Université de Montréal

Postcolonial Readings of Resistance and Negotiation in Selected Contemporary African Writing

par

Ines Mzali

Département d'études anglaises

Faculté des arts et des sciences

Thèse présentée à la Faculté des études supèrieures

en vue de l'obtention du grade de Philosophiae Doctor (Ph.D)

en études anglaises

Décembre, 2011

Université de Montréal

Faculté des études supérieures et postdoctorales

Cette thèse intitulée :

Postcolonial Readings of Resistance and Negotiation
in Selected Contemporary African Writing

Présentée par :

Ines Mzali

a été évaluée par un jury composé des personnes suivantes :

Lianne Moyes, président-rapporteur
Heike Härting, directrice de recherche
Taiwo Adetunji Osinubi, membre du jury
Ato Quayson, examinateur externe
Amaryll Chanady, représentante du doyen de la FES

Abstract

This dissertation is concerned with literary and postcolonial (re)configurations of resistance and negotiation as concepts through which to approach representations of postcolonial conflict in contemporary African literatures. These concepts operate at various levels of the narratives and open new routes for remembering, narrating, and reading violence through their problematization of discourses on African civil wars and political violence, on the one hand, and conceptions of national history, memory, and representation, on the other. While this study reconfigures negotiation and resistance beyond some of their earlier postcolonial definitions, it focuses on developing the notion of negotiation itself as a coping, reading, and discursive strategy which, nevertheless, does not aim for a resolution. Rather than a weakening of resistance, negotiation implies a pluralistic conception of social, political, and cultural agency.

This dissertation posits negotiation as a concept of writing and reading which actively engages events, discourses, and remembering practices through their multiple facets and blurred or unstable boundaries. More specifically, this study explores the ways in which novelists Nuruddin Farah, Chenjerai Hove, Yvonne Vera, Chimamanda Adichie, and Sefi Atta deploy negotiation and resistance as tools for aesthetic and socio-political engagement in postcolonial narratives of conflict in Somalia, Zimbabwe, and Nigeria. Further, negotiation marks my reading of the texts and their intervention in national and global approaches to historiography and representation. While the novels foreground complex genealogies of postcolonial conflict, they also negotiate problematic issues of interrelated responsibilities and representations, including their own. In this sense, negotiation represents a conscious act through which we recognize the instability of any

political, moral, or ethical battle while not allowing that realization to develop into paralyzing cynicism.

Through its negotiated and interdisciplinary approach to narratives of violence, this dissertation does not only engage with multiple discourses deriving from postcolonial, African, and literary studies. It also intervenes into conceptions of the nation, national violence, memory, accountability, and justice from philosophical, political, and cultural fields of study. In addition to critical perspectives on contemporary African literatures, the chapters interrogate the works of a diverse range of theorists such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o, David Jefferess, Pheng Cheah, and Wole Soyinka. This eclectic approach asserts and reflects the novels' attention to the irreducible complexity of local and global factors as well as individual and collective responsibilities in the production of narratives of national history and belonging. A negotiated engagement with discourses surrounding questions of postcolonialty in the era of globalization discourses helps reconceptualize the postcolonial perspective to resist dehistoricized and decontextualized accounts of political and social conflict in African contexts.

Chapter 1 elaborates the key concepts and theoretical contexts which shape the dissertation as a whole. While chapter 2 explores resistance and negotiation in figurative language through metonymy in the representations of the Somali civil war, chapter 3 engages with the trope of spectrality in the complex narration of history and national violence in Zimbabwe. Finally, chapter 4 negotiates concepts of representation and responsibility in narratives of postcolonial trauma in Nigeria.

Résumé

Cette dissertation traite des (re)configurations postcoloniales de la résistance et de la négociation comme concepts permettant d'aborder les représentations des conflits nationaux dans les littératures Africaines contemporaines. Ensemble, ces concepts ouvrent de nouvelles voix et possibilités de se remémorer, de raconter, et de lire la violence en problématisant non seulement les discours sur la guerre civile en Afrique, mais aussi les conceptions d'histoire nationale, de la mémoire, et de leur représentation. Si cette étude cherche à reconfigurer la négociation et la résistance au-delà des définitions qui tendent à les opposer, elle se consacre surtout à développer la notion de négociation comme stratégie de dépassement, de lecture, et d'écriture, qui, néanmoins, ne vise pas de résolution. La négociation implique ainsi une conception pluraliste d'un pouvoir d'action sociale, politique, et culturelle.

Cette dissertation avance que la négociation est un concept d'écriture et de lecture qui intervient dans les événements, discours, et pratiques de remémoration en prenant compte de leurs multiplicités et définitions instables. Cette étude explore les manières selon lesquelles Nuruddin Farah, Chenjerai Hove, Yvonne Vera, Chimamanda Adichie, et Sefi Atta déploient la négociation et la résistance comme outils d'engagement esthétique et sociopolitique dans la narration de la violence en Somalie, au Zimbabwe, et au Nigeria. En outre, la négociation marque mon analyse de l'intervention des textes dans les discours d'historiographie et de représentation. Si ces romans mettent en exergue la généalogie complexe du conflit postcolonial, ils négocient aussi les implications multiples, incluant la leur, dans les questions problématiques de la responsabilité et de la représentation. La

négociation représente un acte conscient à travers lequel nous reconnaissons l'instabilité de toute bataille politique, morale, ou éthique sans pour autant céder à un cynisme paralysant.

De par son approche négociée et interdisciplinaire, cette dissertation ne fait pas qu'entrer en débat avec des discours multiples des études postcoloniales, Africaines, et littéraires. Elle intervient aussi dans les conceptions de la nation, la violence, la mémoire, la responsabilité, et la justice selon les études philosophiques, politiques, et culturelles. Outre les critiques littéraires, les chapitres interrogent les théories de penseurs tels Ngugi wa Thiong'o, David Jefferess, Pheng Cheah, et Wole Soyinka. Cette approche éclectique reflète l'attention des romans à la complexité irréductible des responsabilités individuelles et collectives dans les récits d'histoire et d'appartenance nationales. Cet engagement négocié avec les questions entourant la postcolonialité, malgré la dominance actuelle des discours de la globalisation, permet de reconceptualiser l'approche postcoloniale pour contrer les analyses déhistorisées et décontextualisées des conflits sociopolitiques en Afrique.

Le chapitre 1 élabore les concepts clés de la dissertation. Le chapitre 2 explore la résistance et la négociation dans le langage figuré métonymique dans les représentations de la guerre en Somalie. Le chapitre 3 se consacre à l'analyse de la figure de la spectralité dans la narration de l'histoire et de la violence nationales au Zimbabwe. Finalement, le chapitre 4 négocie les concepts de représentation et de responsabilité dans les récits du trauma postcolonial au Nigeria.

Mots-clés : négociation, résistance, littératures africaines, violence, responsabilité, nation, représentation

Table of Contents

Dedication

I dedicate my dissertation to my exceptional family:

To my mother, Rafia, and my father, Hamadi, for their support, love, and presence despite the distance,

To Ridha and Sherine, my incredible sister who brings so much to all of us

To Youssef and Mehdi and their precious natural curiosity,

To my loving brother Samy and Samia,

And

To the memory of Mamy who saw me leave but did not see me come back…

Acknowledgements

I want to express my deepest gratitude and respect to Professor Heike Härting for being such a supportive supervisor. Her intellectual rigor and her generous and precious suggestions were as helpful as they were inspiring. Her guidance and patience throughout the years it took to complete the dissertation made me a better writer.

I also wish to thank my family for their tremendous support, their love and their patience through the ups and downs of the writing process.

Introduction

Writing Beyond the African Renaissance: Trajectories and Themes

> Creative imagination is one of the greatest re-membering practices. (Ngugi 39)

Such is the artist's role in "re-membering Africa" as Ngugi Wa Thiong'o sees it (ix). Throughout his recent non-fiction work, *Something Torn and New: An African Renaissance*, he insists on this hyphenated spelling to argue that in order to become whole again after colonial "dismembering practices" (1), Africans need to recall and reconnect with precolonial memory.[1] Ngugi's position on memory as a theme and cultural practice is clear as he claims in his preface that "the question of memory may not only explain what ails contemporary Africa but may also contain the seeds of communal renewal and self-confidence" (ix). In this sense, memory and re-membering are crucial for the African Renaissance which Ngugi discusses at length in the book. While he recognizes that the concept of an African Renaissance, in vogue again since the 1990s, is usually evoked in the political and economic sense, he argues that any efforts would be vain without a collective practice of generating "a collective self-confidence enabled by the resurrection of African memory" (90). For Ngugi, the "quest for wholeness" (39) has been marked by postcolonial Africa's failure to "properly mour[n] the deaths that occurred in the two traumatic events in its history: slavery and colonialism" (59). In this sense, the postcolonial project was

---

[1] Ngugi draws on the concept of "re-membering," which has been used in different contexts related to past violations and their memorialization. As Rob Pope puts it, it relates to "politics and histories of colour, class, gender, and sexuality" (86), and we should add, (post)colonialism, and it evokes "calling to memory," recognizing members of an oppressed community, and "putting together a vision of the body" (86). Another variation on the questions of memory and trauma is Toni Morrison's "rememory" (*Beloved* 47).

doomed to give birth to monstrous situations because—according to Ngugi—it opted for the denial of this loss (59) and failed to reconnect with memory (55).

Ngugi's analysis of the concept of an African Renaissance underlies his vision for Africa's rebirth on a continental level rather than according to national borders. Elaborating on Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok's notion of trauma and repressed memory,[2] Ngugi calls for the "re-membering of the entirety of Pan-Africa" through a "collective mourning for the millions" of dead (64). Interestingly, however, he exclusively refers to the dead of the colonial era. Ngugi is right to link contemporary problems not only to the direct effects of slavery and especially colonialism—which is a common argument after all—but also to the question of memory and "transgenerational" trauma (58). Nevertheless, if he insists on acknowledging and confronting what he sees as the original trauma, he omits the need to address trauma resulting from postcolonial violence itself. For even if postcolonial violence is traced back to a colonial origin, we have to be vigilant not to overlook the violent event itself and its specifically traumatic dimension for those who experienced it. The devastating effects of denial, which Ngugi harnesses to his "re-membering" argument, are also relevant to the erasure of the traces and stories of postcolonial violence even in the name of recovery. In this text and others, his main argument and signature revolve around the importance of decolonizing minds and languages. Yet I would also argue that it is equally

---

[2] In *The Shell and the Kernel*, Abraham and Torok develop their "theory of transgenerational phantom" (165) according to which an individual can be haunted by a phantom that has been repressed and transmitted through generations.

important to postcolonize trauma[3] and the attempts to transform the future of the continent by acknowledging the contextual difference between the calls for an African Renaissance in the first half of the 20th century and the recent revival of this discourse decades after independence.

The novels I study here seem to confirm Ngugi's belief in the creative imagination as a great "re-membering practice." Yet what these novels insist on remembering is the accumulation of colonial and postcolonial violence after independence, an accumulation which is also a repetition with a traumatic difference. The issue of responsibility looms large in this respect. After elaborating on its key concepts in chapter 1, this dissertation focuses on Nuruddin Farah's *Links* in chapter 2, Chenjerai Hove's *Bones* and Yvonne Vera's *The Stone Virgins* in chapter 3, and finally Chimamanda Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come* in chapter 4. Although the texts depict different zones and types of conflict—whether armed or not—they all contribute to remembering while problematizing the idea of a unified perspective or undifferentiated suffering. While the novels resist the erasure of the roles played by colonialism, neocolonialism or globalization policies in generating many of the postcolony's predicaments, they also negotiate their tales through a complex grid of multiple perspectives and colonial but also postcolonial responsibilities, all of which result in the creation of more victims, another set of victims who now demand to be acknowledged. What emerges through the narratives, therefore, is the need to foreground diverse

---

[3] Important works that postcolonize trauma include Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth* and Ranjana Khanna's *Dark Continents: Psychoanalysis and Colonialism.*

experiences in ways which counter a clichéd, sensationalist, and reductive representation of postcolonial conflict in Africa as well as the attempt to preclude the formation of other repressed memories either in the name of national or even continental unity. Put differently, the novels' remembering practices, steeped as they are in a debate on representability, reveal a crucial awareness of the cyclic power of violence and the importance for a negotiation between memories of different collectivities. Ngugi's argument that transformation hinges on memory is therefore relevant inasmuch as this memory accommodates possibly conflicting narratives and encompasses various eras. Then, where Ngugi projects re-membering, the novelists seem to foreground remembering through multiple memories and practices of remembering.

I will argue that in relation to postcolonial violence, the transformation of the discourse on Africa goes hand in hand with a narration which resists old and often essentialist clichés in decontextualized representations of the continent. Significantly, this narration also resists the temptation to bury the memories and genealogies of conflict. This transformation also requires acknowledging, and therefore negotiating, the complexity of national and transnational factors, as well as communal and individual traumas and responsibilities. In the novels listed above, the key concepts of resistance and negotiation interact as reading and writing strategies in their representations of postcolonial violence. One of the questions this dissertation might raise is: why does it seem to follow a "national" trajectory in chapters 2, 3, and 4 (i.e. focusing on Somalia, Zimbabwe and Nigeria)? Another question I would like to answer is why I insist on a postcolonial reading practice of contemporary African fiction, despite criticism about the limitations of a

postcolonial literary critique. In order to answer, I will briefly return to the reemergence of the discourse of African Renaissance and its interactions with that of globalization.

1. The Rebirth of the African Renaissance in Political Discourse

In 1999, Thabo Mbeki argued that although the idea of an African Renaissance was not new, the conditions for its realization finally seemed to be present for the first time in African and global history.[4] Two of the four conditions he cited were, first, "the recognition of the bankruptcy of neocolonialism" and, second, the "acceleration of the process of globalization." Here globalization is identified as a post-neocolonialist phase in the restructuring of the world economy and relations, the acceleration of which allegedly proves propitious for African states to achieve the goals of the African Renaissance both as individual entities and as a group. On a political level, this discourse and hope seemed to be warranted by such events as the so-called wave of democratization in the 1990s (Mandela) and the fall of the apartheid government in South Africa, hailed as a symbolic completion of liberation from colonialism on the continent as a whole, as Mandela and Mbeki put it— whether this opinion was shared by other African localities or not.

The late 1990s were also seen as witnessing timely and welcome change to the usual focus on political, economic, and social disasters, especially in the wake of escalating levels of violence, for example in Sierra Leone or Rwanda. Further, the shift from the

---

[4] Mbeki, then recently elected as President of South Africa, made this speech at the launch of the African Renaissance Institute in Pretoria, South Africa in 1999. A few years prior, Nelson Mandela had revived the expression, African Renaissance, in his speech at the 1994 summit of the Organization of African Unity in Tunis, Tunisia.

Organization of African Unity (OAU) to the newly formed African Union (AU) in 2002 with a stronger emphasis on "political and socio-economic integration of the continent" (AU) also seemed to confirm the political will to usher in a new era of cooperation and change on a continental and a global level. While I do not take Mbeki's official discourse to be representative of the different ways and fields in which the African Renaissance has been discussed, the expression became popular again and seemed to seize on shared "desires for renewal and an end to the marginalization of the continent in world affairs" (Zeleza "What Happened," 157). In this sense, globalization often comes to connote a new phase in world history providing the opportunity for the continent to move beyond neocolonialism and economic stagnation. This perception of "the processes of globalization" as a harbinger of unprecedented development and a continental renaissance resonates, to a certain extent, with popular celebratory conceptions of globalization in relation to communications, global culture, identities, and an expected reconfiguration of social and political imaginaries.[5] Needless to say, this enthusiasm has turned into disillusionment and a strong sense of global injustice.

2. Can We Still Postcolonize in the Age of Globalization?

In the humanities, many globalization theorists have seized on themes of mobility, cosmopolitanism, and borderlessness, with their promise to transcend boundaries and

---

[5] In 1992, Roland Robertson provided an early definition of globalization as "a concept [that] refers both to the compression of the world and an intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole" (8). While in the new prologue to the 2000 edition he insists that he has always emphasized the problems and dangers

hierarchies characteristic of modernity. With a focus different from the economic and political discourse stated above, this perspective emphasizes the subversive and empowering effects of these supposedly planetary conditions.[6] Contributors to globalization theory come from different fields of expertise and their visions are too diverse to be reduced to a common trend but as Revathi Krishnaswamy argues, "globalization theory tends to be more brazenly positivistic [than postcolonial studies], taking its representational ability for granted" (2). The apt reference to "representation" alerts us to the hegemonic—or at least homogenizing and decontextualizing—undertones of some globalizing concepts and points to the failure of "celebratory theories of globalization" (11) to take proper account of the unequal effects and benefits of changes taking place in its name. At the same time, this differentiated impact and the forces behind it underline the need to rethink globalization through its links to pre-established power configurations on the one hand, and practices of resistance and negotiation on local and global levels, on the other. To put it differently, it is crucial to trouble the claim of "representability" of such accounts of liberating commercial and cultural exchanges or population mobility and to read these conditions through their economic and socio-political imperatives and impacts. With reference to postcolonial locations and more specifically to Africa, then, a postcolonial approach to the globalization era can recognize these links, as well as locally

related to globalization (6), the above definition was often interpreted as a positivist discourse of globalization, both in relation to economy and culture.
[6] I am only pointing out the recurrent positivistic approach to the concept of globalization in political, economic, and cultural discourses, which does not suggest that they share the understanding of globalization. From a different perspective, ideas of the global culture, mobility, and cosmopolitanism build global solidarities to resist and confront global capital, hence Appadurai's idea of "grassroots globalization" or "globalization from below" (*Globalization* 3).

specific historical dimensions without denying recent transformations of African spaces and practices on local, national, and transnational levels.[7]

My purpose here is not to dwell on globalization discourses or on a detailed comparison with postcolonial studies.[8] Nor am I suggesting strictly delimited fields given the overlapping subject of study and terminology.[9] Rather, I would like to argue that the recurrent idea of globalization's novelty and its dehistoricizing and depoliticizing implications render a "reconfigured" (Moore-Gilbert 62) postcolonial perspective urgent rather than obsolete. To a large extent, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire* theorizes, and has come to epitomize, this idea of a paradigm shift, not only in terms of hegemonic global power but also in terms of potential global resistance to it. The "new paradigm of power," they argue, "depotentialize[s]" older theories of resistance and subversion such as postcolonialism and postmodernism, which Hardt and Negri tend to conflate (138). While the suggestion of a radical paradigm shift innovates in the sense that it invites us to think beyond traditional and neocolonial configurations of power and resistance, it also overlooks the persistence of those same patterns of exploitation and the

[7] See Kwame Anthony Appiah's *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*.
[8] For one such comparative study between globalization theory and postcolonial studies, see Timothy Brennan's "Development to Globalization: Postcolonial Studies and Globalization Theory" and Krishnaswamy's "Postcolonial and Globalization Studies: Connections, Conflicts, and Complicities."
[9] Much has been written about the coexistence of and interactions between postcolonial and global studies, with discrepant understandings of what each field represents. Whether critics perceive them as belonging to different eras, or being concerned with different eras of study, or even existing through a "dialectical relation" (During 31), few would deny their intersections in terms of subject and terminology. My brief reference to this comparative approach should not be read as an assumption that each field functions from a clearly delimited position and definition. Rather, what I am reacting to here is the assumption of newness which underlies many studies of globalization and which eventually implies the obsoleteness of postcolonial approaches to literary or cultural studies. As Bart Moore-Gilbert argues, "[g]lobalization reinforces the necessity for postcolonial criticism" (64), however, he insists, "[t]his new cultural/political situation does . . . require some reconceptualisation of postcolonialism" (62).

ways in which current postcolonial conditions have to be traced back to a combination of their colonial and post-independence history. Another important phenomenon obscured by the concept of globalization as a "new paradigm" is the production of new versions of detrimental racial and geographical categorizations, specifically as they reappear in the guise of difference, cosmopolitanism, humanitarianism, or neo-liberalism.

To bring the discussion back to Africa and to the issue of representation, the notion of novelty or historical rupture risks reinforcing a presentist assessment and depiction of some current situations of post-independence and global violence. Ironically enough, this presentism resuscitates a colonialist vision of the continent. If such a vision has never really disappeared from popular representations of Africa outside the continent, the past years have witnessed a number of texts on Africa openly steeped in disturbingly colonial stereotypes and tropes. Suggestive titles such as *The Coming Anarchy* (Kaplan 2000), *The Trouble with Africa: Why Foreign Aid Isn't Working* (Calderisi 2006), not to mention the often cited essay "Hopeless Africa," published in *The Economist* (2000) tended to categorize the whole continent as intrinsically flawed and violent *despite* all the aid that had been injected into it and the developmental theories experimented in (or on) it.[10] If too many African leaders and government officials have indeed institutionalized or widely

---

[10] The texts cited above differ in their general purpose and perspective. As I point out in Chapter 1, "Hopeless Africa" and *The Coming Anarchy* consistently relate economic, political and social disasters to cultural predispositions. While Robert Calderisi tackles the issue of international aid especially through his extensive experience as a World Bank official, his references to "the African spirit" which he argues "has yet to collapse" (230) for Africa to progress, taps the same essentialist discourse. This is not to suggest that any reference to major problems besetting African countries is necessarily an exercise in Afro-pessimism, but the sweeping generalizations and decontextualized links between culture and violence, corruption or poverty certainly are.

contributed to the recurrent problems of mismanagement, corruption, and violence and if the state has become dysfunctional in more than one instance, emphasizing these facts in isolation hardly conveys the complex grid of complicities between internal, external, past and present factors behind structural and physical violence. Neither, I would like to add, does it account for, or even acknowledge, other examples of local social and political initiatives to tackle problems of poverty, health, education, not to mention attempts to address the question of justice in recent conflicts, problematic as these attempts might be.

Reading these generalized yet severely truncated representations of African contexts with the decontextualizing tendencies of many globalization discourses confirms the need to reengage, rather than disengage, postcolonial with contemporary African studies. The problem with the above representations is not simply their inaccuracy and barely disguised racism, but also their role in perpetuating certain images of Africa which in turn help shape popular and institutional approaches to global humanitarianism and interventionism, international aid and globalization in general. To repoliticize these issues as well as postcolonial violence in African contexts, a broader historical perspective is needed which foregrounds breaks and continuities between colonial, early post-independence and postcolonial eras. The emphasis on the post-independence era encompasses neo-colonialism but also national politics of identity and historiography, as well as traumatic outbreaks of extreme violence. In other words, and contrary to a fairly popular argument, this historical lens does not aim at constructing an apologetic account of postcolonial problems in Africa, nor does it endorse "a politically irresponsible historicism," as Mahmood Mamdani puts it (*Victims* 8). More specifically, he continues, "[t]o explore the

relationship between history and politics is to problematize the relationship between the historical legacy of colonialism and postcolonial politics" (8). Literature, as I will argue, does this very well through negotiation. Although his study refers to the Rwandan genocide, Mamdani's approach, with its attempt to identify past and present responsibilities, including those imputed to the population, is relevant in such contexts as civil wars and political unrest in Somalia, Zimbabwe, and Nigeria, on which I will focus in the following chapters.

Resisting easy conclusions to complex and unstable narratives of violent conflict in the African spaces mentioned above requires a negotiated narration. Fiction and non-fiction have to negotiate not only intertwined, yet sometimes contradictory, perspectives but also their own problematic commitment to analysis and narration. Saying that the postcolonial hinges on the link between history, culture, politics and, one should add, economy, does not in itself clarify what this perspective really implies or what affiliating one's work with it— as I do here—means. With reference to the postcolonial field in Canada, Diana Brydon asserts that "a postcolonial politics means turning away from cheap cynicisms" and facing "difficult engagements." Yet she also recognizes, with good reason, that "Postcolonial politics takes place within a larger crisis of politics itself." Despite the article's specifically Canadian perspective on postcoloniality, the issue is also relevant to Africanist scholars and writers whether working from an African or a non-African location.

If adopting a critical position vis-à-vis celebratory theories of globalization can be imagined as an act of resistance to the latest version of "imperiality,"[11] then what does it mean to postcolonize African studies and not just globalize it? What does engaging with postcolonial politics imply? Does that simply amount to the denunciation of complicities between neocolonialism or global interests and national dictatorships, which together perpetuate an outrageous status quo? Does this position consist in seeking tales of resistance, through a human rights discourse, to national governments (as colonial imposition), corruption, or terrifying levels of violence? Finally, and to return to the question of a "crisis of politics," how does one balance the need and urge to act and write about African postcolonialities with the risk, or as Brydon puts it, "the fear that postcolonial analysis, as currently practiced, may well be complicit with newer forms of domination"? This last point is particularly relevant to some of the events narrated in the novels I study here which raise, for example, the fraught discourses of interventionism, peacemaking, democracy, and human rights during conflict and acute political and social crises. Each position threatens to unravel itself in the face of interlinked responsibilities as well as irreducibly complex, multiple, and sometimes conflicting memories that all compete for recognition. The novels—all of which revolve around issues of responsibility and representation—problematize and inform both postcolonial narration and criticism by foregrounding and negotiating their inherent instability even as they insist on recording various tales of violence. The concept of negotiation, which I will unpack in the following

---

[11] I am using Krishnaswamy's term, "imperiality," through which he suggests "both a break as well as a continuity with older forms of formal imperialism" while " establishing a theoretical affiiation with the notion of coloniality" (12).

chapters, actively engages events, discourses, and remembering practices through their multiple facets and blurred or unstable boundaries. Negotiation, as I understand it, is a way of recognizing "the ineradicable character" of pluralism (Mouffe 13) and the instability of any political, moral, or ethical conflict while not allowing that realization to develop into paralyzing cynicism.

What brought me to the idea of negotiation? First, I should start with conflict and war. It had not been my initial plan to delve into tales of war, extreme violence, torture, and massacres. Initially, I had been specifically interested in structural violence and its less obvious yet virulent impact. I wanted to research the complicities behind the perpetuation of vicious circles whereby tackling structural problems hinged on resources, which because of a mix of international and local politics were always lacking. At the same time, I wanted to articulate this research around post-independence literary reconfigurations of the concept of resistance. From the perspectives of postcolonial theory and fiction, I partly understood resistance as an act of rehistoricizing and rewriting aimed at demystifying presentist approaches to African contexts which tended to view many of the continent's structural problems as naturally generated and perpetuated by its population with little hope for (self)development. Many contemporary novels, however, seemed intent on revisiting postcolonial conflicts. The idea of violence as becoming a haunting phenomenon threatening to erupt again became compelling through the novelists' attempts to make sense of the breaks and continuities with the past even as they conceded the need to negotiate their position, their claims to representation, and their self-assigned responsibility to tell. If

I sought tales of resistance, I found that negotiation reconfigured resistance and narrative of violence more productively.

3. Organization and Chapter Outline

The dissertation is divided into four chapters. The last three chapters focus on the ways in which fiction reconfigures representations of violence, history, and memory by subverting and resisting the often reductive terms in which they have been addressed. Instead, my readings employ the idea of negotiation as a set of multiple and often contending perspectives that problematize the possibility of representation itself. I situate the texts at the crossroads of, first, different global and local reflections on history and representation and, second, individual and communal relations to memory and trauma in a national context. There are obviously various ways in which to read the novels. The emphasis on the national context alongside the global one does not seek to deny their contribution to a transnational literature. Their appeal to a local, diasporic, and transnational audiences is undeniable, in part on account of the English language in which they are written. At the beginning of this introduction, I raised the question of the chapters' apparent "national" scope. This perspective derives from the novels' focus on historical and cultural events that helped shape and were shaped by the nation-state. They also narrate a state of violence through genealogies which exceed the geographical and historical boundaries of the nation-state. While not all the texts dwell on the formation of the nation-state, they all refer back to this very entity to reopen questions of unfinished decolonization

and postcolonial violence with their conflicting politics of memory, acknowledgment, and responsibility.

Chapter 1 elaborates the theoretical issues addressed in the remaining chapters. I will unpack the concept of negotiation and the ways in which it intervenes in my reading of the novels. I will relate the concept of negotiation to questions of postcolonial history, resistance, postcolonial violence, and the nation-state. The chapter examines the critical purchase of raising questions of postcolonial violence and the latter's entanglement with hegemonic conceptions of the nation-state. The possibilities of transformation related to the latter, however, as I will argue later, are not fixed, nor have they been exhausted. Before discussing the authors studied in this dissertation, I will examine how earlier writers have narrated postcolonial violence in African contexts and how that narration becomes negotiated, transformed, and rehistoricized. The following theoretical discussion of negotiation is interdisciplinary in that it addresses conceptualizations of negotiation in discourses of democracy, cosmopolitanism, and literary representation. Finally, in relation to the literary texts, I will argue that resistance and negotiation mark both the form and the content of the novels.

Although the issue of representation figures prominently in all the chapters, chapter 2 specifically addresses media and novelistic representations of the Somali war especially during the US-UN intervention in the 1990s. The novel contributes an alternative anti-sensationalist representation of the events. In other words, *Links* mediates and defers the direct spectacle of violence, rather than claims direct accessibility to that spectacle. I will argue that the sensationalism at the heart of reportage, and specifically photography, is

fueled by a metonymic production and reproduction of images. In contrast, deploying metonymy as a strategy of representation and reading in *Links* reveals the anti-sensationalism of the novel and enables it to counter and unsettle the media's construction of the Somali conflict. The different political implications of sensationalism in the media and anti-sensationalism in *Links*, both entailed in the same trope, forms my basis for identifying metonymy as an important strategy of the representation of war, on the one hand, and postcolonial literary criticism, on the other. Metonymy in the novel also generates a pervasive sense of indeterminacy throughout the text. I will argue, however, that this effect does not correspond to a postmodern type of political neutrality. Rather, the resulting sense of instability subverts the media's claim to truth, foregrounds the instability of any kind of representation including its own, and third, reflects the inevitably complex and interlinked responsibility in conflict situations. Rather than a denial of the possibility of representation, the novel negotiates a multi-faceted and problematized approach to its narrating and memorializing function. This chapter specifically explores the negotiating power of figurative language through the figure of metonymy.

Chapter 3 moves to the Zimbabwean context of postcolonial violence experienced by the population during the liberation war and the so-called "dissident" war which broke out immediately after independence. One of the threads tying this chapter and the novels together is the trope of spectrality. I will draw on Pheng Cheah's concept of national spectrality and explore this notion in relation to Hove's *Bones* and Vera's *The Stone Virgins*. I propose to link the two novels through an analysis of the ways in which Vera's text negotiates national history with individual memory and how it converses with and

rewrites the spiritual dimension of nationalism evoked in *Bones*. Both novels explore and negotiate an alternative rehistoricization of national liberation and independence through marginal voices with a focus on the psychological and—often literally—haunting power of violence. If Hove explores marginalized female perspectives on the horrors of war through the notion of spirit possession, Vera juxtaposes a victim and her torturer's psychological state thereby interweaving the social and historical with the individual experience of trauma and haunting.

Chapter 4 expands on the theme of individual and collective trauma and the victims' constant negotiation of this doubling. The first notable difference with Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* is the temporal gap separating the writing of the novel and the Biafra-Nigeria war which it memorializes. This fact brings back the idea of trauma and haunting together with questions of justice and accountability in the face of denial. As in the other novels, but perhaps with more emphasis in Adichie's text, negotiation encompasses not only multiple perspectives and memories but also the very novel's claims to representation. The novelistic device whereby one of the characters is allowed space to tell his/their story foregrounds the ways in which a responsibility to narrating violence becomes entangled with blurred responsibilities for violence. This problematic issue of representation makes the need to address trauma and the effect of silenced memories even more urgent. In this sense, reading this novel in conjunction with Atta's *Everything Good Will Come*, which depicts military rule in Nigeria, suggests a continuity between war violence and military rule rather than a rupture. Through the latter novel, I return to the idea of negotiating individual and collective doubling but with a focus on responsibility in a situation of

political and structural violence. The focus of Adichie's novel is divided into the meta-critical responsibility to tell and the main character's responsibility to act. In Atta's novel, the role of the activist under military rule develops through a problematized, and therefore negotiated, relation with claims to human rights and democracy discourses.

Chapter 1

Postcolonialism, Resistance, and Negotiation: Theoretical Reconfigurations

> To speak then of metropolis and colony as inhabiting the same in-between, interstitial ground ignores that this territory was differentially occupied and that it was contested space, being the site of coercion and resistance and not of civil negotiation between evenly placed contenders. (Parry, "Signs" 137)

> Here, then, is a model African scholarship that . . . is exemplary in its conjunctural navigation and negotiation betwixt and between. (Korang, "Useless" 463)

> For it is vital, also, that African accommodationist negotiation in the 'posts' be vigilantly self-aware; that it come wearing the protective armour of a healthy rejectionism. (Korang, "Useless" 464)

Although the relation between the concepts of resistance and negotiation in postcolonial discourse exceeds the opposition described in the first epigraph, it succinctly points to the way they have often been categorized in an antagonistic fashion. Benita Parry's statement evokes a recurrent—albeit dated—debate in postcolonial theory and criticism that opposes a textual study of the ambivalence of postcolonial identity and discourse to a materialist concern with colonial and postcolonial conflict. Comparably,

Kwaku Larbi Korang analyzes a theoretical divide in African studies in particular which does not simply oppose critics' approach to the dynamics of resistance and negotiation in the colonial encounter and its postcolonial aftermath, but also implicates the "situatedness of critical discourse" to borrow Biodun Jeyifo's terms (45). Korang identifies "a line dividing" those who resist and reject the "posts," or the discursive, textualist modalities of postmodern/poststructuralist/postcolonial theory and those who either embrace them or are "willing to negotiate an Africanist accommodation with their protocols of critical and cultural understanding" ('Useless' 443). While Korang promotes a theoretical negotiation at the level of methodology, Parry's statement deals with the impact of the theoretical polarization on the rendition of the colonial encounter. Interestingly, it also highlights the way *active* resistance and negotiation as concepts and "subversive" strategies have also been integrated into this dichotomy. According to this opposition, while resistance seems to spring from the concrete oppression and material violence of colonialism, negotiation appears to be the more apposite strategy to account for the blurred space in which signifiers of identity interact and contaminate each other. This is not to suggest that all types of resistance are evacuated from poststructuralist analyses or that negotiation does not feature in accounts of anti-colonial resistance. Yet, although they coexist closely, resistance and negotiation are often perceived as antagonistic, with the latter marking the limits of the former.

This work proposes to read textual configurations of negotiation in ways that link it, rather than oppose it, to resistance in the novels' representations of post-independence

conflicts in postcolonial Africa. While it is crucial to examine how resistance and negotiation are theorized within the colonialist era as anti-colonial strategies, my objective is to assess how they can be redefined and deployed in a *post*-independence context. In contrast to the aforementioned opposition between them, I propose to link them as complementary parts of the same process whereby literature contests, resists, and negotiates the representation of postcolonial violence in Africa in ways that challenge official narratives and dehistoricized representations. It is my contention that negotiation transforms resistance into a process that aims at instilling a culture of activism and deliberation starting with alternative representations of political and social violence.[12] Negotiation, therefore, implies resistance to hegemonic representations of conflict and implication into the constant reformulation of cultural, political, and historical memory and action.

1.1. Terminology and Roadmap

Negotiation marks the novels' approach to complex and traumatic histories of armed or political conflict in postcolonial Africa. It underlies the texts' intervention in the

---

[12] In political theory, the idea of deliberation is usually associated with a liberal conception of democracy whereby a prior consensus on notions of justice and civil rights supposedly establishes an even setting for participants to deliberate and reach a consensus (See John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice*). Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe criticize deliberative democracy and its focus on a consensus. Their concept of radical democracy proposes, instead, that we need to live with rather than solve conflict (xvii). Similarly, my focus is not on consensus nor does it limit political praxis to deliberative democracy. By culture of activism and deliberation, however, I refer to coexisting alternative practices and representations, each striving for its visibility in the social, cultural, and political fabric. Resisting a unitary representation of communities and their past through the negotiation of a complex one instead includes deliberation and contention into the politics of memory.

(re)narrativization of postcolonial violence which, nevertheless, acknowledges the limitations and contradictions of representing past and potentially resurgent trauma. In this dissertation, negotiation refers, first, to a practice of writing and reading whereby the novelists and my reading of their work actively engage with conflicts, resistance or identity discourses, and remembering practices in the context of their respective national histories *through* the multiple facets and unstable boundaries of these discourses and practices. More specifically, as a concept and literary practice, negotiation seeks to acknowledge an inherent pluralism of memories that challenge official history, on the one hand, and the constant regeneration of collective and individual interaction with the ambivalent legacy of the past, on the other. Second, negotiation designates the strategies through which the texts recognize and foreground their own instability as narratives even as they assert the possibility and imperative of literary intervention in specific political and historical narratives. The novels channel this double implication of literary representation of violence through meta-narrative references to their limitations and indeterminacy even as they memorialize and (re)write tales of violence.

Foregrounding the different dimensions of a conflict, however, does not necessarily recreate competing memories in the sense that Michael Rothberg describes it (*Multidirectional* 5). For him "competitive memory" entails "a life-and-death struggle" in the public sphere between "already-established groups" (5). Instead, his concept of "multidirectional memory" implies "groups [that] come into being through their dialogical interactions with others" so that "both the subjects and spaces are open to continual

reconstruction" (5). The possibility of renewed interactions between, and engagements with different memories and histories echoes the idea of negotiation presented above as an ongoing process which does not aim for a resolution (Mouffe 15; Laclau and Mouffe xvii).

By negotiating the instability of their narratives with literature's responsibility and urge to address national politics and the repetition of violence, the novels assert the double implications of negotiation as textual openness *and* practicing political agency and responsibility. While the texts denounce acts of violence and the national and international political contexts enabling them, negotiation here does not necessarily aim for resolution or for the substitution of one narrative for another supposedly unique and truthful version. Yet the texts' openness to various narratives and their indeterminacy are not synonymous with political and historical disengagement. Rather, in tackling uneven power relations in specific contexts and eras through their multifaceted local and global entanglements, the novelists emphasize questions of agency and responsibility by shifting the balance of power within the narrative as otherwise silenced actors also become agents in the negotiation of their grief and their history. At the same time, the texts negotiate a different approach to postcolonial or neocolonial history and national historiography, one which resists hegemonic, presentist, and dehistoricized representations of war.

In the following chapters, the concepts of negotiation and resistance help narrate trauma and memory, while plotting a genealogy of postcolonial violence. What is often negotiated through literature's intervention is the urge to resist and deconstruct postcolonial discourses of and on the nation and national history while seeking to broaden these

concepts and reckon with their persistence. In addition to the responsibility to tell, such novels as *The Stone Virgins* and *Everything Good Will Come* emphasize the responsibility to articulate new ways of engaging with past and present forms of violence. For what is at stake is also the haunting of violence, and therefore the reemergence of the power of past colonial and postcolonial violence. This approach ultimately envisions the possibility of a culture of ongoing, rather than temporary, resistance and accountability which derives its durability and viability from negotiation on both the political and cultural levels.

In this chapter, I will unpack the concept of negotiation first by determining and discussing the areas in which it intervenes in the context of the dissertation: the critical approach to postcolonial writing and history, the questions of resistance, violence, and the nation-state vis-à-vis negotiation. I will, then, examine how different writers have addressed various forms of postcolonial violence in Africa and how the authors studied in the following chapters build on or depart from them in developing their approach to their respective historical contexts. An interdisciplinary discussion of negotiation as a strategy in theories of political deliberation and debates about cosmopolitanism and the nation provides a background for the evolution of the concept. In the literary texts, in turn, negotiation becomes a strategy of resistance which, through the renarrativization of the resurgence of violence, contests normative visions of national historiography and cosmopolitanism alike. These strategies of resisting and negotiating operate both at the levels of form and narrative content in the novels.

1.2 Negotiating Postcolonial Theory

The post-independence focus of the dissertation requires a redefinition of notions of resistance, negotiation, and nation in Africa that acknowledges not only the drastic changes resulting from the intense decentralization of power through globalization but also ongoing links between colonial and postcolonial eras and practices. This chapter explores the debate on resistance and negotiation at the crossroads of globalization and postcolonial studies while emphasizing the valence of a materialist and historical approach rather than the exclusively textual trend that has dominated postcolonial studies from the 1970s. This perspective will also mark the subsequent discussion of national history and violence and the changing ways in which African literary texts have grappled with them over the past decades. More specifically, I do not posit resistance and negotiation in a chronological succession whereby the former would be associated with anti-colonial discourses (such as those produced by Frantz Fanon and Amilcar Cabral) whereas the latter would correspond to a subsequent textual approach bringing linguistic negotiation center-stage.

For different reasons, theorists such as Aijaz Ahmed (1992), E. San Juan Jr. (1998), and Neil Lazarus (2004) denounced the so-called "linguistic turn" as having distanced postcolonial studies from material realities of the postcolonial world and subject. In fact, it is not only necessary, but also productive and, in Ato Quayson's words, "very stimulating to be able to attend to both discourse and materiality, to speak, and yet to indicate an existential tentativeness in whatever has been spoken" (*Postcolonialism* 8). I start with this debate to indicate the detrimental effects of this polarization of methodologies on questions

of resistance and agency. This will also prepare the ground for my discussion and use of the notion of negotiation as a form of resistance in literary representations of national history and violence. In the context of this project, it is important to acknowledge the ways in which theoretical discourses have helped reshape concepts of resistance, nation, history, and negotiation, in order to subsequently study these concepts in the literary texts of the corpus.

The postmodernist and textualist propensity of postcolonial theory has led some scholars to question the validity of postcolonialism for the African context. In the field of African studies, a variant of the debate evoked above derives from the rejection of Eurocentrism often associated with the theory informing postcolonial studies. Further, the implications of postmodernist terminology on notions of resistance, agency, and projects of liberation also partly account for what Paul Tiyambe Zeleza calls "the unease" of many Africanist scholars vis-à-vis postcolonialism (99). While Korang divides Africanist scholars into "accommodationists" and "rejectionists" ("Useless" 443), Zeleza highlights what he perceives as the general "ambivalence of African scholars to postcolonialism" (105) even though they are "deeply invested in the destruction and deconstruction of European hegemony—economic, epistemic, political, and paradigmatic" ("Troubled" 99).[13]

---

[13] Korang's division and study of the two positions and their nuances sometimes overlap with, but are in fact different from the polarization evoked by Biodun Jeyifo in his early essay "The Nature of Things: Arrested Decolonization and Critical Theory." Jeyifo seeks to "demythologize" (36) the "presumed dichotomy" between "two supposedly distinct, polarized camps: first, the foreign, white, European or North American critic or scholar, and second, the native, black, African 'counter-part'" (36), or what he also calls respectively the "Africanist" and the "Nationalist" varieties (42). Translated into Korang's terms, the latter group only corresponds to what he calls the "'hardline' rejectionists" or "the strongly Africanist/nationalist camp" ("Useless" 443). In fact, Korang studies the critics' stance with regard to the theory of the 'posts,' as he refers

While Zeleza mentions various reasons for this perceived ambivalence, this last quotation evokes the paradoxical usefulness of theory in dismantling hegemonic (neo)colonial power structures and its contiguous "apparent cynicism against all truth claims, against revolutionary projects, [and] against collective politics" (100). Nevertheless, this same quotation also reminds us that in practice, theorists do not tend to develop their studies in isolation from a variety of theoretical trends. Nor are these questions always framed in such a way as to align postcolonialism completely with postmodernism and poststructuralism, hence the development within the field itself of the so-called discursive and historical materialist trends.

