip even more important. The comments that were left in response to the video - comments such as “This man was a hero!” and “Yes we do not take orders from the Brits” - filled the comments section. No doubt it has become controversial to view the late Zimbabwean president as a hero as his legacy in the latter years of his presidency tarnished his hero status. It is also important to note that Mugabe did do a variety of impressive things in his early career as president. However, his legacy has now been tarnished as people blame him for the downfall of Zimbabwe. Nevertheless, his ideologies have been influential with regard to all different age groups of Zimbabweans, be it Zimbabweans in Zimbabwe, or those in the diaspora. I have found in most Zimbabweans I meet, and personally, there is the perception of a need to fight against white dominance even when it is not being exerted. The ghastly hauntings are evident here in that we fight against the interpellation of a system that no longer exists. It is a cycle that repeats itself.

In my introduction I discussed my decision to use psychoanalysis as an analytical tool in the arguments presented in this thesis. The re-circulation of the video of the late president of Zimbabwe at the height of the BLM movement caused by the killing of George Floyd in America, and the racial tensions that divided people on various social media platforms during the 2020 corona virus pandemic, have served as a mirror, perhaps a reflection as to where we are as a people. No doubt the response to the racial tensions felt across the globe have opened old wounds and validated the hauntings, and this is why one would argue that they must stay. The hauntings act as a reminder. These are the reminders caused by the recognition of the existence of unjust social systems globally. There has been a re-kindling of those melancholic feelings among people, the melancholic reminders of who is to blame for their loss, and what they looked like. For me the situation was uncanny, in the sense that it was familiar but not the same. In those moments I remembered the liberation war stories I had been told as a child, of how black men and women were killed by Rhodesian soldiers. Parts of me, like the many Zimbabweans who engaged with the video mentioned above, responded from the *vertex* which, as we identified in earlier chapters, is the transferral of trauma from one generation to another according to Frosh. The responses arise out of fear, but also out of the need to protect ourselves. A comment that is usually found in videos similar to this one is how, as African people, we should invest in our own countries and return to our motherland for safety. I ponder here, with all that has ensued in Zimbabwe in the 2000’s, whether the option of freedom is a viable one. The fight for us is more complicated. Not only do we have to fight white dominance, we also fight against our brothers, uncles, and fathers who have taken over from the oppressor.

One of the many failures of our government has been in terms of failing to consider how the trauma has endured. The disfiguring of our pre-colonial identity during colonialism has meant we cannot simply move on as if nothing had transpired. The decolonisation of the psyche is important alongside the metaphorisation of the traumas. I reflect here on my research question once again, what is post-colonial melancholia and how does it manifest in Zimbabwe? Throughout this thesis I have presented various arguments in which we have investigated the different manifestations of melancholia, and here I focus in on the manifestation of silence, which I argue is the major manifestation hindering us. I begin with what Fanon in *Wretched of the Earth* (1961) calls the colonial bourgeoisie, in which the ruling class usurps the influence of the colonial powers by subjecting the lower classes to similar harsh conditions they encountered during colonialism. Fanon presents it as follows: “colonial bourgeoisie as in a trance or state of control that one cannot simply just snap out of. The people stagnate deplorably in unbearable poverty; they slowly awaken to the unutterable treason of their leaders. This awakening is all the more acute in that the bourgeoisie is incapable of learning its lesson” (Fanon, 1961:167). With the turn of the century, Zimbabwe resembled the colonial system in terms of the oppression of its people, the revoking of freedom of speech, and the spreading nationalistic propaganda. Consequently, Zimbabwe became a state under control. As Fanon points out, the problem is not just plainly looking at the colonizer as a rival, but also dismantling the system internally in order to avoid a repetition such as what happened in Zimbabwe. To further Fanon’s argument I suggest that the dismantling of the system would consist of the deconstruction of ideologies that revolve around race, racial prejudice, stereotypes, gender expectations and class divisions. This can be achieved through the metaphorisation of the people with Zimbabweans being able to express their thoughts, opinions and feelings through language without the fear of repercussions. Social media has in its own way engaged the Zimbabwean people in dialogue, but this is not sufficient. There must be some form of dialogue on a national level as well as a reflection of this dialogue in our creative outputs such as film, journalism, art and media. As discussed in Chapter One we saw how the Rhodesian government operated a silence culture, one which was replicated by the ruling party ZANU PF two decades after they came to power in the early 2000’s. Therefore, I identify here silence as a manifestation of melancholia. It is part of what Freud identifies as the melancholic being stuck. If we engage in dialogue, we then begin to process our melancholia as a people.