The meta-critical debate opposing textualism and material historicism may have developed at the expense of a deeper examination of the subjects of the field. While attention to the theoretical implications of various trends and terminology represents an important aspect of the field which generated dialogues on different levels, this supposedly strict and persistent rift between textualism and material historicism attempts to impose a rigid double grid on postcolonial phenomena which in fact originate in a combination of material conditions and discursive constructs with the power to disguise, normalize, or demonize the self or the other. As Quayson puts it "[f]rom the point of view of postcolonialism, there is no need to perceive Marxist and poststructuralist discourses as mutually incompatible" (*Postcolonialism* 14). In fact, it would be hard to categorize most postcolonial analyses as strictly and exclusively textualist or materialist, yet this theoretical

---

to postmodernism and postcolonialism, from those who reject it for its perceived impertinence to African

divide and the debate reinforcing it persist and continue to shape critical alliances. David Jefferess describes this situation succinctly in the introduction to his *Postcolonial Resistance: Cultural Liberation and Transformation*: "While a basic assumption of my analysis that postcolonial theories of resistance must engage with materialist and discursive relations simultaneously seems trite, this sort of criticism of the field reveals the discord between discursive and materialist modes of analysis" (7). One could add that both approaches and the modes of analysis they developed have evolved in a tighter dialogue in practice than the debate would suggest.

Korang's idea of theoretical negotiation, expressed in the epigraphs, is doubly relevant here. First, in relation to the literary texts, it echoes how such a novel as *Links*, for example, draws attention to its indeterminacy and to its lack of resolution while emphasizing the importance of contextualization and the inevitability of intervention. Second, it pairs negotiation not with a weakening of a position but with vigilance and a readiness to resist the domination of postcolonial analysis by either approach. These two points are particularly relevant to the ways in which negotiation intervenes in the texts examined in the following chapters. More specifically, it is important to recognize both resistance and negotiation as seminal driving forces in narrating and reading postcolonial accounts of violence as such an approach represents a conscious aesthetic and political strategy of representation, which, nevertheless, recognizes its limitations and possible contradictions. Writing becomes an act of resistance through what it records and what it

---

studies to those who "accommodate" it to varying degrees.

challenges, but reading can also be a critical process. The key concept of resistance underlies the possibilities of intervention and agency that can be channeled through negotiation. In the following section, I will examine the ways in which resistance has been addressed and redefined in postcolonial studies.

1.3. Theories of Resistance

Early anti-colonial writings (or speeches) produced by Frantz Fanon, Amilcar Cabral, or Julius Nyerere in the 1950s and 1960s helped articulate some of the tenets underlying anti-colonial movements in Africa. If some post-independence fiction reflected the sense of disillusionment among African intellectuals in the postcolonial era, much of the postcolonial criticism and theory that gained prominence in the 1980s helped deconstruct concepts thought to be "compromised by humanism—universalism, historicism, consciousness, and identity" (Gikandi 101). As Simon Gikandi notes, some of the concepts that were now falling out of favor had been at the core of the anti-colonial texts mentioned above (101-2). In the decades following the independence of most African and Asian countries, then, notions of resistance, liberation, sovereignty, and the very idea of *post*-colonialism underwent a theoretical shift. In the wake of the dominance of textualism, however, many theorists sought to reassert the validity of the historical materialist approach,[14] by the same token also reclaiming the important role of resistance.

---

[14] The prominence of textualism or the "linguistic turn" (Parry, "Signs" 119) dominated debates in postcolonial studies in the 1980s and 1990s, and according to Parry, turned much of postcolonial criticism into colonial discourse analysis ("Institutionalization" 74). While few would deny the theoretical gains of

As independence fell short of the excessive expectations attached to it, the function of resistance discourse changed as national elites often used it to legitimize their position and their recuperation of the power to exert violence. Perhaps a combination of the disillusionment caused by post-independence conflicts and the prominence of poststructuralism in the humanities contributed to another shift in the concept of resistance in postcolonial discourse. Writing in the late 1990s, E. San Juan Jr. observes that the reduction of "the facts of exploitation . . . to the status of discourse and intertextuality" (7) in postcolonial theory, is symptomatic of the field's tendency to "focus on a transcendental politics of difference" (7) often at odds with the concrete material conditions of the postcolonial world in an attempt to eschew the risk of essentialism. By the same token, agency and the "intentionality of transformative practice" (7) are often overlooked. While E. San Juan Jr. talks about the absence of "any scenario of injustice, domination, or actual resistance" (2) from mainstream postcolonial discourse, other critics such as Jefferess and Robert Young show that the notion of resistance had not so much disappeared as it had now been restricted to a particular understanding equated with Bhabha's notion of "sly"— usually enunciative—subversion.[15] Resistance in this sense is also closely related to the idea of difference and the hybrid postcolonial diasporic subject. Nonetheless, this

---

deconstructive readings or of the concepts of in-betweeness, hybridity, and ambivalence popularized by Homi Bhabha, many critics have noted that an exclusively textualist analysis of postcolonial texts distorts the representation of a physically and culturally violent colonial encounter (Parry, "Signs" 128) and excludes any notion of active resistance (E. San Juan 2).

[15] In *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, Young argues that it "it is not Bhabha's concern to focus on [anti-colonial] resistance," but rather to reveal the instability of colonial power (186). As for Bhabha's notion of resistance, Young wonders, "what political status can be accorded the subversive strategies that Bhabha articulates?" (192).

marginalization of a particular meaning of resistance is itself symptomatic of a disinterest in the material rather than textual formation of the postcolonial condition, as Parry and E. San Juan Jr. argue extensively.

In *Postcolonial Resistance: Cultural Liberation and Transformation*, Jefferess specifically addresses the question of resistance both as a theoretical concept as well as a political and social driving force under colonialism. He clearly departs from Bhabha's notion of "spectacular resistance" and its inherently ambivalent nature in order to posit resistance as transformation (58). He insists that subversion does not in itself constitute resistance in the transformative sense (31). Jefferess' unwillingness to equate any act of subversion with resistance alludes to the abuse of the term in some postcolonial and postmodern writings. In Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, for instance, he refuses to read young Nyasha's self-destructive bulimia and anorexia as an act of active resistance only because it subverts her father's authority and society's expectations. His conclusion is predicated on the effects of her act. In particular, Nyasha's condition is so destructive to herself and so negligibly effective as a real challenge to authority that it does not uphold the interpretation of her rebellion as resistance. The value of Jefferess' argument, whether one subscribes to his specific reading of the novel or not, is that it reasserts the need to think about resistance in terms of agency and transformation. If the urge to shun the ideological and nationalist foundations of anti-colonial resistance movements led some postcolonial critics to theorize other forms of resistance, this tendency has also resulted in a reductive representation of the colonial world. Such a focus also tends to lock the notion of resistance

either in a temporal and strictly pre-independence frame or in a purely discursive and constantly deferred definition. From either perspective, resistance to cultural and political hegemonies can no longer function as a potential strategy for social and political change in a post-independence context. Again, this is not to say that the power to resist can only be assessed according to its success or that it should be limited to its collective and organized articulations. Nevertheless, locating resistance only in the indeterminacy of the written and spoken sign risks rendering it incidental rather than intentional.

In contrast, Jefferess focuses on instances in which the colonized harnessed resistance to decolonization and social transformation while also raising questions about identity and language. By seeking to tie the idea of resistance to that of agency and social change, rather than "just" subversion, he reflects the renewed interest in analyzing the material and historical contexts of the colonial era and their effective impact on the mobilization of different forms of resistance. Jefferess attempts to move past methodological postcolonial dichotomies and, instead, explores different articulations of resistance and liberation as both a material and discursive "transformation of human relationships" (87). Reframing resistance as transformation of both aspects of power dynamics opens up new ways of reassessing various ramifications of resistance under colonial rule.

At the same time, attention to the material conditions of colonialism and their representation raises crucial questions about the persistence of similar material inequality and comparable power dynamics after independence. This inevitable comparison draws

attention to the fact that "Bhabha's theory of hybridity does not account for the *continuation* of structures of material exploitation and subjugation [italics added]" (Jefferess 35). Predictions of positive cosmopolitanism[16] and liberating mobility and hybridity fail to describe, much less make sense of, the recent past and current situations in the postcolonial world. Thus, there have been various attempts at recuperating ideals of anti-colonial resistance and philosophies with a particular emphasis on empowerment, agency, and change.[17] Amidst the common argument that liberation movements simply gave way to postcolonial nation-states which, in turn, failed to keep their promises of liberation and equality, this renewed interest in resistance as a positively transformative force represents an important reminder and reassessment of colonialism and anti-colonialism decades after independence. Rather than just a nostalgic foray into the past, such studies bridge the colonial past and present patterns of inequality and violence which also call for transformation.

My study, then, does not focus on histories and narratives of resistance leading to independence, but, instead, on the possibility of rearticulating resistance and its effects in

---

[16] New debates on cosmopolitanism are redefining the term beyond the celebratory conception that has dominated its "revival" (Cheah, *Inhuman* 18) from the 1990s. In their introduction to *Rerouting the Postcolonial: New Directions for the New Millennium* (2010), the editors note that all the essays in the collection "address the urgent need for semantic expansion of this term [cosmopolitanism] from its western connotations of education, affluence, elitism, and privilege" (5). The essays are then symptomatic of "a shared ethical concern to conceptualize cosmopolitanism in order to more effectively address the implications of problems which globalization has brought to the fore and which require 'global' solutions" (4). Yet, instead of rendering postcolonialism obsolete, "cosmopolitanism is increasingly seen as a term which interfaces the postcolonial with theories of globalization" (4). In his contribution to the collection, "Cosmopolitan Criticism," Robert Spencer sees cosmopolitanism as instrumental in reorienting and expanding postcolonial studies.

[17] Young, to cite another example, locates issues of conflict, active resistance, and agency at the heart of the emergence of postcolonial theory in *Postcolonialism: an Historical Introduction* (2001).

the era of post-independence. As stated at the beginning of the chapter, I refer to resistance in relation to the concept of negotiation rather than in chronological or conceptual opposition to it. Resistance has often been articulated as a teleological mobilization deployed in the setting of national liberation struggles. In her influential study *Resistance Literature*, Barbara Harlow deals extensively, albeit not exclusively, with resistance literature produced "under occupation" (2) and derives her definition of resistance from such writers as Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Wole Soyinka, and Ayi Kwei Armah who have articulated the "struggle for liberation" (10), often understood as liberation from the occupier or as resistance to censorship and oppression. Acknowledging that improved life in the liberated postcolonial nation does not necessarily materialize with official liberation, Harlow suggests that resistance movements should also develop strategies to achieve their goals after independence. Yet this discussion of resistance as "struggle for liberation," whether as literature or political movement, often seems to be contained in the pre-independence moment, even if the latter may result in a dystopia.

Nevertheless, after independence, resistance continues to be reshaped in various ways and practices as the idea of liberation becomes more elusive and as the ex-colonized, as it is often pointed out, are now alienated and abused through their nation-states. As Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri put it in their reformulation of Foucauldian terminology, in addition to biopower or "power over life" (57), there is the power of the biopolitical, defined "as the power of life to resist and determine an alternative production of subjectivity" (*Commonwealth* 57). Thus defined, resistance is not limited to a particular

temporality but is inherent to and renewed with any system of power. Further, as Stephen Slemon argues, Harlow's conception of literary resistance, which sees "resistance literature" as "an integral part of organized struggle" ("Unsettling" 78), assumes a "representational purity" while it fails to take account of the unavoidable ambivalence of the very concept and practice of resistance (79). When paired with negotiation, however, resistance is predicated on the paradoxes of anti-colonial or post-independence struggles.

Recognizing the inevitable ambivalence and the contradictions inherent in theories and acts of resistance is crucial to attempts to reconfigure it beyond some of the definitions mentioned above. While the notion of resistance has regained wide currency through articulations of the opposition of a transnational "multitude" (2004) to global "Empire" (2000), to use Hardt and Negri's terminology, the kind of resistance that I would like to address here and that the novels illustrate designates a notion of individual and collective agency but not necessarily or exclusively a postnational concept. Negotiation works in tandem with resistance transforming it into a process with a continuous possibility of transformation. In relation to the different discursive, representative, structural, and physical dimensions of post-independence conflict, entrenched as it is in global and national structures of power, the negotiation of violence implies resisting and addressing these different aspects. In the next section, I will elaborate on the specific issues of violence and the postcolonial African nation in fiction and non-fiction.

1.4. Violence and the Postcolonial Nation

Developing a link between resistance and negotiation across the theoretical divide described above also involves re-examining the concept of the nation and the ways in which it has been deconstructed and theorized. Whether we see poststructuralism as an inherent component of postcolonial discourse (Gikandi 100) or as one of two dominant methodologies (Parry, "Sings" 119), or still as one of the different tools at the disposal of postcolonial scholars (Korang, "Useless" 463 and Quayson, *Postcolonialism* 14), the field is undeniably indebted to poststructuralist theory in its urge to deconstruct interrelated concepts of nation, nationalism, resistance, identity, and sovereignty. With regard to the early years of independence, however, one could argue that the increasing distrust of nationalism in general and of the nation-building project in particular also fueled this suspicion vis-à-vis the nation.[18] In other words, theorists were also reacting to the abusive and violent turn of postcolonial nationalism and therefore distancing themselves from the nation. Interestingly, the idea of "nation *building*" inadvertently points to the ways in which this project involves *constructing* national identity and history by writing different parts of society in and out of the collective narrative. To a large extent, it is from this perspective

---

[18] In "Nationalism and Postcolonial Studies," Chrisman explores and contests the tendencies in postcolonial studies to regard nationalism as "inherently dominatory, absolutist, essentialist and destructive" (183). She groups the common arguments into six categories such as the "derivative discourse" (184), which sees nationalism as a Western imposition and "nationalism as failed historical project" (195),which attributes all post-independence problems to nationalism itself. Chrismans's list also includes "nationalism as a dominatory formation" (188) or "nationalism as a nativist projection" (192). While some of the theorists she cites (Gayatri Spivak, David Lloyd, Homi Bhabha, and Anne McClintock) address important issues related to the nation and nationalism, some of Chrisman's most important contestations point to the recurrent failure to differentiate between "nationalisms of the dominator and those of the oppressed" (194) as well as the denial of the "capacity" of the colonized to transform the nation-state (185).

that a "derivative discourse" (Chrisman, "Nationalism" 184) develops which deconstructs the politics of the nation-state and its stranglehold on national historiography[19] as Western concepts which lack any postcolonial (or pre-colonial) referent. In this sense, the moment of independence becomes the marker of the aporetic postcolonial condition whereby the takeover of colonial institutions by national elites undercuts the promise of resistance and liberation precisely by maintaining similar hierarchies, as Fanon predicted (*Wretched* 122-3). The nation becomes a deconstructive pivot: while it represents the sovereignty, or the form through which independence was claimed and obtained, the nation-state is also often perceived as a "non-African" and therefore colonial vestige forcefully imposed on African populations and invariably leading to a violent state.[20] Homogenized representations of postcolonial violence oversimplify both the concept of the nation in Africa and the genealogy of postcolonial violence.

---

[19] For Paul Gilroy, the "absolutist approach to 'race' and ethnicity" that fueled black nationalist movements fails to account for "the increasingly distinct forms of black culture produced from different diaspora populations" (Gilroy 98). Other perspectives point to the selective historiography and identity officially upheld by the nation. The Subaltern Studies Collective, for instance, sought to create an alternative to an elitist nationalist historiography which echoed colonialist disregard for subaltern history.
While the problematic question of essentialism and reductionism recurs in many articulations of nationalist movements, national identity, and resistance, the tendency to dismiss all *postcolonial* national projects and the history of resistance because of the assumption of essentialism precludes a proper analysis of their drawbacks but also their possibly transformative potential if allowed to evolve.
[20] This popular argument is partly based on an erroneous and homogenizing assumption about precolonial communities and governance in Africa. In particular, if the modern concept of nationalism is later crystallized as a rallying strategy, Mahmood Mamdani insists that "pre-colonial Africa comprised neither pristine stateless

1.4.1. Perspectives on the African Nation

While it is necessary to deconstruct pre- and post-independence nationalist discourses in relation to racial or ethnic (Gilroy 1998), language (Ngugi Wa Thiong'o 1986) or gender (Anne McClintock 1997) politics, blaming the concept of the nation as the sole cause of the failure of decolonization impedes the necessary critique of any given and particular national genealogy of violence. First, as Basil Davidson notes, "what the new governments were obliged to take over . . . was not a prosperous colonial business, but, in many ways, a profound colonial crisis" (182). We should also note that the profound crisis was not only of a political, social, and economic nature. The traumatic impact of violent confrontations preceding independence represents another potentially explosive colonial legacy within the postcolonial nation-state as Yvonne Vera shows in *The Stone Virgins*. Second, dismissing the postcolonial nation-state as the root cause of structural and material violence also masks the neo-imperial global factors that influence internal politics, as *Links* on Somalia and *Half of a Yellow Sun* on the Biafran war emphasize. A decontextualized representation of national violence and infamous dictatorships has also tended to erase regional specificities and immediate post-independence history (that which preceded the Mobutus and the Idi Amins). Obscuring the early years of independence in favor of a more common denunciation of post-independence corruption and violence seems to suggest that

---

communities nor only tyranny-ridden conquest states" (*Citizen*, 48). Conquests, wars and migrations, as Kenneth Harrow argues, thus counter the assumption of a "natural" population distribution (33).

independence itself and the idea of the nation-state have never been viable in a postcolonial context.[21]

Aside from the polarized views on the nation, which either condemn it completely or celebrate a strict and immutable definition of it, Africanist scholars have developed varying positions on the idea of nationalism and the nation-state. Joseph Ki-Zerbo, for example, denounces the "legal falsehood" of conceiving of the African state as a nation-state in its 19th century European meaning (83). Others such as Samir Amin ("The Nation" 18)[22] and Manthia Diawara (124) look beyond the nation-state model to the creation or strengthening of regional formations. With regard to the deconstruction of the nation-state and nationalism in general as a Western import, other views have emerged to counter what Korang calls the "all-or-nothing" position, that is to say the either "defeating or triumphalist reading of the nation" (10). His project in *Writing Ghana, Imagining Africa: Nation, and*

---

[21] This argument of postcolonial "nationalism as failed historical project" ("Nationalism" 195) as Chrisman calls it, is partly related to the general theoretical disavowal of the nation-state to the benefit of theories of cosmopolitanism and global Empire which Revathi Krishnaswamy believes characterizes both theories of postcolonialism and globalization (8). Crystal Bartolovich, as one of the theorists who react against the supposed obsolescence of the nation, argues that the pressing question is not whether the nation is disappearing but whether its persistence is a regressive or a progressive force (133). The implication that it could be potentially one or the other echoes Chrisman's argument that nationalism and the nation-state in the postcolonial world are locally transformed ("Nationalism" 186). In other words, while gross and grotesque abuses of power marked the rule of many nation-states in the forms they took after independence, an oversimplified conclusion about a static definition of the nation-state and the role of nationalism would only further mystify postcolonial violence and its global links. Further, countering a rare reference to the postcolonial world in *Empire*, in which Hardt and Negri refer to the postcolonial "*state [as] the poisoned gift of national liberation* [italics in the original]" (*Empire* 134), Kevin Dunn argues that in Africa "the state, like sovereignty, has been discursively constructed and performed in new and contradictory ways" (148).

[22] Amin here envisions "the creation of large regional entities that correspond to the great historical areas (Europe, the former USSR, Latin America, the Arab world, Sub-Saharan Africa, India, China, Southeast Asia)" ("The Nation" 18). Diawara's "regionalism," in turn, refers to a smaller and more specific entity, West Africa. His analysis exemplifies one of the "distinctively African models of postnational alliance" (158), as Oliver Lovesey calls them with reference to Ngugi wa Thiong'o's, Diawara's, and, to a lesser extent, Kwame Anthony Appiah's perspectives (159).

African Modernity consists in exploring the work of earlier nationalist thinkers in 19th century "Ghana," in order to "reconstruct," as he says, and relocate "African nationalist theory, culturalist thought, and intellectual agency in a modern genealogy" (5). Such historical work reveals (or reminds us) how concepts of nationalism and the "nation-form" (10) were appropriated and transformed before and after independence. Korang's belief in negotiating "a way of sidestepping the all-or-nothing propositions" (14) which often mark discourses on the nation reflects the essay quoted in the epigraphs in which he calls for a negotiated approach to theory in African studies. More specifically, the perception of the nation is not only related to the repressive notions of nationalism and nationality developed after independence, it often derives from a deconstructive approach which, while otherwise necessary and productive, has sometimes led to the preclusion, rather than discussion, of this concept.

Regardless of one's ideological stance about the nation, both nationalism and nation-states "are still alive," as Toyin Falola puts it, as "controversial" as they may be (168-9). Falola does not limit the value of nationalist historiography to the empowering restoration of pre-colonial histories that colonialism had sought to erase (171). Rather, to him, nationalist historiography becomes a tool to resist yet another universalist hegemony. He insists that African national histories represent a pole of resistance to "global history," which he sees as nothing more than "the national history of one power [turned] into the metanarrative of global history" (169). This reassessment of the role of national history in the future echoes Zeleza's notion of "nationalist humanism" ("Troubled" 112), which he

sees in the work of intellectuals. For him, it "transcends the narrow confines of nationalism as conventionally understood" (112). Like Falola, he mentions the function of anti-colonial nationalism and envisions a future-oriented role for "nationalist humanism" thanks to its capacity to resist or incorporate "new theoretical waves" (113). Neither argues for the prioritization of what Zeleza calls elsewhere "the dangerous and endangered fictions of the nation-state" ("Visions" 30); rather, from their different perspectives, they seek to salvage the notion of nationalism and reinvest it with a new power of resistance and, as Zeleza argues, a redefined role and scope. Diverse approaches to the nation and nationalism circumvent the "all-or-nothing" views (Korang, *Writing* 14) and suggest negotiating possible analytical alternatives both to strict and immutable visions of the nation-state and to an all-encompassing cosmopolitan redefinition of the world. Likewise, seeking to avoid rigid approaches to postcolonial conflict, the novels studied here choose to negotiate the complex national, international, and regional interplays and their relation to pre-independence power configurations.

1.4.2. On Postcolonial Violence in the African Context

The conflicts that the novels of this dissertation address have all generated literary and journalistic narratives. Foregrounding the national and international, colonial and postcolonial contextualization of the conflict allows the novels to negotiate their resistance to a particular cultural representation of Africa from outside the continent. Their narrative negotiations focus on dramatizing what both national governments and international reports

have silenced. To varying degrees, the novels' emphasis on contextualization functions as a critique of the abundant presentist studies and reports of postcolonial violence in Africa, or what Achille Mbembe calls "a discourse of the gap and the lack" (147).[23] Such a perspective either ignores the colonial and neo-colonial roots of some of the conditions conducive to conflicts, or exclusively blames the postcolonial nation-state for violence while positing cosmopolitanism as the regulating substitute to an obsolescent nationalism and identity politics. Either perspective locks the continent into "one uniform site of dysfunctionality" to use Pius Adesanmi's words (227).

This tendency is reflected in the media through such titles as the often mentioned "Hopeless Africa" (*The Economist* 2000) or *The Coming Anarchy* (Kaplan 2000) which resuscitate colonial metaphors. The resurgence of decontextualized depictions of violence has been identified as the "new barbarism" theory which "implies explanations of political violence that omit political and economic interests and contexts when describing violence, and presents violence as a result of traits embedded in local cultures" (Tuastad 591). The article in *The Economist* tells us that "[t]hese acts are not exclusively African—brutality, despotism, and corruption exist everywhere—but African societies for reasons *buried* in their cultures, seem especially susceptible to them [*italics added*]" (17). The article entitled "Hopeless Africa" enumerates multiple problems plaguing the continent—a non-differentiated land for which Sierra Leone (then marked by civil war violence) is described

---

[23] Mbembe argues that presentism is one of the reasons analyses of African realities remain so myopic. He defines presentism as "a discourse on the gap and the lack," operating through the "excision of the past and deferral of the future" (147).

as the "epitome" (17). Similarly, in *The Coming Anarchy*, Robert Kaplan ignores the impact of global forces on the continent and reiterates the correlation between anarchy and culture (45).

Afro-pessimism thus substitutes for a contextualized analysis of violence which reckons with the specifics of each particular conflict as well as the usually multiple spatio-temporal factors. Further, an analysis which disregards the traumatic impact of colonial violence and the deep-seated memories of armed resistance risks severing postcolonial manifestations of violence from their colonial roots and their neocolonial and global drives. Literature can fuel Afro-pessimism but it can also play an important role in demystifying, though not minimizing, the issue of violence.

Most of the novels analyzed in the following chapters resist and attempt to subvert both official state narratives and dominant non-African representations and analyses of African conflicts. In fact, Farah's *Links* integrates examples of US media reports on the war in Somalia and opposes them to other perspectives. Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* includes a short passage depicting the arrival of two American journalists in Biafra to report on the war. If somewhat caricatural, their portrayal emphasizes their lack of detailed knowledge of the context of the conflict. While indicating the limitation of their attempts to represent the experience of violence and to represent the victims, the texts negotiate a broader and multilayered space of representation where past and present, local and global links become more apparent. Recovering tales of colonial violence and counter-violence does not simply represent a crucial aspect of colonial history. What attention to this genealogy also brings to

the fore is the link between colonial dynamics of violence and its reemergence in the postcolonial era. It is also imperative that such a rewriting emphasize the psychological workings of trauma which underlie cyclic eruptions of violence.

The urge to address postcolonial violence *differently* is also reflected in attempts both to theorize it and to represent it in fiction. Narrating post-independence violence, which encompasses colonial and postcolonial acts of dispossession and the resistance to colonial and postcolonial regimes of power, marks a recurrent interest in recently published fiction. From a theoretical point of view, violence has been the concern of many theorists from different fields in the humanities. Fanon provided an early study of anti-colonial violence not only as a physical struggle against colonial injustice but also as a psychological process (*Wretched* 73). From a poststructuralist perspective, Mbembe examines "the phenomenology of violence" (*Postcolony* 173), and in particular, the violence of death (*Postcolony* 173) in the colony and in the postcolony. He argues that the "omnipresent" (175) aspect of colonial violence transforms it into "a cultural praxis" (175), which he also calls "necropolitics" ("Necropolitics" 11). The arbitrary practice of colonial power continues to mark the postcolony which, he asserts, "is carnivorous" (201). Here Mbembe addresses the violence of authority which deprives the subject of her/his humanity while also creating the conditions for this subject to contribute to her/his destruction (174). Elsewhere, Mbembe notes that along with the degeneration of the economic situation, there occurs a "dispersal of the means of violence" among both institutions of the state and paramilitary groups and individuals (*Postcolony* 50). When the countries in question stop

short of a civil war, they, Mbembe adds, descend into chaos. While this dispersal of violence characterizes different sites of violence in Africa, each conflict situation examined through the novels in my study has its own specificities and timeframe. In addition to the persistence or resurgence of violence in some parts of the postcolonial world more than half a century after independence, what many critics emphasize now is a certain "evolution" of violence into more extreme forms.

While Mbembe talks about "the phenomenology of violence" (*Postcolony* 173), Etienne Balibar proposes "a phenomenology of extreme violence" ("Violence" 9). "Extreme" here suggests that the cumulative effect of violence generates, so to speak, a different phenomenon, requiring a different epistemology. I would suggest that extreme forms of violence akin to what Appadurai calls a "surplus of rage" (*Fear* 10) might sometimes be unprecedented in their magnitude but are always traceable both to historical occurrences and political power structures. More specifically, they represent the compounded effect of traumatic past violence, on the one hand, and constantly renewed abusive local and global strategies of power, on the other. This phenomenon is dramatized in novels such as Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* or Emmanuel Dongala's *Johnny Mad Dog* (2002). As Balibar notes, extreme violence does not only result from extremely traumatic events but also from "the repetition of certain habitual dominations at the invisible or indiscernible limit of violence because, it seems, they are part of the very foundations of society or culture" (10). Here Balibar talks about societal marginalization of women or minority groups such as criminals, but the same principle can be extended to global and

national contexts when similar power dynamics and structures of material inequality persist after independence and become an integral part of social and political power structures. Interestingly, Balibar also notes a link in contemporary thought between extreme violence and "the destruction of politics" (22). The novels' representations of violence both assert and subvert this connection. While the outbreaks of violence they depict always occur during a crisis of politics, the very act of narrating and negotiating them reasserts political agency. This brings us back to the need to explore manifestations and representations of extreme violence in relation to different cultural and political possibilities of negotiating and resisting them.

It would not be wrong to read post-independence violence as the betrayal of the political class and the failure of the postcolonial state, yet it would also be a mistake not to read further into the novels' attempts to establish a clear, if not direct, link with the colonial era and current global economic and political power. Literature provides a reflection on the ways in which the notion of violence in postcolonial writing is reassessed. In this sense, the novels resist the manipulation of national identity and history and emphasize the need to acknowledge national tragedies before and after independence, but their deconstruction also goes beyond poststructuralist and postmodernist indeterminacy. In addition to the deconstruction of notions of national belonging and history, negotiation generates new understandings of material and historical realities of postcolonial life and experience. For many writers, addressing some of the disastrous policies of the postcolonial nation-state

does not necessarily lead to the celebration of a cosmopolitan world that would supposedly be immune to the dangers of nationalist and identity politics.

1.5. (Re)Historicizing Violence in Postcolonial African Fiction

After independence, literature has continued to play a crucial role in deconstructing colonial representations of Africa, but it has also been instrumental in resisting both national and neo-colonial discourses. More specifically, many African novelists have used their texts as a space of contention, reworking colonial and national history through (or as) storytelling, and thus revealing its irreducible complexity and multiplicity. As such, literature has also served as a "forum"[24] for remembering the violence experienced by Africans at different phases of decolonization. In Zimbabwe and Nigeria, the civil war broke out almost immediately after independence. As for Somalia, it was not until 1991 that the civil war started after decades of dictatorship.[25] If recording and recalling colonial oppression often constitutes a national project commissioned by the state, there is usually no such support for narratives of internecine violence, which often testifies either to the complicity of the state or its incapacity to protect its citizens equally. Regardless of their length or intensity, such instances of postcolonial violence have marked the literary imaginary of different parts of the continent. Here the representation of violence is not

---

[24] With reference to the aftermath of the Biafra-Nigeria war, John C. Hawley argues that in the absence of a forum like the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, contemporary Nigerian literature may have become such a space (16).

[25] I mention these particular conflicts as they are the ones represented in the novels I will discuss in the following chapters.

merely a mimetic sociological modality but a creative strategy of bringing together aesthetics, form, and politics.

The novelists' desire to salvage collective and individual counter-memory of national history clashes with the political tendency to declare a beginning and an end to conflicts, alliances, and enmities, by the same token officially sealing inconvenient chapters of abuse. In contrast to the performative "bracketing" of violent events, the novels seek to explore them and their historical precedents. Such an approach to postcolonial traumatic violence through its traces confirms the novels' engagement with history *and* historiography, resisting, therefore, both nationalist and international constructions of the postcolonial state of violence. More particularly, all the novels here adopt an approach different from that of the (currently abundant) genre of what we might call a point-in-time narration, in which the whole novel presents the reader with a slice of war-life: raw, crude, and incomprehensible as specific war acts are. One of the implications is what Eleni Coundouriotis calls "the problem of arrested historicization" (191). This is not to downplay the importance of the "child-soldier" novel, for example, such as Ahmadou Kourouma's *Allah n'est pas obligé* (2000) or Uzodinma Iweala's *Beasts of No Nation* (2005). I am simply suggesting that in contradistinction—or perhaps in a complementary fashion—all the novels forming the corpus of this dissertation demonstrate a more or less stated concern with the larger historical context in which postcolonial violence originates and gradually gathers its terrible momentum. While they perform the crucial task of researching and recording alternative histories, the novels reveal past and present as well as national and

transnational ramifications of postcolonial violence. By so doing, the literary text resists presentist representations of African wars. Before I elaborate on the texts to be discussed in the following chapters, in the following sections, I will discuss literary evocations of violence in earlier African fiction.

1.5.1 Colonial and Postcolonial Violence in African Literatures

The multifaceted question of colonial and postcolonial violence has been at the heart of a vast array of works of fiction. This is not to suggest that violence originating in pre-colonial conflict has not engaged African writers. In fact, acts of violence often carry traces of different sources of antagonism. Yet here I am interested in the ways in which writers have engaged with relatively recent colonial and postcolonial instances of violence and their relation to histories, memories, and traumas in their respective societies. I shall limit myself to some novels and plays. While this is by no means an exhaustive list of major African works of fiction, it is useful to look at some of the patterns and strategies through which writers responded to postcolonial violence, through dictatorship or war, and their links to colonial violence. Although all the novels analyzed in this dissertation, with the exception of Hove's *Bones*, were published after 2000 and reflect as well as depart from earlier writing, the survey below does not follow a chronological organization. I would simply like to indicate some of the recurrent patterns to which novelists (and occasionally playwrights) resort to narrate different types of violence relevant to those broached in the following chapters. The style, genre, and approach of the works evoked below do not

simply reflect the events and phenomena they rewrite but also the times of their production and their relation to prior narrative styles and themes. In other words, they are in a dialogue with the historical moment and the literary precedents and contexts of their production. I shall briefly talk about the explorations of trauma through the psychological motif, the critique of postcolonial tyranny, and the broad category of war narrative. These works differ from the novels I address in the subsequent chapters, as I will argue later, but they also depart from earlier novels preceding "the age of disillusionment" (Lazarus, *Resistance* 18).

While different works of fiction delve into the psychological effects and traces of colonial and postcolonial oppression, not all revolve around the trauma caused by armed conflict and physical violence in general. For instance, the ubiquity of violence in colonial culture through its racial segregation and its divisive onslaught on colonized cultures and identities represents a recurrent topic. The latter underwrites both Tsitsi Dangarembga's novels *Nervous Conditions* (1989), which is entirely set before the independence of Zimbabwe, and its sequel *The Book of Not* (2006), which spans the liberation war and the early years of independence. Through a different strategy, the devastating impact of South Africa's multilayered oppression and, particularly, its racial policing and taxonomy are vividly depicted through Elizabeth's harrowing mental breakdown in Bessie Head's *A Question of Power* (1974). In contrast to the realistic style in Dangarembga's novels, Head's writing explores the disturbing hallucinations of her character during her mental breakdowns by blurring the boundaries between the real and the delusional in the

character's life but also in the novel. Elizabeth's uncanny and nightmarish visions, in fact, come to embody and perform, so to speak, the perversion of race laws and their sexual undertones.

As the issue of violence in colonial and postcolonial contexts oscillates between repetition and difference, defamiliarization often functions as an apposite strategy of representation. This approach is not limited to an overwhelmingly "psychological" writing as in Head's novel, or arguably in Vera's impressionistic novel *Without a Name* (1994), for instance, but spans a vast array of strategies. Gerald Gaylard argues that the disillusionment following the early years of independence triggered "the reflexive search for a new script that could speak of and to postcolonial circumstances . . . African postcolonialism consequently evolves a poetics of defamiliarisation as a technique of accessing a creative moment, and a politics dissident to a given status-quo" (*After* 4). While not all African writing expressing post-independence disillusionment fits the postmodern and magic realist features Gaylard identifies, a defamiliarizing style seems to have developed as an alternative to social realism, in particular, which often goes on a par with political nationalism (19) and which dominated African literature from the 1960s to the 1990s (31).

Writing about deplorable political and social contexts in some African countries is obviously not a new trend. Soon after independence, African intellectuals first expressed their concern, then their disappointment and pessimism in regard to the postcolonial national project as a whole. What Neil Lazarus calls "the literature of disillusionment" (*Resistance* 18) in African fiction emerged shortly after most African countries gained their

independence. For example, writers such as Wole Soyinka, Ayi Kwei Armah, and Ngugi wa Thiong'o, who had contributed to the anti-colonial and nationalist mobilization, now reported the early dictatorial and exploitative direction national elites were taking. Armah's *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968), for example, depicts a bleak image of post-independence Ghana, as a country subjected to autocracy, opportunism, and corruption. The lack of expeditious results and the proliferation of corruption, tyranny, and internal conflict shook many intellectuals' belief in the viability of African nations. This growing mistrust in the postcolonial nation and national narratives of identity was also largely reflected in postcolonial criticism and theory as mentioned earlier.

Alternatively, other approaches to the recurrent themes of dictatorship and corruption depart from social realist narration. Resistance to the government is often channeled through a satirical rendering of the leaders. Soyinka's play *Kongi's Harvest* (1967), for example, has been described as an obvious satirical representation of Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah in the last (and most contested) years of his presidency. Sony Labou Tansi, on the other hand, remains quite an exemplar of satirical exaggeration with his grotesque caricatures of dictators, their entourage, and their absurdly arbitrary and tyrannical power in several of his works, in particular *La vie et demie* (1979) and *L'état honteux* (1981). Here "the grotesque and the obscene" constitute an unequivocal reference, as Mbembe puts it, to "two essential characteristics that identify postcolonial regimes of domination" (*Postcolony* 103). Through a different narrative style, Nuruddin Farah denounces the stifling, and often murderous, grip of Siyad Barre's police state in his trilogy

Variations on the Theme of an African Dictatorship (*Sweet and Sour Milk*, 1979, *Sardines*, 1981, and *Close Sesame*, 1983). While the satirical tone is less pervasive, and certainly not fantastical or carnivalesque as in Labou Tansi's oeuvre, Farah definitely satirizes his depiction of the leader and the institutionalized cult of personality.

A variation of narrative strategies also characterizes the treatment of violence in war narratives. As mentioned above, the child-soldier narrative has almost become a genre in itself. Ken Saro-Wiwa's *Sozaboy: A Novel in Rotten English* (1985) constitutes an early precedent although the narrator is not a young child. The narrative is typically told in the voice, perspective, and language of the protagonist, which highlights the atrocities and the sense of absurdity of war as the children are often not aware of the forces and causes fueling it. The horror and utter confusion with which they are confronted also characterize the conflicts themselves as both goals and enemies often keep shifting. The general "dehistoricization" of conflicts in child-soldier narratives functions as a strategy to denounce the senseless war and the resulting physical and psychological devastation of victims and "victimizing" soldiers alike. While these novels can be related to (earlier) war fiction set during anti-colonial wars, they differ in their construction of the conflict and the position of the protagonists (Coundouriotis 192).

Fiction depicting anti-colonial struggle reflects the different strategies of resistance leading to independence. In Southern Africa, for instance, the culmination of resistance into guerilla wars led to a relative abundance of narratives of guerilla war from Zimbabwe. Charles Samupindi's *Pawns* (1992) and Shimmer Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns* (1990), to

name only two novels, depict the intensity of the "bush war" through the eyes of guerilla fighters. It is relevant to add that these novels were published in the early 1990s, about a decade after independence. Even if the commitment to the necessity of liberation remains unflinching, these are not tales extolling the heroism of those involved in the fight. Rather, they focus on the sheer reality of life and war in the bush, with its horror, exertion, and the fierceness of attacks and counter-attacks. While both *Harvest of Thorns* and *Pawns* hint at the trauma awaiting returning guerillas after the war, Alexander Konengoni's *Echoing Silences* (1997) revolves around the psychological toll on one such returnee. More than in prior narratives, Kanengoni, himself a war veteran, explores the persistence of traumatic war memories and their impact on whole communities long after liberation. The text also condemns the government's promotion of certain tales of heroism and silencing of tales of abuse and trauma.

While there are similarities and continuities between the foregoing novels and those forming the corpus of the dissertation, the latter, I want to suggest, represent yet another departure from earlier writing about violence. Here too the novels are in dialogue with the contexts of their production. Not only are postmodern (or post-realist) notions of instability, multiple and multilayered memories and perspectives foregrounded, but the narratives negotiate their relation with the history and historiography as well as the African nation in a global context. The novels draw attention to the links and differences between pre-independence instances of violence and trauma and their postcolonial reincarnations.

Their negotiation of a redefined and a multifaceted approach to postcolonial conflict constitutes the novels' intervention in the narrativization of violence and memory. Gaylard argues that "[t]he interleaving of postcolonial poetics and politics around a reflexive moment that remains partially impenetrable to language, promoting a sense of mystery and a lack of finality beyond definitions, suggests a 'new' relationship between aesthetics and politics in the contemporary era" (4). Without necessarily identifying postmodernist or magic realist features in the novels—as Gaylard's project seeks to do—it suffices to say that the idea of narrating differently does not simply gesture to uncanny and often absurd tyranny and abuse. It also emanates from the urge to subvert and renegotiate prior representations and to devise new strategies to engage with changing or reincarnated contexts of conflict. For example, Farah's *Links* is set in a post-dictatorship and civil war Somalia and thus negotiates the confusion and half-truths of a civil war with the need to reckon with collective responsibility and not just with that of the ruling elite. Through the trope of spectrality, Hove's and Vera's novels rewrite national history as well as the guerilla narrative with a focus in Vera's on the possibility of traumatic memory to reincarnate into postcolonial *armed* conflict. Adichie and Atta, in turn, respectively narrate the Biafra-Nigeria war and the military rule by focusing on a shared individual and communal responsibility. Where armed conflict and governmental coercion are invoked, there is also an explicit engagement with psychological as well as multilayered historical genealogies of violence and the need to articulate them through the notion of responsibility. Although the novels use different narrative strategies, they all resist previous and present

hegemonic representations of violence while deploying negotiation in order to multiply rather than limit expressions of trauma and articulations of agency and responsibility.

1.5.2. Transcending the "Age of Disillusionment"

Respectively set in Somalia, Zimbabwe, and Nigeria, the novels studied in the following chapters grapple with the representation of postcolonial violence whether occurring through war or a strenuous political and economic situation. Despite the historical moment of their production, many of the narratives refer to the colonial era and include the transition to independence within their timeframes, thus constantly setting postcolonial violence against that historical moment which should have ended the "need" for it, so to speak. Decades after independence, the theme of disillusionment still acts as a leitmotif in much of contemporary African fiction and independence continues to evoke a bittersweet historical moment in the novels' embattled national spaces. Nevertheless, the ubiquity of independence as a symbolic and temporal referent helps register not only its failed promises to improve life in the postcolony, but also, significantly enough, the persistence of the nation-state. The wider distance from which more recent novelists reexamine national history is crucial, I think, in the sense that it forces them to reckon with the gaps in their firsthand experience of historical events and to engage critically with the complex tasks of researching and reporting collective stories. Three novels, in particular, depict how civil wars transcend the nation-state's geographical and chronological limits (*Links*, *The Stone Virgins*, and *Half of a Yellow Sun*). The five novels question the ways in

which the nation and its history have been analyzed. They interweave individual and multiple collective memories of atrocities with historical and geo-political contexts in order to revise the question of responsibility and culpability.

By attempting to problematize historical accounts, the novels, thus, resist and deconstruct national and international representations of postcolonial, specifically African, violence. Yet they also represent a counter discourse to a certain theoretical disengagement with historicism. In other words, the novels I examine here reflect a certain rejection of the limiting scope of an exclusively poststructuralist and postmodernist approach severed from the sheer materiality and physicality of conflict and their impact on postcolonial politics and identities. Also, the novels do not limit themselves to criticizing the tyranny of the leaders of nation-states. They seek to examine both the impact of trauma and the scope of responsibility at the level of the individual and the community. Further, while the novels actively deconstruct hegemonic forms of history and representation, and confront the nationalist drives behind the perpetuation of inequality and the rise of new forms of violence, their endeavor to *globalize* and *re-periodize* postcolonial violence expands rather than dismisses the notion of responsibility. In what follows, I will discuss the concept of negotiation as defined and understood in different disciplines, then proceed to present its function in the novels.

1.6. Negotiating Violence

The texts endeavor to counter a presentist approach with its tendency to suggest irrationality behind conflicts and to limit responsibility to the immediate perpetrators of violent acts. Choosing to negotiate violence through its past and present, national and transnational linkages also questions a certain vision of a hybrid, postnational, and mobile world population effectively subverting local political and economic boundaries. Approaching global flows of people, culture, and goods from a postmodern ideal of difference and collapsed boundaries has been deployed as an alternative to the official division of borders and to so-called nativist constructions of identity and belonging. Much of this discourse is also premised on the historical appropriation of the nation in exclusionary practices and definitions of national identity. Yet shunning all analyses or resistance strategies which might evoke the nation and a history of nationalist resistance and empowerment has led to what Chrisman calls a "postcolonial delegitimation of the political" (*Postcolonial Contraventions* 4). At the same time, the "universally" cosmopolitan ideal of mobility and exchange has not materialized, at least not for the majority of the world population. Further, the description of metropolitan understandings of cosmopolitanism rarely pays much attention to the different ways in which related mechanisms of globalization operate in the local specificities of the postcolonial world. More specifically, despite the acceleration of changes resulting from globalization in past decades, Samir Amin aptly sees a clear continuation of the colonial system and administration into present-day international trade, financial and political institutions (94).

Although countries such as Brazil and China have emerged as serious economic contenders to the traditional leading powers, Amin's thesis holds true for many ex-colonial African nations where dramatically unequal power structures—reinforced by national and global collusions—form persistent destabilizing factors.

Evincing some of these links, as many novelists do, helps uncover the deeply historical and structural roots of social and economic discrepancies. In turn, this global stranglehold on local economies plays an important role in increasingly virulent outbreaks of violence. Not only is violence traceable to colonial and postcolonial precedents and their cyclic reincarnations, but it also results from a continued marginalization of large parts of the population (surplus) including where resources are abundant. A critical approach is needed to assess the participation of greatly flawed nationalist policies and elites in structural and physical violence. However, the tendency to identify and isolate the nation-state as the unique cause of all postcolonial woes and to present cosmopolitanism and globalization as the only viable alternatives obscures how all of these processes interact and contribute to the classification of swaths of people as either exploitable or disposable. The "delegitimation of the political" (Chrisman, *Postcolonial Contraventions* 4) in this sense risks buttressing the colonial and neocolonial representations of violence in the continent as apolitical, ahistorical, endemic, and therefore somewhat "buried in their [African] cultures" (*The Economist* 17). Not only is such a perspective dangerously reductive and racist (dangerously because by erasing the causes it suggests hopelessness, as the title of the article, "Hopeless Africa," clearly indicates), but it also exonerates all parties—except those

"visibly" involved—from their historical and present involvement in and culpability for current manifestations of armed and structural violence. It is for this reason that my dissertation pays specific attention to the novels' political project.

Part of what I mean by negotiation, then, is related to the novelists' strategies to narrate postcolonial violence *differently*. This narration does not only constitute a reaction to the telescoped and severely truncated analyses of the perceived "clannish," "ethnic," or "religious" underpinnings of national and regional conflicts. It is also a departure from the "deligitimation of the political" (Chrisman, *Postcolonial Contraventions* 4) in literary representations. To a large extent, the texts complicate their narratives of violence by creating a space where past and present, national and international contexts appear unavoidably entangled and collectively responsible. If the texts seek to deconstruct political, communal, and national discourses, they also reaffirm the possibility of engagement in the political and the historical. The paradox or the irresolvable tension accounts for the need for negotiation, the etymology of which as Jacques Derrida suggests, is "un-leisure [that] is the impossibility of stopping, of settling in a position" (*Negotiations* 12). If this suggests permanent instability, he also adds that "[n]egotiation operates in the very place of threat where one must . . . with vigilance venture as far as possible" (16). In other words, if "the impossibility of settling" suggests instability, it certainly does not urge or even imply disengagement or chaos. Quite the opposite, Derrida's words are a call to a repeated and persistent critique and—in the context of the literary works—interrogation of

conflicts and of the ways in which they have been narrated. In fact, the "impossibility of settling" may account for literature's repeated returns to sites of past violence.

On another level in the novels, characterization marks a different space of negotiation. More specifically, by "narrating differently" I am not only referring to the narratives' resistance to international and official or prior literary representations of postcolonial conflict in Africa. This narration also encompasses the ways in which the characters grapple with the traumatic impact of past and ongoing violence and negotiate its individual and communal effects as well as their individual and communal responses and responsibilities. Negotiation, then, is premised on acknowledging the complex and sometimes paradoxical factors constituting the background of violence. Yet narrating conflict, with attention to its causes and effects, does not simply amount to a memorialization of the event—which in itself constitutes an important impetus to the act of writing. What transpires through the recurring linkages between colonial, neo-colonial and postcolonial violence is its potential reoccurrence (under different guises) as long as the causes and the various responsibilities remain unaddressed. In the opening pages of Farah's *Links*, the main character is alerted to a group of armed young men taking potshots and asks:

"Can't we intervene?"
"I doubt it."
"What if I talk to them?"
"Why take unnecessary risks?"
"Because somebody has to."
"If I were you, I wouldn't!" (*Links* 16)

This short passage illustrates the imperative and complexity of negotiation in order to intervene with which the character is confronted upon his arrival in Somalia. Negotiation, or even the attempt at it, then, implies risk-taking because to negotiate is to intervene and implicate oneself. Moreover, with negotiation, to quote Derrida once again, "there is always something a little dirty, that gets one's hands dirty" (13). It is in this sense that the texts negotiate the complex causality and entangled responsibilities behind post-independence manifestations of violence. In other words, negotiation implies the irreducible co-existence of contiguous if sometimes paradoxical perspectives on violence but also the need for their public discussion as social, political, cultural, and historical phenomena.

1.6.1 Theories of Negotiation

In the context of postcolonial violence, negotiation questions—but does not discard—notions of national history, responsibility, and sovereignty. Given the novels' reconfiguration of temporal and geographical frames of national conflicts, each of the above concepts necessarily involves historical and global linkages. As mentioned earlier, the concept of nationalism has traditionally been opposed to a Kantian, Eurocentric understanding of cosmopolitanism with the expectation that the former will wither in the face of a supposedly more egalitarian, free-flowing, and productive cosmopolitanism. From this oppositional perspective, negotiation tends to be associated with the latter as a "transactional interaction process whereby individuals in an intercultural situation attempt

to assert, define, modify, challenge, and/or support their own and others' desired self-images" (Ting-Toomey 217). While the article from which this definition is excerpted does not address the question of nationalism and cosmopolitanism, it points to the negotiation of identity which marks one of the main focal points of postcolonial textualist understandings of cosmopolitanism. From this perspective, critics conceive of negotiation as the main strategy underlying (ex)colonizer and (ex)colonized interactions which both generates hybrid subjects and subverts nationalist constructions of identity. Then, the idea of borderless cosmopolitanism has been presented as an inevitable and desirable development and a space in which identities are constantly negotiated and reshaped. Now the debate on cosmopolitanism and nationalism has moved in different directions and has generated new articulations of legal and political dimensions of globalization. The fact that developments of cosmopolitan thought have had to address the persistence of community and state nationalism, despite contrary predictions, transforms negotiation into a pertinent approach that does not only characterize individuals' contacts in an intercultural space, but also governs tensions and interactions between different levels of national, transnational and cosmopolitan articulations of law, sovereignty and responsibility.

I shall return to the ways in which theoretical developments about the nation and cosmopolitanism help broaden the definition of negotiation. First, however, I would like to examine briefly some of the contexts in which negotiation plays a central role and the range of old and new connotations it generates, starting with its primary definition as a discussion aiming at reaching an agreement. While most of the events described by the novels in the

corpus revolve around conflict, here by negotiation I do not mean the attempt to secure a cease-fire between warring parties. Yet the concept itself is often studied in relation to conflict resolution, international diplomacy, and politics.[26] Interestingly, and depending on the field and context in which it is theorized, negotiation simultaneously signifies a process and points to the end result—the agreement or consensus—that justifies the launching of negotiation to begin with. When defined in radical opposition to resistance, for instance, negotiation is often interpreted as the weakening of a position and the resulting obligation to compromise in order to reach a consensus, a binding agreement, that falls short of the initial demands. So while resistance tends to connote an end-oriented mobilization in contrast to the definition of negotiation as a process-oriented procedure, in fact in diplomatic circles, as well as in Peace Studies and Negotiation Theory, negotiation and its success hinge on the final agreement. If at the beginning of the process, a final agreement is hoped for but still unknown, the understanding is that, if successful, negotiations will lead to a clear and binding outcome. This, of course, is contested by the literary texts in which negotiation is premised on the absence of a unique and unanimous resolution.

From a different perspective and based on the assumption that each negotiating party has some leverage, negotiation also suggests a participatory political practice rather than a failure to resist. As we move from negotiating conflict resolution, war prevention, or

---

[26] For a definition of negotiation from a Peace Studies perspective, see David P. Barash and Charles P. Webel's *Peace Studies and Conflict Studies* (2009). For an analysis of international negotiations of trade and conflict, see William I. Zartman and Jeffrey Z. Rubin's *Power and Negotiation* (2002).
Business negotiations also occupy a significant position in the vast literature on Negotiation Theory (see Konrad Ehlich and Johannes Wagner's *The Discourse of Business Negotiation*). In my work, however, I am not concerned with this aspect but with negotiation in the political, historical, social, and cultural spheres.

peace treaties to the idea of discussion and deliberation, the emphasis also shifts slightly from the end result to the process itself. This is not to say that the former becomes unimportant since from a particular point of view, the discussion ideally aims at a consensus, but the process and possibility of negotiation as participation here constitute a strategy that is valued in itself, and not simply a means to an end. Interestingly and despite the apparent affinities between the concept of deliberative democracy and the notion of negotiation—through the core ideas of discussion and consensus for example—Jane Mansbridge et al. argue that they have been defined in opposition to each other (65). Deliberation, they explain, "aims at consensus and the common good. In most formulations it excludes negotiation and bargained compromise. It excludes self-interest" (66). According to what they categorize as classic theories of deliberation (66), negotiation seems to connote an aggressive defense of one's self interest and the best way to serve it regardless of the common good, which, in turn, is expected to underlie deliberative practices. In fact, this is the theoretical background they attempt to depart from in order to suggest that deliberative negotiation be regarded as an acceptable practice in deliberative democracy and be deployed in ways "that incorporate self-interest without deviating from the criteria for good deliberation" (70). In this proposed reformulation of deliberative democracy, then, there is a shift from consensus based on "judgments and reason" (70)—an allusion to Habermas' conception of deliberative democracy (Mansbridge et al. 67)—to a "genuine agreement among participants that the outcomes are right or fair" (70). The

emphasis here is on the participants' right to defend their self-interest and to negotiate in order to reach a consensus that is satisfactory to all.

Even in this reformulated approach to deliberative democracy which seems to depart from overarching and somewhat predetermined notions of Habermasian moral rationality or Rawlsian justice, the final agreement or consensus still occupies a central position. The very idea of consensus, however, or the assumption that one could be reached, forms the basis of criticism leveled against deliberative democracy. The concept of radical democracy, in particular, relies precisely on opposing consensus as hegemonic and asserting the "ineradicable character" of pluralism, as Chantal Mouffe succinctly puts it (13). Not only is the notion of consensus problematic because it imposes a falsely unitary agreement where there is difference, but also because it forfeits productive antagonism. In the Preface to the second edition of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe reiterate their position and take issue with deliberative democracy on the grounds that "[t]he central role that the notion of antagonism plays in our work forecloses any possibility of a final reconciliation, of a kind of rational consensus, of a fully inclusive 'we'" (xvii). In another article, Mouffe insists in the same vein that the different attempts of deliberative theorists—namely Jürgen Habermas and John Rawls—to settle the question of pluralism are doomed to fail because "taking pluralism seriously requires that we give up the dream of rational consensus" (12). If both theories of deliberative and radical democracy seek to reinvigorate the notion of democracy by rethinking modalities of participation, the objectives of the political practices they envision diverge fundamentally

as the former remains end-oriented despite its attention to the process whereas the latter insists on the necessity to allow a continuous expression of pluralism and antagonism.

I initiated this discussion in order to assess links between the concept of negotiation and some (relatively) new articulations of the political and to explore notions that could be brought to bear on various understandings of the concept in relation to cultural and literary practices. As mentioned above, negotiation is sometimes opposed to deliberation based on the assumption that the former is concerned with self-interest while the second is premised on the "common good." Even as theorists seek to integrate negotiation as a valid strategy for deliberative politics, the final agreement—premised on the belief in its possibility—remains the main objective. In other words, the notion of negotiation in this theoretical context is still different from the one evoked in relation to identity and cosmopolitan politics whereby it tends to signify continuous interactions in an "ineradicably" pluralistic social and political space, thus suggesting that where a consensus occurs, it is never final (Mouffe 16).

While Laclau and Mouffe do not engage with negotiation as a political concept or cultural practice, I think their approach to pluralism and to its irreducibility helps elucidate a different potential for the use of negotiation in a multilayered and pluralistic context, specifically in multi-ethnic contexts, as is the case in most African societies. What happens to the concept of negotiation in radical democratic practices centered on "agonistic

pluralism" (Mouffe 15)?[27] I think the question of negotiation is relevant here because the call for pluralism to be acknowledged as an irreducible reality does not suggest the cessation of political dialogues, as Mouffe quite explicitly states that "[compromises] are part and parcel of politics, but they should be seen as temporary in an ongoing confrontation" (16). Although I agree with Mouffe's suggestion that politics should be viewed as an ongoing confrontation, her formulation of agreement as "conversion" from one political party or trend to another suggests intractability at the level of positions and systems where, I believe, there is more flexibility and *negotiation* in praxis, neither of which eradicates pluralism. Nevertheless, I do not undertake a critique of the political trends discussed here. Rather, I am interested in the ways in which negotiation, through its different conceptions, is perceived to play a role; second, I propose to trace the particular definition of negotiation elaborated in the following chapters to the interactive developments of cultural, political, and public, and social debates.

At the beginning of the chapter, I proposed to articulate the possibility of ongoing rather than temporary resistance and accountability which derive their durability and vitality from negotiation. The idea of pluralism does not imply an absence of interaction, but rather a continuous one premised on the legitimacy of different visions, and with more relevance for such topics as violence and trauma, the legitimacy of having a different memory, experience, and claims. The latter claims also evoke important and contentious

---

[27] "Envisaged from the point of view of 'agonistic pluralism,' Mouffe argues "the aim of democratic politics is to construct the 'them' in such a way that it is no longer perceived as an enemy to be destroyed but as an

questions of accountability and justice. Again, in the context of memorialization through narratives of violence, these aspects figure as a potential site of hegemony, negotiation, or even future reincarnations of violence. More specifically, responsibility—further theorized in chapter 4—encompasses both past and present configurations of power, of memory, and of justice through reshaped and negotiated responses to responsibility.

The novels' multilayered narratives, which strive to widen the scope of responsibility and to foreground the causes of conflict historically and globally, question clichéd representations of African structural and physical violence. They force a rethinking of the roles of the individual, the community, the nation, and a cosmopolitan conception of politics and justice. Negotiation, then, functions as a writing and analytical tool that both questions and appeals to different spaces of resistance, inscriptions of memory, and possibly transformation. What I want to suggest here is that the narratives contribute to the very current reformulations of the debate between cosmopolitanism and nationalism in an African geopolitical space.[28]

As Pheng Cheah argues, the cosmopolitan discourse largely continues to be a celebratory one envisioning an ineluctable and *desirable* transition from reductive state nationalism to cosmopolitanism. While cosmopolitan discourse focuses on a transnational

---

'adversary' i.e. somebody whose ideas we combat but whose right to defend those ideas we do not put into question" (15).

[28] In order to demystify "the notorious tensions between nationalism and cosmopolitanism" which only "become more apparent from Marx onwards" (*Inhuman* 25), Cheah goes back to Kant's articulation of cosmopolitanism to argue that its development predated the spread of nationalism (23). He notes that "[w]hat is distinctively new about the revival of cosmopolitanism in the 1990s is the attempt to ground the normative critique of nationalism in analyses of contemporary globalization and its effects" (18), thus suggesting its

political imaginary and the actualization of cosmopolitan solidarities as what Cheah calls, somewhat reductively, "the human face of globalization" (19), this ideal hinges on the advance of global liberalism and the global flows of labor and goods.[29] Not only does this perception and highly promoted image mask the perverse effects and the limited reach of global benefits, but it also obscures the interdependence of global economy and nation-states. Examining the historical development of both concepts, he concludes that "the relation between nation and cosmopolitanism is more supple and complex, and the putative thematic opposition between these terms has always been unstable" (Cheah, *Inhuman* 21). What this suggests, and what Cheah reiterates in many of his writings, is that the development of cosmopolitan solidarities does not translate into their ability to "displace and replace" national bases for solidarity (41). The persistence of the nation despite globalization and the various proclamations of its imminent end has been observed by many, but what Cheah adds here is that "[i]t is precipitous to consider nationalism an outmoded *form of consciousness* [italics added]" (30). In other words, he does not simply refer to the roles nation-states are playing to justify remilitarization or to regulate global trade to their advantage, but insists on the continued purchase of nationalism as a form of popular consciousness for populations who bear the brunt of the North-South divide

---

factuality and inevitability. What this position implies is also that cosmopolitanism is no longer "an ideal political project" (18) but an actuality.

[29] For novels that address the conditions generated by different forms of global liberalism in an African context, see F. Odun Balogun's *Adjusted Lives: Stories of Structural Adjustment* (1995), Chris Abani's *Graceland* (2004), and Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's *I Do Not Come to You by Chance* (2009).

maintained by globalization.[30] In other words, if the fluidity of globalization undermines some of the normative, cultural, and political powers of the nation and the state, then racialized and regionalized power relations question the related claim of cosmopolitanism to a monopoly on the political imaginary. It is this monopoly that fiction resists and subverts by negotiating space for other alternatives, be they local or not. In *Everything Good Will Come*, when Enitan decides to become an activist under the military regime, she rejects the human rights and democracy discourse of the opposition and chooses to act without the support of a political party. In this case, the ability of negotiating engagement multiplies rather than limits possibilities.

Cheah's reconfiguration of cosmopolitanism and nationalism as coexistent spaces sometimes caught in a "conflictual embrace" (43) suggests a role for negotiation. This idea is reinforced by the fact that both concepts can potentially function in paradoxical ways. There are multiple cases of individuals and communities who rally and rely on

---

[30] In their opposition to the nation as an impairing and obsolete form, Hardt and Negri reflect a common anti-nationalist or post-nationalist position. Aside from the argument that the nation-state is a flawed system imposed on postcolonial populations, this stance is also based on the perception of globalization and giant multinationals as a network that supplants the powers and role of the nation-state. Critics such as Terence Turner argue that while states have salvaged their position by acting as "mediators between the global economic system and the internal economy of the state," they have been "dehyphenated" from the nation (50). Yet "[i]f the nation-state was indeed dying, Krishnaswamy counters, "the war on terror appears to have given it a new lease on life" (10). Aside from the militaristic aspect of the nation which has become obvious after 9/11, and which often serves as an argument against the alleged imminent death of the nation, various critics argue for a potentially positive and relevant role for the postcolonial nation-state. Despite the instrumental role of the nation-state in imperialistic expansion, Krishnaswamy argues that the postcolonial nation-state can now act as a "protection against imperialism" (Krishnaswamy 10), while Cheah sees it as a possible means to economic and social redistribution ("Introduction" 34). These arguments are generally not oblivious to the dangers and drawbacks of nationalism and of a state appended to the nation, but they suggest that the postcolonial nation is a changing process rather than the emulation of an immutable model. Cheah's perspective on nationalism as a still valid "form of consciousness" (*Inhuman* 30) then adds to the above in the sense that it emphasizes the idea of nationalism from the perspective of the people rather than that of the state.

transnational support to fight their respective abusive governments. Diasporic mobilizations to oppose political oppression, state-sanctioned violence, or policies in the country of origin also appeal to a transnational moral order that would generate both the concept of international responsibility to act and that of state accountability beyond its borders. At the same time, there is tension between this perception of transnationalism—usually cited as evidence for the demise of the nation and the success of different levels of globalization— and the neo-imperialism located in the normative cosmopolitan ideal whereby discourses of human rights and democracy also serve to revamp the "civilizing mission" motif. In order to give prominence to the first while addressing the second, theorists have grappled with the meanings of cosmopolitan democracy as a space where the political is believed to evolve through the interaction of different levels of belonging and commitments. From this perspective, and as Seyla Benhabib argues, cosmopolitanism is conceived as "a philosophical project of mediations, not of reductions or of totalizations" (20). The need to mediate is therefore contingent on the conception of cosmopolitanism as a transnational deliberative space with conflicting interests in which debates lead to transformation but not homogenization. In Benhabib's formulation: "The new politics of cosmopolitan membership is about negotiating this complex relationship between rights of full membership, democratic voice and territorial residence" (35). While Benhabib stops at "territorial residence" as a marker of (fluid and temporary) difference, Cheah insists on recognizing a space for the nation, thereby drawing attention to the inevitable links between "new cosmopolitanism," understood as a hegemonic universalism, and global capital's

continued stranglehold on the postcolonial state (43). Further, cosmopolitanism as a way of negotiating "fluid" citizenship does not represent the only possible alternative articulation of political, social, and cultural coexistence. Manthia Diawara, for instance, privileges the adoption of "a regional imaginary" or "a regional identity in motion" in West African countries as a more tenable project than the projection of a borderless continent or world (124).

1.6.2. Negotiation in the Novels

While part of the discussion about cosmopolitanism and nationalism springs from mobility and porous borders, it also derives from reflections on postcolonial violence and accountability within a national context. Keeping in mind the fraught conception of the cosmopolitan as a "cosmopolitical force field" (Cheah, *Inhuman* 43), which emphasizes its problematic implications and complicities, on the one hand (Cheah), and potential for change through negotiation, on the other (Benhabib), I would like to return to the novels' negotiation of both violence and its narration. If some of the novels do not directly engage with the above debate as I do here, the theme of postcolonial violence and the narratives' approach to it inevitably raise contentious questions of justice, responsibility, and human rights which, in a postcolonial context, are often discussed in terms of their national and transnational enforceability. As Joseph Slaughter argues in *Human Rights Inc.: The World Novel, Narrative Form, and International Law*, "world literature," with the recurrent theme of government oppression, foregrounds, normalizes, and disseminates the universalist

discourse of human rights as a way to counter national abuses of power. This idea reiterates the concern to hold abusive sovereign governments effectively accountable.

The novels studied in this dissertation complicate tales of so-called international humanitarian interventions in the case of civil war (as in *Links* in Somalia), or the singular responsibility of the postcolonial nation-state (*Half of a Yellow Sun* on the Biafra-Nigeria war), or even the reach and putative transformative power of universalist democracy and human rights discourse (as in *Everything Good Will Come* in Nigeria). At the same time, denouncing violence unleashed in the name of nationalism and identity does not mask the history of nationalist resistance to colonialism and colonial racial segregation (see *Bones* and *The Stone Virgins* in Zimbabwe).[31] Further, despite comparable patterns of global exploitation (be it colonial or neo-colonial), national complicities and deviations, and complex workings of the traumatic effects of past violence, the different contexts described by the novels are invested in specific local histories and actors.

As a concept, negotiation underlies the ways in which the novels resist and challenge accepted or dominant representations of violence in a postcolonial context and foreground alternative narratives. As it does not aim for resolution or a unique historical account of traumatic events, it implies textual openness and political agency. As a practice, the texts negotiate the representation of violence by giving a voice to different characters involved in conflict, either as civilian victims, or as combatants, such as characters in *The*

---

[31] In Vera's *The Stone Virgins*, this idea is embodied in references to traces of the just defeated white minority rule such as its "Keep Out" signs. Such a reference is also strategically reiterated when Nonceba, who was

*Stone Virgin*s and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The concept of negotiation, which in this context relates to the recognition of the plurality and instability of narratives of violence, is reflected in the form of different novels. *Bones* and *Links* refrain from giving direct access to violence, which dramatizes the extent of textual mediation in the representation of political abuse and war. In *Bones*, this indirect narration allows the narrator to register the story of his female characters while also emphasizing the fact that they are often silenced. In *Links*, deferred access to violence becomes a strategy of resistance and of subversion of the media's sensationalist exposure of violent images at the expense of contextualization. In both cases, then, resistance and subversion of dominant discourses is paired with an awareness of the limitation of any kind of representation. The limitation of narration is also dramatized in *Half of a Yellow Sun* when the narrator allows one of the characters, Ugwu, to start writing his own book within the novel. This is how the texts negotiate agency with textual openness and indeterminacy.

The novels, as I read them, negotiate a productive bridge between textualist and historical-materialist strategies by linking representations of violence to discursive constructions of identity and to material and historical conditions, all of which encompass colonial and postcolonial eras. For instance, in *Links*, which I will discuss in the following chapter, the trope of metonymy intervenes at the level of media and literary representations of the Somali conflict in the 1990s. While the novel resists a particularly truncated representation of the US and UN intervention in Somalia, it also negotiates meanings of

---

brutally tortured during the civil war, now walks a Zimbabwean city and registers the appearance of black

violence through local counter-memories. The constant metonymic displacement of a clear conclusion creates a sense of indeterminacy throughout the narrative. Interestingly, then, the usually textualist notion of indeterminacy does not entail inattention to material and historical contexts. Rather, through metonymy, the novel strives to present an irreducibly complex situation in which media representation, political interest, war and collective and individual responsibility are intertwined. In the sense, the negotiation of multiple meanings and narratives of violence within the same text does not strive for a unitary version of an event or a consensus; rather it acknowledges the limits of representation and the multi-layered aspect of conflict. Nor does this imply a politically neutral text. *Links* foregrounds the idea of shared responsibility in war even as it denounces the motivation and nature of the US intervention in Somalia. Different characters in *Links* but also *Half of a Yellow Sun*, and *Everything Good Will Come* and the agonistic relations among them reveal intertwined responsibilities and culpabilities, and therefore reflect the need for negotiation in the face of different, complex, and sometimes paradoxical realities.

The texts relate to the idea of negotiation as a process that need not strive for consensus but rather acknowledgement for alternative memories and the persistence of the traumatic effect of violence. While this approach does not necessarily seek to define what justice might mean to the victims of violence and its perpetrators, it gives expression to alternative political, social, and historical practices enacted through the narrative act itself, but also through the characters' different attempts to negotiate their positions and reactions

---

mannequins in clothing stores and "recently employed black bank tellers" (165).

in their respective contexts. These narratives of war and extreme political turmoil are therefore testimonies to individual and communal resilience and transformative power as much as they are records of indelible and extreme trauma.

Reconfiguring narratives of postcolonial trauma and conflict as narratives of colonialism and neocolonialism challenges the presentist representation of violence as springing from the advent of an African nation-state. At the same time, alternative narratives of such conflicts undermine recently constructed unitary national histories by ruling elites. The novels' negotiation of narratives of violence through multiple perspectives and counter-memories marks their resistance to superficial accounts of conflicts—usually described as ethnic—on the one hand, and governmental manipulations of power and identity politics, on the other.[32] My point here is that this pluralistic approach to pre-independence and postcolonial national history neither reproduces the flaw of exclusive postmodern textualism, nor necessarily reflects the cosmopolitan position envisioning cultural, political, and social pluralism only as post-national features. Despite the potential solidarities that can be developed transnationally, and as discussed earlier (through Cheah), the cosmopolitan argument tends to obscure the differentiated impact of globalization as well as the particular histories and experiences that have shaped postcolonial spaces. This position often equates African nationalism with the elite's

---

[32] My emphasis on multiple perspectives and counter-memories does not imply that all the novels provide a list of different accounts of each event. Rather, they foreground alternative experiences that have either been silenced or denied while also recognizing the limits of their own narratives. The latter point is crucial because the novels do not claim to exhaust narrative and memorializing possibilities. Instead, they evolve by negotiating the concepts of truth, history, and responsibility. It is in this sense that they negotiate, rather than uphold or negate, the idea of nation.

exploitative rule and its imposition of a unitary often nativist identity through the modern apparatus of the nation-state. The emphasis here is not only on the dangers of "nativisim," but also on the imposition of the modern nation-state by an elite. While it is undeniable that various nation-states proceeded to produce a unitary and exclusionary narrative of their history, this anti-national position also ignores the different ways in which nationalism was appropriated and shaped by the people and how it was woven into different forms of communal organizations and various acts of resistance to colonialism and colonial discourse.[33] In this sense, recovering alternative memories of the history of the nation-state before its official advent through independence reviews misconceptions about African traditions and modernity, on the one hand and consequently helps ground past and present political and social practices in the specificity of the local.

The novels' renarrativization of national history through multiple local memories evokes V.Y. Mudimbe's study of "the conflict of memories" (105) mainly in the colonial era. Mudimbe's understanding of conflict refers to the Belgian colonial attempt in the Congo to create a new colonial memory at the expense of local systems of thought, knowledge, and experience in order to "engineer a historical rupture in the consciousness and the space of Africans" (107). According to his account, an apparently "coherent" and "monolithic" colonial system opposes "a multitude of African social formations with

---

[33] Aside from the argument that the nation-state and nationalism in the postcolony have been appropriated and adapted in various ways, Ranajit Guha also draws attention to "the contribution of the people *on their own*, that is *independently of the elite* to the making and development of this nationalism [italics in the original]" (39). Although Guha here refers to what "elitist historiography" (38) overlooks in an Indian context, similar assumptions mark critical accounts of the political situation in African states, as an emphasis on the unitary

different, often particularist memories competing with each other. Thus at the end of the nineteenth century, colonization cohesively binds the diverse, often antagonistic, collective memories of many African cultures" (129). What I think is pertinent to the idea of negotiation and to the novels' narrative projects is not so much the incontestable fact that colonial administrations endeavored to weaken or erase African cultures, as the important, if unsurprising, point that these cultures harbored "diverse" and "antagonistic" memories. While Mudimbe's word, "antagonistic," might suggest tension and conflict, to me it also evokes a pluralistic concept of memories, philosophies, and societies, which warrants the practice of negotiation.

From another philosophical point of view, Paulin Hountondji emphasizes the idea of pluralism in African cultures. He further argues that "colonialism has . . . *arrested* African cultures by reducing their internal pluralism, diminishing the discords and weakening the tensions from which they derived their vitality, leaving Africans with an artificial choice between cultural 'alienation' . . . and 'cultural nationalism [*italics added*]'" (269). Alongside diversity, Hountondji stresses the vitality and potential for transformation generated by antagonism, all of which become stunted by colonial or postcolonial uniformity. This is in fact reminiscent of the notion of antagonism as defined by Laclau and Mouffe's approach to radical democracy. In contemporary fiction, while notions of history, representation, memory, and identity are informed by their transformation through a

---

version of nationalism proclaimed by the state obscures alternative political and social practices emanating from the population which interact with and reshape the national space.

globalized and postmodern lens, they are also in dialogue with the contexts and histories depicted in the novels.

To go back to the question of violence, then, the novels' negotiation of history and the ways in which it is remembered operates through the contextualization of conflict and the inclusion of contiguous counter-memories. At the same time, through alternative modes of narration and of memorialization, the texts illustrate their characters' alternative and changing cultural, social and political practices, thereby contradicting reductive and homogenizing accounts of African postcoloniality. When produced by the media, such representations are partly reliant on the public's need for brevity and sensationalism on the one hand, and the general interest in maintaining the status quo and masking unsavory details on interrelated responsibility, on the other. Another drive for the perpetuation of a brief, presentist, and quite pessimistic account of the state of Africa in general as an undifferentiated space is that this approach continues to justify unequal trends of globalization and international interventionism. Acknowledging, in Ato Quayson's words, "the processes by which social imaginaries gain coherence and change through time *in relation to* as well as *in subversion of* the nation state form [italics in the original]" (31) therefore foregrounds the idea of negotiation not only as a narrative strategy straddling past, present, local, and global understandings of postcoloniality, but also as a locally, individually, and communally productive practice. If the characters depicted in the novels evolve in distinct situations of conflict, many of them strive to redefine the notion of responsibility in its multiple meanings. If some of the characters enact their understanding

of responsibility through the act of narration as a testimony, such as Ugwu in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, others such as the historian Cephas in *the Stone Virgins* link communal healing to the restoration of plural traditions within national history. Others still, choose a proactive political activism as Enitan in *Everything Good Will Come* who carves out a space of action derived from her negotiation of ideas of responsibility and justice. All of these examples reflect the flexibility and transformative power of "social," and one should add political, "imaginaries" (Quayson, *Calibrations* 31) in dialogue with various national contexts and forms.

The responsibility to reveal the colonial origin of violence and the effect of trauma in some postcolonial nation-states is not dissociated from the need to tell stories of abuse of the nation-state through a politics of inclusion and exclusion. Through different narrative choices, the novels often share a meta-narrative concern with the representation of violence on the one hand, and the representation of alternative and irreducibly complex characters and contexts, on the other. My contention, then, is that despite, or in fact because of, the various narrative styles, specific contexts, and eras addressed respectively in the texts, resistance to decontextualized discourses on postcolonial violence or to nationalist uniformity is always channeled through negotiation. The latter, however, does not imply an end to resistance as it is often assumed. Nor does it seek consensus. In fact, the most important implication of a redefined notion of negotiation is that it provides for ongoing resistance and the constant redefinition of the grammar of justice and responsibility inherent to discussions of violence, nation, and globalization. As Thomas Keenan puts it,

we need "to negotiate with the rights we have even 'after' their problematization" (*Fables* 167). This idea, I think, evokes the postcolonial debate I discussed at the beginning of the chapter. A discursive approach to the rhetoric and practices characteristic of the era of postcolonialism and globalization represents a valuable critical strategy. At the same time, problematic as notions of resistance, nation, state, identity, human rights or international justice may be, they represent tools with which to negotiate the political, social, and economic realities in postcolonial Africa.

Chapter 2

Wars of Representation : Metonymy in the Representation of Somalia in the Media and in Nuruddin Farah's *Links*

With his daughter's recommendation in mind, "No body bags, please" (17), Jeebleh, the main character in *Links*, leaves New York for Somalia. From an American perspective, Somalia largely signifies random death, gratuitous violence, and stray bullets. The association of this location with body bags for the repatriation of fallen US soldiers harks back to the widely circulated images related to the battle which opposed a Somali faction to American troops in Mogadishu in October 1993. Out of the battle which claimed hundreds of Somali lives emerged reports centering on the dead and injured US soldiers. The image of a dead US Ranger dragged by a rope clashed with the construction of the mission in Somalia as humanitarian despite its gradual slide into war rhetoric and actions. Nuruddin Farah's novel *Links* was published in 2004. That year also marked the formation of a new Somali transitional parliament in exile in Kenya, in an attempt to restore central power in a country devastated by civil war since the government and state collapsed in 1991.

Links is set after the involvement of US and United Nations (UN) troops in the Somali conflict in the early 1990s. Yet the novel explores different perspectives on some of the events and functions as an anti-sensationalist counter-representation to the mainstream US media's sensationalist coverage of the events in the 1990s. My reading of the politics of representation through the novel's use of metonymy is marked by a cultural studies approach which treats the novel, media reports, and photographs as different texts engaged in the cultural representation of Somalia's civil war. As I will argue later, the media reports and photographs addressed below and their inherent sensationalism often operate through metonymic displacement fueled by the production and reproduction of certain images of

violence and chaos. In contrast, but equally through the trope of metonymy and its logic of displacement and contiguity, the novel produces an anti-sensationalist representation that constantly defers the spectacle of violence. *Links*, thus, negotiates a pertinent and alternative approach to other, especially media, representations of war in an African context, which illustrates the importance of literature's contribution to the contextualization and understanding of humanitarian intervention in current and recent conflicts.

The novel can certainly generate other readings based on its literary and intertextual frame. For example, the epigraphs from Dante's *Inferno* that preface each of the novel's five parts constitute a significant intertextual dimension of the novel. To Jeebleh, who is a Dante scholar, the devastated city of Mogadishu and the related "demons of despair" (36) and war evoke the Dantean setting of the Purgatory. Further, it is quite clear that Jeebleh's aversion to clan affiliation, politics, and expectations of loyalty (95), on the one hand, and his references to different historical invasions as well as diverse cultural and ideological influences prevalent in the city (124, 45), on the other, allude to other possible areas of contention in which the text intervenes.[34] In the following, however, I propose to explore

---

[34] The critical depiction of the prominent clan system in Somali society is a recurrent theme in Farah's novels. Jeebleh, for example, learns from his mother that clansmen are "opportunists who would turn up at his door with a begging bowl when he was doing well—the very same men and women who would disappear when he was the one in need" (95). Analyzing Farah's portrayal of the clan in *From a Crooked Rib* (1970), *A Naked Needle* (1976), *Sweet and Sour Milk* (1979), and *Sardines* (1981), Florence Stratton points out the imbrication of the social and political systems in the novels and Farah's dual desire for "freedom from the tyranny of the clan and its political ally [the government]" (*Perspectives* 153). Stratton concludes that for Farah the country is subjected to a struggle between "the forces for and against the clan system, between the traditionalists . . . and the progressive" (152). Yet Farah's novels also evoke social, political, or cultural factors such as the Soviet hegemony imposed on the political government and ideology in *Sweet and Sour Milk*. More particularly in *Links*, Jeebleh reflects on the invasions to which Somalia has been subjected, including in his list early colonizing forces such as the Arabs, the Persians, and various European powers but also "the Russians, and most recently the Americans" (124). In other words, *Links*' concern with the representation of the battles opposing Somalis to US troops does not seek to narrow the social and political upheavals in

specifically the ways in which *Links'* metonymic narration generates alternative representations of the Somali armed conflict and the US and UN operation in the 1990s. More particularly, after introducing examples of the media's construction of the conflict, this chapter examines the possibilities of a metonymic reading of the novel as a means of cultural negotiation that aims at intervening at the following interrelated levels of the narrative. First, the novel negotiates the diasporic perspective of the main character, Jeebleh, who travels to a country still rife with conflicting ideas of failed nationalism and overpowering, yet often ambiguous partisan politics. In fact, Jeebleh's position as a diasporic Somali reflects and reinforces the idea of displacement characteristic of the text's metonymic representation. By extension, the narrative also recognizes and negotiates the blurred subjectivities and intertwined responsibility for the state of violence—cutting across partisan politics as well as local and diasporic communities. Partly linked to and reinforced by Jeebleh's displacement is the recurrent reference to media reports on Somalia. Second, then, by way of metonymic deferral and contiguity, the novel negotiates the limitations, juxtapositions, and interrelatedness of narratives of violence, thereby destabilizing the media's narrative of the conflict before and immediately after the international intervention while also questioning the possibility of representation. Finally, the concept of a negotiated representation underlies the aesthetic formation of the literary text which itself interrogates its very production of memory through narratives of war and enacts the metonymic deferral through indeterminacy and the absence of a denouement,

---

Somalia to a unique and clear-cut dichotomy between "the West," on the one hand, and African countries at war, on the other.

which constitutes a contestation of media strategies of, and claims to accurate representation.

The text thus reflects my earlier definition of negotiation as a concept which, without claiming resolution, actively engages post-independence violence and discourses on postcolonial national identity and memory through their multiple and interrelated facets. In particular, *Links* not only intervenes in the representation of the Somali conflict by foregrounding the problematic question of violence and its local, diasporic, and international links, but it also engages the larger debate on intervention in African conflicts. More specifically, a counterdiscursive use of metonymic displacement and contiguity emphasizes the need to acknowledge the role of representation in the construction of conflicts and to reckon with it in conflict analysis and resolution. In this way, postcolonial discourse analysis not only contributes to a critique of colonialism and neocolonialism but it also helps undo the logic of contemporary conflicts and international interventions.

2.1 Metonymy

My study of the novel does not follow a chronological order to trace the ways metonymy unfolds but, instead, seeks to identify coeval manifestations of the metonymic deferral and contiguity that result in the ubiquitous anti-sensationalist quality of the novel. This chapter argues that, through its metonymic narrative form, the novel enacts a negotiated approach to narrating violence. According to David Lodge, metonymy "is the figure which names an attribute, adjunct, cause, effect of the thing meant instead of the thing itself" (483). As a figure of speech, as a trope, or as concept, metonymy operates

through displacement, thus deferral, and contiguity. Both the media and the novel's representations rely on metonymy, but, as I will argue in what follows, the novel's use of metonymy as a figure of speech and a trope negotiates the production of alternative, multilayered and intertextually connected narratives of violence. More specifically, as a trope, metonymy often shifts the novel's narrative, saying what the text does not name literally (Hillis Miller ix), and thus brings to the fore various levels of signification particularly related to the position of the narrative and that of the characters. Through its principles of deferral and contiguity, the metonymic mode that pervades the textual fabric produces a narrative which responds to the media's truncated reports while also acknowledging the instability of the text's own versions and constantly deferring closure. I am not suggesting that the deployment of the figure of metonymy always implies an intervention by way of a negotiation that does not aim at resolution or compromise. Rather, the paradoxical features of displacement *and* contiguity of metonymy can also lend themselves to a potentially hegemonic representation of the conflict and its actors. In fact, before my reading of metonymy as a trope in *Links*, I will analyze how metonymy, as a concept of displacement, underlies the media and a particularly sensationalist photographic construction of the UN and US operation in Somalia.

Whereas the media's metonymic truncation exacerbates the visual effect of violence while harnessing it to propaganda, the novel, illustrates how metonymy can also act as an antidote to sensationalism. More specifically, what underlies the media's representation of the conflict is mainly metonymy as a concept of linear syntagmatic displacement as the media's images shift from one spectacle of violence to the next while displacing the *context*

of its occurrence. While catering to the audience's voyeuristic desire, direct and decontextualized representation of violence tends to strongly suggest a particular interpretation of the events. As a result, a slippage also occurs at the level of the meaning of the conflict, here attributing arbitrary violence to Somalis and ill-fated good will to US forces. In *Links*, however, metonymy works as a trope for the novel as a whole not only through displacement but also contiguity. In fact, it is metonymy that defers the spectacle of direct violence. The text, thus, negotiates an alternative anti-sensationalist representation of the events, by which I mean a representation in which the direct spectacle of violence is often mediated and deferred rather than exposed through a graphic description of the violent act. This approach facilitates the contextualization of the conflict through various and contiguous perspectives that broaden rather than limit the scope of interpretation. Instead of reducing representation to a particular photographic icon, the text locates the circulated images within the complex context of their advent. As the novel eludes the direct spectacle of violence as the sole mode of representation, it presents the reader with a broader interpretive space which negotiates the multiplicity of perspectives on the war and the various factors underlying it.

2.1.1. Metonymy: Displacement, Contiguity, and (Postcolonial) Difference

To understand the role of metonymy in Farah's text more clearly, it is necessary to focus on it as a central vehicle of representation. This choice, however, is not guided by the belief that metaphor plays no major role in *Links*. The traditional distinction between metaphor and metonymy notwithstanding, the two figures tend to be closely associated and

often work in tandem in the complex process of representing and producing meaning in a text.

Acknowledging what Annie Gagiano calls his "metaphorically extravagant" writing ("Surveying" 252), critics have persistently sought to analyze Farah's texts through their metaphorical dimension in the text and in the form of the narrative. According to Abdourahman A. Waberi, "[t]he reader is endlessly impressed by a perpetual metaphorization of everything that stems from abstraction" (775). This metaphorization, he adds, functions as "a means of knowledge and a narrative form" (775). Patricia Alden and Louis Tremaine note that the titles of his novels *Maps* (1986), *Gifts* (1993), and *Secrets* (1998) represent "special forms of narratives" which are also metaphors for "narratives of self-invention" (760).

The recurrent themes of the nation, dictatorship, and war in Farah's novels and, in his words, his "use of Somalia as a metaphor" (qtd in Gagiano, "Surveying" 252) led to a critical focus on metaphors with a particular postcolonial valence. In reading *Close Sesame* (1992) and *Sweet and Sour Milk*, Waberi examines the use of the "resolutely classic" organic metaphor in postcolonial literature, but which, he argues, Farah "appropriates, reinterprets, and extends" (775). Similarly, Dubravka Juraga argues that despite the recurrence, if not overuse, of rape as a metaphor in postcolonial literature for colonialism, it still represents an apt metaphor in *Sardines* (1982) which allows Farah to link the politics of gender and sexuality to both colonial and postcolonial power (301). In turn, gang rape in *Secrets* functions as a metaphor "to present fatherhood . . . as an uncertain and

indeterminate phenomenon," thus as a comment on the idea of national belonging and loyalty (Alidou and Mazrui 124).