Fanon furthers his argument by elaborating on what he calls the ‘pitfalls of nationalism’. This is usually centred on the nation’s leadership, and the Zimbabwean leadership after independence started off by being people-centred. They were fighting for the nation and the people of Zimbabwe. However, once independence was declared, they abandoned the promises they had made to the ordinary people. Fanon presents it as follows:

Before independence, the leader generally embodies the aspirations of the people for independence, political liberty, and national dignity. but as soon as independence is declared,

far from embodying in concrete form the needs of the people in what touches bread, land, and the restoration of the country to the sacred hands of the people, the leader will reveal his inner purpose: to become the general president of that company of profiteers impatient for their returns which constitutes the national bourgeoisie. (Fanon, 1961:166)

Much like Althusser's interpellation concept, the bourgeoisie is a Marxist ideology based on exposing the class that controls society's economy. In most cases they are the ruling party. As Fanon explains, the people of the country find themselves destitute in deplorable poverty, whilst the bourgeoisie tells them they are fighting for the nation. Many Zimbabweans have found themselves living in poverty and separated from their families as they venture into the diaspora in search of a better life. It has become evident in the last few years that there is groaning and the emergence of growing pains among the people of Zimbabwe as we awaken to the falsehoods and deception on the part of our government.

The year 2017, with the military coup to overthrow the then president, Robert Mugabe, was no doubt one of those years when the growing pains emerged. Many Zimbabweans took to the streets to demonstrate and rejoice when it was announced that Mugabe was stepping down, and that Mnangagwa would be the new president of Zimbabwe. It is interesting to note here that the regime used the same rhetoric as they used in the Chimurenga war to dethrone Mugabe. They did this by stating they were protecting the country and its interests, and that Mugabe no longer served the people. Chigumadzi elaborated on this and stated "In a twist of fate, it is this very Chimurenga legacy that the war veterans and military were claiming to defend against 'enemies' and 'criminal elements' when they intervened in ZANU–PF party politics in November 2017 to force Mugabe's ouster". (Chigumadzi, 2018:28).

As I watched the celebrations unfold in Zimbabwe, I watched with intensity. However, I felt the dislocation that many Zimbabweans in the diaspora felt. Nevertheless, even in that dislocation there was hope. A hope for a better Zimbabwe. There was also that gnawing feeling of impending doom that preceded the hope that I felt. I recognise now that it was the fear of the repetition that Bhabha mentioned. The Mugabe regime ran as a system that resembled the colonial oppressive regime. By removing Mugabe, the system was not dismantled. Rather, Mnangagwa inherited the existing system and became its leader. History had repeated itself. I ponder here whether this could be a viable reason as to why the younger generation tend not to be as patriotic as were our forefathers. Throughout this thesis I have demonstrated the traces of the inherited interwoven trauma caused by the colonial legacy of the country, and by the current and previous governments of the country. It has become difficult to sift through the different experiences that Zimbabwe has gone through. As Chigumadzi expresses it:

The struggles over history are complex, because the present continuously slips into the past, marking history as always ambivalent, incomplete, a work in progress. When we pick apart linear histories of cause and effect, we are bound to discover that history doesn't march forward in a straight line of progress. Instead, history is like water – it lives between us, and comes to us in waves. At times, it is still and unobtrusive, and, at others, it is turbulent and threatening. Even at its most innocuous, water poses hidden dangers. (Chigumadzi, 2018:29)

In particular, in terms of the idea of the present resembling and slipping into the past, history becomes uncertain, because it no longer feels like the past if we are dealing with it in the present day. The uncanny, unsettling feeling I felt as they inaugurated Mnangagwa as president was confirmed as, months after his coming to power, civilians were killed on the streets of Harare. In August 2018 many Zimbabweans took to the streets to protest the delay in the release of the election results following the removal of Mugabe from the Presidency the previous year. Headlines such as “*Three people killed after live ammunition, water cannon and teargas fired in capital*” (Burke, 2018) come out of the global and Zimbabwean press. Like the predecessors in the system, the Zimbabwean leadership used the repressive state apparatus to restrain the people. As one Facebook user commented, “At least in the Mugabe regime we did not get killed for protesting”. Reading this comment, I remembered a similar comment written in 2015 by a different user, when Zimbabwe celebrated 35 years of independence. The user stated: “Today my grandfather told me that during the Ian Smith regime, although we were oppressed, at least I could buy a can of coke for 10 cents.” These two comments to me symbolise the betrayal the people feel with regard to the leadership of the country. Perhaps there is a furthering of the melancholic where they are no longer just stuck but are sinking. It is the idea of imagining that life was perhaps better under the previous oppressive regime than the present that is a repetition here. The *Imago*, the part of us that holds on to some form of national pride, is no longer just fragile but fractured.

### The Ghosts of Present and Past



**Figure 6:1** Civilians and the army on the streets of Harare Source (Burke, 2018)

I begin here by contemplating what my grandmother would have thought of the current political climate in Zimbabwe. I contemplate here the shocking images that filled the Facebook and WhatsApp platforms during the 2018 election riots. One image in particular of an old woman shot on the streets of Harare circulated on the social media platforms, a matriarch killed whilst fighting for her freedom. Whilst I viewed these horrific incidents on my screen, I contemplate how my grandmother’s generation

encountered similar brutality under the Rhodesian regime. It wasn't news for them but a reality. Simultaneously we live through a different Zimbabwe, mine through a diasporic dislocation lens, but filled with trauma none-the-less, while her experience has been filled with double trauma, one from the colonial regime and the other caused by the failures and betrayal of the Mugabe regime. Both regimes were oppressive and there is a repetition. I consider what the matriarch Nehanda would say if she was to comment on the political climate in the country and the suffering that the people have had and are enduring. I contemplated naming this section 'the hauntings of Nehanda'. As I expressed in earlier chapters, after her death Mbuya Nehanda's image transcended, and she became the voice and the symbol at the heart of the Chimurenga war. However, as we have seen, her voice was then used to cage, manipulate and restrain the people whom she was fighting for, all in the name of nationalism.

I reflect here on the rhetorical question, if Mbuya Nehanda was alive, what she would have to say about the state of the nation? What would I, as the daughter of the soil, say to her? Would my hybrid nature be a source of contention between us, or is this another fallacy and lie created by the government to promote nationalism? This we will never know. But I reflect here on a situation presented by Chigumadzi where she imagines a conversation with her late grandmother, asking her what life was like as a black woman in colonial Rhodesia, and on the complexities created by trauma that would have made the conversation a difficult one to have.

“Zvimwe hazvibvunzwi. Some things are just not asked about. ‘How could I have asked my own mother such a thing?’ Sometimes I am not sure how to continue asking as she relays difficult experiences. It feels cruel, voyeuristic, to ask her to tell me more about what it was like for her and her family to be put into the lorries that carried them from their original musha to a place they did not know during the forced removals of her girlhood, or to ask her to describe how she felt when she saw the school trunk returning home on top of the bus without its owner, her third-born son, just fourteen years old, confirming that he had not started his second year at St Faith's as they had expected, but had hitch-hiked to Mozambique with friends to join the Chimurenga. You could not. You just had to keep it to yourself. This was war.” (Chigumadzi, 2018:38-39)

I suggest here, as it was in Mbuya Nehanda's era, in my grandmother generation, my mother's generation and my generation, we all have encountered some form of war. The similarities are that throughout the threads of time, freedom was the price paid under the various oppressive regimes. Zimbabwe is still at war, at war with the ghosts of colonial pasts and at war with herself. The trauma is not healed but continues to pile up. I am reminded of Lacan's analogy demonstrated in Bhabha's work of mimicry being like a patch molted into the background. It tries to blend in, but it is still visible. I liken this to trauma as well. Although we try to hide the trauma, it is visible. Trauma is unrepresentable. Unless addressed, the trauma never goes away, but manifests itself differently, sometimes as violence or sometimes as silence. The irony here is how Mbuya Nehanda died. She expressed vocally how her bones will rise again, promising that a violence will avenge her death. As Chigumadzi illustrates it: “Mbuya Nehanda vakafa vashitaura shuwa, Mbuya Nehanda died speaking the truth” (Chigumadzi, 2018: 27). The Matriarch died metaphorising her pain. Her voice echoes through the eons of time.