Other critics acknowledge the centrality of the nation and of postcolonial power in Farah's metaphors but underline their complexity and instability. For Derek Wright, *Maps* is characterized by "a puzzling indeterminacy as regards where the metaphor ends and literal reality starts" (100). More specifically, Gagiano argues that the allegories and/or metaphors "intercept, challenge and ironise one another. . . . [and] do not, therefore, provide easy answers or national analyses" ("Surveying" 255). Peter Hitchcock, on the other hand, problematizes the function and reading of metaphors in Farah's texts. While he states that "Farah's fiction subsumes form to character as metaphor" (91), he evokes the danger or "the tragedy of metaphoricity" (101) in risking to reproduce masculinist discourses in metaphorical representations of women (90), for example. While a problematized reading of metaphors reiterates their importance in Farah's oeuvre, it also draws attention to a critical tendency to privilege this trope. In this chapter, I will study metonymy as a pervasive trope in *Links*.

My objective in pursuing the metonymic construction of *Links* is to seize the complexity of representation that unfolds not only metaphorically but also metonymically. According to Mac Fenwick, who insists that both figures are intertwined in literary texts, "[m]etonymy seeks to emphasize the historically determined connections between two terms without eliding or denying their difference" (46), whereas metaphor "implies almost a magical sharing of meaning [between] the two terms" (46). Fenwick specifies that the definitions can be clear-cut only in simple examples of these figures. Most studies of the

tropes derive from Roman Jakobson's formalist distinction between the two as springing from two linguistic strategies of association.[35] According to Jacques Lacan's reconceptualization of the Freudian and Jakobsonian notion of metaphor, the trope marks a paradigmatic movement that works through the principle of substitution whereas the metonym moves along the syntagmatic axis.[36] The latter figure, then, represents contiguity since both elements of the metonymy exist coevally on the same plane, but also displacement as meaning slides from one to the other.

Even though Jakobson and Lacan associate metonymy with the genre of realism, the metonymic slippage thus produced not only describes or reports a situation but also generates and channels meaning through a particular set of connotations. Meaning and connotations come into being through the initiation of that particular link in the text itself. Contiguity and absence of exact equivalence also imply displacement from one to the other. Paradoxically then, contiguity and displacement form the two guiding principles of the trope, and this inherent paradox accounts for possibly conflicting implications of representation through metonymy. Looking for the double effect of metonymy, I am not suggesting that they exist at opposite ends; rather, they complicate the problem of representation and make metonymy simultaneously a potentially hegemonic as well as resistant and multifaceted strategy of negotiating representation.

In his article "Representation and the Colonial Text: A Critical Exploration of Some Forms of Mimeticism" (1984), Homi Bhabha sketches the difference he perceives between

---

[35] See Roman Jakobson's "Two Aspects of Language and two Types of Aphasic Disturbances."
[36] See Jacques Lacan's *Écrits: A Selection*.

metaphor and metonymy in ways that were instrumental in launching a particular postcolonial interpretation of these figures.[37] According to Bhabha, metonymy signals difference. More specifically, he posits that a metonymic reading of V.S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas* forecloses the appropriation of the latter "as a good object" (114) by the canonical tradition. Such an appropriation would strip the text of its particularities only to see in it the universal characteristics that qualify it for acceptance. By claiming that "it is possible to see the tropes of the text as metonymy and repetition instead of metaphor, and its mode of address as the 'uncanny' rather than irony" (115),[38] Bhabha reinscribes the discussion of metaphor and metonymy in a postcolonial context concerned with the politics of the universal and the local. His suggestions enable a metonymic analysis of Naipaul's novel so that, as Fenwick concludes, the house "becomes not a representation of all homes or the Home, but a part of a complex series of homes that define the novel" including "the houses that inspired the novel, which are the homes of rural and newly-urbanized Trinidad" (49). As a result, the Caribbean context of the text is brought back to the fore since it is no longer perceived as a mere geographical location of a secondary importance within a universalist signification. Here, a metonymy rather than a metaphor-driven reading generates a different interpretation of the text not as reflective of a pre-established reality but as "productive of meaning" (100). Thus while neither denying nor asserting the connection between metonymy and realism, Bhabha, frees metonymy from the mere

---

[37] The article is no full-fledged study and comparison of metaphor and metonymy but it focuses on representation in literary texts according to what Bhabha lists as universalist, nationalist, and ideological Althusserian perspectives.

mimetic function suggested in Jakobson's and Lacan's categorizations. Yet, even as he credits metonymy with more generative and representative potential than previous studies, Bhabha does not mention the ways in which even metonymy could be appropriated to generate hegemonic accounts of the postcolonial world.

Another seminal text in the field describes the function of metonymy in postcolonial literature in slightly different yet related terms. For the authors of *The Empire Writes Back*, "postcolonial writing enacts a language variance" representative of "the metonym, the part which stands for the whole" (51).[39] While Bhabha views metonymy as a trope and a reading approach,[40] here Ashcroft et al., who limit it to the function of synecdoche, analyze it as symptomatic of the language of postcolonial writing itself. In the cross-cultural text, they write, metonymy, as language variance, "registers cultural distance" without seeking to bridge the gap between "center" and "margin" (56). One metonymic strategy consists in the insertion of non-English words in an English (language) text which allows it to "resis[t] incorporation into 'English literature' or some universal literary mode" (53). Arguing that metonymy as a trope performs anti-universalist resistance is reminiscent of Bhabha's

---

[38] By associating the uncanny and metonymy, Bhabha reverses the Freudian and Lacanian notion that the uncanny materializes through symptom, thus operating metaphorically. He, however, does not elaborate on this particular association.

[39] Bill Aschroft continues to write about the function of metonymy in postcolonial texts. In *Post-Colonial Transformations* (2001), he reiterates that "[w]hile the tropes of the post-colonial text may be fruitfully read as metonymy, language variance *itself* is far more directly metonymic of cultural difference" (75).

[40] Hillis Miller acknowledges the irresolvable question of the tropological interpretation: "To think of literature as a performative parable raises the question of whether a reading, as it works by citation and commentary, only describes the performative action of the work or whether the performative power if literature is carried over into criticism" (ix-x).

position even though Ashcroft et al. embed this anti-universalist metonymic function in the language variance itself and not in its tropological and interpretative frame.[41]

2.1.2. Tropological Shifting of the Narrative of Postcolonial Somalia's War

The idea that the text foregrounds difference and resists incorporation informs the way I propose to read *Links*, beginning with the observation that the title invites a metonymic reading strategy. First, metonymy performs not only the function of a figure of speech but also that of a trope at the conceptual level of the novel which problematizes the narratives of violence in the media and in fiction by deferring its representation, on the one hand, and producing a text marked by contiguous narratives and interpretive possibilities, on the other. Reading the novel metonymically, as I do here, departs from Bhabha's postcolonial definition. In the latter, metonymy moves the postcolonial text from a universalist reading to a local perspective and interpretation. In Farah's text, in turn, metonymy emphasizes the local while also placing it within a geopolitical global context. In this case, then, metonymy still enables anti-universalist and anti-hegemonic readings of postcolonial realities, but it also situates them in a global context of war and international intervention, thus identifying the contact zones and interrelated factors which underlie violence in Somalia. Even though Bhabha's approach informs my reading to a certain extent, I do not focus on metonymy as a privileged and more productive reading strategy

---

[41] In "Is that the Congo? Language as Metonymy in the Postcolonial Text" (1989), Ashcroft states that "while the tropes of the post-colonial text may be fruitfully read as metonymy, language variance *itself* in such a text is far more metonymic of cultural difference" (4), as the fact that "people are speaking differently" implies that "they have a different kind of 'world'" (7).

than metaphor. In fact, the title "Links," which is a starting point for my metonymic reading, operates both metaphorically and metonymically.

In the context of this chapter, metonymy refers to a strategy of representation and interpretation which operates differently in the media's and novel's distinct descriptions of the same events. What underlies the former is mainly metonymy as a concept of syntagmatic linear displacement as the media's images shift from one spectacle of violence to the next while displacing the *context* of its occurrence, thereby strongly suggesting a hegemonic interpretation of the conflict. In *Links*, by contrast, the metonymic principle of displacement operates by deferring spectacular violence. By thus evading the overwhelming and often decontextualized images of violence, the novel negotiates the representation of war by giving space to contiguous perspectives on the situation in Mogadishu. Therefore, not only does metonymy intervene as a figure of speech in specific instances in the text but it also functions as an extended trope which pervades the whole narrative and generates alternative stories by deferring any one stable meaning and by ensuring the contiguity of different versions and interconnections. As J. Hillis Miller suggests, "the tropological dimension of literature is not local and intermittent, but pervasive. Each work is one long trope: an ironic catachresis invoking by indirection 'something' that can be named in no literal way" (ix). Even though I do not suggest that metonymy constitutes the sole long trope at work in *Links*, the title of the novel itself with its suggestions of deferral and contiguity, as I will argue later, announces its pervasiveness. What Miller repeatedly calls "indirection," whereby literary works are "'thrown beside' their real meaning" (ix), harks back to the Greek etymology of the word trope, translated as

"turn" or "way." With reference to this study, then, the metonymic approach to representation in the novel effects a "turn," or a change at the level of the narrative by generating or "call[ing] forth something else," (ix) here, for example, the impossibility of a stable narrative closure despite Jeeblehh's quest and the earlier hints of a detective novel. The power of tropes, then, resides in their production of that which the text does not or cannot name, according to Miller, and their operation, according to Judith Butler, "in a way that is not restricted to an accepted version of reality" (*Psychic* 201). The integration of the principles of deferral and contiguity in the narration of *Links* also illustrates the performative dimension of tropology in the literary text (202). Also insisting on the idea of performativity, Miller concludes that "the tropological, parabolic, performative dimension enables writing and reading to enter history and be effective there, for better or for worse" (ix). The performative intervention of the trope and its transformation of the ways in which we write and read reflect my conception of negotiation as an active and conscious intervention in the narration and memorialization of violence.

The implications of tropological intervention in a literary text prove particularly relevant to metonymic representation in *Links*, as it not only signals difference as Bhabha and Ashcroft discuss it in a postcolonial context, but it also shifts the narrative and negotiates its irreducibly different and multiple meanings. I would also suggest that the metonymic narration of *Links* goes beyond some of the ways in which the trope has been discussed in postcolonial and specifically African literature. For Ashcroft, for example, instances of "language variance" are themselves specifically "metonymic of cultural difference" ("Is that the Congo?" 4). This particular association with culture as a whole, or

the way in which "synecdoche returns to haunt metonymy" (242), to borrow Neil Ten Kortenaar's words, often marks references to metonymy in postcolonial criticism. In "Magic Realism as Post-Colonial Discourse," to cite another example, Stephen Slemon argues that "the site of the text, though described in familiar and local terms, becomes a metonymy of the post-colonial culture as a whole" ("Magic" 12).

Critical attention to metonymy in postcolonial texts has also often focused on what Gerald Gaylard calls "metonymic nationalism" ("The Death of the Subject?" 64) or the metonymic association between the fate of the main character and that of the nation-state. Gaylard associates the use of the trope in African—and postcolonial literature in general—with a now outdated anti-colonial nationalist period (64) and the social realism which dominated African literature from the 1960s to the 1990s (*After Colonialism* 31). He argues that "[m]etonymy in African literature betokened a political seriousness that denied aesthetic indulgence" and "neatly resolved" issues of subjectivity ("The Death of the Subject" 64).[42] In *Links*, however, metonymic representation does not purport to "neatly resolve" questions of "difference, incommensurability, open-endedness" as Gaylard sees it (64). Rather, through its principle of deferral and contiguity, *Links'* metonymic

---

[42] Brenda Cooper has yet another approach to metonymy as a strategy to resist a certain image of Africa and to assert a different, concrete, and gendered reality. More specifically, she examines Buchi Emecheta's *The New Tribe* in which the author, Cooper argues, seeks to explode the essentialized, "metaphorical, symbolic Africa" prevalent both in colonial and postcolonial essentialist discourses, by "embed[ding] her work in material culture and the everyday" ("Rhetoric" 20). For Cooper, Emecheta seeks to create this effect by "rel[ying] quite heavily upon . . . the rhetoric of metonymy" (20). This understanding of metonymy is reminiscent of a Jakobsonian definition of metonymy as the preferred trope of realism. Yet Cooper harnesses Emecheta's attention to "the everyday, the material and the concrete" (26) to a strategy of resistance to "inherited imperial ways" of imagining Africa and African women (20). In *A New Generation of African Writers: Migration, Material Culture and Language* (2008), Cooper reiterates her idea of the English language as steeped in "older tropes and imperial metaphors" which the new generation of writers resist through the "enabling potential of the rhetoric of metonymy" (1).

representation continuously foregrounds open-endedness and indeterminacy as a strategy against a sensationalist and simplistic construction of a complex war situation. Further, as stated earlier, Jeebleh's diasporic displacement reflects a metonymic deferral rather than a metonymic substitution of the character for the nation-state. The novel's metonymic representation of violence, then, departs both from "nationalist metonymy" and metonymy as deployed in the media's construction of the war.

2.2. Representations of Violence

Violence as fact and figure is excess. It challenges temporality since it exceeds its occurrence and outlives the violent event through the scar or trace it leaves behind. The latter functions not only as a sign of its past presence, but also as a threat of its potential repetition. Contiguous signs of the war in the city, thus, constitute metonyms not only for the state of war but also for collective and anonymous responsibilities. In *Links*, for example, the general state of the city testifies to both past and potential outbreaks of violence. Jeebleh's observation of "bullet-scarred, mortar-struck, machine-gun showered" buildings (70), for example, reinforces and emphasizes the allusion to (past) violence through the repetition (with a difference) of its effects and traces. These walls allude to, though do not name, the war, the numerous actors, and the various battles that have raged and ravaged Mogadishu, thereby testifying to a city, and by extension a population, taken hostage by bullets, mortars, and machine-guns, or rather by the different parties wielding them. While this seems like a simple metonymy in which the bullets, mortars, and machine-guns stand for the fighters and the scarred wall displaces the actual conflict, it prefigures

the intricate web of entangled responsibility, enmity, and complicity among the various characters of the novel, including Jeebleh. If at the beginning, Jeebleh's disconcertion at his inability to know whom to trust is understandable, it becomes clear that this continues to be true of most the characters with whom he interacts.

Through media reports and literary narratives, violence is further displaced from the time and place of its occurrence through the choice of representation itself. According to Teresa de Lauretis, the relation between violence and representation is twofold. Rhetoric names violence by describing events as violent; besides, "it is easy to slide in the reverse notion of a language which, itself, produces violence . . . then there is also a violence of rhetoric" (240).[43] A similar relation interlinks the notions of representation and war whereby the slide from one to another occurs easily. Representations of war and the materiality of war itself thus do not stand *for* one another but coexist in discrepant yet linked realms, which illustrates the principle of contiguity in metonymy. In this sense, war and its representations,[44] here mainly through photography, can also be read through displacement, associated with metonymy, and not just substitution, related, as it is, to metaphor. Similarly, representation in *Links* unfolds along these two principles, displacement and contiguity, which together underlie the deferral of closure in the language and plot of the novel. Related to them then is the concept of indeterminacy here referring to

---

[43] Other discussions of the question of violence and its "naming" include Walter Benjamin's "Critique of Violence" and Jacques Derrida's "Force of Law: the Mythical Foundation of Authority."

[44] This slide is facilitated by the immediacy of reports thanks to the technology whereby images of war are registered and transmitted live or within a short span of time. In contrast to earlier props for war reconstruction such as diaries and letters usually consulted retrospectively, as documented by Evelyn Cobley (*Representing War: Form and Ideology in First World War Narratives*), the visual and immediate power of photography and footage reinforce the notion of authenticity.

the ways in which the text questions the claim of representation and representability of violence. The novel, in short, comments not so much on the war as on the biased and constructed nature of its representation. Nevertheless, I am not proposing to read *Links* as a deconstructive project. Rather, I want to argue that the novel negotiates the different and multilayered versions and representations of the war through their contiguity within the text.

In what follows, I want to argue that the sensationalism at the heart of a certain kind of reportage, and specifically photography, is fueled by a metonymic production and reproduction of images. I refer specifically to the normative forms of war journalism that marked the US media coverage of the war in Somalia. In this context, metonymy underlies a representation which implies immediacy and a claim to truth and accuracy. In contrast, deploying metonymy as a strategy for representation and reading in *Links* reveals the anti-sensationalism of the novel and enables it to undermine the media's construction of the Somali war and to emphasize the mediated, and therefore always deferred, nature of representation. Metonymy in this sense opens the possibility of a negotiated, and therefore collaborative, space of interpretation. The different political implications of the sensationalism in the media and anti-sensationalism in *Links*, both entailed by the same trope, form my basis for identifying metonymy in war representation and reassessing its role in relation to postcolonial literary criticism. In this chapter, in particular then, I will analyze negotiation as it develops in the aesthetic construction of the text through metonymy as figure of speech and trope. Again, my analysis of news media serves to

outline a normative form of representing war in an African context, while my reading of the novel seeks to foreground alternative practices of cultural negotiation.

2.3. The Somali Civil War and International Intervention: Contexts

At the failure of the first United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM I) to secure a safe environment for relief work to be conducted in 1992, the UN authorized the US to form and lead the United Task Force (UNITAF), a peacemaking mission[45] with the main task of ensuring the safe delivery of humanitarian aid. The official discourse of the US government centered on peace and continued to avoid any mention of "hostilities" even as the military in Somalia gradually slid into combat missions. This understanding of the mission—known in the US as "Operation Restore Hope"—was also backed by images of soldiers carrying out humanitarian work. After the mission had been declared a success,[46] however, in October 1993 emerged images of maimed American soldiers and those of a US soldier's dead body stripped off his clothes and dragged by a rope amidst a jeering crowd. Such violent photographs and footage clashed with the expectations of an audience more prepared to see its troops glorified for their assistance with peacemaking and humanitarian

---

[45] It is noteworthy that the US opted for a peacemaking rather than a peacekeeping operation. According to the UN, the former is a "diplomatic process of brokering an end to conflict, principally through mediation and negotiation . . . ; military activities contributing to peacemaking include military-to-military contacts, security assistance, shows of force and preventive deployments" (The United Nations, "Glossary"). Peacekeeping, in turn, consists in a "hybrid politico-military activity aimed at conflict control, which involves a United Nations presence in the field . . . with the consent of the parties, to implement or monitor the implementation of arrangements relating to the control of conflicts . . . and their resolution . . . and/or protect the delivery of humanitarian relief" (United Nations, "Glossary"). While the former option emphasizes the diplomatic route for peacekeeping, it also provides for a more militaristic approach. Further, the UN authorized UNITAF to use "all necessary measures" to secure the area (United Nations, "Somalia-UNOSOM II, Mandate").

work. Unsurprisingly, the media's representation of the Somali situation relied on the sensationalism inherent in the widely reproduced images at the expense of a contextualized analysis of their production or the nature of the US intervention.[47] For the mainstream US public opinion, signs of jubilation at the humiliation of an American body, and metaphorically that of the US military and mission, soon became the markers of *arbitrary* violence and cruelty that presumably characterize the land and its people. Now, such an image has come to occupy the center of representation of the Somali war, and to some extent that of African conflicts in general.

By the time former US President George Bush Sr. decided to launch "Operation Restore Hope," Somalia had attracted much journalistic interest as a country that had fallen prey to chaotic clan warfare. The media also reported on the insecurity which prevented the limited and understaffed UNOSOM I to alleviate massive starvation. Few reports went beyond the reference to the mere presence and work of foreign troops. In this sense, and despite the wide media coverage, the history of the country and the complex factors behind the conflict were largely ignored. After maintaining a dictatorship for more than twenty years and a state of war driven by the dream of a "Greater Somalia,"[48] Siyad Barre escaped

---

[46] See President Clinton's speech to General Johnston and Staff. Here Clinton thanks the troops at the end of UNITAF for "a successful mission," writing "a new chapter in the annals of international peacekeeping" and for "proving that the we can lead and serve in new ways in a new world" (565-66).

[47] For a description of the Canadian peacekeeping mission in Somalia, see Sherene Razack's *Dark Threats and White Knights: the Somalia Affair, Peacekeeping, and the New Imperialis*m. The Somalia affair refers to the involvement of Canadian peacekeepers in the shooting, the death, and in one instance the torture of unarmed Somalis. Razack examines the ways in which peacekeeping is largely perceived as a new "civilizing mission," another instance of the "white man's burden."

[48] The Ogaden War (1977-8) opposed Somali troops to Ethiopian forces when Somalia tried to retrieve the Ogaden region attributed to Ethiopia by departing colonial powers even though it was also home to thousands of Somalis. Barre also deployed his troops in a fierce battle against secessionist Somaliland (formerly British

the capital in 1991 leaving a vacancy of power over which rival warlords reached no agreement. Throughout his rule, Barre's Somalia had been one of the battlefields for the cold war, thus receiving Soviet funding and weaponry at one point, and counting on US aid at another. In post-cold war 1991, clan politics, which had been *nominally* banned under Barre (von Hippel 301) allegedly to develop a nationalist bond, openly gained prominence again and became the rallying poles for power contenders.[49]

Despite relative success in convincing the warring factions to agree to a cease-fire, the first UN mission to Somalia, UNOSOM I (April 1992-March 1993) failed to secure the safe delivery of food to the staggering number of Somalis facing starvation. The US government decided to intervene in what was presented as an exclusively peacemaking and humanitarian mission even though later developments led the mission in other directions, the full implications of which were not always clearly specified (Hirsch and Oakley 151). In his address on Somalia, however, former President Bush insisted that "[o]ur mission has a limited objective, to open the supply routes, to get the food moving, and to prepare the way for a UN peacekeeping force [UNOSOM II] to keep it moving" (2175). Addressing himself to the Somali population, he added "we come to your country for one reason only, to enable the starving to be fed" (2175). The Bush administration and the UN agreed on a

Somaliland) in the 1980s. The latter eventually declared independence immediately after the collapse of Barre's government in 1991.

[49] Much was written about the role of clan rivalry in the problems of Somalia. In the renewed fighting the country has witnessed since May 2006, the opposed poles have reorganized around an Islamist versus secular factions, which brought Somalia openly back into the US agenda through the "war on terror" motif. Contrary to Samuel Huntington's predictions according to which the "bloody clash of clans" in Somalia would not spread beyond its borders (28), the seemingly very local conflict is incorporated into the global war system through the involvement of foreign forces such as Ethiopia with US backing starting from summer 2006 in what has been called a proxy war.

plan to limit UNITAF (December 1992-May 1993) to a few months of operation during which the area would be secured and after which peacemaking would be handed back to the UN under UNOSOM II (March 1993-March 1995). UNITAF was presented as a joint UN and US operation with troops from 14 UN member states, including Canada, which gave the mission a global and neo-imperial dimension. Yet the agreement effectively placed the operation under the aegis of US leadership and conditions.

For both the US and the UN, Somalia marked a new strategy in world politics and intervention. For the first time, the UN sent a contingent to ensure peace in a country without having been solicited by the government. As for the US, the intervention seemed to launch a new era in interventionism steeped in post-cold war notions of a "New World Order," in order to "prov[e]," as former President Clinton later put it with reference to the Somali mission, "that we can lead and serve in new ways in a new world" (565-66). The shift—which the media's coverage also reflected—from an open war, which the US waged in the Gulf shortly before, to a peace mission was not the only particularity of American involvement in Somalia. The US government was also trying to ensure the autonomy of the US force vis-à-vis UN traditional rules of intervention by opting for peacemaking, thereby giving troops the prerogative to shoot without having been attacked first (Church 51). Africa becomes a laboratory for post-cold war politics.

Ensuring the delivery of food to the population was the successful aspect of the mission before the situation deteriorated with the contribution of all parties. After the belated transfer of peacekeeping from UNITAF to UNOSOM II, the US maintained more

than 4000 soldiers as part of the mission (Hirsch and Oakley 34) including a Quick Reaction Force of 1000 to be dispatched in case of need. It is the latter force that was involved in the July and October 1993 confrontations depicted in *Links*. In July, the Quick Reaction Force conducted a heavy attack on Aideed's command and control center where a meeting was being held. The casualties were mainly clan elders and political leaders (121). Another similar operation to seize Aideed, the leader of one of the main fighting factions, resulted in the notorious October 3rd battle (127).

Not only did the UN increase power enforcement prerogatives of UNOSOM II, but Boutros-Ghali also appointed US Admiral Jonathan Howe as the Secretary General Special Representative. The transfer of the mission with a new leadership as well as the continued and now more ambitious American domination of the goals of the operation combined to hasten the slide of international intervention in Somalia into militarism. Mohamed Sahnoun, who had led UNOSOM I with a firm belief in "preventive diplomacy,"[50] insisted on negotiating cease-fire by involving elders from all factions—including Aideed—(Hirsch and Oakley 23, 30) and securing their agreement for the presence of UN troops. Under Howe the UN veered from this strategy as the new leader of the mission "developed an obsession with military strategy that he shared with Boutros-Ghali" (Adam 184). In spite of later attempts to blame the UN for the disastrous outcome of the Somali intervention,[51] it seems that at all times, as Ryan Hendrickson points out, "in Somalia US troops served

---

[50] See Mohamed Sahnoun's *Somalia: the Missed Opportunities*. 1994.
[51] According to Paul Wolfowtiz, for example, the mistake of the US consisted in handing over the Aideed manhunt to the UN when, he believes, only US forces and command could have conducted the search and

directly under US leadership. The United States was also the principal author of all UN resolutions that dealt with Somalia" (36). Two of these resolutions were the so-called "nation building" resolutions, including the one ordering the Aideed manhunt, thus *officially* destroying the myth of impartiality that had already been breached. In practice, then, the peacemaking mission had been sliding into clashes opposing US and UN forces to Somalis but since Aideed was presented as the real obstacle to peace—in other words peace still being the objective—the slide into war was surreptitious. Even though the October event forced a change in the perception of US involvement at the level of American media reports, it did little to encourage a serious effort to identify joint responsibilities and recognize that the situation resulted from a series of decisions on all levels rather than the apparently chaotic and incomprehensible outburst of violent Somali gangs.

In the US, Bush's decision to dispatch troops to Somalia met with little resistance since questions about the real motivation behind the mission paled by comparison to the emergency of the situation and the scale of famine. Speculating on the drives behind Bush's decision is not the object of this chapter, but it remains relevant to identifying the link between the media and the instrumentalization of the Somali war as propaganda for the promotion of another US image as a peacemaker. According to some analysts, images of starvation and war did nothing less than prompt the government into action; others believe that this mission was Bush's attempt to mark his presidency before leaving office; yet another opinion insists that Bush was only motivated by the humanitarian aspect of the

---

capture successfully (32). Hendrickson also notes a common "anti-UN stance" in Congress (36) in the various attempts to account for the pandemonium in which the intervention ended.

mission (DiPrizio 52). Bush's own answer was that Somalia was "doable" in comparison to Yugoslavia, which was then mired in a civil war (Nelan 43). His reply strengthens the hypothesis that in this operation "the agenda—the tactics and strategy—was the imagery: the creation of images" (Keenan "Mobilizing" 442). In an age when representation through the media constitutes a battleground in its own right, it is not farfetched to see the Somali affair as a means to stage a displacement from a belligerent image to a pacifist one for the national and international opinion.

The US government and the media's representation of "Operation Restore Hope" revolved around the construction of a peacemaking image for the US military. In particular, the Somali crisis represented an opportunity to complement, yet not replace, the image of the US military waging the Gulf War. The shock provoked by the images circulated in the wake of the October battle results not only from their stark reality and materiality but also from the pre-existing popular support for a mission that had been rhetorically constructed as exclusively humanitarian and risk-free. As a result, for a large part of the popular American imaginary, the image of the desecrated body occupies the center of the representation of the Somali war and people, and to some extent of African conflicts in general. As illustrated in Farah's *Links*, the material reality of the international intervention on the ground differed from its discursive development at the level of the government and the media. Recognizing and addressing this dual plane on which the mission evolved help dissolve the conflation between material and rhetorical constructions of violence.

2.4. Media Representation or the Power of the Metonymic Image

Media-generated images often function metonymically. Their metonymic effect resides in their power to displace and substitute the context of their origin. Although this effect appears in photographs and footage, here I will focus on the former medium. Through photography metonymic displacement tends to produce a sensationalist image. The need for sensationalism together with the power of the image to mark and arrest memory more than the conditions of its production (Sontag 89) provide photographs with a tremendous potential for metonymic truncation. Moreover, the metonymic dimension of the image is buttressed by its mass reproduction (Benjamin, "Short"). Reprinting prioritizes and spreads a specific account to a large audience, thereby continuing to obscure the context of its production and to promote a particular discourse endorsed by the photograph. In the examples discussed here, the success of metonymic truncation is predicated on the sensationalist power the image exerts at the expense of contextualization. The image does not inform us about the origin of war, the nature of the US mission, or the actual event to which it relates.

The peacemaking narrative obscured the gradual slide into confrontation between US and Somali forces. The metonymic mode through which the media represented the Somali war accounts for the shock in the US at the outcome of the battle of October 3rd. After the battle, however, the mainstream media attempted to salvage the peace mission myth and sustained similar strategies of representation based on metonymic truncation and displacement. Maintaining the metonymic mode with its elusive potential of slippage becomes crucial in saving the hegemonic representation of the war which served the

propaganda prior to the arrival of troops in Somalia. I want to argue that despite the unexpected development of "Operation Restore Hope," there occurs no major change in the strategy of representation because the underlying metaphors that revolve around the recoding of the "white man's burden" remain unchanged and almost completely unchallenged.

Representation of the Somali conflict and intervention enacts displacement on at least two levels: first, from the war in Iraq to the humanitarian and peacemaking mission in Somalia, and second, from the intricate geopolitical and historical complexity of the Somali situation and the US intervention to a simple and swift assistance from a powerful nation to another one in distress. At the time, the US had been deeply involved in the Gulf crisis, portraying it as a necessary and just war. In the Somali crisis, by contrast, another image of the US was being promoted: that of a peacemaker. The ideas of peace and charitableness are encoded in the way "Operation Restore Hope" departs linguistically from "Operation Desert Storm" which referred openly to the belligerent nature of the US intervention in the Gulf. I propose a metonymic move linking the US operations in Iraq and Somalia because the relation between the two missions is certainly not paradigmatic. Both are inscribed in an interventionist agenda as different strategies that are, nevertheless, related to the assumption of the US as arbiter of the world and thus exist on the same continuum. Even if representation of the role of US troops slides from warmongering to peacemaking, the operations almost overlap temporally and the circulation of the latter image and discourse certainly does not jeopardize the former. The US military does not *only* constitute a war machine in its interventions, but it also operates through a metonymically constructed

discourse of war and peacemaking. The shift, then, does not represent a change in metaphor but enacts a metonymic move in which one particular image—the peacemaking soldier—is momentarily emphasized instead of another—the lethal soldier. Whether promoting a "just war" or promising to restore lost hope, the discourse taps into the concept of civilizing missions and the modern recoding of "the white man's burden" which consists in using force to wipe out evil, or affluence and authority to save victims from their own incapacity. In short, the underlying neocolonial metaphor persists untouched in the representation of either operation.

The second level of metonymic displacement relates to the content of reports on Somalia through the reductive yet sensationalist power of the photo-icon. Here the geopolitical context and timing of the intervention as well as the factors behind the violence itself are simply described in terms of humanitarianism on the part of international forces and armed anarchy on the Somali end. In Thomas Keenan's words, from the start Somalia represents a "photo opportunity" ("Mobilizing" 434), which was expected to finalize the new image of the US as a world leader with an efficient and organized military and peacemaking force. With the implicit claim that they encapsulate the gist of the mission, the images circulated during the first stage hinge on the excision of contiguous and contextual details that do not match the ways in which the mission has been packaged. Complementing the reports on massive starvation that preceded the launch of the

operation,[52] the first set of images, thus, does not so much report on as it seeks to confirm the new face of US power and politics. Here occurs the second displacement or metonymic slide, which consists in reducing the complexity of the Somali conflict and that of the US intervention itself to images of soldiers undertaking humanitarian work, on one end, and either starving victims or raging clan-led warriors, on the Somali end. The media's need for sensationalism propels the most striking images as the most representative thus fueling a limited understanding of the civil war as well as a binary view of US soldiers and Somalis.[53]

When the battle of October 1993 reveals the ambivalence surrounding the US presence and mission, images of defeat and humiliation start to redefine the representation and perception of the mission in the US. However, and despite a change in tone, a similar metonymic displacement continues to characterize reports on Somalia. This continuity in the strategies of representation becomes clearer when examined though the coverage of the events in *Time* magazine. Two images of *Time*'s cover story of October 18, 1993 are quite representative of the mainstream media's approach to the Somali affair. On the left-hand

---

[52] Somalia had already attracted journalistic interest before the White House opted for intervention because UNOSOM I, the UN mission, had already started in Somalia and the UN general secretary, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, was then repeatedly calling for US assistance.

[53] In a way, then, the media's reductionist and constructed image of the mission also functions through a synecdochic operation, yet representation here is not limited to the substitution of one part (or one aspect) fro the whole. Rather, the media's construction reveals a tension between the two principles of metonymy, namely displacement and contiguity. For instance, the strategy of representation at this stage of the mission does not only consist in showing images of soldiers conducting relief work even if the latter feature prominently during this phase. Journalists also report on the militaristic deployment of forces for Aideed's capture. While the mission slides gradually into war—with all the hazards and implications of one—the manhunt is associated metonymically with the humanitarian goal of "Operation Restore Hope." What is excised from these displaced associations are the contiguous alienation of many Somalis, the increased endangerment of civilians, and the actual prioritization of the capture over negotiation and peacemaking strategies.

side, a soldier interacts with a child in what seems to be a camp where children have gathered to eat. On the right-hand side, a cheering crowd stands on both sides of the body of a ranger. The article entitled "Anatomy of a Disaster" reads:

> It seemed simple at first. There were people in need. America would help. But the mission to Somalia, which began with visions of charity, now puts forth images of horror. While America's attention was focused at home, the goals of the mission shifted dangerously, and now the effort threatens to become a violent standoff. (Church 46)

We can thus identify two moments in the representation of the Somali conflict marked by two "sets of images" (Keenan, "Mobilizing" 442), or what I see as two distinct sets of representation. By the first set, I refer to the anticipation and coverage of the operation both prior to and during the first months of US military presence in Somalia. The latter set of representation consists of the media coverage of the US (and UN) debacle in October 1993.

The opposition and proximity of images from the two phases of the Somali intervention illustrate how the metonymic mode is harnessed to the promotion of a sensationalist and unitary version of the mission. First, these images dramatize and problematize Jean Baudrillard analysis of the media's prefabrication of conflict. Secondly, they also testify to the recoding of the civilizing mission whereby Somalis are opposed to US troops and appear as either anarchic warriors or victims of their own belligerence. To a large extent, the first set of representation echoes Baudrillard's "virtual war" (29) by which he conceptualizes the prominence of the media's anticipation and preparation to the extent that it substitutes for the actual war. In his study of the Gulf War, Baudrillard dissects the

media build-up of the war and its dramatization prior to the first offensive. He argues that "virtual war" does not just anticipate but actually forestalls the dramatic effect of fighting (35). In particular, "[b]y virtue of having been anticipated in all its details and exhausted by all scenarios" (35), the war becomes a non-event. In reality, the impact of war is not forestalled but obscured. Baudrillard's thoughts help theorize contemporary war in which, thanks to a supposedly efficient and accurate technology, violence is inflicted from a distance. Media reports, detailed maps, and strategic footage thus "*enact*" the war or rather its simulacrum to confirm images for which the audience has already been prepared. As many observers suggest, the effect is more akin to a sophisticated videogame than a real destruction of human bodies and infrastructure.[54] Somewhat paradoxically, then, "Operation Restore Hope," with its promise that the US military would be able to exhibit a more human face, results in a closer and properly gruesome image of war where the body, which seems to have disappeared in much of the Gulf war representation, now makes a forceful return.

In light of Baudrillard's thoughts, the power of the virtual construction of the Somali mission consists in maintaining a conflation between anticipated events and their actual progress. More particularly, the construction of the Somali mission as humanitarian and safe facilitates the obstruction of contiguous elements that would contradict the

---

[54] It is the prominence of the simulacrum of war and the fact that it obscures the real war, according to Baudrillard, that lead him to maintain against all odds that the Gulf War did not take place. The videogame effect, however, did not completely block out images of destruction "that did not fit the script of the world's first high-tech clean war" (Patton's introduction 13).

promoted version.[55] Despite the official discourse clearly positing "Restore Hope" at the opposite end of the continuum from "Desert Storm" and its war terminology, signs of war insidiously infiltrate the Somali narrative from the beginning. The "goals of the mission shifted dangerously" (Church 46), *Time's* retrospective article tells us in an attempt to analyze the failed mission. Yet we know that the media, in line with the official discourse, had already designated an enemy very early into the mission. Early coverage reveals that in contiguity with images of hopeful crowds welcoming US soldiers, the name of Farah Aideed soon emerges as the source of evil, the obstacle hindering peace and relief work. Just as not much attention was paid to the peacemaking rather than peacekeeping provision, the incongruity of war jargon (and paraphernalia) alongside images of celebration and relief work goes largely unnoticed. In fact, in the December 14, 1992 issue of the same magazine, Bruce Nelan's report on Somalia entitled "Taking on the Thugs," already prefigures the ambiguous position of the troops and the spirit of intervention already present: the troops would *also* have to neutralize the "thugs." Even when the priority moves to the Aideed manhunt, the discourse is still steeped in the previously constructed peace mission to which every action on the ground is unquestionably subsumed. Hence the discrepancy between the two photos in the 1993 *Time* issue and the implicitly suggested ungratefulness of the Somali population results from the narrative's elision of contextual details that heralded the

---

[55] In her article, Anna Everett stresses the discrepancy between images and their corresponding comments describing them in a 1992 Fox news documentary entitled "Somalia Behind the Scenes." She cites one of the examples used to prove that Operation Restore Hope was achieving its goals. A soldier is shown holding a bag where Somalis were supposedly disposing of their guns. Clashing with the comment that the American call for disarmament was being answered, is the image of a rather empty bag, testimony to the largely unheeded call. This particular example is symptomatic of the way the audience is directed to read images in a particular way in spite of what they would otherwise suggest.

clash. In a representation "dense with antinomies [but which] nevertheless circulates as . . . unitary and empiricist" (Everett 3), the second level of displacement is thus predicated on the dismissal of contiguous elements of the mission signaled, for instance, by the designation of an enemy faction to the mission.

Unlike the Gulf War which seemed to conform to its virtual counterpart, the October battle in Somalia revealed war rather than peacemaking as well as an unexpected vulnerability on the American side. In this sense, the Somali mission problematizes Baudrillard's theory about virtual war and hyperreality. According to his portrayal of the Gulf War, "no accidents occurred [and] everything unfolded according to programmatic order" (73). Aside from the contradictions inherent in his Gulf War essays or even the problematic and arguable nature of the above claim, it remains largely true that the Gulf war did not *immediately* give rise to major challenges to its representation in the US. While Baudrillard's argument emphasizes an overarching (anticipated) hyperreality to the extent that actual war becomes secondary and almost dispensable, the unplanned events in Somalia undermine the idea that the media-created simulacrum is inviolable and self-contained. With "Desert Storm" the warmongering staged in the "virtual war" prepared for what took place on the ground. In the case of the Somali mission, in contrast, a cover-up becomes necessary to mask the discrepancy between prefabricated representation and the actual evolution of the mission into a war.

The need to defend the constructed virtual mission becomes even more dramatic after the famous battle. The metonymic reduction operating in the first set of representation and displacing the context of the intervention and its escalation accounts for the shock of

the public and political spheres at the outcome. Nevertheless and despite the change in the content and tone of reports, the tenacious myth of peace fabricated at the beginning survives the debacle so that similar strategies of representation continue to mark the media's take on the Somali conflict and mission. In other words, the mode functions dialectically provoking the failure of the first set to predict or account for what happens in October, but also allowing the second set to continue to tap the same myth of civilization versus barbarism and maintain the same metonymic evasive style. Then, while the inevitable showdown disturbs the peacemaking narrative, it does not lead the media to unveil and challenge its own mechanisms of representation. Instead, a focus on US losses at the expense of the hundreds of Somali deaths helps produce a second set of representation and reports which fuels incomprehension and suggests US troops were victims of their goodwill.

In addition to framing the image of an American peace force while securing US presence in a geopolitically interesting location, the mission in Somalia also plays into a related plane of representation in which the civilizing mission is recoded and revamped. The strategic interest was and continues to be clearly downplayed for the benefit of a peacekeeping national and international image. For example, in a language symptomatic of the media in general, The *Time* article maintains that "Operation Restore Hope was supposed to pioneer a new kind of American intervention, one for purely humanitarian

purposes in a land where the US had no economic or strategic interest" (Church 56).[56] It is not difficult to see how the humanitarian goal here harks back to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century discourses on the civilizing role of Western colonialism. As Susan Carruthers points out, "sub-Saharan Africa continues to feed the West's subconscious. . . enabling identities to be fashioned around the polarity of Western civilization and African 'barbarism'" (157). My contention is that the metonymic mode continues to function through the second set of representation because the underlying metaphors of the "white man's burden" are never questioned. In fact, they are deployed forcefully as if the events confirmed them. The polarity described by Carruthers characterizes both moments of representation. In the first set, largely epitomized by the left-hand side *Time* photograph, American troops come to save the population from itself. At the same time, they are called upon to neutralize or at least reckon with the "thugs" traumatizing their own people. The reduction of the conflict to its clan-aspect—with rare references to the past of the country as a battleground for the Cold War, for instance—also reinforces the stereotype of chaos and belligerence as inherent in the regional and cultural setup. For example, Bruce Nelan's "Taking on the Thugs," published before the October battle, features a picture of a truckload of armed Somalis, and therefore already instills the image of Somalis as belligerent and that of US troops as guardians against "evil." Implicitly, then, and despite the fact that there is no constructed enmity from the outset as in the Gulf War, the mission revolves around clear binaries whereby Somalis appear either as victims of their own

---

[56] The fact that the US has maintained intelligence and involvement in Somalia after they officially ended "Operation Restore Hope" and recalled the troops testifies to the strategic interests perceived in the region

warfare in need of assistance from a more powerful and mature force or as armed militiamen having access to weapons but lacking self-control over their use.

Finally, when fighting breaks out more openly and reaches the public opinion because of the death of US soldiers, the media also reorganize representation in binary terms. The right-hand side picture featuring the body illustrates the second phase of representation. To a large extent, this event is implicitly construed as the confirmation of the polarity that Carruthers mentions. Describing the profanation of a human body (second image) while reminding the reader that it belonged to a soldier who probably performed relief work (first image) does not question American intentions but some American decisions and the wisdom of intervening in an alien quagmire. The challenge for the media, then, consists in conceding a series of *faux pas* while insisting on the nobility of the mission on one side, and the lack of matching gratitude on the other. The reiterated notion that the US was *not* at war with the population and that the only announced danger to peace emanated from Aideed and his militia reinforces such a perception of Somalis as naturally and *irrationally* violent. Similarly, the media's emphasis on the loss of 18 US soldiers—in contrast to its tendency to overlook the hundreds of Somali deaths—also helps foreground the belief that hostility stemmed exclusively from the Somali side.

Therefore, in different reports at both moments of representation, the portrayal of US troops as peacemakers opposes the image of the local population as belligerent. The persistence of the myth of the peace mission tainting reports and images transpires in a spokesman's comment reported in *Links*, "[w]e fed them, they got strong, and they killed

---

long before the "war on terror" imperatives clarified it.

us!" (262). This comment reflects the general political and media take on the events: that the troops accomplished their humanitarian tasks but the local population—or part of it— was *incomprehensibly* ungrateful and hostile. The opposition of the two pictures in the magazine does not display the usual reversal whereby the victim becomes the perpetrator and inflicts reprisals; rather, it foregrounds the perceived moral mismatch between the two groups and thus seems to confirm the colonial paradigms at play in the first set of representation.

Metonymic displacement marks both the shift from war making in Iraq to peacemaking in Somalia and the displacement of context throughout the media coverage in Somalia. These two levels of metonymic displacement unfold according to the same assumptions of the US as a civilized and civilizing power. Metonymy here functions as a political and ideological concept. The myth of peace proves too strong to be completely dislodged by a battle. Reflecting Sherene Razack's argument that "[m]ythologies help the nation to forget its bloody past and present" (9), the myth of the "purely humanitarian" (Church 56) operation in Somalia survives the battle and enables a reformulation of the tenacious narrative of good moral intentions and superiority after the raid.[57] These persistent undertones are more than merely incidental for Razack who argues that "contemporary peacemaking is first and foremost a colonial project" (156). Whether a powerful military force is called upon to wage war or to instill peace in an international

---

[57] In *Dark Threats and White Knights: the Somalia Affair, Peacekeeping, and the New Imperialism*, Razack analyses the "racial dimensions of the peacekeeping encounter" (4) itself perceived as a "civilizing mission," which made soldiers behave "more like conquerors than humanitarians" (4). She focuses on the involvement of Canadian peacekeepers in several incidents including one in which a young Somali was tortured to death.

context, the spirit of dominance resulting from preconceptions of "civilization" and "barbarism" does not only pave the way for excess and abuse of power, but it also facilitates ensuing cover-ups.

Regardless of the actual evolution of the mission toward confrontation prior to October 3rd, a metonymic representation substitutes humanitarianism for all US (and UN) actions including war-like tactics. In other words, this representation does not directly tap into "just war" rhetoric because, rhetorically speaking, this is not war. After the turning point of the battle, metonymy continues to operate in the way the sensationalist images substitute for the context of their occurrence. Further, and specifically because this context is obscured, the extreme anger and violence unleashed against the body tend to be construed as gratuitous and incomprehensible. These characteristics with the related connotations of anarchy come to mark the representation of the Somali situation and to suggest the reason of the failure of all interventions. Interestingly, the metonymic representation does not operate by providing an alternative representation with a subversive power, as it came to be viewed in a certain postcolonial discourse. Here metonymic truncation and displacement confirm a particularly hegemonic and unitary construction based on the "white man's burden" metaphor, as it is rearticulated and remapped onto different contexts of global power, war, and representation. Although the content of reports changes, the basic constructs are left unchallenged since, as Razack concludes, national

---

Razack aptly argues that these specific instances of abuse, which many attribute to the work of "a few bad apples"(6), in fact reflect "the larger global story of racism and peacekeeping" (8).

mythologies have the power to transform the torturer into the victim. In this context, however, the mythology is of a global scope.

2.5. Counter-discursive Metonymy in Links

In contrast to instant television reportage and photography, literature often represents conflict through hindsight and thereby negotiates prior representations of the event. Yet, *Links* does not simply represent a critique of media representations of the conflict and of Somalis. Nor does it seek to promote a single alternative and linear historical or sociological account of the conflict. In fact, through its counterdiscursive use of metonymic deferral and contiguity, the novel tends to subvert both the type of metonymic displacement characteristic of the media and the "nationalist metonymy" (Gaylard "The Death of the Subject" 64) deployed in a number of African novels.[58] More precisely, the constant deferral of meaning and the contiguity of various actors and versions of the war work in tandem to create the counterdiscursive anti-sensationalist and indeterminate aspects of the novel. Interestingly, then, *Links* situates itself at the heart of the war of representation while refusing to reproduce the media's strategies of reportage; rather, it adds, counters, questions, and negotiates different modes of representation including its own.

---

[58] Gaylard mentions the prominence of nationalist metonymy in South African fiction as in Mongane Serote's *To Every Birth its Blood*, or Mandla Langa's *A Rainbow on the Paper Sky*. Marjorie Macgoye's *Coming to Birth* represents a different metonymy in which instead of the individual, Nairobi functions as a "metonymic condensation of the Kenyan nation" (Slaughter, *Master Plans* 37).

Before elaborating on the novel's different metonymic interventions and my rationale for pursuing them, it is useful to start with a typical example of the narration of violence in *Links*. The novel repeatedly employs a structural deferral as a narrative strategy to represent violence. In this example, I refer to metonymy as a trope which operates through deferral and contiguity, characteristic of the novel's narration, rather than a classical example of a one-word metonymy. The novel contests the media's sensationalist, and therefore, truncated mode of representation primarily by displacing the direct spectacle of violence from the reader's gaze without denying its ubiquity. For example, in one passage, Jeebleh returns to his hotel in Mogadishu and is informed that two armed men who entered his room have already been fought and stopped. This description is symptomatic of the way violence often, although not always, appears to elude Jeebleh's direct presence as well as the reader's direct observation. Instead of stressing the armed confrontation, the text foregrounds the event's affective impact on Jeebleh. This anti-climactic belatedness is repeated in the novel. When the girls who were abducted before his arrival in Mogadishu are freed, he considers that he "found" them (289). Yet when he is led to them, their abductors have already left and neither a confrontation nor an explanation ensues. In fact, these passages echo Jeebleh's belated arrival at the war scene in Somalia and his position as a diasporic, therefore always displaced, observer. In these examples, metonymic displacement foregrounds questions rather than answers.

At the same time, this strategy acknowledges and negotiates the possibility of various interpretations of events. By the same token, the metonymic deferral of direct violence questions dominant journalistic conventions of representation which often focus

on the spectacle of violence while eliding its political production and its traumatic effects. Such a displacement is clear in the succession of images of soldiers conducting relief work and those of the contingent caught in the battle which *in turn* occupied the center of the narrative of international intervention and implicitly seemed to validate the good-versus-evil model.[59] This perspective leaves little room for the alternative explanation that the gradual escalation of incidents involving the troops had rendered a massive showdown inevitable. While the mission was still largely described and perceived as metonymically humanitarian at the international and more particularly at the American level, Somalis were discovering other facets of what later came to be dubbed an "intravasion" (*Links* 124), merging invasion and intervention. As one of Jeebleh's interlocuters informs him, the first action of the Marines in Mogadishu was to handcuff and arrest a group of unarmed young boys (73). From the beginning, then, the "humanitarian mission" evoked different implications inside and outside Somalia.

Links opens multiple spaces for possible representations and potentially conflicting individual and communal interpretations of, and responses to, violence, more "representative," so to speak, of the complex political situation of Somalia in the 1990s. As I shall elaborate in this section, the text deploys metonymy in such a way that it fosters negotiation, or as Derrida defines it, "the impossibility of stopping, of settling in a position"

---

[59] In her article "Tribalism and Tribulation: Media Constructions of 'African Savagery' and 'Western Humanitarianism' in the 1990s," Carruthers studies the Western media coverage of the conflict and intervention in Somalia and that of the genocide in Rwanda. She shows how the persistence and opposition between reified notions of "Western civilization" and "African barbarism" (157) continue to underlie representations of Africa. Further, she argues that "fetishizing" African violence serves to "displace" the structural violence related to "the constant influence" (168) of Western institutions in Africa (169). The

so that "one is always working in the mobility between several positions" (*Negotiations* 12). First, along with its contestation of earlier representations of the war, the novel's intervention by way of negotiation marks the tension between diasporic, local, and international perspectives on the conflict. By extension, the metonymic mode of representation also underlies the negotiation of the characters' intertwined, evasive, and necessarily implicated subjectivities in times of war. Alongside and related to this tension is the textual negotiation of different representations of the international intervention in Somalia as depicted in the media, on the one hand, and contested or supplemented by Jeebleh's conversations with Mogadishu residents, on the other. Finally, the pervasiveness of metonymic representation marks the narrative form through the plot and the novel's indeterminacy. My reading of these different levels of negotiation does not entail a chronological order, nor does it suggest their distinct layers of the narrative. Rather, all these aspects of the narrative are interrelated and contiguous.

The novel's characteristic deferral of the direct experience of violence starts with the character of Jeebleh who, as an exile, is absent from the country at the height of the conflict between Somalis and the forces of intervention. Following a near encounter with death in the New York traffic, Jeebleh decides to interrupt his twenty-year long exile and visit his now war-torn native Somalia, which he had left after being mysteriously liberated from prison and a death sentence for his political activities under the dictatorship. He discovers a bruised environment where enmeshed family and clan relations oscillate

---

polarized good-versus-evil model not only serves to justify intervention, but it also obscures the global economic and geopolitical contexts of violence.

between allegiance and enmity. Amid traces of war and violence in a metamorphosed Mogadishu, he is reunited with his childhood friend and former political detainee. Bile, who walked out of prison at the collapse of the government, now forms one of many sources of information that help Jeebleh assess Somali perspectives on the conflict and the confrontation with UN and US forces. Jeebleh's self-assigned task to unravel the mystery of the abduction of Bile's niece Raasta and her playmate becomes one of the novel's various subplots. Identifying himself as a man of peace for whom the belated honoring of his mother's grave accounts for his presence in the country, he, nevertheless, decides to take action in order to provoke the killing of Caloosha, Bile's half brother, who is also one of the main actors in the civil war and the man behind the imprisonment of the two friends. Even though the girls' liberation and Caloosha's death fulfill two of his wishes, the degree of Jeebleh's implication in the turn of events remains unclear. Now seeing his life as interlinked with others and that of Somalia, Jeebleh nevertheless leaves without a sense of resolution.

2.5.1 Metonymy as Figure and Trope in Links

The title of the novel, *Links*, suggests the trope of metonymy as a meta-narrative strategy that often works metaphorically. More than just a theme, the noun "links" becomes a trope almost as pervasive in the novel as violence in Mogadishu. Commenting on Farah's narrative style, Alden and Tremaine notice that he uses "special forms of narrative, which are named in the titles of three of his novels: *Maps*, *Gifts*, and *Secrets*. These special narrative modes serve at the same time as metaphors for the equivocal nature of the power

of all narratives of self-invention" (760). The title of *Links* similarly enunciates the main trope in the writing of the novel. Not only do "links" in the title and in the novel signal a connectedness between different points or links in a chain, but they also imply the delay of meaning and action from one to the other. In other words, while functioning metaphorically, the title signals a metonymic movement of violence which, far from denying it, strengthens its impact by stripping off sensationalist distortions and focusing on its persistence beyond and after the act itself. Interestingly, then, the word contains both principles of displacement and contiguity. The displacement of meaning from one link to the next characterizes Jeebleh's quest throughout the novel. For example, discontinuities and slippages mark his attempts to extricate explanations and details from the people he encounters. Paradoxically, then, "links" evokes connectedness and a will to contextualize but also breaks and gaps, in short, the impossibility to achieve a full understanding of the violent and unstable situation in Somalia.

Metonymy constitutes a figure of speech as well as an extended trope which shifts the narrative repeatedly and marks the representative frame of the novel as a whole. This section focuses on its workings as a "long trope" (Hillis Miller ix) and its implications on representation and negotiation in Hillis Miller's sense that "the tropological dimension of literature is not local and intermittent, but pervasive" (ix). Nevertheless, I want to argue that the use of specific metonymic words and expressions also reinforce the effect of deferral and indeterminacy, again in contradistinction to the truncated rmetonymic effect in certain media representations of the war. For example, in his first encounter upon his arrival, Jeebleh asks Af-Laawe how he had been informed about his arrival. In a typically obscure

answer, the latter responds: "Maybe Nairobi rang to alert me" (6). "Nairobi," a classical one-word metonymy, does not simply associate Af-Laawe's informer with the city, thereby entailing Af-Laawe's wide connections; rather, it serves, primarily, to obscure both the informer's identity and Af-Laawe's political allegiance. Jeebleh also quickly learns that the people's assumed names in fact reflect their unstable and ambiguous identities and alliances, which is not unusual in a civil war context. He even starts dubbing the people he meets according to the little he can see of them as "OneArm" (37) or "Bucktooth" (38), to cite two examples. While the effect of metonymic expressions tends to be that "the target domain is understood 'from' the perspective imposed by the source" (84), as Antonio Barcelona asserts, here, instead of imposing a characteristic or particularly revealing perspective on the characters, these examples of metonymy emphasize their elusiveness and Jeebleh's incapacity to decide whom to trust. This type of metonymic reference also marks Af-Laawe himself, who proves to be a mystery. When Jeebleh first meets him he notes that "the man boasted a mouth that was not much of a mouth, with a pair of lips that appeared tucked away" (4). Af-Laawe, literally "the one with no mouth" (23), however, appears to be only one of his nicknames, which emphasizes his evasiveness and his multiple and shifting identities.[60]

The fact that the characters' elusive identity also stands for the blurred lines of enmity and rivalry in the civil war represents only one aspect of metonymic condensation.

---

[60] I am following Geoge Lakoff and Mark Johnson's general approach to metonymy whereby, as they explain, "[they] are including as metonymy what traditional rhetoricians have called synecdoche, where the part stands for the whole . . . In these cases as in the other cases of metonymy, one entity is being used to refer to another" (36).

In addition, the elusiveness of the characters, of their stories, and of Jeebleh's own narrative also has another implication in relation to the narrative itself. Despite Jeebleh's initial intention to inquire and "learn" (32), as he puts it, the shiftiness he encounters prefigures the narrative's own impossibility of producing a stable story or a denouement in the classical sense. Further, Af-Laawe's metonymic reference to Nairobi reminds Jeebleh that "in moments of great anxiety one may mistake the self for the world" (6). This quotation both stresses the temptation of a metonymic identification in situations of conflict and warrants the urgency of an alternative use of metonymy to resist this limited understanding of equivalence and negotiate the narrative modes of violence. Interestingly, then, even as the text engages in metonymic representation, it does so by departing from one of the classical metonymic functions, prominent in "nationalist metonymy" for instance, where the experience of one stands for that of the collectivity or the nation. In short, whether considered as a figure of speech in specific examples or as an extended trope, metonymy here reinforces the deferral of meaning and the contiguity, therefore, indeterminacy of war narratives and responsibilities. This approach exemplifies the possibilities of intervention in representations of war while recognizing the need to negotiate between different positions and perspectives.

*2.5.2 (Diasporic) Negotiations of the "bigger national narrative" (*Links *29)*

By mediating all the events narrated in *Links*, Jeebleh's own perspective delineates the specific parameters through which the text contributes alternative narratives. First, Jeebleh's position as a diasporic Somali reflects and reinforces the idea of displacement

characteristic of metonymic representation at work in the novel. Second, his long absence both highlights and exacerbates his own tensions in relation to some aspects of Somali society such as allegiance to one's clan and therefore complicates any easy identification of the character's story with that of the nation or the collectivity in general. Yet the relation of contiguity rather than representation which links Jeebleh to the national narratives of Somalia also extends to the individual Somalis he meets in Mogadishu. As Bile puts it, "We mistake a personal hurt for a communal one" (167). The text, thus, repeatedly subverts one classical understanding of metonymy as an expression of the ways in which the individual stands for the community. Metonymic representation, here, emphasizes deferral or indeterminacy and contiguity.

Further, and because of this displacement, Jeebleh's experience of much of the conflict from his New York location is largely mediated by the very journalistic reportage deconstructed in the narrative of his return to Somalia. While his long, albeit remote, experience in Somalia allows him to keep a critical distance vis-à-vis all the reports and photographs he has compiled over the years, they still constitute a major source of information he often references in his conversations in Mogadishu. This subtext also serves as a reminder of the prominent role the US media played in the construction of the mission before it was even launched. While this is not the sole concern of the novel, the importance and the juxtaposition of these different, sometimes paradoxical, yet overlapping narratives form my premise for pursuing negotiation as it unfolds through a metonymic displacement and contiguity which ultimately function very differently from the metonymic displacement at work in the media's representation.

Slippage of meaning and communication marks the subtext of other characters' crisscrossed storytelling as Jeebleh strives "to learn and to listen" (32), as he puts it. This textual metonymic movement, therefore, keeps delaying conclusions or even the possibility of drawing them. The connections between what Jeebleh sees and hears are replete with inconsistencies due to his interlocutors' tendency to truncate, interrupt, or withhold their stories. His first dialogue upon his arrival in Mogadishu is indicative of much of the communication throughout the narrative. Af-Laawe, an enigmatic figure with shifting alliances, vaguely introduces himself to Jeebleh but refuses to tell him who instructed him to meet him. When asked how Bile is doing, Af-Laawe's answer remains evasive: "it depends on who you talk to" (5). This answer, Jeebleh soon realizes, almost applies to every question he asks. Other conversations, when they do happen within the purview of the text and the reader, also seem to be continuously interrupted and delayed as the different characters typically lapse into their unspoken anxieties. On his first encounter with Bile, for instance, Jeebleh notices his friend's recurrent brooding expression suggesting that "his thoughts provided their own subtext" (81). While Bile still struggles with the effects of his long isolation in detention, his subtext of unspeakable thoughts also reflects the evasive nature of language and the impossibility of capturing the full experience of war-related violence.

Other passages perform a linguistic deferral, which ultimately reflects the intertwined subjectivities of the characters and the strategically evasive conclusion of the novel. Raasta, described in the novel as a gifted and "special" child (302), knows how to comfort Bile and ease him out of his panic attacks. Immediately after Caloosha's death,

however, she realizes that this time Bile's distress differs from his usual bouts of depression. Faced with general silence, Raasta "thought of a neater way to close the brackets her mother had opened when she spoke of Uncle [Bile]'s not having been well" (310). To her question, her mother, Shanta, simply answers that it is a long story (310), yet "Raasta knew that she wouldn't get to hear the story. But never mind . . . there was no joy in making demands that were impossible to meet" (310-11). Raasta then knows how to interpret Shanta's words not as a promise to tell her later but as an assertion of the impossibility of fully recounting and grasping the story. Subsequently, Jeebleh learns that Bile's state results from his visit to Caloosha before his death. The mystery surrounding this death, however, persists. In other words, the brackets cannot be closed as the text merely reproduces rumors but eludes details on the visit, including who or what killed Caloosha. In fact, the spectacle of the act itself could not properly represent the full story behind Bile's distress and his or Jeebleh's possible implication. Therefore, the above passage does not simply relate to Bile or Raasta, but also to Jeebleh, who came on a quest hoping to "locate his mother's story in the context of the bigger national narrative" (29). Furthermore, the brackets alluding to the long story do not only underlie Bile's and Caloosha's relation, but necessarily implicate Jeebleh before and through his exile. Through the pervasiveness of the metonymic movement, the text activates different yet intertwined layers of meaning and responsibility.

Likewise, no easy answers or iconic images could neatly unravel the knots at the heart of a long conflict. Significantly, Raasta establishes a link with collective violence and concludes her conversation with her mother by quoting her uncle: "in a civil war there is

continuous fighting, based on grievances that are forever changing" (312). To attempt to do justice to the narrative of a complex situation through an expeditious, sensationalist and suggestive set of images is indeed "a demand impossible to meet" (311). At the end of a particularly anguishing stay Jeebleh comes to view his quest for answers differently. He now understands that "his story lay in a tarry of other people's tales, each with its own Dantean complexity. His story was not an exemplar to represent or serve in place of the others: it would not do to separate it from those informing it" (331). The deferral that he confronts in his attempts to decipher the now changed city and its people thwarts all desire to substitute one representative narrative for another. As his story can neither represent others nor be viewed in isolation, establishing links, then, represents the most that Jeebleh can achieve. The impossibility of substituting one for the other ensures a contiguity of interlinked tales.

2.5.3. Negotiating Representations of Violence: the Media in the Novel

The main plot cannot be dissociated from and revolves around other texts which form the novel's intertextual dimension. Although Dante's *Inferno* constitutes a prominent literary intertext in *Links*, the latter also integrates references to media representations of the war, in ways that mark them as another intertext. Therefore, one level of intertextuality recasts *Inferno* in a contemporary context of wars, while the other, which is my focus, brings different modes of representation together, thereby emphasizing the role the texts

play in analyzing and negotiating interpretations of the conflict. Intertextuality,[61] or the coexistence of traces of different texts within the novel, illustrates metonymic functions since the narrative slides from one text to another. At the same time, no text exits the body of the main narrative so that the multilayered frame operates in a contiguous fashion. As I suggested earlier, the main difference between journalistic discourse and the novel discussed here lies in the flexibility of the fictive text to incorporate self-consciously various modes of representation including oral recollections and memorializations of the conflict. For instance, *Links*, mainly through Jeebleh, includes details of the conflict representation provided by the media to the extent that these references form another source of (mis)information within the text. Even though the novel tends to deconstruct or at least seriously question media representations of the Somali crisis, the body of information it constitutes forms the basic knowledge about the events that Jeebleh, and probably part of the readership, possess. Consequently, Jeebleh's contributions to conversations often draw on the details he has accessed through journalistic mediation. This itself forms an important intertext in *Links*.

---

[61] Julia Kristeva coined the term intertextuality in her essays published in *Semeiotikè: recherches pour une sémanalyse* (1969). The concept describes the "important fact [that] each word (text) is an intersection of word (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read" ("Word" 37). Therefore, "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations, any text is the absorption and transformation of another" ("Word" 37). In another essay included in the same collection Kristeva writes: "The text is therefore *productivity*...; it is a permutation of texts, an intertextuality: in the space of the text, many utterances taken from other texts intersect with one another and neutralize one another" (cited in Orr 27). With reference to *Links*, I use the term intertextuality to refer to the presence of other texts (through references to media reports, for instance). While the texts interact as they exist contiguously in the novel, this intertextuality does not necessarily lead to neutralization or permutation as evoked above. The contiguity of different writing modes allows the text to react to and subvert the narrative strategies of the media, for example. This writing results in an opening up of udifferent possibilities that persist as possibly interactive, yet distinguishable.

The oral narratives of violence registered in the novel through the characters' recollections also constitute another intertext brought to bear on the media representation of the same events. Dajaal, for instance, provides an extended story of his personal experience of the confrontation between US forces and Somalis in July and October 1993. One of Bile's most trustworthy aides, Dajaal, tells Jeebleh that he was part of the meeting targeted by the US Quick Task Force that launched the attack in order to capture important members of their "enemy" clan in the gathering (71). As it later became clear, neither Aidid, to whom the novelist refers as StrongmanSouth, nor his aides were present at the meeting that had attracted clan leaders and prominent figures to discuss peace plans. The helicopter-led attack, however, left its share of casualties. As Dajaal explains,

> the July gathering has since become famous, because it led eventually to the October-third slaughter. It is the viciousness of what occurred in July, when helicopters attacked our gathering, that decided me to dig up my weapons from where I had buried them after the Dictator fled the city. (71)

If, in a first movement, the story slides from the initial representation of the US media to Dajaal's perspective, the metonymic move, here understood as a larger conceptual practice, is effectively completed through the persistence of both texts rather than the supplementation of one by the other during the displacement. Dajaal's story about the attack in July does not erase the images of the October battle, or previous confrontations with US and UN forces. Nevertheless, it provides the context leading to the latter confrontation. While media representation displaces its focus from the image of soldiers assisting children directly to that of Somalis fighting peacemaking forces and desecrating a

body, the passage here points to one of the missing links: the other events contiguous to and inseparable from the October battle including the heavy toll on the Somali population. In another passage, Jeebleh and his friends discuss the aftermath of the October 3rd attack. Seamus says of the US forces: "They came to show the world that they could make peace-on-demand in Somalia" (261). As the different parties grew confrontational, "we asked ourselves how the Americans could reconcile the earlier gestures of mercy with the bombings of the city" (262). A UN official's comment quoted by Seamus "We fed them, they got strong, and they killed us" (262) also illustrates the metonymic slippage in media representation from one image ("we fed them") to another ("they got strong, killed us") while the context of this truncated version is displaced beyond representation. In the passage from *Links*, by contrast, metonymic representation takes place through both *displacement* from the American perspective to the Somali version of the conflict and *contiguity* of the complex factors leading to the escalation, as they point out the Somali responsibility as well. As Bile concludes, "[t]he American in Charge met his equal and Faustian counterpart in StrongmanSouth [the clan-militia leading standing for Aideed]" (2263). Metonymic representation serves to describe the same event but to different political ends. It creates a counter-discourse to media-generated narratives of conflict.

2.5.4. Negotiating Literary Constructions of Memory, Violence and the Narration of Violence through Anti-Sensationalism and Indeterminacy

The text refuses to present a truthful version by completely erasing another one, which allows for the contiguity or coexistence of scenes of experienced violence rather than

a mono-logic coherent narrative. After all, the problem with the photographs taken in Somalia lies not in the inaccuracy of images that were real enough but in their reductive interpretation through the choice of framing and journalistic commentary. In contrast to Susan Sontag, for whom photography lacks the narrative coherence of the written text and always needs to be complemented with an explicative and interpretive caption, Judith Butler argues that the photograph's framing "is itself interpreting, actively, even forcibly" (823). The novel's contribution, then, consists in broadening the frame of representation and therefore that of interpretation. The presence of the media through Jeebleh's and other characters' access to journalistic articles and footage enriches the intertextual nature of the text, specifically because the novel deconstructs and questions this narrative without moving beyond the indeterminacy of representation.

Through the movement they create, the stylistic features of metonymy have further conceptual implications that transform its deferral of violence and resolution into strategies of counter-representation. Anti-sensationalism and indeterminacy, as the implications I would like to emphasize, serve to foreground the irreducibility of a complex war to a spectacular and schematic explanation. Anti-sensationalism, or the intensely mediated character of *Links*, primarily questions the previous press coverage and unsettles claims to truth and authenticity, while also delaying closures. Generally, sensationalist photography strongly suggests meaning and evokes old clichés on African conflicts rather than encourages critical analysis and understanding. To emphasize the image's immediate and presumably eloquent "truth" erases the short and long term contextual factors, thereby dehistoricizing and, often enough, depoliticizing conflict. By veering away from the

suggestive spectacle and its claim to authenticity, the novel shifts the audience from the position of a mere consumer of often decontextualized information to that of a more contributive reader given the absence of a predetermined meaning to consume.

Wright argues that literary representations of the arbitrarily formed and imagined postcolonial nation often reflect postmodern characteristics such as indeterminacy and the constant deferral of closure. These concerns in postcolonial fiction have engendered what Wright calls "flamboyantly experimental" novels (96-7). In *Links*, Farah reproduces the problematic and often detrimental nature of representation and notions of truth without resorting to experimental writing. In fact, metonymy, as a figure of deferral, acts as a strategy precluding closure and resolution in part through its anti-sensationalist effects. Consequently, the delay of definite meaning production and closure that Jeebleh seeks acknowledges the impossibility to re-present and thus foregrounds the flawed nature of representation of Somalia in the media. In particular, the mere presence of an "alibi" through a snapshot proves insufficient to represent the complexity of violent confrontations, as becomes clear through Dajaal and his family's story. Metonymy is thus used counter-discursively when it achieves an anti-sensationalist discourse that questions widely accepted descriptions of the conflict and the nature of the US presence and intervention in Somalia. In short, indeterminacy here does not result from a "flamboyantly experimental" text, but through the metonymic movements involving the reader in multifold and simultaneous interpretive readings. Therefore, while building on the postcolonial understanding of metonymy as a tool to address the local, this particular

reading of *Links* expands Bhabha's Lacanian notion of metonymy in order to emphasize its political significance.

Aside from countering the politics of the media, the anti-sensationalist feature of the text imposes a distance between the violent act, on the one hand, and Jebbleh and the reader who often access it retrospectively, on the other. By staging this gap, *Links* in fact alludes to the inevitable delay separating any event and its representation even as the camera seems to erase that distance. From his New York residence, Jeebleh's sources of information about the situation in Somalia are necessarily subjected to an irremediable lapse between the event and its rendering. It is important here to remember that the gap is not necessarily temporal, given the immediacy of media reports. Therefore, the hiatus inherent in every representation is reinforced by the displacement of links within the image itself because of its focus. Despite Jeebleh's efforts, gaps abound in the novel and are never filled thus indicating the impossibility to represent the war through a unique text or perspective. The displacement of representation and, by extension, interpretation underlies and underlines the fact that represented violence is (re)produced rather than merely "reported." In this sense, the novel interpellates the reader through its own indeterminacy, which stands for the need to question modes of representation including photography's assigned role of alibi or fact. Withholding gruesome details from the reader while exposing different facets of the conflict within the same text thwart the reader's reflex to search for an easy resolution and thus indicate the irreducibility of violence and war to simple dualistic schemas.

Reflecting the narrative strategies of representation in *Links*, the plot of the novel also unfolds in a "non-spectacular" narration. This aspect marks the way in which Jeebleh

continues to experience violence in a delayed and mediated fashion throughout his stay in Mogadishu. This is not to say that the war is not real to Jeebleh who witnesses the senseless murder of a child at the hands of militiamen taking bets on live targets (16). Nevertheless, and despite the ubiquity of violence, Jeebleh often senses it through its past and present traces as in the "bullet-scarred, mortar-struck, machine-gun showered" (70) walls that act as reminders of past fighting or the omnipresent weapons that constantly signal another potential outbreak. If Jeebleh goes to Somalia to "learn and listen" (32), "to know the answers [and] witness what's become of our city" (36) as he puts it, he soon realizes there are no easy answers and his access to information often remains mediated. Typically, the most intense events narrated reach the reader and Jeebleh through other characters' mediation and thus depend on their (un)willingness to tell the story. The sense of danger distresses Jeebleh when two armed men sneak into his hotel room to wait for him. Even in this case, however, he arrives after the security guards confronted and killed one of them. Violence, then, engulfs his presence in the country but rarely involves him directly. The plot continues to unfold according to this pattern.

The non-spectacular effect thus functions as a comment on representation precisely because it is constant not only in the narrative style but also in the plot which never reaches a truly (un-mediated) climactic moment. Interestingly, at first, the text seems to evolve according to the principles of a detective novel. However, the metonymic implications guiding the narrative deflate all expectations of sensationalism, climax, and denouement. From the peripheral position of a newly returned exile, the protagonist decides to act and contribute to the writing of his own story; nonetheless, the narrative continues to unfold

along its anti-sensationalist slippage. Jeebleh gradually moves from the privileged position of the incoming observer, who is allowed to cross the clan zones dividing Mogadishu, to the position of an actor intent on contributing to the resolution of the girls' abduction on the one hand, and integrating the cycle of revenge by asking Dajaal to carry out Caloosha's murder, on the other. Yet his wish to act never materializes into a carefully prepared action on his part notwithstanding his tangential, if not incidental, presence at the girls' rescue, or his possible role in Caloosha's death.

The girls' liberation and Caloosha's murder happen in quick succession but neither results in a final explicatory episode so that a denouement is deferred beyond the narrative in spite of Jeebleh's indirect involvement in the final events. The final return of Raasta and Makka, whose earlier disappearance forms a pole of tension in Bile's surrounding and functions as the main mystery in the novel, does not correspond to a classical resolution of the affair. If we know that Caloosha orchestrated the abduction, hints about the motives and the involvement of Rassta's father remain hypothetical. As for Caloosha's death, in spite of Jeebleh's indirect implication, neither he nor the reader knows much about the circumstances. Although the text remains evasive about Bile's role in his half-brother's death, Jeebleh believes that his friend murdered Caloosha but dares not ask Dajaal if the latter helped him. In other words, he leaves Somalia without the certainty of having contributed to the assassination through Dajaal. The implications of his decisions and actions, then, remain open-ended and reinforce the novel's characteristic indeterminacy.

Related to the lack of a clear denouement of the abduction mystery is Jeebleh's inability to become a fully formed voice or authority in the representation of violence.

Another event illustrates how his wish to act eludes him. After Dajaal tells him about the US operation during which a Black Hawk helicopter whirled so close to the population that his infant granddaughter was snatched from her mother's arms and maimed for life, Jeebleh asks to meet her. But as soon as he steps into the house, he realizes that given his powerlessness there is no justification for what he now sees as a voyeuristic visit typical of a "war tourist" (272). Even if Jeebleh's uncertainty and thwarted desire to act can be attributed to the trauma of his arduous imprisonment and long exile, this indeterminacy is also inscribed in the metonymic character of the text. Significantly, and despite Jeebleh's awkward realization, this passage also constitutes an important moment in the novel when the text shifts focus from the main character's actions and thoughts to the narratization of a Somali perspective of the battle leading to the US debacle. Similarly, it serves to explain the local anger at the US operation and the illogical harm done to the population in the name of peacekeeping. Yet this testimony only represents another perspective that neither captures the nature of violence nor totally accounts for its continued presence. Not only is Jeebleh often frustrated in his attempts to understand and find a coherent narrative of the conflict and the people surrounding him, but he also falls short of achieving the goals of the hero of a quest. Similarly, the text accumulates hints and clues yet resists narrative closure.

Quite clearly, here, the power of metonymy emanates from its persistence. On the one hand, the movement of displacement maintains an unsettling force, while, on the other, contiguity enables the coexistence of different interpretive possibilities simultaneously. The classical denouement where the narrative ascribes deeds to doers never becomes a reality. Instead of resolution, Jeebleh understands the intricacy of a situation in which guilt and

responsibility are shared. The myth of neutrality that might have surrounded him at the beginning also evaporates when he decides to yield to revenge. In more than one sense, the novel never swerves from anti-sensationalism even in its most intense moments when Jeebleh often receives violence though mediation. In other words, it is not so much violence that is at the center of the narrative as the production and the negotiations of its representation in which the reader's attention is called upon not to absorb but to observe and participate.

Reading *Links* as an assemblage of scenes and pieces of stories that interact and relate to one another but do not form a coherent exclusive and conclusive narrative illustrates the entanglement of displacement and contiguity. These narrative and structural strategies thus result in a permanent state of indeterminacy in *Links* subverting the identification with a mystery novel as well as the journalistic claim to explicatory clarity, objectivity, and accuracy. In contrast to Derek Wright's comment on indeterminacy being brought forth by exuberantly experimental narratives, in this context it springs from constant delay and the impossibility to choose a leading narrative thread amongst the contiguous elements emerging from the storyline. By the end of the novel and of his Somali journey, Jeebleh leaves with unanswered questions but comes to an understanding about his life as entangled in a network of other stories that he can neither escape from, nor represent, for each link in the network signals a difference.

Likewise, the chain of events leading to, and perpetuating, the civil war are locally and internationally interlocked, and so is the responsibility of each individual within it. In this sense, the unresolved mystery surrounding Jeebleh's implication in Caloosha's death

conforms to the spirit of the novel, and so does his initially vague decision to take action as he gradually integrates the civil war world where no one is completely innocent. If, for Bhabha, metonymy represents a way to move from Eurocentric universalism to postcolonial localism, metonymy here evolves to link the local to its global context. Evidently, this shift does not represent a regressive move back to universalism. Rather, it locates the Somali conflict within a global context of war in contrast to the popular perception of "clan rivalry" as the unique and direct cause of violence. The global connection includes, but is not limited to, what Annie Gagiano dubs "criminal neo-colonialism" ("Surveying" 263) based on the unhindered global circulation of weapons fueling African wars. Further, realities and representations of Somalia's conflict and its near-statelessness have been and continue to be at the center of geopolitical intrigues and diverse opportunistic interests.

In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag argues that by marking memory, "the photograph eclipses other forms of understanding, of remembering." (89) For her, photographs "haunt" us but remain limited in contrast to "narratives [which] can make us understand" (89). Sontag pinpoints the potential power of the photography to freeze events through shock. However, the photograph does more than freeze, for it actually suggests a particular understanding while functioning as irrefutable truth. Similarly, the narrative wields such power as to make us understand in a specific way, which again could amount to a photographic kind of truncation. Both modes of discourse displace events through their representation. In the context of *Links*, however, Jeebleh's uncertainty towards the end represents the novel's attempts to negotiate the production of violence and the complicit

nature of the politics of representation. Here understanding does not result from a coherent narrative. In fact, the narrative exhibits too many gaps to claim coherence, but this uncertainty becomes the narrative's positive contribution since precluding closure also broadens the scope of interpretation, and thus, of cultural and political negotiation.

Chapter 3

Allowing the Nation to Live-On : Re-Imagining the Nation Beyond National History in Chenjerai Hove's *Bones* and Yvonne Vera's *The Stone Virgins*

The first section of *The Stone Virgins* (2002) maps colonial spaces, its logic of exclusion and excess. In her description of the racially segregated colonial city of Bulawayo, the narrator of Yvonne Vera's novel dwells on an interstitial space which outmaneuvers the colonial law and society of Rhodesia. *Ekoneni*—corner—is the space in-between where illicit relationships can thrive outside the control of the colonial state. It is "a rendezvous, a place to meet. You cannot meet inside any of the buildings because the city is divided" (11). This "ambivalent" space marks a "place of protest," of crossings and transgressions, the narrator indicates, but the meeting point is also dangerous, for every aspiration to change is risky. Through its ambivalence, or rather polyvalence, *Ekoneni* points to the violent configuration and scarring of the urban landscape by the racially segregated colonial and white minority rule in Rhodesia. Yet the passage signifies both Frantz Fanon's description of colonialism's violent compartmentalization of space (*Wretched* 31) and the transgression of apartheid rules, but it also stresses the resistance as well as the desire and potential for change which thrive at the fault lines of the forced regulation of bodies and minds. The description of the colonial divided city is the novel's starting point for Zimbabwe's civil war[62] and the ambivalent and paradoxical ways in which the conflict echoes a long colonial and anti-colonial history of violence. Not unlike *Ekoneni*, Thandabantu Store in rural Kezi plays the role of a meeting point for transient as

---

[62] Some historical accounts use the expression "civil war" to refer to the liberation war which ended white majority rule in 1979 and resulted in the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980. In my work, civil war refers to the violence which erupted in the Matabeleland provinces after independence. This post-liberation conflict is also commonly known as the "dissident" war.

well as local customers and becomes instrumental in the negotiation of traditional and patriarchal divisions when the women soldiers return to Kezi and naturally gather around the store. Significantly, during *Gukurahundi*—the government crackdown on the "dissidents" of Matabeleland—the soldiers of the now independent Zimbabwe transform the store into their battle/playground, torturing, killing, and burning their victims, thereby resuscitating the methods of Rhodesian soldiers when they chastised storekeepers they suspected of supplying anti-colonial guerillas with provisions. The early years of independence before and during the civil war of the 1980s witness the almost immediate return of the spirit of war. Chenjerai Hove's *Bones* (1988) and Vera's *The Stone Virgins* (2002) construct narratives in which the new government with its own nationalist narrative represents only one of the haunting sites of violence.

Based on the persistence of violence after liberation as well as on the two novels' evocation of the motif of spirits and haunting to narrate war trauma, this chapter explores the notion of spectrality in relation to the rising postcolonial nation-state. Derived from Jacques Derrida's and especially Pheng Cheah's notions of spectrality, here spectrality refers to the inevitability of a paradoxical ghostly "presence" which constantly evokes the colonial origin of the modern nation-state but also the violence which preceded and finally resulted in its constitution. In particular, I am interested in the ways in which paradoxical narratives of identity and historical events inhabit national spaces and disrupt national temporality often despite official attempts to either deny them or regulate them in the name of a stable linear discourse on the nation-state's history and future. In other words, I

propose to explore how the novels negotiate the inherent pluralism of memories through their spectrality in the nation-state, and how they, in turn, foreground the nation's paradoxes and enable its constant regeneration. As Derrida argues, spectrality, or the return of the ghost into the present and the future, highlights "the doubtful contemporaneity of the present to itself" (*Specters* 39), while also undoing the opposition between present, past, and future (39). While the nation-state actively produces a unique, linear narrative that seeks to repress alternatives, it is itself necessarily spectral as are its people's stories. For example, pre-independence violence continues to haunt various spaces within the nation through traumatic memories of the war, on the one hand, and renewed manifestations of violence by governmental and non-governmental forces, on the other.

While they develop the idea of trauma and the resurgence of violence through hauntings and ghosts, the two novels may evoke but generally depart from other postcolonial and specifically African representations of ghosts in literature. The idea of haunting implies the existence of a different dimension that is subversive of, alternative to, or simply contiguous with the realm of "reality," convention, and official history and edict. Alternatively, haunting has been traditionally explored as a trope of injustice and trauma, which is not to say that these two evocations are necessarily exclusive. The existence of ghosts in such tales as Amos Tutuola's *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* (1952) and *The Palm-wine Drinkard* (1962), for example, is not presented as an extraordinary occurrence even though the events and feats are themselves fantastical. Likewise, Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* (1991) portrays a world in which spirits constitute a ubiquitous presence and force. This novel is often cited as a major exponent of magic realism, a mode in which the

magical is presented as ordinary and ordinarily mingling with the real. Whether benevolent or malevolent, the ghost here does not necessarily exist as a result—and therefore reminder—of prejudice.

In contrast, *Bones* and *The Stone Virgins* draw largely, but not exclusively, on the association of ghosts with the question of justice which Jacques Derrida mentions (*Specters* xix). One of the figures through which haunting is articulated in the novels, the spirit medium Nehanda, predates colonialism, and is therefore not born out of the colonial encounter. Yet, she acts as an agent of resistance and rebellion, before becoming a symbol of resistance and sacrifice. When associated with injustice, haunting refers to an anomaly embodied in acts of violence and the repression of their memorialization. While the association of ghosts with justice is often translated into retribution by the spirit which returns and possesses the wronged in order to exact vengeance, the two novels configure ghosts and the question of justice differently, that is through negotiation. As Sam Durrant puts it with reference to the often-cited example of *Hamlet*, "Hamlet's *problem* is that the ghost of his father equates justice with vengeance [*italics added*]" (Durrant 72). In contrast, in Wilson Harris' *Palace of the Peacock* (1988), Durrant writes, the repetition entailed in haunting does not become "retributive" but rather "redemptive" (72). More importantly, what the novel enacts, he argues, is "a redemption *of* rather than *from* history, a remembrance rather than a forgetting of material suffering" (75). Remembering becomes redemptive.

Haunting in the novels studied here underwrites the negotiation of remembrance and healing as well as the impossibility of erasing a past injustice through retribution. In *Bones*,

possession allows the memory of violence to be passed on. In *The Stone Virgins*, the spirits which helped liberate the land are ultimately distorted through the traumatic effect of extreme violence. Here violence itself becomes a haunting presence. At the same time, haunting also enables the negotiation of multiple narratives and memories. In other words, the centrality of spirits does not transform the novels into typical postcolonial ghost stories, but helps negotiate a multilayered approach to recurrent violence.

The new nation-state's perpetuation of colonial strategies of political repression signals its comparable failure to acknowledge the desire for and the production of alternative unofficial narratives. The government's attempts to promote a particular version of national history and culture instead of negotiating multiplicity ignore the different experiences and expectations of those who took part in the liberation war. They also—and this is instrumental in both novels studied here—bypass the ways in which these experiences continue to haunt individuals, communities, and institutions after independence. More specifically, the struggle for independence designates a paradoxically liberating and traumatizing historical period that gives rise to a "zone of occult instability [*déséquilibre occulte*]" (*Wretched* 182), to use Fanon's famous but cryptic expression. This unstable and dynamic zone "in which the people dwell" represents the constant transformation of a people in the throes of a battle for liberation. Yet it also alludes to the related impossibility of imposing a stable and definable national culture and history, as Homi Bhabha concludes reading Fanon (*Location* 218). Unitary and "continuist national narratives," Bhabha continues, "miss 'the zone of occult instability'" (218). Put differently, the aptly equivocal notion of "occult instability" has two main implications in relation to

the Zimbabwean context of this chapter. First, it is, as Fanon argues, a potentially positive space where "[the] souls [of the colonized] will be crystallised" (182) while this zone remains subjected to the interactions of the effects and after-effects of war violence.