However, although she prophesied the bones would rise, the children of the soil have been silenced. By silencing her children, we have also silenced her. As Frosh discloses in his argument on ghosts and transgenerational trauma, post-colonial societies carry around the “active ghost of time past” (Frosh, 2012:242). Frosh then expands on this by suggesting that society therefore re-enacts the traumatic experiences. The way in which the Zimbabwean leadership saw the Rhodesian government using force and oppression is the same way they have reacted to civilians who they perceive to be in need of control. Their actions are perhaps learned behaviour as a result of trauma.

I deliberate here once again the hauntings of Mbuya Nehanda using Frosh’s proposition on Freud’s the *uncanny*, and how we can use this to reflect on trauma and hauntings. In earlier chapters I discussed Yvonne Vera’s novel *Nehanda* (1993) in which she reimagines the life of the Matriarch and proposes what her life would have been like in the pre-colonial era, her encounter with the white settlers which then lead to her death. I re-imagine here what Mbuya Nehanda’s voice and stance would be like if she were to step into the year 2021 and experience life as a Zimbabwean woman under the Mnangagwa regime. Freud explains how he finds himself on a train and sees a reflection of himself but is unable to recognise who he is, but rather perceives his reflection as an intruder. I propose that this would be the same for the Matriarch in modern day Zimbabwe. She would find that her bones that were meant to resemble her fighting spirit, resemble the characteristics of the enemy, an intruder.

“I was sitting alone in my wagon-lit compartment when a more than usually violent jolt of the train swung back the door of the adjoining washing-cabinet, and an elderly gentleman in a dressing-gown and a travelling cap came in. I assumed that in leaving the washing-cabinet, which lay between the two compartments, he had taken the wrong direction and come into my compartment by mistake. Jumping up with the intention of putting him right, I at once realized to my dismay that the intruder was nothing but my own reflection in the looking glass on the open door. I can still recollect that I thoroughly disliked his appearance.” (Freud, 1919:248)

I use this re-imagining to get us as a people to “face the truth about ourselves” (Frosh, 2012:243) as Frosh elaborates. It forces us as a people to face inwards and confront ourselves, to make us face the harsh reality and bitter truth that, as a people, our resolve has shifted. The sad truth here is there is not a lot of written work regarding Mbuya Nehanda’s life prior to her death. Once again, I refer to Vera’s re-imagining of Mbuya Nehanda in her novel and sync it with Freud’s *uncanny* to home in on my point as to whether or not the Matriarch would recognize herself if she was to step into Zimbabwe in 2021. As we established earlier, silence is a melancholic response. Mbuya Nehanda was very vocal until her death. Vera, in writing the character of Nehanda, acknowledged this, and uses language as an expressive tool. The following passage illustrates this profoundly.

“Nehanda carries her bag of words in a pouch that lies tied around her waist. She wears some along her arms. Words and bones. Words fall into dreaming, into night. She hears the bones fall in the silence. She is surrounded by a turmoil of echoes which ascends night and sky. In the morning, a horizon of rock, of dry bones, grows into day.” (Vera, 1993:1)

It is the imagery of Nehanda's body being covered by words that stands out here. In a society where predominantly women are always told to keep silent, her body being covered by words is important here. Vera in a way prophesied the emergence of the current silent culture in Zimbabwe. "She hears the bones fall in silence" (Vera, 1993:1), the bones that she had hoped would arise and fight. Yet they continuously fall in silence or are being silenced. In as much as her words and image have been used to symbolise freedom in Zimbabwe, one does wonder if she was alive today, whether she too would have been silenced, just like her bones.

### **Silence and the Third Space.**

As I contemplate the notion of silence, I reflect here how this has affected creative outputs in Zimbabwe. No doubt great pieces of work, be they literature or film, have emerged from the country, but not with the same agility as in the 90's. The silence culture has restricted how creatives are able to express themselves through art with any degree of freedom. Nevertheless, Zimbabweans are beginning to find ways to express themselves, especially with the help of the internet. I reflect here on how some of the pieces of work discussed in this thesis are mainly from people who have either lived in the diaspora or have had some sort of encounter with it. People like Tsitsi Dangarembga, Yvonne Vera and Joe Njagu, just to mention a few. I liken this to Homi Bhabha's concept on the Third Space which I mention in passing in this thesis. The Third Space allows for fluidity of identities. It is a space where one encounters different ways of thinking, which in turn can challenge one's way of thinking and one's cultural / ideological stance. By encountering different cultures and traditions one is able to identify loopholes or problematic areas in one's own thinking that one wouldn't have otherwise seen had one remained in the same environment as one was in. I believe this was the case for Stanley Makuwe when he wrote *Finding Temeraire* which later became *Repented* (2019) the movie, or for Dangarembga when she wrote *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and Yvonne Vera with *Nehanda* (1993). One thing all these writers have in common is the fact that they were able to write these great pieces of work once they had stepped out of Zimbabwe, a change of environment. Psychoanalytically speaking, this is an aspect which is important to note. Allow me to home in on this.