The official version of national history fails to grasp and negotiate the multiple hidden and mysterious workings of the experience of war and liberation as well as the persistent trauma after independence. Both *Bones* (1988) and *The Stone Virgins* reflect this aspect through the exclusion of their characters' narratives from official government-sanctioned historiography. Second, the occult and ambivalent possibilities of transformation and haunting are reminiscent of the subversive interstitial spaces that escape colonial or national regulation, such as *Ekoneni*, which is mapped on a colonial geography. From this perspective, the pockets of resistance to the new government prove as vulnerable to the reincarnation and manifestation of violence as the institutions of the nation-state themselves. Thus linear and unitary visions of history, including official narratives of national development, clash with the idea of a haunting past that tends to reincarnate itself into a potentially violent present.

While the traumatic violence of liberation war eventually gives way to independence, the subsequent civil war dramatizes not only the now blurred link between violence and the purpose of the fighting but also the fact that it is no longer the preserve of colonial forces and the anti-colonial guerillas opposing them. This is not to say that only colonial forces were guilty of abuse before liberation. Yet the postcolonial omnipresence of apparently arbitrary violence and death without the common goal of independence further complicates and reshapes the legacy of liberation and the meaning of resistance. This type

of post-independence violence evokes what Achille Mbembe calls "necropolitics" or "the subjugation of life to the power of death" ("Necropolitics" 39). Mbembe takes this notion from Michel Foucault's biopolitics but deems the latter "insufficient" to explain the ways in which contemporary wars create "*death-worlds*" (40) and exercise killing as their ultimate objective (12). His idea that "necropolitics" "profoundly reconfigure[s] the relations among resistance, sacrifice, and terror" (39) proves relevant to post-independence civil wars in which objectives and enmities have shifted.

Nevertheless, and to go back to the Zimbabwean context, the notions of resistance, sacrifice, freedom, and death are haunted by competing meanings acquired at different historical moments of the liberation war and thereafter. Further, it is important to reckon with the gendered dimension of the rhetoric surrounding these concepts. Zimbabwe's war of liberation evokes the question of gender as both men and women reorganized into civilian and guerilla resistance. *Bones* specifically relates the sacrifices borne by women under colonialism, during the war, and in the early days of independence by using the spirit medium of Nehanda as a motif for the resurgence of resistance but also as one for female resilience in the face of colonial and patriarchal abuse. *The Stone Virgins*, in turn, constructs a narrative in which violence persists after the end of the liberation struggle and haunts the new nation through the civil war. At the beginning, the text hints at the possibilities that women's wide participation in national liberation seemed to offer in a newly liberated Zimbabwe. Nevertheless, fighting lives-on into the post-colonial era and fuels bloody attacks on Matabeleland civilians. By depicting the brutal attack on the two sisters, *The Stone Virgins* emphasizes the ways in which the national forces behind the war

paradoxically stifle that potential. Both Josephine Nkongo-Simbanegavi and Tanya Lyons write about ZANLA's glorification of a certain image of women combatants in nationalist discourse during and after liberation war even though the women's stories were silenced. These "myths of female liberation" (Nkongo-Simbanegavi 1) reiterated by "propagandists" posited Nehanda, sometimes dubbed "comrade Nehanda," as a source of inspiration for embattled women (3). In *Bones*, by contrast, this underlying female spiritual inspiration is not constrained by a nationalist frame and agenda. In other words, while Nehanda is presented as a "mother" figure for the land and the nation when she calls on people to rebel, the alternative spiritual narrative uniting the women in the novel against all oppressive power revises the easy incorporation of the feminine into nationalist symbolism.

In *The Stone Virgins*, the civil war leads to the violent hijacking of the figure of Nehanda and the ideals of resistance and liberation. The above description of the discrepant yet comparable spaces of the two wars illustrates the imaginative power of the narrative which accommodates paradoxical realities. In this context, freedom springs from war and begets more conflict, which mainly victimizes women. As the novels evoke and make claims for that which was repressed or instrumentalized by the state, they conjure Derrida's link between ghosts and the question of justice (*Specters* xix). In the novels, I argue, the notion of spectrality serves to negotiate multilayered temporalities and alternative narratives of the nation which recognize the foundational paradoxes in the nation's ontology.

3.1. Spectrality

Both novelists craft stories in which independence anti-climactically fails to relieve the land of the traces of violence unleashed during colonialism and liberation war. The metaphor of persistent or returning ghosts of violence is reinforced by the evocation of the spirit medium Nehanda who played a role in anti-colonial resistance and became ambivalently appropriated as a mythical heroic figure of national liberation even as the spirit of resistance and freedom she incarnated was repressed by the regime. Albeit differently, *Bones* and *The Stone Virgins* evoke haunting, not as a phenomenon to be "conjured away," mastered, or exoticized but as one to acknowledge for its inevitability. The inevitability of the ghost is predicated on its allusion both to specific instances of violence and to the repression of the victims' narratives. Haunting, therefore, also becomes a pivot for the novels' negotiation of alternative histories.

Both Derrida and Cheah insist on the inevitability of haunting and in fact its necessity for rethinking the present. As Derrida asserts the persistence of Marx's specters against the background of a "new world disorder" (*Specters* 37) intent on denying them, he launches his study of the specter as the one "who has disappeared [but] appears still to be there" (97). Such a ghostly presence, Derrida argues, necessitates "a return to the body" (126), and therefore a certain paradoxical corporeality (126). Besides, the appearance of the ghost is neither random nor aimless. By returning to Shakespeare's ghost in *Hamlet*, Derrida foregrounds the origin of the specter in an act of injustice and highlights the predication of its return on its demand for revenge. On the other hand, with reference to the persistence of "Marx' ghosts" (37), Derrida insists that current repression amounts to the

"confirmation of a haunting" (37). Since Derrida's specter is "always a *revenant*" (11), haunting functions through an uncanny repetition that always occurs with a difference. This reoccurring yet changing return is crucial to the conception of the revenant as one that evokes both the "living past" and "the living future" (99).

Based on its paradoxical materiality and its haunting of the past and the future, the ghost becomes inevitably related to a sense of responsibility in relation to politics and history. Haunting implies a link between the ghost and the idea of justice, whereby attending to the latter implies the need to acknowledge the former, as an uncanny sign of injustice or repression (xix). Peter Hitchcock is another critic who emphasizes the ambiguity of the ghost that despite its immateriality is "grounded" in materiality (*Oscillate* 164). He considers the idea of ghosts as "an antidote to idealist assumptions" about Marx (164). Hitchcock studies spectrality as a recurrent trope in philosophical and political Marxism and asserts the Derridean connection between specters and responsibility. In particular, Hitchcock interrogates spectrality with a view to the possible reformulations of materialism and concludes: "[t]his little history of ghosts is not about the agency of the specter, but about materialism's accountability to and for specters" (168). With reference to the postcolonial context, Ranjana Khanna argues that "[w]hile some specters may be put to rest permanently through the work of a genealogy of the present, others are endemic to the structure of nation-statehood's colonial inception" (15). Yet what Hitchcock seems to suggest besides the impossibility of putting some ghosts to rest is that accountability requires the reminder embodied by the "unsettled spirit" (164). It is precisely this paradox that *The Stone Virgins* dramatizes.

While Derrida's ghosts derive from a European context, his insistence on a material specter connected to justice and responsibility resonate with representations of haunting in Hove's and Vera's novels. Another pertinent aspect of Derrida's "spectropolitics" (107) is his argument that "[t]he specter is also, among other things, what one imagines, what one thinks one sees and which one projects on an imaginary screen where there is nothing to see" (100). The specter, then, does not only haunt un-conjured and despite (or because of) repression. Rather, it can be conjured, re-imagined and appropriated differently by multiple parties. By unsettling attempts at a hegemonic regulation of the past, spectrality invokes the unavoidable interstitial space mentioned earlier where different and paradoxical forces interact. The question that the novels recurrently seem to ask, then, is "not whence comes the ghost" but "wither?" (37), to use Derrida's words. While for him this question refers to the specters of Marx and their disavowal by what he calls the "new theoreticim" (32), Derrida's "spectropolitics" (107) proves relevant to a context in which official and alternative narratives of national history compete to appropriate spirits, such as Nehanda's, in order to either repress them or conjure them selectively. Nevertheless, as Khanna's assertion indicates, haunting in the context of the novels, acquires a specifically postcolonial significance largely determined by the paradoxes of the postcolonial nation-state, on which I will elaborate shortly. Also, ghosts represent ambivalent interventions, whereby they can be conjured by political manipulation or incarnate untold stories and repressed abuse. However, the idea of retribution often associated with ghosts is paramount in neither novel. Rather, haunting here revolves around the impact of violent trauma and the ambivalent but always uncanny ways in which it becomes manifest and recurrent. It is

through this ambivalence, related, albeit not limited, to the nation-state that texts negotiate the traumatizing history of violence and its multifaceted implications.

While he discusses Derrida's theory on specters at length, Cheah's approach to spectrality differs in that it engages directly with the issues of the postcolonial nation-state. For Cheah, national spectrality evokes a paradox that refers to the "mutual haunting . . . of nation and state" (Cheah, *Spectral* 346), whereby the latter contaminates the former with its subjection to pressures of global capital. The nation, however, retains its "promise of reincarnation," Cheah insists (*Spectral* 382), generated by the people who constitute it. Although expressed differently, the idea of the nation as inevitably haunted and inherently paradoxical also marks the novels' approach. The paradox springs from the nation's role in (post)colonial violence and its representation as a promise of freedom in the postcolonial world. This aporetic perception of the nation is largely related to the notion of "coloniality," which Ramón Grosfoguel borrows from Aníbal Quijano and defines as "colonial situations in the present period in which colonial administrations have almost been eradicated from the capitalist world-system" (95). The term, "coloniality," exposes the mistaken conflation between the end of colonial administrations and an actual decolonization. "This mythology," Grosfoguel argues "obscures the continuities between the colonial past and current colonial/racial hierarchies and contributes to the invisibility of coloniality today" (96). It is this continuity that the specter renders legible. In the novels, haunting reveals the "coloniality" of violence in the nation-state after its official independence.

The continuities of colonial patterns of domination also determine the position of postcolonial nation-states within the global system of capitalism. Cheah's idea of the nation

as a "life-death" figure haunted by the ideals of freedom and equality, on the one hand, and the destructive power of global capital, on the other, aptly evokes the entanglement of the past, the present, and the future through haunting. This "life-death" image thus points to the ways in which colonialist patterns of exploitation haunt and, in fact, continue to determine global hierarchies. Grosfoguel takes this argument further and insists on the indivisibility of colonialism and the formation of the capitalist world system, which in turn encompasses the postcolonial nation-state. More than Cheah, who highlights the inevitable contamination of the nation by global capital through the state, Grosfoguel argues that since the postcolonial nation-state is itself part of the global division of labor dominated by coloniality, it has no possibility of "breaking with, or transforming the whole system" (101). Thus decolonization has not happened yet.

While the conception of the nation as paradoxical and spectral is relevant to my study of the novels, my focus differs from Cheah's in that the paradox I propose to read through Hove's and Vera's narratives is specifically related to the idea of violence which emanates from the state apparatus and the violent history of the nation itself. I will not focus on the role of global capitalism, but rather examine the idea of spectrality specifically through the novels' exploration of the iterability of violence as perpetrated and endured by different parties before and after independence. One of the ways in which I wish to link the two novels consists in analyzing how Vera's text negotiates national history with individual memory from her temporal vantage point. I will also analyze how the narrator converses with and rewrites the question of haunting in national history evoked in Hove's *Bones*, thus positing the text in a dialogue with the Zimbabwean context of its publication. Vera's novel

traces postcolonial violence to the continued spectral existence of past (anti)colonial physical, structural, and psychological violence. If Hove's novel proposes to shed light on the liberation war and the early post-independence government from a hitherto silenced female perspective, Vera's narrative explores marginal voices in order to attempt to understand the post-liberation upsurge of violence. Her text moves beyond arguments that ascribe postcolonial brutality exclusively to nationalism and its exclusionary politics of repression but rather explores and reveals the otherwise obscured "coloniality" of violence, to use Grosfoguel's terms (96). By taking the reader into the killer's and his victim's minds, the novel interweaves social, political, and historical contexts with the characters' individual experience of trauma and thereby negotiates how the temporalities of colonialism, independence, civil war, and global "coloniality" haunt each other in both detrimental and regenerative ways. The notions of haunting and the reincarnation of violence and trauma structure both novels even though in contrast to *The Stone Virgins*, *Bones* eschews any reference to the post-liberation war.

By mapping a genealogy of violence along with its haunting power, the novels foreground the argument that the new nation actualized by liberation carries within it contradictory impulses. In an adapted reading of Cheah's notion of spectrality, I argue that the nation is inhabited both by the nationalist ideal and the potential of equality, on the one hand, and by the violence unleashed in their name and which now seems difficult to contain, on the other. Not only does violence emanate from colonial confrontation, but it also continues to exist in the context of clashing concepts of national power and history. Further, as Cheah argues, the nation is inevitably haunted by the state. In addition to its

subjection to the diktats of global capital as he asserts, the state, as Mbembe argues, "has inherited this unconditionality [of colonial sovereignty] and the regime of impunity that was its corollary" (*Postcolony* 26). The characteristics of colonial rule thus uncannily return in postcolonial African nation-states in the guise of independence. I am not suggesting that the novels read here simply seek to establish a linear genealogy whereby the excesses of post-liberation derive directly from the inherited modalities of colonial sovereignty. Rather, the novels also illustrate how the nation-state's perpetuation of colonial modes of exercising power is compounded by the repression of collective and individual traumas through denial and through the motif of national sacrifice.

The aesthetic aspect of both novels reflects the uncanny repetition of colonial patterns of violence and power. Analyzing the ways in which new African fiction departs from earlier African social realism, Gerald Gaylard argues that the "disillusionment which follows the perceived failure of the independence revolutions. . . initiates the reflexive search for a new script that could speak of and to postcolonial circumstances" (*After Colonialism* 4). Gaylard does not include Hove's or Vera's writing in what he calls African postcolonialist literature, which, as opposed to the realist genre, combines "a defamiliarising aesthetic" with "dissident politics" (224). Yet the texts' exploration of haunting and of the psychological manifestations of trauma reveals a comparable need to include specters in the negotiation of a different thematic and aesthetic approach to the question of post-liberation trauma and violence. This approach seeks to account for the complex interactions between colonial and postcolonial histories which are here rewritten through an alternative temporality, that of the revenant. For spectrality speaks to various

aspects of postcoloniality beyond a simple opposition between colonialism and anti-colonialism or a simple correlation between the concept of the nation and post-liberation brutality. *The Stone Virgins*, for example, explores a conflict in which the different parties involved sought to derive righteousness by conjuring up the spirit of national resistance prevalent during the liberation war. The emphasis, therefore, is not only on the association of violence with the new nation. Rather, the text also stresses the colonial precedent for that violence and the impossibility of erasing its traumatic traces and impact through the construction of an exclusive, rather than inclusive, national history. The novels' representation of Zimbabwe's history and nationalist history resonates with Cheah's concept of the nation as a bearer of paradoxical specters.

As illustrated in the novels, national spectrality conjures alternative temporalities which clash both with an exclusionary nationalist history and with representations of African conflicts strictly as a product of the post-independence nation-state. The idea that postcolonial violence emerges as the reincarnation of previous forms of brutality or of an imperial genealogy of death implies that while post-independence violence revolves around nationalist constructions of the nation-state, its origins predate its formation. Cheah's conceptualization of the nation through spectrality proves productive when read in conjunction with such texts as Hove's and Vera's. In particular, *Bones* depicts colonial and anti-colonial violence and the characters' hardships as transcending the moment of liberation. *The Stone Virgins*, in turn, builds on the idea of the postcolonial nation as inevitably haunted and threatened by another reincarnation of violence. The spectral temporality of the nation thus accounts for its excesses but it also provides for the

possibility and the need for a more progressive regeneration since it is not presented as a fixed concept.

Following Cheah, I argue that the nation can regenerate as a more progressive instrument for social change only once it has acknowledged its aberrations and accepted to negotiate its inherent contradictions. This is not to deny that the intrinsic weaknesses of the nation persist nonetheless. As Grosfoguel points out, although the nation-state wields some power within, it remains subjected to the coloniality of the global system of which it is part. For him, then, "a global problem cannot have a national solution" (101). Nevertheless, the end of Vera's novel illustrates how negotiating the paradoxes and haunting past of the nation-state contributes to the healing of characters in the grip of civil war trauma. Reading the two novels and Cheah's text against each other positions Cheah's philosophical concept of the spectral nation within a historicist and literary rather than exclusively discursive perspective on the nation. While in *Bones* the community's perception of madness becomes symptomatic of spirit possession and repressed memories, in *The Stone Virgins* the idea of haunting involves a "necropolitics" of life and death. Mbembe interestingly describes such politics as "less abstract and more tactile" than reason as a basis for a contemporary reading of "politics, sovereignty, and the subject" ("Necropolitics" 14). His concept of necropolitics becomes instrumental in analyzing the narratives' embodiment of traumatic ghosts in renewed and heightened violence against, mainly, the female body. It is instrumental because his notion of necropolitics encompasses a notion of power which seeks the full subjection of the body in order to create "*death worlds* " by reducing populations to "the status of *living dead*" (40).

The focus on a historicist rather than an exclusively discursive approach to spectrality as a crucial aspect of the nation-state, I argue, illustrates the ways in which fiction negotiates its role in rewriting history and imagining an alternative conception of the nation where the spirit of resistance is channeled towards social change. I would like to emphasize two particular implications of this approach. First, this perspective relates to a certain material rather than an exclusively metaphorical spectral presence in the novels. In particular and aside from the politics of life and death which Mbembe, following Foucault, evokes, spectrality here partly materializes through the simultaneously spiritual (therefore repeatedly reincarnated) and historical (thus documented) figure of the spirit-medium Nehanda, who played an important role in Zimbabwe's anti-colonial uprising in the 19th century. The second implication of this reading evokes alternative lived experiences as well as the unavoidable issue of justice, which according to Derrida, ghosts necessarily conjure (*Specters* xix). This is true of Vera's text in particular where haunting invokes the urgency of the question of justice in the wake of a brutal civil war. In *The Stone Virgins*, attention to the ghosts is not only an individual or a particular community's responsibility, but it is also the historian's task, which is embodied in the character of Cephas. The texts' negotiation of multiple experiences of violence and war expressed through both historical and spiritual temporalities foregrounds the need for an official recognition of the plurality of these voices and experiences. In short, the idea of the nation's paradoxical spectrality calls for the texts' negotiation of alternative and pluralistic notions of national histories and practices.

3.2. Nation in Context

The question, then, is how does postcoloniality redefine the nation and reconfigure it as a political, cultural, and social agency for change? If it seems impossible to talk about the African nation-state without addressing the various conflicts that have beleaguered many countries since independence, it would also be faulty to ascribe that violence solely to the nation-form and its excesses. In other words, despite the prominence of Afro-pessimism and the alarmist discourse locking the whole continent in a violent and chaotic whirlwind, the history of the nation in the continent offers different facets in addition to harboring possibilities of resistance to unmediated global exploitation. In the Zimbabwean context, the civil war started immediately after independence and did not materialize through a secessionist drive as it was the case when Biafra seceded from Nigeria. In fact, the specific history of the country under and after independence relates violence to its pre-colonial occurrences and to a particular practice of nationalism rather than to the nation-form itself.

During the decades preceding the end of white minority rule in 1979 and ultimately independence in 1980, anti-colonial resistance rallied around two main parties, ZANU, which Robert Mugabe joined, and ZAPU, and their respective guerilla forces, ZANLA and ZIPRA. The war of independence came to be known as the Second *Chimurenga*, or liberation struggle. It is second to the first anti-colonial uprising in 1896 in which the spirit-medium Nehanda was executed by the British after—according to the legend—promising that her bones will rise again to complete the liberation of the land. Haunting here becomes a promise of liberation The Second *Chimurenga* thus inscribes its own struggle in an anti-colonial tradition of resistance and a spiritual dialogue with the ancestral Shona spirit. In

fact the first *Chimurenga* resonated with both the Shona and Ndebele since the uprising started in Matabeleland, home to a large Ndebele population, before spreading to Mashonaland.

Antagonisms and rivalry between the two groups culminated in utter distrust when Mugabe-led ZANU won the first elections after independence. In the face of what ZIPRA guerillas later reported as harassment by ZANLA soldiers as well as the government's discriminatory practices, many returned to the bush but this time "without political leadership, without civilian and party support, without hope of success but only of survival" (Alexander et al. 203). Vera's character Sibaso, a former guerilla fighter during the liberation war who refuses to abandon his life as a lonely, disconnected, and extremely violent fighter, illustrates this aimless roaming in the bush in the Matabeleland province where the civil war took place and where the novel is set. Besides its focus on Sibaso's attack on two sisters, the novel depicts government soldiers perpetrating acts of extreme and random violence. The brutal crackdown of the government's specially trained Fifth Brigade Unit caught the region in a violent cycle of arbitrary reprisals that resulted in thousands of deaths.

Most accounts of the war emphasize the Shona-Ndebele rivalry as the main drive for the conflict and massacres thus assuming that ethnic divides undermined the foundations of the Zimbabwean new nation. However, the authors of *Violence and Memory* argue that the "ethnic" dimension of the discrimination and conflict was only introduced later (6). According to this perspective, the post-independence war during which the Shona-dominated government unleashed a brutal repression against the mainly Ndebele

inhabitants of the province, resulted from political rivalry between the two main parties and their followers (6). Whether this aspect exacerbated the already existing political rivalry or predated independence, what the three historians aptly emphasize is that during the liberation war both parties, regionally and ideologically distinct as they were, shared a national and socialist commitment rather than a regional and ethnic bond.[63]

Moreover, what finally led to the resurgence of violence was not the imposition of a common nation on the Western provinces. Rather, it resulted from "the nation [being] imagined after 1980 so as to exclude the history and experience of the Western third of the country" (84). The war came to an end when the political rivals, Mugabe and Nkomo agreed on a Unity Government and a national amnesty for the rebels in 1988. In practice, the deal meant that the government did not have to recognize the atrocities perpetrated during the war, while the so-called Unity Government incorporated, and therefore effectively neutralized and disappeared ZAPU. The end of the war and neutralization of the long-standing opposition allowed the government to gradually tighten its grip on the historiography of Zimbabwe.

---

[63] The fact that both the Shona and the Ndebele were represented in both parties and guerilla armies also supports the argument that, before ZANLA won the elections, the divisions were first and foremost political. If at the beginning of the conflict Robert Mugabe referred to "ZIPRA followers" as the cause of dissidence, later a minister asserted that the dissidents were Ndebele (Alexander et al. 185). The subsequent brutality of

3.3. A Non-Teleological Definition of the Postcolonial Nation

    3.3.1. National Constructions of History

    The above historical contextualization points to a distinctive history of nationalism which differs from the official narrative produced after independence. During the pre-independence era nationalism branched out in different urban and rural formations assuming various faces and local practices of resistance. This diffusion accounts for the persistence of "the nation and nationalism [as] critical concepts in contemporary Zimbabwe" informing "some of the most effective opposition ideologies" (Alexander et al. 84). According to the writers of *Violence and Memory* and to Ranka Primorac the original development of nationalism in Zimbabwe allows Zimbabweans to hold the nation-state accountable for its policies in the name of nationalist values of egalitarian rule. Yet it remains necessary to reframe the nation beyond the first postcolonial form it took as a result of state policy.[64] Some of the devastating effects of government-sponsored nationalism in postcolonial Zimbabwe often serve as arguments to denounce not only the deviation of the national project but the nation-form itself. Joseph Ki-Zerbo, who wrote extensively on the notion of Africa's *self*-development, deplores the inadequacy of the

---

the government's Fifth Brigade on the civilians regardless of their political involvement seemed to give credence to this shift. The war was increasingly perceived as ethnic genocide.

[64] The argument defending the nation and nationalism as a viable instrument of change and accountability in both *Violence and Memory* and *The Place of Tears* is not predicated on a theoretical and philosophical approach to these concepts. Rather, the respective authors couch their point in the specific history of nationalism in Zimbabwe. This contextualized approach acknowledges the specificity of each conflict. Ali Mazrui also distinguishes between different types of national conflicts in a postcolonial African context: "Primary violence is the violence that challenges the boundaries of the political community. Secondary violence challenges the goal of the political community" (112). According to Mazrui's categorization, the post-independence conflict in the Matabeleland in Zimbabwe was an example of "secondary violence," challenging the government in power rather than the national entity.

concept of the nation because "[b]y a legal falsehood which borders on the taboo, the African state is considered as the nation state in the sense given to it in nineteenth-century Europe" (83). The colonial origin of national borders, together with instances of national violence through war, political oppression or exclusionary history, have resulted in a heightened distrust of the nation as a concept.

The conflation between particular forms of nationalist policy and the concepts of the nation are premised on a fixed, and by now unsuccessful, conception of the nation. As Etienne Balibar argues, there is no alternative "political possibility," nor can "current capitalism [afford] . . . 'a global social state' corresponding to the national social states" (*We the People* 129). The possibility of social change and coexistence despite and beyond past and present violence therefore necessitates a rethinking of the postcolonial nation which renegotiates its politics of memory and redistribution within the present historical global era. Ki-Zerbo's denunciation thus provides a key to address the problem of the nation in Africa. More specifically, the question is not so much how to dispose of an "imposed" and persistent nation in Africa but how to redefine it in such a way that it recognizes its inherent contradictions and forms a space for the negotiation of history and of political and social praxis. Redefining the nation as a multi-faceted and progressive force requires resisting the impulse to "[suppress] 'conflict' and 'antagonism' in society as if they were always the harbinger of violence and not the opposite" (Balibar *We the People*, 116). A constant negotiation of the different antagonistic forces and contradictions within the nation reconfigures it not as a fixed entity but as an ongoing process.

The nation, then, is caught between contradictory impulses. The libratory and egalitarian ideology that fueled the nationalist struggle and the socialist agenda the state pledged at independence clashes with the oppressive politics of selective nation building and the brutal suppression of opposition. The dual nature of the concept of the nation, or to use Crystal Bartolovich's terms its potential to be "progressive" or "regressive" (133), underlies Cheah's study of the nation-state in *Spectral Nationality: Passages of Freedom from Kant to Postcolonial Literatures of Liberation*. If the nation is neither inherently progressive nor regressive, it is always open to the haunting of the state and the contamination of global capital and domination. But, as Cheah argues, it is also open to the regenerative forces of its people, hence his positive understanding of spectrality.

Instead of reproducing positions and arguments either for or against the nation, Cheah manages to bring the opposites together. He proposes a metaphor for the nation as "a creature of life-death" (*Spectral* 394). In this paradox, the state contaminates the nation as it is necessarily subjected to neo-colonial pressures of global power and capital. Yet the nation retains the capacity for continuous regeneration on the basis of its very spectrality (*Spectral* 388) and its history as a phenomenal drive behind anti-colonial resistance movements. The "life-death" metaphor does not condemn the nation, but allows it to "live-on," as he puts it. Through this theoretical ploy Cheah accounts both for the persistence of the nation and its problematic nature, while also making a strong case for it. Besides asserting that the attempts to "exorcize" it (*Spectral* 382) are doomed to failure, he argues that the populist nation, despite its fallouts, represents the only possibility for economic

redistribution. Being this dual life-death figure, however, the nation can "go awry," as it often does.

When we adapt Cheah's argument to the question of violence, spectrality evokes and makes legible the ways in which the nation is haunted by both its ideals and the violence faced and confronted by the people in order to actualize the nation-state. The unresolved trauma that continues to haunt the people and the nation dates back to colonial physical and structural violence as well as to the war that was fought to end it. As a result, it inevitably haunts the definitions of the nation and the nation-state, the origins of which are inseparable from the history of colonialism and colonial violence. Postcolonial conflict and repression thus thrive on an already existing genealogy of violence with its persistent political and social effects. The idea that spectrality binds the postcolonial nation to its previous historical states, including its violent inception, entails that any attempt to deny them and their postcolonial reincarnations is repressive and vain. Similarly, seeking to dismiss the nation because of its history will only further repress the trauma of the colonial past and of the independence struggle. As David Scott argues, careful attention to the past "enables us to appreciate more deeply the contours of the present we inhabit, and to appreciate it in such a way as to enlarge the possibility of reshaping it" (17). A spectral conception of the nation frees it from the teleological frame of official narratives of national history after independence.

3.3.2.The Return of the Rhetoric of War

The Zimbabwean context illustrates the ambivalence of the past in shaping the nation. Before analyzing the ways in which the nation is both positively and negatively bound to its constitutive living past, it is important to distinguish this particular anti-teleological conception of the nation from the postcolonial state's construction of the nation according to a strict chronological grid. The origin of national resistance in Zimbabwe has been associated with the nineteenth century Ndebele-Shona uprising, or the First *Chimurenga*. The chronological reference to the liberation war as Second *Chimurenga* highlights continuity with the earlier revolt and establishes both a naturalized and supernatural link with the spirit of Nehanda and thereby refers to a decolonization project. At independence, while obscuring the contribution of the Western provinces to the making of national history, the state continued to rely on this liberation rhetoric in order to justify its war in Matabeleland as one against enemies of the nation. More recently, "patriotic history," to use Ranger's phrase ("Rule" 220),[65] has revived anti-colonial rhetoric with the launching of the so-called *Third Chimurenga* in 2000. This project aimed at the redistribution of white-owned farms by seizing them while also discrediting the members of the opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change, as enemies of the nation intent on allowing the return of white colonizers. The supporters of this fast-track land reform agree that it is the logical and final stage of decolonization. However, the

---

[65] Terence Ranger whose extensive work on the history and historiography of Zimbabwe started long before its independence notes the appearance of a "new variety of historiography" that he dubs "patriotic history" and defines as "different from and more narrow than the old nationalist historiography… It resents the

government drew on residual violence among war veterans and party youth conjured up by liberation rhetoric. The recycled anti-colonial discourse permeates the monolithic conception of the nation as a fixed project with Mugabe and his government as its defenders. The "dovetailing chimurenga" (Primorac 9) thus embeds resistance within a linear teleological frame of gradual liberation from colonial rule in which all national and political questions are subjected to this temporality, thereby paradoxically justifying the persistence of the state of exception. With reference to the civil war, it is the exclusive definition of the nation at the expense of alternative memories that provided a propitious context for the return of the ghost of violence among dissidents and government soldiers alike.

While violence during liberation wars has often proven a "cleansing force not for the original victim [as Fanon predicted] but for the imperial villain" (Mazrui 103), Cheah refuses to reduce the haunting sites of the nation to one exclusively destructive force. The notion of haunting he elaborates dismantles teleological time, since "even as spectrality disjoins the present, it also renews the present in the same movement . . . But it is precisely the rending of time that allows the new to emerge and rejuvenate the present by giving it the promise of a future" (*Spectral* 389). The past contaminates the present and is constantly reborn or reincarnated while the future, to be potentially liberating, is conceivable beyond a teleological frame. If the haunting past can continuously threaten repressive national narratives and practices by complicating the rhetorical linear "Chimurenga temporality," it

---

'disloyal' questions raised by historians of nationalism. It regards as irrelevant any history which is not political" ("Rule" 220).

also gives the spectral nation the possibility of redefining its future because, Cheah insists, it also holds the potential "for actualizing freedom for the world's masses" (*Spectral* 384). For the nation to be a potentially progressive force, it has to recognize not only its past aberrations but also its potential abuses largely related to that past. In conformity with Cheah's fluid conception of time, then, the nation cannot simply be defined according to a final fixed state and time signaling complete decolonization. If anything, this conception incapacitates it in the face of cultural, political, and economic globalization. A more pluralistic nation can exceed the limits of the state to function as a space in which opposing forces of society can rearticulate the resistance mobilized for liberation. In other words, it is primordial to allow the spirit of resistance to channel itself in the postcolonial configuration of the society.

In order to recuperate the nation as a possibility for agency, the ghost metaphor can play a crucial role in "historical revisionism" (Huggan 129) by forcing it, so to speak, to recognize its past and present abuses. The trope of the ghost, at once signaling unresolved and repressed trauma as well as the impossibility to erase it, points to the thorny question of national historiography. To classify colonial violence as abusive and counter-violence as a just reaction to it does not erase the traumatic reality of it, nor does it acknowledge the more complex reality of war. In Hove's novel, for example, Marita's own memories and her quest for her guerilla son clash with the official rhetoric of heroic sacrifice for the nation. While functioning as a crucial rallying force in the national narrative, Zimbabwe's war of liberation also represents one of the bloodiest episodes of Zimbabwe's recent history. The widespread nature of guerilla warfare and the levels of cruelty in which all

warring parties were involved almost transformed this violence into a collective taboo to be handled with care in the official historiography.[66] In spite of civilian support for the fighters in different regions, civilians sometimes paid the price of both Rhodesian retaliation and ZANLA/ZIPRA rivalry. If non-politically motivated anti-civilian violence remained sporadic before the civil war, clashes between the two rivals and reprisals against perceived supporters of the rival group and "sell-outs" were more than incidental (Ranger, *Voices* 231). While this rivalry does not affect the common goal of independence, it complicates the war narrative and widens the gap between liberation memories and official commemoration.

By the same token, Cheah's choice of metaphor also evokes the idea of trauma exacerbated by the government's official denial. According to Ki Zerbo, the phenomenon of "cruelty," in Balibar's sense, reflects the devastating effects of "untreated traumas stifled for decades or centuries" (89) and which resulted from the violence of the colonial remapping of the continent. Reading the nation's history through positive spectrality does not free it from the omnipresent fact and risk of excess, but traces the roots of violence back to its previous cycles, thus identifying this spectrality as a key factor in violent outbreaks and in potential reconstruction. This inevitable haunting redefines violence in contrast to Frantz Fanon, for whom violence is a liberating force in both senses of the word. It enables

---

[66] The impact of the war on civilians was not only related to exactions by Rhodesian soldiers but also to their vulnerability to occasional abuse by guerillas. For the guerillas, in turn, the atrocities of the war were exacerbated by the complex ideological enmity among the nationalists. Again, according to *Violence and Memory* "for [ZIPRA] guerillas, the violence that was remembered as the most traumatic was that which occurred at the training camps" at the hands of their ZANLA counterparts (158). The subsequent erasure of this tension is somewhat similar to the official Kenyan's post-liberation attempt to "whitewash the Mau Mau period as a moment of disharmony best forgotten" (Lovesey 150).

the liberation of the colonized from the colonizer but also from the psychological grid of inferiority systematically instilled in him/her. In contrast to Fanon's notion of a cleansing type of violence which frees the colonized from his earlier position as "a prisoner of history" (*Black Skin* 229), Cheah's critique of violence constitutes it as a haunting power that forces a constant presence of *that* history and accountability for it.

3.4. Negotiating Spectrality in Bones *and* The Stone Virgins

Hove's and Vera's work departs from the realistic mode characteristic of the African realist writers Gaylard identifies. While I am not necessarily following Gaylard's classification, it is worth noting that both novels share some of the features he outlines as recurrent in postcolonialist fiction (i.e. post-African realist novels) notably such as a concern with "psychology, . . . [and] dissidence" as well as "ghosts, . . . the grotesque, the alienated, . . . [and] death" (133). Harking back to Bessie Head's writing, the two novels share an interest in delving in the psychological world of their most troubled characters while tapping into the theme and symbolism of death and haunting in order to subvert the official nationalist narrative, its temporality, its gendered construction, and its appropriation of the spiritual symbolism of liberation.

The novels' resistance to official historiography and their denunciation of the abuses of the nation-state derive in part from the non-chronological approach to national history inherent in the idea of haunting. Hove's and Vera's writing resonates with the anti-teleological concept of the national narrative entailed in spectrality. Both texts also enrich Cheah's notion of the ghost through their particular dramatizations of history. By so doing

they, Vera's especially, illustrate how literature inscribes alternative practices of history and nation narration. More specifically, it provides a space to read and further complicate Cheah's idea of the paradoxical constitution of the nation. While *Bones* illustrates how the positive liberation spirit born of injustice gives way to the nation-state's marginalization of alternative and female experiences of the war, Vera adds a layer of complexity by narrating the postcolonial war-torn nation through experiences of collective as well as individual abuse and trauma.

Hove has repeatedly expressed his interest in exploring history and tradition from the female perspective (Hove "Dictatorships"). *Bones* expresses his wish to give voice and space to women who form the un-remembered figures of the liberation war. Through the focus on the life, resilience and mysterious death of the central character, Marita, whose plight revolves around the absence of her guerilla son, and the emphasis on a female perspective, the novel differs from other male-oriented accounts of the liberation war such as Shimmer Chinodya's *A Harvest of Thorns* (1989). The liberation war and independence form the background against which the main character experiences the injustice of the colonial system represented by the white landowner Manyepo, as well as her acute sense of loss when her only son leaves to join the guerillas never to reappear. For Marita, who endures torture at the hands of Rhodesian soldiers, independence represents the possibility of going to the city to search for him now that the war has ended. Yet her trip confronts her with abusive government officials and ends with her mysterious death. While her life and death form the core of the novel, neither happens within its purview. Her character is constructed out of other people's accounts, each represented by at least one chapter. Janifa

and the Unknown Woman act as repositories of much of Marita's memory and draw on her experience and spirit. In this text, then, the themes of colonialism, independence, and "collective memory" come forth mainly through female voices and the way they interweave through a spiritual link textually sustained by the figure of Nehanda. Through this particular focus, Hove depicts the female protagonist caught in a maze of power relations not only subjecting her to colonial violence but also to her community's gender-based expectations. The abuse she ultimately faces at the hands of government officials further complicates the issue of collective memory. Despite charges that Hove is appealing to a nationalistic and unanimous vision of history buttressed by the government in power, the figure of Marita does not simply evoke colonial violence and the need to accept suffering and loss for the sake of the nation and its liberation. The liberation war also represents that to which she loses her son. Further, as the white settler Manyepo confirms the impact and laws of the new government in the city cannot reach his farm and power, independence for Marita becomes crucial only in so far as it renews hope for finding her son. Marita therefore, is a figure that carries her plight from colonial Rhodesia into independent Zimbabwe.

The Stone Virgins also explores the psyche of characters who have been written out of official national history. Vera's text encompasses and focuses on the violent post-liberation conflict and directs the narrative closer to the individual character's intertwined psychological and physical reaction to violence before and after independence. In the climactic encounter during which a former guerilla beheads Thenjiwe before raping and mutilating her sister, Nonceba, Vera chooses to explore not only Nonceba's psyche but also

that of the perpetrator, Sibaso, in an attempt to decipher the logic of violence and its ambivalent and haunting power. The non-linear presence of the past within the present and future constitutes an underlying leitmotif to which the two novels respectively ascribe different connotations in order to negotiate different perspectives on national history. The narratives depict a national background where the haunting past reincarnates as collective and individual expressions. To do so both authors draw on the theme of ghosts and spirit possession mainly through the figure of the spirit medium Nehanda, which provides one of the ways through which the texts can be read in relation to the concept of spectrality. The novels, however, explore not only the metaphorical, but also a certain material dimension of spectrality.

3.4.1. Alternative Evocations of Nehanda in Bones and The Stone Virgins

The evocative name of Nehanda, the Shona spirit medium who participated in the 1896 uprisings, bridges traditional belief and national symbolism. Nehanda's spirit-medium believed to wield the power to make rain and war (Schmidt 28) was remembered and celebrated for her spiritual leading role in the uprisings. Significantly, the rebellion started in Matabeland and spread to Mashonaland thus joining the Ndebele and the Shona in a common resistance to British colonialism. While Nehanda was not the only spirit medium to play a role in the uprisings, her last statement before the British hanged her that her "bones will rise," according to the oral tradition (Lan 6), transformed her into an important icon for an anti-colonial rebellion and set a precedent for resistance. Hence the second *Chimurenga,* or the war of Liberation waged in the 1960s and 1970s across the different

regions of Zimbabwe, symbolically realizes Nehanda's prophecy. In addition to the image

of an inspirational heroine from the past used to foster resistance and unity in the present,

Nehanda is also, literally so to speak, a spirit that *returns* from the past to possess a spirit-

medium. Significantly, then, the "haunting" of the spirit and symbolism of Nehanda is not

only conceived metaphorically, but it is also understood literally. The role of religion

during the liberation war has been documented as crucial enough for many guerilla camps

and units to have their own spirit mediums.[67] If postcolonial ghosts are traditionally seen to

represent "the return of the repressed—namely the return of the truth about colonization"

(Gelder & Jacobs 188), here the figure of Nehanda only partly plays this role. More

specifically, the prophecy of the spirit medium that her bones will rise again symbolically

comes true when the population reorganizes in the 20th century to resume the resistance that

led to her hanging decades earlier. From this perspective, she could conform to the classical

conception of a ghost whose haunting signals an unjust and untimely death or destruction.

The "return of the repressed" in this sense often materializes through revenge, or the

attempt to restore what was disrupted, here through the war which finally ended white

minority rule.

   Yet Nehanda is not just a ghost predicated on colonial temporality and

dispossession. In *Bones*, after independence Nehanda continues to inhabit female characters

victimized under and after colonialism. Through Vera's text, I will argue that this spirit

---

[67] In their study of the role of religion during the guerillas war, Mark Ncube and Ranger address the
assumption that while religion played an important role among ZANLA guerillas, as it was well documented
(45), it was not as important in Southern Matabeleland. While they do not refute a regional difference, they

becomes open to manipulation and becomes a carrier of violence. Violence, then, perpetrated and repressed for decades becomes itself the ghost that haunts the nation after independence. As a result of the joint spiritual and historical role played by the spirit-medium in the 1896 uprisings, Nehanda soon became a national and nationalist figure as a repository of the collective spirit of resistance. Yet, by rewriting the spirit of Nehanda and the idea of haunting in a postcolonial context marked by the hegemony of the state, the two novels free it, so to speak, from the limiting grip of nationalist historiography. The two narratives explore different ways in which ghosts attached to the war return and reincarnate in the present, thus illustrating Derrida's idea that when it comes to the ghost, the question is not simply where it originates, but rather whether it will return, and, most importantly here, where it is going (37). In this context, the traumatic violence marking the history of Zimbabwe paired with the attempt of the government to control historical references and repress alternative tales makes haunting inevitable.

3.4.1.1. Nehanda and Nationalist Symbolism in Bones

Given the nationalist symbolism outlined above, calling on Nehanda's legend and The First *Chimurenga* inevitably places the novels in dialogue with the history of nationalism in Zimbabwe. Specifically in *Bones* and despite the charge that Hove's "is a classic nationalist text" which "indirectly claims to be an authentic reflection of historic events" (Sibanyoni 54), Nehanda's voice unfolds in a narrative space marked by the

---

record, nevertheless, a "revival of the influence of Mwali shrines" during the war and link it to a mounting rejection of colonial rule (37).

"absent-present guerilla figure" (Gunner 82), and which represents an ambivalent image of nationalist history. In contrast to Robert Muponde and Mxolisi Sibanyoni who discard the novel as suspiciously nationalistic—here meaning hegemonic at worst and naïve at best— Maurice Vambe describes it as elusive enough to be "read both as a confirmation and as a critique of nationalist politics" ("Poverty" 92). The role Nehanda plays in the novel as a voice, a symbol, and a spiritual and structural link reflects how the text seems to play into and out of these two positions. Similarly, Nehanda, in addition to her function as a marker of "feminist nationalism" in Lene Bull-Christiansen's words (16), also reveals how the narrative negotiates and reconfigures national temporality.

Hove's chapter entitled "The Spirits Speak: 1897 My Bones Fall" represents a space for the voice of Nehanda's spirit (who is not specifically named but identified through the references in the title) to renew its promise of reincarnation and form a spiritual nexus of temporality in the narrative. In this chapter, Nehanda voices a haranguing message to her people whom she exhorts to combat the colonial scourge. It is partly this aspect of the text which leads some critics to condemn the novel as unquestionably promoting a nationalist program and pretending to represent and appeal to all people through the "language of oral mythology and folk-tale" (Sibanyoni 59). Besides the indictment of romanticism or exoticism Flora Veit-Wild ("The Elusive Truth" 117) and, to a lesser extent, Primorac point out, Sibanyoni criticizes Hove for constructing a national narrative in which "everyone gallantly and voluntarily gave their bones to the creation of the new nation" (54). Many passages in the novel support this perspective even though I want to argue that others

undermine it, if they do not question the homogeneously constructed nationalist rhetoric and its already apparent devastating consequences.