In a recent article published on the blog Partnership for Conflict, Crime & Security Research, Diana Jeater gave an interview talking about her recent work titled '*Why did you fight*' *Narratives of Rhodesian identity during the insurgency 1972-1980*. One of the outstanding parts of the interview for me was when she discussed the importance of listening to different perspectives to ours, whether we agree or not. She elaborated how doing research such as this thesis can be emotionally challenging work which requires one to be frank with oneself and know that one is there to listen to different perspectives to one's own. I think this is vital as there aren't many spaces where we, as Zimbabweans, feel safe to discuss our ideologies and express our thoughts and have people, in turn, listen. Spaces like the Domestic Violence campaign mentioned in earlier chapters, where men and women come together to





Zimbabwean passport allows me to remain in a place of ambiguity, a state where I do not get to choose either/or. This is my Third Space. My resistance tool with regard to interpellation to both the Zimbabwean and British systems.

This thesis is a continuing conversation that we as a people need to consistently have. It serves as a *Third Space*, a space where ideas can be exchanged and, most importantly, where one can be heard. In these chapters we have heard the voice of Mbuya Nehanda, and my grandmother Monica Chipusire, among many other women who have inspired this work. In listening to these women, I have been able to find my voice as a daughter of the soil despite my dislocation and hybridity. As Vera through the character of Nehanda states, freedom and survival lie in the mouth. In some ways I have metaphorised my melancholia through the pages of this work. The freedom and survival for Zimbabwe lie in her mouth.

*Aluta continua*

## Appendix

### Conference Attendance and Presentations.



1. **British Association of Film, Television and Screen Studies Conference** (April 2019) held at Birmingham. I was a finalist for the research poster competition where I presented on the interpellation of black women in colonial Rhodesia.



2. **Association for Psychosocial Studies Conference** (May 2019) held at Birkbeck University. I presented my work as part of a panel where I discussed femininity in relation to psychoanalysis in the novel *Nervous Conditions*.



3. **Research and Global Challenges Conference** (May 2019) held at the University of Bedfordshire. I presented on Mimicry and Hybridity in post-colonial Zimbabwe.
4. **Psychoanalysis and Ideology Conference** (October 2018) held in Sopot Poland . I presented a paper on ‘Psychoanalysis and Ideology: An analysis of Ideological Apparatuses in the novel *Nervous Conditions*’.

### **Ethics Approval**

I can confirm that I submitted my ethics form in December 2018 and the University of Bedfordshire Research Institute of Media, Arts and Performance ethics committee approved it in April 2019. This was carried on and submitted to the University for the Creative Arts as I transferred in my final year of PhD studies. I can confirm that all participants that were interviewed in this research signed consent forms and also gave verbal confirmation in the voice recordings.

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## **Filmography**

*Chinhoyi 7* (2018) directed by Moses Matanda

*Escape* (2016) Co-produced by Joe Njagu and Agnieszka Piotrowska

*Flame* (1996) directed by Ingrid Sinclair

*Lobola* (2010) directed by Joe Njagu, produced by Rufaro Kaseke

*Mother's Day* (2006) directed by Tsitsi Dangarembga

*Playing Warriors* (2012) directed by Rumbidzai Katedza

*The Engagement Party* (2013) Documentary film by Agnieszka Piotrowska

*The Two Farmers* (1948)

*Repented* (2019) directed by Agnieszka Piotrowska

## **Interviews**

Njangu, Joe (2018) Interview by Charmaine Dambuza December 2018, Harare Zimbabwe. (2 hours)

Wakatama, Ellah (8<sup>th</sup> February 2019). Telephone interview by Charmaine Dambuza (2 hours)

Mujeri, Charmaine December (2018). Interview by Charmaine Dambuza, Harare Zimbabwe (2 hours 30 min.)

Karine Tregold (December 2018). Interview by Charmaine Dambuza, Harare Zimbabwe (2 hours)

Kaseke Rufaro (February 2019 and November 2020) Interviews by Charmaine Dambuza, Luton, United Kingdom (3 hours)