"The Spirits Speak" appeals to the nationalist symbolism of Nehanda and exposes itself to the pitfalls of this discourse. Her opening call "Arise my children" (43) foregrounds her as the mother of the nation and the instigator of resistance. This passage harks back to the conflation between the concepts of mother and mother-nation both by projecting a mythical "single mother figure[e]" (Boehmer 9) and by evoking an organic bond between the "children" of the land and the mother/land. This by-now much critiqued metaphorical conflation between the mother and the nation represents an ambivalent approach to national history and identity which appeals to the "redemptive" symbolism of such figures while it risks supporting "patriarchal desire and a system of gendered national authority" (9), as Elleke Boehmer points out.

In this passage, Nehanda enjoins her people to act and starts a monologue which taps into what Matthew Engelke has called the "nativist" (23) dimension of the novel. [68] For this spirit, the spiritual, sacred, and almost organic bond between the people and the land legitimates the need to fight the "white locusts" (44) and the "[d]isease [that] has sucked into the juice of the land you inherited for your children" (43). Through the same rhetoric, the chapter serves as a description of the colonial appropriation of the land in the 19th century as well as the continued exploitation almost a century later represented by the racist and abusive white farm-owner, Manyepo. The chronological discrepancy of Nehanda's

voice intervening in the middle of the narrative from (and beyond) her 1897 spatio-temporal location only to describe a still ongoing injustice perpetuates her war cry "Arise all the bones of the land" (47), itself echoed by her last promise: "my bones will rise again in the spirit of war" (50). As an answer to that prophecy, the fighters mobilize to resume what Nehanda started. In short, the nativist rhetoric and bond between the ancestral land and "the children of the soil" (51) and the celebration of Nehanda as a returning war spirit all contribute to the novel's seeming "collu[sion] with the basic rhetoric of the nationalists" (Muponde) that gradually led to the hegemonic appropriation of history and subsequent violence in the name of nationalism.[69] I agree with Primorac's argument that "a nationalist stance is not *in itself* sufficient to render those novels complicit with the repressive Zimbabwean events and discourses of recent years" and that "representing nationalism as inherently detrimental is especially counter-productive in the Zimbabwean context" (3), but what renders *Bones* vulnerable to such a reading is the way it poetically draws on a romanticized spirit of nationalism in its "pastoral" sense, while avoiding any mention of the war in Matabeleland.[70]

---

[68] In "Thinking about the Nativism in Chenjerai Hove's Work," Engelke does not use the word "nativism" to dismiss Hove's writing. Rather, he tries to examine its connotations and the ways in which Hove's writing challenges the usual understanding of "nativism."

[69] Muponde views many literary texts written in the nationalist vein as entangled in "veiled, perhaps unintended complicities in this 'Third chimurenga' project [started in 2000]." *Bones*, he affirms, "might as well be a founding text for the 'Third chimurenga.'"

[70] It is worth noting here that the novel was first published in 1988 when peace negotiations brought the civil war to an end. This war fought by the government in the name of nationalist interest compromises the official nationalistic account of history and definition of the nation. Yet *Bones* makes no reference to what became the first failed test for the new nation-state. In contrast, Hove's following novel, *Shadows* (1991), deals explicitly with post-liberation violence and refers to the "unfulfilled promises" of "the liars of the land" in his epigraph, which Sibanyoni interprets as Hove's disillusionment and change of heart (62).

3.4.1.2. From Nativism to Spectrality: Renegotiating Nehanda

Notwithstanding the problematic and potentially simplistic undercurrent of nativism and seeming alignment with the official discourse, *Bones* with Hove's characteristically dense prose proves difficult to pigeonhole. More specifically, Hove depicts a post-liberation context which clashes with the ideals of freedom and justice associated with liberation rhetoric. Further, and more importantly, the text negotiates Nehanda's national symbolism with her alternative spiritual temporality and her role as a specifically female spirit. The novel, then, does not sustain claims such as Sibanyoni's for at least two reasons. First, Hove's choice to focus on alternative voices and experiences of characters who are abused by Rhodesian colonials and Zimbabweans alike does not uphold a neat Manichean division between the two. Nor does the narrative present a harmonious and homogeneous mobilization for liberation, even as the text supports the legitimacy of the anti-colonial war. Instead, the novel negotiates its approach to history by reconstructing memory from a spiritual perspective which does not simply fit in a national temporality of progress. Although Marita leaves the farm and goes to the city after independence, both the rural and urban settings of the novel are equally described "as coercive, constricting and static: a frozen world" (Primorac 89). The coercion cuts across both the rural and urban, as well as the colonial and post-colonial divides. For instance, Janifa's rape by Chisaga who continues, nevertheless, to be approved by her mother evokes Marita's torture by Rhodesian soldiers. Similarly, the arrogant and brutal attitude of Zimbabwean government workers and officers also replicates that of their Rhodesian predecessors. The comparable ordeal of both characters *regardless* of independence or of the perpetrator's identity

undermines the chronological organization of state-sanctioned collective memory. More specifically, the post-liberation era belies the progressive transformation expected from independence and renews the women's need for Nehanda's spirit of resilience.

This last point brings us to the second characteristic of the novel which undermines its alleged unproblematized commitment to classical nationalism. Here Hove rewrites the mythical figure of Nehanda as a symbol of female solidarity, negotiating her gender beyond its appropriation by the nationalist discourse. Obviously, the chapter on Nehanda emphasizes the nationalist symbolism of this spirit. However, the links between this chapter and the interaction of Janifa and The Unknown Woman with Marita before and after her death also entail a more complex role for the spirits' haunting voice. Given the text's explicit focus on female perspectives on colonialism, war and importantly, post-independence rural and urban Zimbabwe, Nehanda forms a bridge between the anti-colonial struggle, on the one hand, and women's specific resistance to oppressive settler power and hostile patriarchal and political forces, on the other. Thus, even if often viewed as a partisan narrative of the official nationalist history, *Bones* undeniably departs from the usually male-oriented guerilla evocations of the struggle and seeks to introduce a hitherto overlooked female perspective on the war and the early postcolonial era. At the same time, he also attempts to negotiate a different role for Nehanda beyond, though not against, her nationalist symbolism and valence.

While Nehanda continues to evoke a national liberation narrative, the novel emphasizes her as a figure of resistance that uncompromisingly represents a symbol of female resilience with a focus on its spiritual rather than militaristic dimension. As Liz

Gunner suggests, Nehanda underlies female solidarity in the novel (83) as she brings together "a whole stream of oral memory and collective consciousness about past struggle and the present . . . outside linear, chronological time" (79). It is remarkable that despite the focus on the female perspective in *Bones*, there should be no reference to female guerillas, or even to women's role—together with male civilians—in feeding and sheltering combatants. This choice, I think, further grounds Nehanda's voice in the spiritual dimension and reinforces the bond between all the other female characters beyond the temporality and exclusive symbolism of the nationalist struggle.

This type of solidarity reinforced by spiritual ties underlies Marita and The Unknown Woman's encounter. On the bus journey to the city, Marita bonds with The Unknown Woman and shares her memories, hopes, and even her doubts as to what the new state can achieve since, as she believes, "You can stop war through talking. You can't stop poverty through talking" (72). When Marita dies in the city, The Unknown Woman comes to *claim* her body to give it a proper burial. The narrative provides no information on Marita's death except Janifa's hint that she was killed (100) and the soldiers' comment that they "have orders from very important people to take the body and bury it" (78). Motivated by what they have shared during their brief encounter, The Unknown Woman is prepared to lose her life—and she does—to reclaim Marita's body. The textual erasure of her specific identity marks her as a symbol, so that their relation is in fact representative of a common female spiritual bond through and against changes of power. If the expression, "Unknown Woman," seems to evoke the highly nationalist symbolism of the tomb of the Unknown

Soldier, the woman here remains at the margins of the official national history as she dies at the hands of the new government's soldiers.

The death of both women, however, does not mark the end of the alternative spiritual link between female characters. Chapter 14, "The Spirits Speak," centers on Marita's spirit rather than Nehanda's. The transfer of spirituality leads Primorac to see Marita as a version of Nehanda (90). Her spirit of resistance to Manyepo (although she is his most hard-working laborer), to her husband, and to communal gender and status expectations encompasses both colonial and postcolonial temporalities and infuses the women around her. While Janifa, Marita's son's schoolmate, learns from Marita's wisdom and singularity, the Unknown Woman learns from Marita's stories about the land. Marita's narrative role harks back to the tradition of storytelling as a mode of healing and negotiating a violent history and its traumatic effects. Through a spiritual rather than a nationalist axis, reinforced by the woman's anonymous character, then, Marita wields and communicates stories about the land and exploitation, which is reminiscent of Nehanda's role earlier in the novel. By claiming her body, the Unknown Woman is also claiming Marita's spirit. For Vambe, "the construction of the language of nationalism through the trope of spirit-possession reflects a paradoxical reality, that of the unifying potential of nationalism but also the negative desire by nationalism to limit the meanings that can be potentially attached to resistance" (*African* 77). While this reading of *Bones* does not completely deny the problematic duality of the nationalist rhetoric used both to combat colonialism and to silence opposing voices in the new nation, it takes into account the complexity of the novel and Hove's attempt to make room for alternative resistances and

denounce the continued policing of the female subject across the colonial and postcolonial eras. I think Vambe best synthesizes the debate surrounding the function and problematic ideological foundation of *Bones* when he points out that Hove's text illustrates the paradoxical nature of nationalist discourse ("Poverty" 92).

Spectrality, "embodied," so to speak, in the phenomenon of spirit-possession, continues to evoke the revival of anti-colonial struggle and liberation. Nevertheless, the spirit of resistance associated with Nehanda and Marita frees and renews itself beyond national linearity and beyond its own nationalist signification. The novel, then, acknowledges this national symbolism while also negotiating a space for an alternative spiritual temporality, thereby prefiguring the need for female resistance to old and new powers in the post-independence era. Whether we read *Bones* as a novel opening up spaces for "alternative national consciousnesses" (Engelke 41), or as one expressing the longing for a more effective liberation, the text does not address the potential abusive manipulation of freedom icons such as Nehanda.

3.4.1.3. Spectrality in Post-Independence War

In *The Stone Virgins*, Vera explores the idea of spirit possession differently. While Hove constructs the figure of Nehanda as a "resistor rather than a warrior" (Gunner 84), Vera rewrites the permanence of the spirit of war in ways akin to Cheah's paradoxical spectrality. As she rewrites the nationalist myth of liberation, Vera chooses not to focus on the post-1980 hegemonic construction of the nation-state and the political rivalry culminating in thousands of deaths. Rather, the text explores the effects of colonial and

postcolonial violence on the individual and the community. The novel is as much a narrative about the disillusionment related to independence and the general sense of betrayal in Matabeleland as a reflection on violence itself as a haunting power, a permanent ghost always ready to possess new spaces. Structurally, Vera organizes the narrative into two different parts respectively dated 1950-1980 and 1981-1986, corresponding to pre-Independence Rhodesia and post-independence Zimbabwe. Thematically, the soldiers and the rebels become indistinguishable in their brutality and the violence blurs the moment of independence separating the two eras and sections. The idea of spectrality explored through the haunting power of the past and its capacity to reincarnate is repeatedly foregrounded through the form of the novel, in which the first part haunts the second through a multilayered spectrality involving not only violence, but also the characters. In this chapter, however, I will focus on spectrality and trauma through the ways in which the characters manage or fail to negotiate them.

In the chapter opening the "1981-1986" section of the novel, Vera craftily conveys the disintegration of the ideals of freedom and independence, the distortion of the nationalist project, and the abuse of former symbols of freedom. Despite the confusion arising from the proximity of the two wars, violence is here replicated with a difference as the "second" war illustrates what Cheah calls the nation "going awry" through the abuse of its own metaphors for struggle and emancipation. Vera conveys this abuse by rewriting

nationalist discourse and the figure of Nehanda she herself celebrates in her eponymous novel.[71]

Shortly after liberation, which proves "only a respite from war" (Vera, *Stone* 58), the rising of the ghost of violence amidst the celebratory discourse of liberation overshadows independence and makes it irrelevant in the war-torn provinces of the country. While this resurgence of violence results from the state's appropriation of nationalist history and power, Vera portrays the spirit of violence itself and its powerful traumatizing effects as central to the relapse in war. Following a passage describing what appears to be a mundane city landscape but for the significant mention of "the first black mayor" (*Stone* 65), an eloquent yet short and elliptical paragraph announces the war

> The war begins. A curfew is declared. A state of emergency. No movement is allowed. The cease-fire ceases. It begins in the streets, the burying of memory. The bones rising. Rising. Every road out of Bulawayo is covered with soldiers and police, teeming like ants. Roadblocks. Bombs. Landmines. Hand grenades. Memory is lost. Independence ends. Guns rise. Rising anew. In 1981. (*Stone* 65)

The short and fragmented sentences reflect the confusion leading to an incomprehensible and precipitate war. The passive voice withholds information on those who declare the curfew or bury memory in order to highlight guns and violence as the main actors. In fact, the deployment of soldiers and roadblocks or the danger of landmines and grenades evoke a

---

[71] In her first novel, *Nehanda* (1993), Vera tells the story of the 19th century spirit medium, from her special birth to her execution by the British for her role in the 1896-1897 uprisings. In her typically poetic style, Vera celebrates this historical and mythical figure, interweaving her spiritual leadership with the sacredness of the land and the need to take arms to cleanse it. The novel, described as one that "speaks to both postcolonialism

pre-liberation landscape reinforced by the image of "bones rising." This allusion to unnamed Nehanda is unmistakable here but the libratory and spiritual connotations usually associated with "bones rising" disappear as the expression swiftly shifts into "guns rising." By specifying that they do not simply rise but rise anew in 1981, the text registers a rupture in the national myth of liberation.[72] More than an assertion of a parallelism between pre-liberation and post-liberation conflicts to signify the failure of the transition to peace, the metaphor of "bones rising," brief as it is, rewrites the myth of Nehanda in 1981 in a way that departs from Hove's approach in *Bones*. In this short paragraph, then, Vera pinpoints the double-edged haunting of the fighting spirit in the new nation. During the decades preceding liberation, Nehanda's prophecy that her "bones will rise" becomes a metaphor for the spirit of armed resistance for liberation but also an assertion of the immortality and possible reincarnations of that spirit. After independence, the reincarnations also prove paradoxical as they are used to perpetuate a self-destructive war. The metaphor of the bones rising allows Sibaso to stretch it beyond independence and still call on Nehanda for protection (117). On the other hand, the same metaphor, which evokes a "spiritual temporality" of national resistance, becomes integrated in the government's response to

---

and feminism" (Bose 212) taps into the popular and celebrated legends of resistance to colonialism, while emphasizing Nehanda's resilience.

[72] This rupture reveals the nuance between the idea of spirit and that of myth. If the former acts as a symbol to enliven the resistance struggle despite its regional and ethnic specificity as a Shona spirit, the myth of liberation gradually builds on an exclusionary appropriation of that history in an effort to alienate the opposition party (ZAPU) now more and more perceived as an Ndebele party. By nationalist myth, I also mean the homogenization of the narrative through erasure of alternative memories and demands as well as the deployment of nationalist rhetoric in order to silence the opposition on various occasions since 1980. After the cease-fire in 1987, Mugabe's government draws on the nationalist myth of unity and homogeneity to dismiss reports on war atrocities as the work of outside and neo-colonial forces intent on dividing the nation (Bull-Christiansen, *Tales* 57).

various political and economic crises during and after the civil war. More specifically, anti-colonial mobilization and patriotic rhetoric are often used to justify crackdowns on the opposition. In other words, post-liberation appropriations of the spirit of resistance and resilience represented in part by Nehanda fail to break the cycle of violence and channel the potential of resistance differently.

The election of Mugabe and his ZANU party at the head of the government in 1980 marked the beginning of the official construction of an exclusionary and unitary history contested by the opposition. The domination of the ruling party culminated in the ousting of the opposing party leader, Joseph Nkomo, from his government position, thus confirming the alienation which had been fueling the ZIPRA fighters' return to guerilla war in the Matabeleland. As the government took drastic measures to quell the rebellion, the toll was high especially among civilians. For Bull-Christiansen, this is when "the spiritual narrative of the nation" breaks up (212) "because in Bulawayo after independence the bones that rise represent Shona 'quasi-nationalism'" (210). Even though the so-called "dissident war" was contingent on a narrow conception of nationalism rejecting plurality and power sharing, the novel further explores the psychological impact of violence on all collective and individual agents involved in the liberation war.

The text thus examines the danger of the war's ghostly and cyclic presence across ethnic and regional divides. Positing that "the spiritual temporality of the nation" is "broken and fragmented" (Bull-Christiansen 211) implies that the post-liberation war is totally severed from the spiritual impetus behind the anti-colonial struggle. Despite the obvious validity of this argument given the manipulation of national myths to justify government

abuse, the novel emphasizes the specter of violence *itself* and how it manages to possess Sibaso and the soldiers alike. In other words, the continued haunting power of the spirit violence which reincarnates in a different conflict is also subjected to a spiritual temporality. In this context, however, the unanchored ghost of violence exacerbated by the oppressive invention of history shifts from the libratory function attributed to it by the national war to a continuous repetition of its traumatic expressions forcing the "nation-people" into a self-destructive cycle. Of course this is not the end of official independence but that of the expectations of peace in an egalitarian society. Free from Rhodesian minority rule as they are, Zimbabwe's people once again become prisoners of the violence constitutive of the creation of the nation and that will continuously threaten to emerge if silenced. The active "burying of memory" follows as an extension of this denial, while the "bones" transform into "guns." If, to evoke Cheah, the spiritual or spectral temporality still underlies the fate of the nation including the civil war, the "burying of memory" deprives it of the ideals of liberation gained during the First and Second *Chimurengas*, so that violence starts existing for and by itself.

The "guns/bones rising" are not exclusive to any specific actor in the war since the neat division between the two main enemies under Rhodesian rule has now disappeared and the memory of a common fight and achieved goal is "lost." While Vambe warns that Vera's choice not to historicize the causes of the war risks "portray[ing] the new government as extremely xenophobic and tribalist which might not be the whole truth about the complexity of the war" (103), Annie Gagiano aptly suggests that the paucity of details on the historical background allows "Vera [to] indicate that it is war that is the real enemy of

human life and community" ("Katabolism" 70). From this perspective, Vera's chronological division of her sections establishes a spectral basis between the colonial and the post-independence eras constituting an undercurrent of violence itself albeit not of its political context. The question the novel addresses, then, by reconfiguring the myth of Nehanda is what happens to the accumulated violence inherited from colonial rule and the counter-violence summoned to combat it.

Not unlike the new government, Sibaso also recuperates the myth of Nehanda but abuses it as he links it to his own resistance to change. From his fight for the liberation of Zimbabwe, Sibaso only salvages violence and his sense of intimacy with death, choosing to refuse the reality of independence. In his unhinged world, however, he attempts to reconnect with the spiritual world of ancestors: "I count each nameless ancestor on my dead fingers. The one buried in a noose. Nehanda. The female one. She protects me with her bones. I embrace death, a flame" (117). Sibaso's evocation of Nehanda completes the passage rewriting bones as "guns rising" and confirms the distortion of the symbol. Even though he moves from an organized guerilla war with a defined enemy and goal to sheer and arbitrary violence, Sibaso still feels himself spiritually linked to his ancestors. Now, however, he discards the symbols of communal liberation implied in the myth of the First *Chimurenga* and inscribes Nehanda in his spiritual bond with death and an aimless obsession with the idea of sacrifice.

The persistence of this specter from the First *Chimurenga* thus survives in paradoxical manifestations. The spirit of war underlying it does not return with a fixed meaning and therefore can inhabit different sites of the present and future. While Hove tries

both to retain Nehanda's centrality to a nationalist discourse and to inscribe her spirit in a "feminist nationalism" (Bull-Christiansen) that transcends national time, Vera reflects on the persistence and reappropriation of the power of such a national foundational myth and its central tropes of violence and death that helped achieve liberation yet can potentially become detrimental to the transformative potential of the nation. Spectrality, therefore, paradoxically works in and against constructions of collective and individual memory.

3.4.2. Collective and Individual Avatars

In addition to the specific rewriting of symbolism related to Nehanda, characterization in both novels forms another site through which to explore the nation and nation-people's spectrality. As Cheah puts it, "neither the nation-form nor culture are per se particularistic or chauvinistic. We need a different way of understanding national culture's degeneration into an oppressive ideology" (*Spectral* 8). In its attempt to (re)shape the nation, the state constructs the history of liberation by emphasizing a Manichean difference between "just" violence deployed to respond to settler colonialism and violence that it associates with colonial forces. Characters from both novels become inevitably entangled in the state's attempt to assimilate, therefore deny, sections of the population and their respective experiences within the hegemonic construction of history. Paradoxically, incorporation becomes a strategy of neutralization and of "exclusion" from power and representations of nationality. In the process, the violence experienced by the population caught in the middle of the liberation war, such as Marita, or participating in it, such as

Sibaso and his fellow fighters, is subsumed to the general and somewhat dismissive notion of sacrifice.

Countering the state's politics of memory, Marita and Janifa in *Bones* and Sibaso and Nonceba in *The Stone Virgins* exist as avatars of the past enabling the persistence of memories that the postcolonial state tried to eject from the constructed nation. Both authors depart from typical protagonists. More specifically, Hove allows a female perspective to dominate most of his "national" narrative in a literary context dominated by the male fighter figure. In the text, this is reinforced by the fact that the three main women's attitude resists and troubles others' expectations to see them comply with colonial, postcolonial, and communal policing. Vera also expands her usual focus on female characters developed in previous novels in order to explore the damaged psyche of a former male guerilla fighter now become a dangerous predator, alongside the psychological space of his traumatized victim. Both authors develop their texts through marginalized figures and their peripheral memories or counter-memories. As haunting sites, the characters sometimes become an exaggerated version of their ghosts. While Marita literally cannot survive in the postcolonial context, in which her search for her son strikes a discordant note, and Janifa succumbs to insanity, Sibaso, in turn, sinks further in the brutality he has experienced during the war and turns his training into killing random victims. By countering the state's tacit proscription to remember differently, the characters impersonate the inassimilable, or what the national body politic tried to incorporate but failed to digest.

3.4.2.1. Discordant Memory and Madness

Relating the national present to the colonial past from a spectral rather than a comparative perspective acknowledges the complex layering of the postcolonial nation and helps account for the "national culture's degeneration into an oppressive ideology" (Cheah, *Spectral* 8). By wanting to inscribe a female *civilian* perspective in the national collective memory, Hove implicitly recognizes the construction of the latter. His project does not consist so much in deconstructing the nationalist discourse as in attempting to enlarge it and make it more inclusive. As it is depicted in *Bones*, however, the memory of the nation has been constrained by the state's priority to assert and reinforce its stranglehold, as is clear from an officer's warning of the dire consequences of disobeying a government which "can make you eat things which nobody can make you eat" (79). If this power constantly brings the liberation struggle to the fore by highlighting the leaders' war credentials, it also cannibalizes other "hero's tales" (now political opponents) as well as the civilians' voluntary or forcible involvement in the war, which has nonetheless "eaten into the lives of everybody" (79). Hove's characters, however, *will* not be incorporated but transform themselves into a marker of the repressed, in contrast to the celebrated, past. Thus becoming sites of spectrality, Marita and the Unknown Woman, both marginal figures who come to clash with the government order in the city, disturb the new national rule and thus provoke their own elimination.

Marita's individuality cuts across both the colonizer/colonized and colonial/postcolonial divides. More specifically, underwritten by her son's absence, her narrative bears the different traces of social alienation, colonial exploitation including

torture, and postcolonial abuse. As such, her character troubles a neat Manichean systemic and temporal distinction between the colonial recent past and the postcolonial present. Straddling both eras, the community itself forms a source of oppression for Marita and later Janifa. Giving birth to no more than one child subjects her to gossip and accusations of witchcraft (8), while the disappearance of the same son later transforms her into the "terrorist's mother" (4) in the eyes of the villagers and exposes her to the Rhodesian soldiers' torture. Whereas Marita is aware of colonial injustice and adopts the fighters' discourse of the necessity to fight for the "motherland" (73), she does not easily accept the sacrifice demanded of the population. When she asks a group of fighters about her son, they approve of his initiative to join the fight and dismiss her concerns: "Right, mother. Let us talk about *more useful things* that will take us up to sunset properly [italics added]" (62). The "more useful things" refer to information about Manyepo but to protect him from the fighters' violence, Marita chooses not to denounce his abusive and humiliating treatment of the workers later arguing that despite his oppressive presence, he is someone's son. By readily identifying with Manyepo's mother rather than with the fighters who propose to avenge her torture by the soldiers, Marita with her "firmly gendered" resistance (Primorac 91) blurs easy polarizations and refuses the justification of "just" violence. Further, by admitting her incapacity to "fill [her] heart with something else" other than her son (10) as well as her need to question him on rumors accusing fighters of abusing civilians, she continuously displaces the nationalist narrative of collective sacrifice for the common good. Whether viewing her son as a terrorist or considering him a liberation hero, both popular appraisals of the guerilla war deny Marita the right to feel her personal loss.

At liberation, this discrepancy between her personal experience and the now official national history culminates in her death which, according to Maurice Vambe, is the price for her "perceived crime" (77). The circumstances of Marita's death remain mysterious except for the unspecific comment that she was murdered (100) and that "important people" order the burial of the body (78), so the text does not clearly reveal the reason behind the "murder." Be that as it may, her stubborn and, more significantly, *voiced* preoccupation with her son certainly forms a dissonant reminder of the war costs and scars amidst state-promoted celebrations of heroic fighters. By refusing to integrate the official mottos of the state into her tragedy and by dwelling on the unresolved aspects of the war and liberation, Marita herself becomes a space through which past traumas haunt the new nation, if only from a peripheral and dismissed member of the society. Metaphorically, if not also literally, her death in the city follows logically from her marginal position in the nationalist politics of remembering and illustrates the state's drive to eliminate that which it could not incorporate.

After Marita's death, The Unknown Woman's and Janifa's individual attempts to reclaim Marita's body and spirit are encoded as madness, another metaphor for the exclusion of the inassimilable other within the modern configuration of the postcolonial nation. Madness functions as a complex trope in various African novels, most famously in Bessie Head's or in Dambudzo Marechera's works. In *Writing Madness: Borderlines of the Body in African Literature*, Flora Veit-Wild warns of the double-edged attention to madness in African settings. In particular, the trope risks evoking the colonial discursive opposition of "African" irrationality to "European" rationality. In the fiction she studies,

however, madness occurs as "a continuation of the colonial mental repression that had begun with colonialism" (*Writing Madness* 93). It has also been noted that mental instability in this context is often, albeit not exclusively, gendered. According to Huma Ibrahim, for instance, "Head furthered the debate on gender in African literature by linking madness in women to the humiliations that wives and mothers endure on a daily basis" (*Encyclopedia* 201). Yet in Head's and Tsitsi Dangarembga's works, Ibrahim continues, madness is also symptomatic of apartheid, and is therefore racialized, and colonial violence which in turn exacerbated gender issues (201). Madness, depicted as indicative of colonial trauma, becomes a reaction to colonial violence and its ensuing effects on gender and social relations. On the other hand, it signifies a rupture between the struggle for independence and the postcolonial nation-state with its regulations of history, subjectivities and gender. In *Bones*, Hove shows how alternative narratives are excluded from the nation-state's realm of modern historiography as discordant voices such as The Unknown Woman's and Janifa's are dismissed as madness.

The Unknown Woman dies at the soldiers' hands after refusing to abandon Marita's body to them. She tries to explain her determination to bury the woman who "showed me all the burdens I have inside me" (67) by telling her stories about the land, its people, and her own longing to be reunited with her son. Although Marita is distinguished by her individuality and her singular determination, the strong commitment the Unknown Woman now feels towards her and her legacy, represents a form of communal and gendered history unacknowledged by the national narrative which has by now veered from its originary libratory vocation as "a contestive counter-memory" (Vambe, *African* 77). Her unwavering

decision to risk and ultimately lose her life for Marita's right to a proper burial could only be dismissed as madness by the hospital worker and the officer, who both represent a new order. Like Marita before her and Janifa after, the Unknown Woman's endeavor is doomed because, in Katrin Brendt's words, "the colonial and patriarchal system . . . treats their individuality as madness" (125). In fact, the idea of madness becomes dangerously exacerbated at their arrival in the city, where the two women are eventually eliminated. The modern city, in particular, functions as the government's primary sphere for shaping official space and policing subjectivities.

In this new context, labeling the Unknown Woman's resistance as madness interestingly evokes different levels of tension between individuality and community and between modernity and tradition. If all patriarchal power, be it colonial, postcolonial or traditional, equates difference with madness, in this context the idea of community itself is transformed and subjected to the edict of the government. The Unknown Woman's determination to claim the body in order to perform the proper burial rites thus represents her bond with Marita through their alternative memory but also an assertion of traditional and spiritual rites over the overarching and whimsical power of the state. The government's confiscation of the body, in turn, reveals its extended power over life and death, whereby it takes precedence over all rites and rights. Hence the bewilderment of the new civil servants at the Unknown Woman's willingness to risk her life in her attempt to honor Marita's dead body. Proper burial ensures the continuation between material and spiritual worlds, therefore also preserving the memory of the dead. The latter is precisely what the soldiers attempt to erase by confiscating the body. The "burying of memory," to use Vera's words

(*The Stone Virgins* 65), thus hinges on the government's "necropolitical" (Mbembe, "Necropolitics" 27) regulation of space and bodies, as well as the active production of a new homogeneous memory for the nation to adopt while alternative memories are either literally eliminated as Marita and the Unknown Woman or neutralized as Janifa who is taken to an asylum.[73]

Madness forms a charged metaphor for (post)colonial trauma, exclusion and the political and social urge to discipline bodies and sprits. It also suggests a negotiation of violence in a physical language. In *Bones*, one government officer deplores the spread of different "types of madness, especially after this [liberation] war which has eaten into the lives of everybody" and what he perceives as people's irrational belief that "anybody can stand up and say they rule the piece of land on which they stand" (79). In the post-independence context, the government joins colonial and patriarchal systems in treating alternative, different or inconvenient narratives as pure madness using the asylum as one of the ways to contain them. By commenting on the ubiquity of "madness" and people's novel demands, the officer unwittingly points to the multiple untold and untellable stories of war and trauma while also obliquely identifying the other thorny question of land distribution inherited from the colonial past and that will continue to plague national politics. Insanity, then, points to the untold stories and effects of war and trauma as well as the "untellable"

---

[73] Interestingly, the production of a new and selective memory reinforced by the city space and organization evokes Mudimbe's study of the colonial dialectics of the village and the mission (113), whereby the latter represents a modern space where institutions are dedicated to the active "domestication" (114) and "invention" of memory through conversion and erasure of preexisting memory and systems of thought. While the analogy has its limits since the postcolonial nation-state reshapes memory but also claims the identity and belonging to the land, the novel here highlights the active production of an official memory, obviously

confusing repression and gendered and racialized violence occurring after independence. The state's insistence on silencing rather than integrating multiple narratives within its national framework constitutes insanity as a symptom of violence and excess that becomes apparent through the spectral.

The same trope dominates the character of Janifa who is confined to a mental institution after her rape. When The Unknown Woman dies, Janifa becomes the sole custodian of Marita's memories. After Chisaga rapes her to assuage his anger at Marita's false promise and her mother forcibly takes her to a medicine man, Janifa starts roaming the forest and talking to dead Marita. Her mother denies the rape and insists Chisaga "is not a bad man" (93). This betrayal by her mother and the community in general alienate Janifa and drive her away from the confines of the village and its social norms. Like Marita's position which could not be acknowledged by the dominant discourse, Janifa's allegiance to Marita and her symbolic escape into a continued monologue with Marita's spirit clash with the expectations of her family and community. While Marita is literally eliminated, Janifa is forced to live another form of exclusion and exile in the asylum.[74] From this marginal location, however, she is free to become a "spirit medium" preserving and replicating the other women's spirits. Chained as she is in the hospital, Janifa metaphorically defies the rulers' power by defeating their attempt at eliminating the two women and providing a space for their memories to be salvaged.

---

predicated on forgetting differences, and a conversion to a new order which immediately takes precedence over others.

[74] The asylum also becomes a key location in the city in *Shadows*, Hove's subsequent novel, as the text deals directly with the brutality the characters suffer before and after independence with the advent of the civil war.

Even if Janifa's attitude never develops into what could be described as an antagonistic action as it is the case with Marita and the Unknown Woman, her role has also been read as a powerful subversion. According to Vambe, for example, "what the official narrative of resistance insists on deliberately eliding, repressing and silencing, Janifa hopes to recover, thus revealing the novel's ironical insistence on the impossibility of forgetting the war and its aftermath" (*African* 78). Although I agree with Vambe's reading of *Bones* as more critical of the post-liberation nationalist discourse than other critics have allowed, it is significant that Janifa's torment does not spring from the war or from political oppression. In conformity with the novel's inscription of marginal voices into collective memory, Janifa's experience illustrates a facet of social and gendered oppression which is excluded from the nationalist discourse of liberation and which, therefore, haunts attempts at articulating the priorities and aspirations of the new nation.

3.4.2.2. "Remember[ing] Harm": Sibaso and Spectral Violence[75]

Not unlike the government that wishes to enshrine its version of the past in an official history, the three women too want to remember, but they want to remember differently. This need to claim the right to a personal memory is reminiscent—albeit through a different expression—of Sibaso's refusal to settle for the government's selective accounts. Sibaso is an extreme representation of the devastating potential of haunting of the past and nationally (collectively and individually) repressed traumas. If Marita and The Unknown Woman are repressed for nurturing the "wrong" memories, Sibaso becomes a

victim of the violence inherent in and instrumental to ending white minority rule. Interestingly, then, if the three women's fate is sealed by the dominant and oppressive turn of the postcolonial state, Sibaso represents another site (besides the postcolonial power structures) where spectral violence continues to affect the nation. In this sense, he is an individual and extreme illustration of the nation "going awry." His refusal to be incorporated into the national narrative and post-war state and his inability to connect with a post-war reality transform him into the unpalatable product and side effect of the past.

Vera, as various critics have observed, chooses not to approach history from a classical socio-political perspective[76] but explores, instead, the psyche of the lonely figure of a freedom fighter turned dissident after independence. In this way, her work, which historian Terence Ranger describes as a reaction to academic history that she sees as "a burden or an obstacle" ("History has its Ceiling" 204), explores the regional and national situation starting from the individual, hence her emphasis on the psyche of the victimizer and the victim. Disproving the criticism that Vera's approach risks dehistoricizing the war while developing an anti-government bias because of the organized brutality of the soldiers (Vambe, *African* 103), the novel ignores the ideological divide in order to explore the interconnected effects of the two wars on civilians and fighters alike for whom past brutality feeds their propensity to engage in another cycle of violence. Delving in one fighter's psyche as well as that of his victim, Vera highlights the cyclical nature of violence

---

[75] Sibaso refers to himself as someone "who remembers harm" (*The Stone Virgins* 97).

[76] Many critics such as Zeleza (2007), Ranger (2002), Bull-Christiansen (2004) have pointed out the particular relation between history as a discipline and Vera's text. According to Gagiano "Vera is not challenging or competing with historical accounts of the 1981-86 Matabeleland events, chronicles which have their own

and its individual impact more than the historical events leading up to confrontation. If the First *Chimurenga* set a precedent for the Second, then liberation war with its embedded rivalry and fierce battles and retributions also set a precedent for conflicts to come. Therefore, Sibaso represents the product of traumatic colonial violence and anti-colonial counter-violence, but he is also the victim of the postcolonial state's attempt to generate an exclusionary history and genealogy of heroism and legitimacy.

The choice to depict Sibaso as a lonely crusader enhances the importance of *individual* trauma in collective outbursts of violence, thereby placing more emphasis on the spirit of violence itself as a factor than on the exaggerated ethnic argument. In contrast to the assumption that the dissident war was an organized reaction of ZIPRA fighters to harassment faced in the joint camps and the uncertainty of their fate after their party lost the elections, the writers of *Violence and Memory* argue that despite some guerillas' attempts to organize the fighting, the war was marked by confusion and the absence of "political leadership" (203). Many perceived the bush as the only option for survival especially after the government started its repressive campaign. Sibaso represents a facet of a purposeless, confused, and damaged category of fighters who internalized violence as a state of normality. The protracted war becomes an extension not only of the fighting which preceded independence but also of the "spirit of violence [which] makes the violence omnipresent" in the colonial regime (Mbembe, *Postcolony* 175). With Sibaso in mind, Mbembe's question about what happens "after the colony" and whether there occurs any

---

legitimate methodology and function, but she is doing what historians do not and cannot do in her 'alternative' rendition of what that time was like" ("Katabolism" 71).

significant change (196) does not only apply to the abusive power of the postcolonial state, but it may also encompass the individuals whose humanity (not only life) was at stake under and after colonialism. For Sibaso, violence has become second a nature expressed through a skill to kill in which he was trained. Avoiding a simplified and potentially simplistic characterization of dissident violence, Vera does more than depict the horrific assault he inflicts on the two sisters. Rather, she narrates this new cycle of violence by exploring his memory and individual experience of the liberation war in order to frame this new cycle of violence.

Inventing its own historiography, as Ranger suggests ("History has its Ceiling" 205), the novel traces the history of postcolonial violence not only through its traumatic effect on Nonceba but also through a journey to the psyche of her torturer, Sibaso who has turned to violence as an end in itself. To the celebration of independence, Sibaso opposes a sense of betrayal and loss insisting that "Independence is the compromise to which I could not belong. I am a man who is set free, Sibaso, one who remembers harm" (97). Independence becomes equated with betrayal because it requires forgetting "harm" and deprives him of a justification for violence (141). His brief escapade to the city in search of his father and his immediate return to the precarious life of the bush brings forth "the unbridgeable cleavage which any war almost always establishes between combatants and civilians—even those supposedly on the same side" (Gagiano, "Katabolism" 71). For Sibaso who has learned to survive in non-human conditions, the "compromise" of independence, which immediately renders his life obsolete, is perceived as an affront to what he personally had to endure. More than the war trauma itself, Vera also foregrounds

the confusion and apprehension of the return to a "civilian" life which the female and male guerillas depicted earlier in the novel seem to share but disguise as aloofness. What is incomprehensible from a civilian perspective, the "unbridgeable cleavage," is captured by the post-apartheid words of Tatamkhulu Afrika, a South African poet, novelist, and activist who was once a member of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the armed wing of the African National Congress:

> When we warred with more (or less?) than words, when I mourned with the black bereaved, raged with them in the holiness of absolute outrage, slept with them on the small, intervening islands between bloodsheds . . . That, too, is now over: the comradeship of wars, of adrenalin shared, the living on the razor's edge…Forbidden, criminal…but inescapably, undeniably there, nostalgia for my now (forever?) past violent years, the satisfaction of the thrust into the soft underbelly of the hated foe, sweeps over me like a wailing wind and I rock a little in my chair and weep with an abandon that does not shame me, though I know I am out of step and stand accused (Tatamkulu Afrika cited in O'Brien 20-1).

This striking quotation does not coat violence with nostalgia in a language of post-war disillusionment and lack of change. Rather, it openly evokes the simultaneously entrancing and alienating effects of war culture premised on the hatred of the foe. From this perspective, then, peace deprives fighters of their notion of enmity together with the possibility of venial violence. In order to recreate the state of war and ensure that his "violent years" continue to be his present, "if he loses an enemy, [Sibaso] . . . invents another" (Vera, *Stone* 83). Sibaso rejects a future of "nostalgia" and chooses to perpetuate a war now emptied of its original meaning. His *now* a-temporal and apolitical subjection to

war ghosts underwrites the reversal whereby the enemy no longer causes violence but is fabricated out of the need to extend fighting.

Further, departing from the strong sense of war bonding Afrika cherishes and contrary to other dissidents who operated in groups, Sibaso has lost his sense of community and comradeship and now claims his individuality as his freedom. By choosing to "embrace death" (Vera, *Stone* 117) and regard the living with contempt, Sibaso does not only free himself from the constraints of a new political situation but also from all commitment to life. The singularity of a "man who is set free" (97) and who "did not fight to please another" (141) allows Vera to look beyond the political, regional, and ethnic screens through which postcolonial violence is conceived and perceived. Instead, the text dwells on the arbitrary and impulsive nature of violence which leads Sibaso to unleash his brutality not on government forces or political rivals but on two civilian sisters who probably share his ethnic background.[77]

Yet Sibaso is not simply a lone and insane individual. Rather, he is symptomatic of the larger social and political mutations to which the fighters and the whole population now had to adjust. The scene of the attack reveals Sibaso to be so possessed by a spirit of violence that he no longer needs to justify that attack by evoking betrayal as many fighters did to justify the terrible treatment they dealt villagers. His position as an avatar for past violence even as he equates his actions with his own liberation from any compromise is

---

[77] This particular choice testifies to Vera's wish to portray the true to life confusion of many internecine wars as well as to depart from the official and assumed categorization of enemies. Gagiano also refers to this choice to discredit Vambe's drastic statement that Vera "participates in the reinvention of tribalism" by

somewhat reminiscent of Cheah's description of the ghost as the "most apposite figure for freedom" (383). Nonetheless, Sibaso's sense of personal and individual freedom as a license for violence is radically different from Cheah's collective freedom. What Sibaso sees as freedom is predicated on his obsession with death and refusal to forget harm for the benefit of nation building. In other words, his haunting liberates him from human society and the constraints of national temporality while, in fact, it locks him into the past war. He, therefore, represents the counterpart of the positive spectrality that Cheah envisions as the possibility to rejuvenate the nation. Yet Sibaso's narrative does not contradict Cheah's general notion of spectrality. Rather, it foregrounds the image of the nation as a death-life figure open to haunting by paradoxical specters.

While Sibaso's story does not undermine Cheah's account of spectrality, it complicates it by drawing attention to the potent ghost of internal violence. In fact, Cheah recognizes that the contamination of the nation cannot be entirely attributed to the state, but that the postcolonial nation also hosts the specter of colonialism through its European origin and its predication on colonial borders. Further, he adds, different nationalist mythologies were not constructed on egalitarian bases. While these potential haunting sites undercut the nation mostly at the ontological level, the trauma of many war veterans together with the lingering spirit of violence constitute another major ghostly presence ready to reincarnate. In addition to registering the nation's potential to metamorphose into a totalitarian power structure, *The Stone Virgins* traces postcolonial violence to an individual

---

portraying what he believes she perceives "as violence instigated by Shona people against the Ndebele people" (Vambe, *African* 104).

and collective incapacity to come to terms with the cruelty unleashed and undergone during colonialism and the long liberation war. This is not, therefore, simply the tale of a traumatized individual, but that of a traumatized national history and a traumatized national narrative of freedom.

In the national context, the persistence of Sibaso and similar "dissidents" exemplify one manifestation of trauma. In her postcolonial adaptation of Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok's work on trauma and repression, Ranjana Khanna describes this trauma as "[a] phantom [that] constitutes a transgenerationally transmitted signifier of repression" (255). Further, the official national narrative will not remember his enduring trauma and his "illicit versions of the war" (Vera, *Stone* 81) but will instead become a repressive force.[78] Sibaso, then, equates independence with a politics of forgetting the harm of colonialism as well as that of war, for which he will not settle. If his memory is distorted, it is certainly not dead. Physically and psychologically damaged, this rebellious and solitary figure chooses to inhabit and serve death, which becomes a violent parody of the liberation struggle for which he was trained. Rejecting what he sees as the new nation-state's willed erasure of the past, he opts out of the nationally sanctioned time frame. That "they" do not remember prompts him to return to the bush and recreate the life-in-death which has marked his embattled life. Sibaso's relation to time, therefore, is more akin to Cheah's notion of

---

[78] Khanna adapts the idea of the transgenrational phantom from Abraham and Torok's psychoanalytic work on trauma. According to the "theory of transgenerational phantom" (165), an individual can be unwittingly haunted by an inherited phantom which has been repressed and transmitted through generations. While Abraham and Torok elaborated the theory of trangenerational phantom in relation to the family, the concept is productively adapted to a colonial and postcolonial context. From this perspective, Sibaso, in particular, and the population who has experienced war in general, are not only traumatized by the war itself. They are also

spectrality which allows for the recreation of the present through the coexistence of past, present, future in an "interminable process" of spectrality (*Spectral* 386).

His lonely and isolated position leads Sibaso to mistake his entrapment in his violent past for freedom. In fact, the paradoxical notions of haunting and freedom illustrate the way in which the concept of spectrality explodes teleological time. While Nonceba experiences her haunting differently, as I will argue later, for Sibaso, it represents the possibility to free himself from the nation's temporality and the epochal change which requires him to reintegrate civilian life as part of a community. If haunting binds to the past, here it allows him to escape his immediate spatio-temporality and claim instead an ancient memory. He now equates his traveling through the historical Gulati rocks with a voyage in time, which allows him to collapse the past and present as "forty thousand years gather in [his] *memory* like a wild wind. [*italics added*]" (104). Death—from its illustration in the cave paintings to its ubiquitous presence in the hills—becomes an a-temporal motif for Sibaso whose transcendental memory (gathering thousands of years) confirms his phantomatic existence. This temporal collapse also corresponds to the erasure of the moment of national liberation and Sibaso's invention of his particular history of death.

Further, Sibaso's rebellious acts and choices amount to a grotesque (deadly) "caricature" of the nation's temporality and of its cannibalizing and sacrificial tendencies. The idea of the grotesque recurs in Mbembe's study of the postcolonial state, which, he argues, inherited its "arbitrar[y] and unconditiona[l]" power from colonial sovereignty

---

haunted by the traces of accumulated colonial violence. The post-liberation era only reinforces the repetition of such a haunting through the official repression of certain memories.

(*Postcolony* 26). Yet this legacy of colonial violence as "visible, immediate, sometimes ritualized, . . . very often caricatural" (175) is not limited to the postcolonial state. Sibaso singularly reflects some of the abuses of the nation-state and the potential reincarnation of past violence, while also prefiguring what Mbembe later describes as the African states' loss of sovereignty through their loss of the "monopoly on violence and on the means of coercion" ("Necropolitics" 32), as well as, we might add, the power to invent rituals. If the nation, as Benedict Anderson argues, constructs its genealogy around a selective and glorified History of death (206), Sibaso invents his own narrative of death by choosing to inhabit the liminal space between life and death and by appropriating Nehanda's spirit even as he disowns liberation. This subversion by way of tragic mimicry of the nation he rejects is also expressed in his desire and symbolic gesture to incorporate the "other," represented by the dead body he encounters, and in his grotesque staging of his own reinvented notion of sacrifice when he attacks the sisters.

Through his dissension and growing revulsion toward the living, Sibaso impedes his incorporation into a selective national narrative and hierarchy of power. The commissioned writing of a partial monolithic history of liberation becomes part of the nation's tendency to cannibalize its different versions and alternative national practices. In the process of honoring the chosen dead and heroes as models for a unified nation, the violent inception of the nation and the related war trauma are obscured, which transforms them into potential haunting sites. Metaphorically, then, Sibaso embodies the phantom which, again in Khanna's words "originates in a trauma, a repressed secret that has not been introjected, but rather has been incorporated—swallowed whole rather than psychically assimilated"

(255).[79] Yet, Sibaso, who attempts to resist his incorporation by the nation, is also incapable of assimilating the war violence and his irrevocable transformation by it. The powerful grip of violence on him and his incapacity to "assimilate" it help detach it from the historical and political context in which it was summoned, which gives it a state of permanence precluding any possibility of mourning. Sibaso, then, as a host for the spirit of violence, continues to perpetuate the war after liberation. As such he becomes a ghostly presence straddling the "eerie passage" (Vera *Stone* 106) between life and death, thus representing what the nation has tried to repress through incorporation.

The post-liberation nation-state, then, remains vulnerable to the resurgence of Sibaso's repressed memory which subverts the nation-state's exclusive claim on the past and future. In this sense, Sibaso enacts the "disruptive properties of ghosts" by foregrounding a "countermemory" (Huggan 129). Yet it is very important to distinguish Sibaso's countermemory from his victims' or Hove's characters'. More specifically, while Sibaso's story highlights the problematic demobilization of embattled and potentially traumatized fighters, his distorted memory is not only predicated on his sense of personal suffering but also on his urge to inflict harm and continue to incorporate death in his life. His desire for *indiscriminate* sacrifice distorts the notion of justice to which the idea of

---

[79] Abraham and Torok's distinction between introjection and incorporation is crucial to the idea of haunting. Introjection refers to the coping mechanism through which the loss is assimilated or "fully worked through," as Khanna puts it (255). Incorporation, in contrast, refers to the "refus[al] to mourn" (Abraham and Torok 127) and the inability to assimilate the loss. This incorporation, then, is at the origin of the repressed but haunting phantom, which, according to Abraham and Torok, manifests itself through language. To return to the postcolonial context, the repressed secret that continues to haunt the nation state, in Khanna's formulation, "is embedded in [its] formation" (255) given the colonial, and one could add, the violent origin of the independent nation-state. Sibaso represents a double incorporation in the sense that he resorts to incorporation even as he is what the nation tries to incorporate in turn.

haunting is often related. His living through death continues to shape his experience when, in his own words, he "tastes" death. As he explores a bomb crater, he finds a dead man's whistle along with severed limbs and a torso. "[E]nter[ing] the lives of the dead" (105), he raises the whistle to his lips:

> I know that I have tasted the presence of a dead man. I breathe in his passageway, my breath following his. I blow slowly. The sound emerging is his voice, calling from the ashes. I raise his lips to mine. An eerie passage. Not a lament but an embrace. Not an embrace but acceptance . . . a man imitates the man before him, with all his weaknesses. (106)

The spirit of the man now embodied in the whistle finds expression through Sibaso's living body. What we can describe as Sibaso's symbolic cannibalistic gesture, based on his word choice, allows him, in Huggan's words "to absorb the 'other' only to assert it as a powerful 'absent presence'" (132). The channel through which this absorption takes place, the whistle, in a way becomes Sibaso's "bone flute."[80] So Sibaso's metaphorical ingestion of the other's violent death relates to his incapacity to exorcise the spirit of war and to mourn

---

[80] In "Ghost Stories, Bone Flutes, Cannibal Countermemory," Huggan studies the links between the ghost and the cannibal and their evocation of the repressed past in the Caribbean. He argues after Wilson Harris, that the bone flute "integrates the cannibal and the ghost" (131). The flute, made of the dead enemy's bone, then joins both the idea of cannibalism (reformulated here by Sibaso's "tasting" of death) and that of the ghostly presence of the dead through the sound the flute makes. For Huggan, "[b]y trading on the interplay between containment and dispersal—between the incorporated body and the unassimilable ghost—the bone flute records and regulates the violence of the past while acknowledging that this violence can never be fully controlled" (132). Huggans's work on the bone flute derives from Harris who dwells on the significance of the artifact on several occasions. In contrast to Sibaso's metaphorical cannibalism, the bone flute involves "[t]he ritual consumption of a morsel of flesh plucked from the enemy [which] plants knowledge of the invaders' plans and intentions" (Harris 54). If in this case, consuming the other implies acquiring his "secret knowledge" (107), or, according to Durrant, engaging in "a collective ethic of subsistence" (75) for Sibaso, however, the emphasis is on tasting and incorporating the man's death rather than his spirit. He sees his act as an embrace with the dead man (106), which prefigures his own death.

his losses. This translates instead into his urge to perpetuate and perpetrate violence. Not only does he represent a metaphor for the returning ghost defying complete incorporation, but he also perverts and parodies the cannibalizing gestures of the post-liberation nation. By becoming an instrument of anti-national and anti-social violence, Sibaso thus signals the unpalatable in the postcolonial nation.

In the same vein, Sibaso rejects and replicates the nation's "sacrificial tendencies" (Cheah, *Spectral* 1) by appropriating the ancient ritual of sacrifice he discovers in prehistoric cave paintings. Sibaso reinvents the collective sacrificial act as the individual ritual he enacts as murder, torture, and rape when he attacks the sisters in an effort to free himself from his sense of betrayal and alienation. The nation's "sacrificial tendencies," to repeat Cheah's expression, inevitably start with the pre-independence mobilization of local forces in order to secure national liberation. While neither Hove's nor Vera's novels question the necessity of the mobilization in the colonial context of its occurrence, both texts point to the ineradicable sense of trauma experienced both collectively and individually and its persistence after liberation.

The second expression of these "sacrificial tendencies" occurs when plurality is sacrificed during the production of a unitary national history, identity, and power. Such a massive denial of individual and communal contributions and losses itself amounts to a sacrifice in the sense endorsed by Sibaso as "the loss of life, of lives, so that one life might be saved" (104). Not predicated on the need to cleanse and save the community, the notion of sacrifice is entirely related to the interest of the ruler. While Sibaso has already been damaged by the brutality of the war, the post-liberation government's denial of his

suffering exacerbates his sense of betrayal and alienation. As he contemplates the paintings portraying sacrificial rites of "the virgins who walk into their graves before the burial of a king" (103), Sibaso decides not to dub this act "sacrifice" because "the life of rulers is served, not saved. This, suicide" (104). This nuance between "sacrifice" and "suicide" is instrumental for a multilayered reading of this passage. Departing from the recurrent critics' association of Nonceba and Thenjiwe with the sacrificed virgins in the painting, Gagiano argues that "one aspect of the complex 'stone virgin' symbolism casts Sibaso too as resembling the sacrificed San maidens" ("Katabolism" 68) despite their a priori opposite experiences. Monstrous as his acts are, Gagiano insists, Sibaso is also "uncared for, unloved, and unhealed" (67) and now unsuitable for social life (68). He, nevertheless, no longer accepts this sacrificial role. For Gagiano, then, his choice to call the maidens' death suicide stems from his need to redefine death as "an honorable, dedicated, life-affirming" choice (69), which, by the same token, transforms his own suicide into "an act implicitly rejecting the 'servitude' to which war had reduced him" (69). Although I agree with Gagiano that Sibaso shares a "space of victimhood" (67), and that his idea of suicide in the painting reveals his attempt to change his self-perception as a sacrificed victim, I want to argue that his appropriation of the ritual in the painting does not stop at this reinterpretation; for Sibaso rejects his sacrificial role also by inflicting his residual violence randomly. In other words, if victimized by the war and the betrayal of the new nation, Sibaso now reacts by becoming an indiscriminate aggressor and rapist who has detached himself from his spatio-temporal reality and chosen unconditional violence.

In order to escape his condition as a victim of the war and of liberation which renders him irrelevant, Sibaso creates his own objects of sacrifice and becomes the center of his ritual. In other words, he attempts to mimic the notion of sacrifice as communal cleansing or devotion and adapts it to his need to claim his absolute freedom from the nation-state's politics and massive sacrifice. Typically, he erases the moment of liberation and telescopes hundreds of years to join the ancient rites and his own murderous raid. At this stage of his self-perception, sacrificial Sibaso therefore becomes a demanding perpetrator who can now be identified with the king in the cave paintings. Given his distorted relation to notions of life and death, he decides that the sacrificial virgins "have been saved from life's embrace. Not dead" (104), He attempts to approximate the sacrifice of the young virgins to be companions for the dead king in his encounter with the Gumede sisters. Torture, here, is not a frenzied attack due to the panic of war. His movements, mutilation, rape, and murder (as well as his morbid dance with Thenjiwe's decapitated body) are executed slowly and meticulously as he tells Nonceba stories all the while. In this complex encounter, then, Sibaso projects onto Nonceba the role of the abused and sacrificed object while transmitting his stories about the war.

Further, by slicing Nonceba's lips, and thus attempting to repress her stories, he also replicates the painting in his endeavor to "save" her from "life's embrace" without giving her death. In this way, death is made alive and the past lives in the present. The memory of this sacrifice survives into the future through Nonceba's scars, therefore transforming her into his companion, one who like him, straddles life and death. If his perspective was silenced by independence, he ensures that his trace will remain: Nonceba now bears the

physical and psychological scars of his violence and of his existence. His reinvented sacrificial rite consists in sacrificing Nonceba without killing her so that her scarred body and mind should carry his "illicit versions of the war" (81) which he shares with her during his assault. On a metaphorical level, his acts are reminiscent of the nation-state which has solicited the fighters' total devotion before it symbolically sliced their lips lest they evoke one of its illicit stories.

Extreme as he might be in his isolation, Sibaso is actually representative of the multifaceted possibilities of conjuring up the violent past that has resurfaced in different parts of the continent and has contributed to the production of multiple pockets of incessant violence not only on a continental but also global level. As in *Bones*, the trope of madness is relevant to Sibaso and it signals social ostracism. Yet, Sibaso is only an extreme example of the violence (individual and collective) that exploded after the 1979 cease-fire. The individual's own spectral history thus relates to the collective violence in Zimbabwe. In his isolation, he also realizes he can invent any justification for his attempts to prolong the state of war by "find[ing] a prop for every truth . . . " which is, significantly enough, also relevant for the government justifications for violence. He, accordingly, shares his urge to commit acts of extreme violence with the soldiers that shoot dozens of civilians, torture Mahlathini to death and burn down the only store in Kezi. While hospitalized after Sibaso's attack, Nonceba hears the story of a woman who was forced by soldiers to murder her husband in an attempt to save their sons. Commenting on this story, Bull-Christiansen remarks that the same methods of torturing and terrorizing civilians were common during the liberation war and practiced by freedom fighters and Rhodesian soldiers alike (89). To

oppose the Rhodesian army, freedom fighters transited through training camps in neighboring African countries where they received training in guerilla warfare and survival. All the warring armies required the massive production of guerillas trained in modern war tactics. Years later, the dissident war was fought on the same premises, with the same tactics and fighters. The violence and the war culture produced in excess during the liberation war thus survive the cease-fire. Sibaso, for example, by refusing to unlearn war culture, represents the persistence of propitious sites for war, while the government can also rely on its veterans' residual violence and experience. Sibaso's reference to the continent "succomb[ing] to a violent wind" (82) reflects how the parallel effects of past violence, continuing neo-imperial power, and present malfunction of the state transform past battlegrounds into permanent pockets of global war.

3.5. Negotiating Alternative Spectralities

As they illustrate the troubled relation between official and alternative histories as well as the psychological impact of the politics of remembering, Hove's and Vera's novels interact with and complicate the reading of Cheah's spectrality. But while *Bones'* characters eventually fail to function through an alternative conception of the past and of nationalism, *The Stone Virgins* explores a possible reconstruction beyond the violent cycle of Sibaso and his counterparts from the Fifth Brigade. The fact that both former guerillas and government soldiers are guilty of war atrocities illustrates the potential of the haunted nation to succumb to the murder impulse constitutive of its birth and heritage. Being a life-death figure, however, the nation also has the potential to regenerate itself more

productively through the same concept of spectrality. If violence represents a reality and a constant threat given its potential to channel itself through another avatar (e.g., ideologically or ethnically-driven feuds), regeneration and reconstruction are equally plausible in theory. Any *re*generation is naturally predicated on its own spectrality. More specifically, concepts of regeneration, reconstruction, and renewal refer to the possibility to generate and construct *again* after some form of destruction. The nation's ambivalent nature is precisely what enables a positive regeneration. The term "re-generation" also alludes to the possibility for a new generation to reshape the nation through an acknowledgement of its contradictory specters. In this sense, while regeneration hinges on spectrality, here it does not necessarily represent Abraham and Torok's repressed transgenerational phantom. This idea is illustrated by Nonceba's survival, as I will show later.

While sharing a concern with the politics of national memory, the two novels differ when it comes to imagining a socially viable and positive spectrality. As mentioned earlier, symbolically Janifa plays a crucial role in the sense that she hosts Marita's spirit as well as the memory of the woman who died in her attempt to bury her body. From her marginalized location in the asylum and its relative freedom from social and governmental rules, Janifa, is now at leisure to welcome her double "possession." Notwithstanding its textual function, her remembering and spiritual bond with past memories and present abuses remain locked onto herself since she lives in a space where "nobody listens to [the patients'] stories" (104). The return of the spirits remains hopelessly isolated and repressed. While the novel contributes to remembering the forgotten and calls for a more inclusive

rather than abusive collective memory which acknowledges the different facets of liberation history, it does not imagine a social or political possibility, the way Vera's text does. As Ranger puts it, in order to "rescue the dead of Kezi from vultures and unknown graves" ("History Has its Ceiling" 212), Vera has to explore Sibaso and Cephas and their respective sense of history. The two men who affect both sisters in a drastically different fashion represent two ways through which specters enter the present and future. In fact, it is Cephas and Nonceba's separate yet joint careful coexistence that opens up possible ways to recuperate the nation while unavoidably acknowledging its constitutive violence and past (and present) abuses.

Unlike *Bones*, then, *The Stone Virgins* daringly plunges into the history of the Matabeleland war. At the time of its publication, the state had been reshaping national history into "patriotic history" (Ranger, "Rule" 220) and launched the Third *Chimurenga* in which Zimbabweans were categorized into patriots or "sell-outs" or (neo)colonial puppets. In other words, the text enters the literary scene long after negotiations ended the war and led to the subtle yet effective disintegration of the main party in the western province, while the spirit of violence has already possessed the social and political bodies of the nation. The text thus negotiates that war and its trauma back into the national rewriting of history when that historiography was harnessed to the current needs of the government.[81] The term

---

[81] Alexander and McGregor show that in the 1990s the development of the Internet and of an independent press in Zimbabwe allowed journalists to bring the extreme violence of the past war to an audience which had largely been unaware of the regionally contained conflict. During the war, the media reported the government's view which exaggerated "dissident" violence and veiled the thousands of deaths caused by government troops (250-51). A few years after the cease-fire in 1987, new reports on human rights abuses during the war were published and circulated on the Internet. The media, then, started playing the role of "a forum for public debate" (245). This led to Mugabe's "deeply ambivalent acknowledgement of some level of

"negotiation" is common in literary studies, where a text is often said to negotiate identities, through the use of vocabulary and structure from two languages within the same text, for example. Yet, in my understanding, the concept of negotiation has a more prominent role. First, it underlies the function of the text within the cultural space of its production in the ways that *The Stone Virgins* negotiates its own position as a fictionalized and psychological foray into history by prying open an officially classified file. Second, in addition to its multilayered voices, the novel also imagines a negotiated space within the nation in which Nonceba manages to build a bridge between her dead and living self, on the one hand, and between herself and Cephas, on the other. In addition to crafting her text as a space of personal and historical memory, Vera also transforms its last two chapters into a possible embodiment of Cheah's positive understanding of spectrality.

As mentioned earlier Vera's approach to historical events departs from classical historiography and yet intervenes in the historical debate that had started before it was published. Withholding historical details does not serve either side of the war. Rather, it allows the narrative to track the specter of violence through its different manifestations and scars. The imaginative power underlying the text transforms it into a space to approach the psyche of the victim and torturer alike without ever minimizing the horror of their encounter or the inaccessibility of Nonceba's ensuing scars. More particularly, Vera does not simply describe Sibaso's acts or summarize the history of his engagement. Rather, she attempts to imagine his thoughts as an individual. The way the narrative space brings

---

government responsibility for the violence" (262). However, the severe economic and political crisis starting in the late 1990s ushered the state and the country into another era of governmental control, also putting an

unbridgeable perspectives (including Cephas') together is reminiscent of Spivak's idea of "imaginative making" (*Death* 31), or what she calls telepoeisis as a strategy to read texts from different origins in relation to each other. In the context of the novel, the narratives do not represent texts of different origins in Spivak's sense, yet the discrepancy of the narratives and memories constituting the genealogy of the nation-state necessitates a negotiated approach to history. Behind the space allotted to Sibaso is an effort to comprehend. If the nation is to be grateful to the fighters that make independence a reality—if only for a brief instant—then it has to account for the killing spree that seizes both factions in 1981. The text also attempts to imagine and write Nonceba's pain. Both experiences, however different emerge in the same context and mark important episodes in the recent heritage of the country. As she "rescue[s] the dead of Kezi from vultures and unknown graves," as Ranger puts it ("History has its Ceiling" 212), Vera reasserts their existence in spite of the current efforts to erase them and affirms the cyclic nature of violence. Thus, the narrative negotiates its historical contribution while also commenting on the most recent wave of political violence to which portions of the society, including Mugabe's war veterans, have succumbed—again.

The Stone Virgins does not limit its "imaginative making" to reexamining the violent history of the region. The narrative imagines life after war. Nonceba and Cephas' careful relation becomes possible only insofar as they both recognize the presence of the dead among them as well as the need to live together yet separately. The surviving nation theorized by Cheah and posited by *The Stone Virgins*, undergoes a constant

---

end to this short-lived public debate in Zimbabwe.

(re)construction, since independence, as event, represents only an episode in its history, neither quite the beginning of the nation, nor the finalization of it. Only if it becomes such a collectivity can the postcolonial nation function as a site from which cultural, political, and economic negotiations allow resistance to live on, as a process. Drawing on Derrida, Cheah asserts that "the future to-come is not the future of teleological time, for example the ends promised by Hegelian, Marxist or revolutionary nationalist teleology. It is something that is always arriving but which never arrives finally" (*Spectral* 390). This concept of the future is what a negotiated reconceptualization of the nation can aim for. Although I am referring here to a deconstructive temporality, the concept of negotiation in my work does not correspond to a deconstructive notion of time. Rather, negotiation as a practice and a concept seeks to acknowledge an inherent pluralism of memories competing with official history, on the one hand, and the constant regeneration of the nation based on its ambivalent specters, on the other. A non-teleological conception of the future, thus, becomes crucial because reconceptualizing the nation again and again through a negotiation of its specters implies an ongoing process.[82]

If the potential of the nation to regenerate itself after such a war hinges on its recognition of the duplicity of history, then Nonceba and Cephas illustrate how spectrality can be transformed positively and productively. During their first conversation in Kezi, Nonceba cannot help a possessive reaction toward her suffering and experience: "Her pain

---

[82] If the first part of the novel haunts the second through the repetition of the war and Thenjiwe's ghostly presence through her sister, there is also an instance in which the future haunts the past. Although Thenjiwe is aware that "[s]he has a lot to forget . . . [s]he has no idea now, or ever, that some of the harm she has to forget

is her own, untouchable, not something to be revealed to a stranger who happened to follow his past here" (156). Regardless of the connection Cephas feels for having known and loved her sister, Cephas and Nonceba's relation seems improbable at first given her experience and the impossibility for him to comprehend it. He, nonetheless, learns to imagine and guess some of her needs while he maintains the distance she wants. So if gaps cannot be bridged between Nonceba and Sibaso, or between the soldiers and Mahlathini who refuses to look at them or talk to them before they burn him, Cephas and Nonceba learn to communicate in and through silence as "they exist in each other's solitude" (170).

Nonceba's slow recovery—and his—depends not on escaping her traumatic experience but on coexisting with her dead sister. Cephas, a latecomer to the site of horror in Kezi, accepts that Nonceba is forever doubled as her sister in a close connection whereby "[t]he trace of one voice is in the other [and] [t]hey exist each in the other" (176). Cephas understands the materiality of this ghost and the mutual existence of the sisters into each other, and therefore "dares not compare them, the living and the dead. He dares not choose. He need not choose" (177). This haunting is, then, very different from the one experienced by Sibaso. It also departs from the definition of the ghost as the presence of an unjustly killed victim who returns for retribution. Nonceba's existence in life therefore depends on the acknowledged presence of her dead sister. This coexistence illustrates the idea articulated above that positive regeneration is necessarily predicated on its own spectrality. Cephas knows her steadiness and his depend on her sister's presence, Thenjiwe being the

---

is in the future, not in the past" (36). The instability of a linear temporality is thus prefigured at the beginning of the novel.

original link that led him to Nonceba. Their spectral and anti-chronological relation with the dead and with each other becomes possible only thanks to the ability, to use Spivak's words, to "[touch] the other with the patient power of imagination" (Speech 1). This imagined connection and reconstruction based on the presence of the dead spiritually and physically through Nonceba' scars provides both novels with the hitherto missing positive spectrality.

The life they carefully construct for themselves in Bulawayo cannot be dissociated from the transformation of the city after the end of official racial segregation. If Nonceba and Cephas' relation represents one of the ways the history of the nation can be reappropriated by the nation-people, their slow reconstruction is also deeply entrenched in a national space. As Primorac argues, "Nonceba's recovery is also made possible by independence. This is textually stressed and underlined through spatial means" (Primorac 166). Nonceba's autonomy and mobility through Bulawayo contrasts the early description of a racially "divided" city (11) in the opening chapter. She now walks a different city where "black mannequins," "recently employed black bank tellers and trainee managers" (165), mark the political and social changes in the city and, by the same token, offer her more possibilities. That day, Nonceba can choose between a job she has secured for herself and another one Cephas has found for her. Vera's choice to show Nonceba in her "de Certeauian act of 'walking the city'" (Samuelson 28) is also related to the re-negotiation of national space as against governmental mapping. Nonceba's mobility as a lonely *flâneuse* thus relates to the novel freedom for a black Zimbabwean while also alluding to and subverting the postcolonial government's attempts in 1983 to keep city space strictly

gendered (Samuelson 28). Significantly, Nonceba's life in the city with and without Cephas negotiates different temporalities and levels of emancipation both relating the individual to the national.

Cephas also bridges individual and collective healing. Confronted with the impossibility to forget the past or recover it, Cephas opts for reconstruction. Assisting Nonceba is related to his failure to save Thenjiwe. His statement that "a *new* nation needs to restore its *past* [*italics added*]" alludes both to the nation as an "imagined" entity and a multilayered spectral structure. As he dedicates himself to the reconstruction of King Lobengula's ancient Kraal, he brings to the fore the ancient history of the Ndebele's presence within the recent national frame. In both his personal and historical roles, this historian is aware of the fine line that he has to tread carefully between positive reconstruction and the possibly devastating temptation to "replicat[e] histories" (184). In this sense, the specters of the past become, in Peter Hitchcock's words, "a strong antidote to idealist assumptions" (164). More specifically, he continues, "this is the positive meaning of the specter and one that informs the . . . argument where conjuration is a sign of unsettled spirit, or spirits that cannot be put to rest for historically specific reasons" (164). The notion of justice, if at all possible, then is not related to putting ghosts of the past to rest but to recognizing and negotiating their persistence and the implications of paradoxical spectrality in the nation.

The idea of negotiation is often defined as an attempt to seek a compromise between two pre-established positions. The literary texts, however, contribute to and propose is an ongoing negotiation between the multiple layers and collectivities within the nation which

is not meant to fuse them to a monolithic and ideal state. Cheah's idea that spectrality is an "interminable process" proves crucial in establishing what negotiation could be in a cultural and politico-economic context. As Cephas and Nonceba's relation depends on their awareness of the presence of Thenjiwe not only as a part of Nonceba but also as the reason that led to their encounter, so does the nation's future necessarily depend on plural remembering. Both *Bones*' and *The Stone Virgins*' spectral dimensions represent attempts to record and account for national abuses without dismissing the nation's relevance. Violence during liberation war was a radical manifestation of anti-colonial resistance. Then, the spirit of resistance still lurks in the present, ready to be positively channeled. Besides egalitarian principles and promises of social change, the spirit of resistance forms one of the productive specters of the nation.

Chapter 4

Postcolonial Trauma: Negotiating Responsibility as Resistance in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come*

For various critics, Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) represents both the emergence of the "third generation" of Nigerian novelists and the "Renaissance of Biafra" in literature. Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come* (first published in 2005) spans the three decades following independence from a Lagos perspective, in which the main character witnesses the tribulations of Nigerian life under military rule with only a few passing references to the war. The renewed interest in the Nigerian-Biafran war marks an attempt to revive the story of Biafra, thereby not only breaking the official silence about the war, but also suggesting the impact of Biafra on the national history of Nigeria after the war. While not entirely on Biafra, this chapter examines how reengaging with Biafran history 40 years after the end of the war marks the need to rewrite national history in a way that evokes the events of 1967-70 and reckons with their impact on subsequent developments in the nation-state, especially in relation to Nigeria's military governments. Reading the two novels in conjunction suggests a continuity rather than a rupture between the two historical epochs of the war and the subsequent succession of military rule after the conflict.

In fact, and despite the efforts to "unremember" Biafra, as Biyi Bandele Thomas puts it (qtd. in Bryce 58), it seems that the memories of the war and what it represented for Easterners and refugees alike has continued to influence literary expressions. As Nduka Otiono writes, "[t]wo historic experiences have continued to dominate the consciousness of contemporary Nigerian writers—both caused by military political adventures. The first is the Nigerian civil war of the 1960s and the second the reign of military dictatorship,

especially in the 1990s" (70). Despite the different contexts and issues at stake, the two experiences do not simply follow each other chronologically; rather, they interrelate through a similar logic of violence premised on a highly militarized nation-state. Further, it is important to note that the story of Biafra exceeds the memory of a brutal war or the resurrection of a political movement for secession. More specifically, from a certain perspective, Biafra's case has come to symbolize a postcolonial (and intra-national) resistance to the excesses of the newly formed nation-state and thus evokes the persistent ideal of a more liberating and egalitarian political formation. In this sense, negotiating the ways in which to rewrite and recontextualize the history of the war with its national and transnational bifurcations helps reframe and rethink the post-war political situation in Nigeria. In other words, both novels evoke different yet not unrelated collective traumas the treatment of which requires both the writer and the citizen to rearticulate a "politics of responsibility" (Lavin, *Politics*) vis-à-vis communal history.

Bearing in mind Otiono's suggestion that two historical experiences decidedly haunt Nigerian writing, it is possible to analyze literary evocations of Biafra and the military dictatorship as related expressions of postcolonial trauma. While the first novel deals with the specific event of the war, the second traces trauma both to physical and structural violence as it unfolds along axes of social and military political repression. Both novels create characters who negotiate their positions within their immediate surroundings, gradually bridging individual trauma with collective reactions to violence and expressions of resistance. The two novelists problematize the need to denounce and rehistoricize the nation through the question of responsibility, thereby negotiating the various meanings and

implications of the concept. Both texts evoke intertwined responsibilities for post-independence violence. Whereas *Half of a Yellow Sun* emphasizes narrative responsibility and its limitations of remembering and sharing individual and collective trauma, *Everything Good Will Come* focuses on the redefinition of responsibility in such a way as to negotiate its individual expressions with collective and social engagements.

4.1. Nigeria Before and After Biafra

After creating the territorial entity of Nigeria in 1914, the British colonial powers organized the territory according to the tripartite division into northern, eastern and western regions that continued to dominate Nigerian politics and administration well after independence in 1960.[83] Each region was respectively dominated by, and associated with, one of the three majority ethnic groupings, even though this fact often tends to obscure the presence of over 250 smaller ethnic groups. Herbert Ekwe Ekwe also argues that the departing British sought to undermine a strong "Pan-Nigerian" unity (29) and insisted on the continuation of the pre-independence ethnically based administrative partition subjecting the oil-rich regions to federal government dominated by the north. [84] Whether it is accurate to claim that the regional power struggle that complicated pre-independence negotiations permanently discouraged Easterners from working for the national project as

---

[83] In fact, the pre-independence "federal" administration of Nigeria in the 1950s by strong regional governments led to disparate organizations and strengthened regional divisions and mutual suspicions. The war put an end to the tripartite division, and the country now consists of 36 states.

[84] This was achieved by means of a population census declaring the northern population as the largest of the three regions. This first census together with the one conducted in 1972 have been contested as a fraudulent way to secure power for the north, which represented the division of power supported by the British government.

Ekwe Ekwe suggests (27), the effects of the divide-and-rule policy based on regional and, by extension also ethnic, affiliation continued to challenge the consolidation of Nigeria after 1960.

As the state failed to promote equality and cement a sense of unity while attempting to further its "northernization" agenda, the first of a list of military coups put an end to the First Republic in 1966.[85] If there was little resistance initially, soon, the putsch came to be seen as an "Igbo coup" aimed at disempowering and subjecting other groups. Popular resentment and political propaganda gave rise to extensive pogroms against the Igbo and other eastern minorities in many northern cities and in Lagos.[86] The countercoup in July 1966 did not stop the violence and a few months after the first coup, tens of thousands of Igbo had been murdered (174) and a large number of refugees headed to the southeast. The extent of the genocidal attacks together with the failure of the federal government to take action strengthened the support and need for the secession in the southeast. The war started shortly after Chukwuemeka Ojukwu declared the independence of the Republic of Biafra in 1967. The civil war, which ended with the disintegration of Biafra, lasted three years and caused between 1 and 3 million deaths on the Biafran side (Falola and Heaton 158).

The (in)evitability of the war continues to be a controversial issue. In *Destination Biafra*, for example, Buchi Emecheta recognizes the need to ensure protection for persecuted populations after the attacks but insists that the prolonged suffering of Easterners within and bordering Biafra resulted from the confrontation of two strong men's

---

[85] In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, while visiting her relatives in the north, Olanna attends a meeting of Igbo residents angered by the northerners' decision to ban Igbo children from northern schools (47).

ambitions. Others insist that the interested international involvement prolonged the war (Falola and Heaton 178) and complicated it, thus forestalling yet more opportunities to put an end to the slaughter. As Adichie suggests in her novel, however, the extensive attacks in the north led the population in Biafra to support Ojukwu and the new Republic as the only alternative for freedom and protection from further attacks. [87]

The continental and international contexts not only complicated the issue of Biafra but also transformed it into a globally enmeshed war. Not surprisingly, like the violent situation in the Congo that erupted in the early 1960s, the break-up of Nigerian unity was often analyzed as the failure of the African postcolonial state in general. While some African states had a "symbolic" stake in Nigeria's unity or dismantlement,[88] others— namely Britain—had strong commercial interests. In other words, even though the secession and subsequent war came as a direct result of the massacre and torture of Igbo migrants, Biafra—again not unlike Katanga in the Congo—became a battleground for international rivalries and interests as the impact of the secession was not limited to the Nigerian-Biafran context.[89] Thus becoming an international battleground, Biafra does not

---

[86] The last string of massacres dated back to 1945 amidst divisions on anti-colonial strategies.

[87] The literature on the subject reflects the controversy about the war and the way it unfolded. For example, Falola and Heaton cautiously observe that while the fear of genocide was real enough and justified among the Biafran population given the riots and the ongoing famine caused by the siege, it also became a platform for Ojukwu and fellow leaders to produce "massive amounts of propaganda" within Biafra and at the international level in order to promote the Biafran cause and charge of genocide (178), while by the same token also fostering "Igbo nationalism" (175). For Ekwe Ekwe, in contrast, all the events, from the massacres to the war amounted to an "organized" genocide (58) by the "genocide-state" (11) of Nigeria.

[88] South Africa's involvement revolved around its apartheid regime and the active attempt to undermine any strong African-led government to reinforce its white rule ideology. Later the South African government also trained guerillas to fuel the civil war in Zimbabwe. Ironically, then, South Africa recognized Biafra along with Tanzania, Côte d'Ivoire and Gabon.

[89] The geopolitical map of alliances was formed in accordance with various warfronts: "[The war] drew so much international attention that it was referred to as 'world war in microcosm.' While Britain supported the

only explode the ideal of liberation in a united Nigeria but it also heralds the increasing

rather than decreasing dependence of the postcolonial nation-state on a global economic

and political configuration. It is also through a similar multinational lens that we can view

the resurgence of Biafra in Nigerian literature.

The relative stability due to the economic boom in the postwar decade and the

succession of military regimes probably helped the government silence the history of the

war and its consequences. Besides, the devastation in the east was not matched by a similar

impact in the rest of the country. As characters in both *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Everything*

Good Will Come confess, their life in Lagos went on unperturbed and it was not until they

traveled to London that they finally discovered the scope of the Biafran tragedy. In spite of

the promise to reconstruct the ravaged southeast, post-war discrimination through a number

of measures designed to slow if not hamper the return to normalcy testify to a punitive

rather than a constructive policy.[90] As Atta writes in her novel, Abacha's violently

repressive regime (1993-1998) witnessed the revival of calls for secession in different

regions of the country in addition to the rise of civil protests. Starting from 1999, the

Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) sought to

revive not only the history of the war but also demands for independence. For supporters,

this revival constitutes a response to the marginalization of the Igbo after the war and the

---

federal government led by Gowon, France sided with the Biafrans. Israel supported Biafra to show its
opposition to Egypt, which supported the federal government. South Africa, led by its apartheid government,
threw its support behind Biafra to spite the Organization of African Unity (AOU). The former Soviet Union,
for its part, supported the federal government which drove the Chinese to the Biafran side. The United States
sympathized with Biafra but remained formally neutral" (*Encyclopedia of African History and Culture* 53).
[90] For details on how the "reconstruction" period was conducted in effect, see Nnaemeka Ikpeze' essay "Post-
Biafran Marginalization of the Igbo in Nigeria."

refusal of the federal government to invest in developing regional states that once constituted Biafra.

4.2. Novel Politics: Rearticulating the Role of Nigerian Novelists after Biafra

Before I proceed to reading the novels in more detail, I would like to comment on the critical implications of their engagement with relatively recent national history. My rationale for bringing the two texts together hinges on their interest in reviving chapters of specifically post-independence history and their common, albeit differently expressed, concern with possibilities of resisting the rule and culture of silence imposed by different regimes. Respectively published in 2006 and 2004, *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Everything Good Will Come* have been cited as contributions to the recent revival of the Nigerian novel or what Adesanmi and Dunton call the "third generation" (vii) of Nigerian writers. I am not proposing a thorough comparison between the nationalist literature of early independence and current Nigerian writing. Rather, I would like to outline some of the ways in which these two novels in particular evoke and rework the concept of the postcolonial subject and the narrator's responsibility from their historical and literary perspective. The novels take the instability of the war and the repression of the military governments as their respective reference point to negotiate and rehistoricize the postcolonial nation.

Contradicting post-independence intellectuals' belief in the nation as a unifying and progressive factor, the Nigerian-Biafran war marks the early failure of the political and cultural project of nationalist literature. For those writers who believed in literature's role to

consolidate a common Nigerian culture,[91] Biafra does not only subvert the myth of *de facto* liberation and progress in the postcolonial nation-state.[92] The history of Biafra and the war also destabilize previous intellectual projections of egalitarianism in postcolonial Africa of the kind perhaps that animate Adichie's intellectual character Odenigbo in his pre-war articles on African socialism (87). In conformity with a modernist conception of progress, he believes that "[t]he real tragedy of our postcolonial world . . . is that the majority [of people] have not been given the tools to *negotiate* this new world [italics in the original]" (129). Even if he disapproves of the promotion of Nigerian identity as a replacement for ethnic specificities, in this passage Odenigbo echoes Achebe's "progressive" argument about a new world for which independence functions as a threshold. With the dramatic turn of events, however, it becomes difficult to conceive of literature, and more specifically the novel, as a medium which simply anticipates or depicts realistic scenes of contemporary life without reflecting the imprint of postcolonial history's "own" horror stories and their continued haunting of the present. In other words, the history of Biafra inaugurates a new

---

[91] As a prominent voice in articulating the role of the African writer, Chinua Achebe has often promoted his vision of "the novelist as a teacher" (*Hopes* 45) who handles a powerful societal and educative instrument: "Literature gives us a second handle on reality enabling us to encounter in the safe manageable dimensions of make-believe the very same threats . . . that may assail the psyche in real life; and at the same time providing through the self-discovery it imparts a veritable weapon for coping with these threats […] What better preparation do people want as they begin their journey into the strange, revolutionary world of modernization" (*Hopes* 170). As Imre Szeman notes, before the war Achebe and Wole Soyinka embraced the concept of the nation as a drive for modernization and a shield against nativist politics (119-120) and believed in the need to produce nationalist literature to that end (118). For both writers, the nation brings together political and cultural projects for the advancement of the country in particular, and the continent in general.

[92] In *The Man Died*, Wole Soyinka muses over the chains binding his ankles in detention and the history of slavery they evoke (39). The incongruous yet real presence of his black Nigerian jailors clashes with the image of a "racial memory" of a collective past of aggression thus illustrating the ironic repetition of repression after independence.

traumatic reference point for Nigerian postcolonial history and future generations of novelists.

4.2.1. Biafra Literature

The aftermath of the war witnessed the production of what came to be known as civil war literature. The "literary phenomenon" to use Chidi Amuta's ("Nigerian" 85) and Jane Bryce's terms (29) usually refers to works produced in the 1970s and1980s. The corpus includes Buchi Emecheta's *Destination Biafra* (1982), Chinua Achebe's *Girls at War and Other Stories* (1972), S.O. Mezu's *Behind the Rising Sun* (1971), Flora Nwapa's *Never Again* (1975) and *Wives at War and Other Stories (1980)*. Aside from his article "The Nigerian Civil War and the Evolution of Nigerian Literature" (1983), Chidi Amuta also compiled "A Selected Checklist of Primary and Critical Sources on Nigerian Civil War Literature" (1982). In Craig McLuckie's *Nigerian Civil War Literature: Seeking an Imagined Community* (1990), the texts documented and examined form a genre, as Bryce suggests, or rather "numerous examples of different genres" ("Conflict" 29).[93] Instead of providing a detailed survey of the main works of fiction produced at the time, it is more useful to mention the major dilemmas related to the narration of the war in its immediate aftermath as these are precisely some of the issues which *Half of a Yellow Sun* negotiates.

For Amuta, the war did not simply mark the literary imaginary, but it "jolt[ed] the Nigerian writer from his relative stupor" ("Nigerian" 91). Further, he argues that literary

---

[93] In addition to McLuckie's and Amuta's survey, Adichie's acknowledgement note, as Hugh Hodges points out contains and incomplete but "a fairly representative collection" of literature on Biafra (1).

works addressing the civil war "represent some of the most important manifestations of the national imperative in African literature" (86). For him, the war, forces the writer to think of the specificities of the national, rather than Pan-African, context. Yet this historical imperative also confronts the writer with "the theoretical problem of the relationship between history. . . and the literary artifact" (Amuta 94). Hodges reiterates this dilemma or "how to reconcile or at least balance the competing demands of historicism and storytelling" (Hodges 3) and agrees with Amuta that some war fiction fails to provide more than a historical account of events. Further, Hodges insists on the contradiction and anxiety (7) inherent to the desire to *fictionalize* war *objectively*. In Emecheta's *Destination Biafra*, for example, he argues that the "documentary" tone suggesting "neutral factuality" is "deeply at odds with its allegorical nature" (6) and with the selective narration of historical events during the war (6). The unacknowledged "anxiety about the slippage between fictionalization and falsification" (7) leads to contradictions in the work of fiction and to confusion in its reading, as when "fictional" passages are read as historical "evidence" (4).

Discussing recent war narratives, Hodges clearly states that the anxiety mentioned above is not exclusive to early civil war literature. Yet, and this is crucial for my reading of the novel, "precisely because *Half of a Yellow Sun* dramatizes its own incompleteness, its inability to fully comprehend (in both senses of the word) the Biafran war, it negotiates the dilemmas implicit in fictionalizing war more successfully than most of its predecessors" (Hodges 3). While it is indebted to various works from the civil war literature era, Adichie's text "rejects the possibility of a 'total assessment'" (11). The dilemmas inherent to the majority of the fiction produced at the time help put into perspective what Imre

Szeman and Obi Nwakanma call the crisis of the Nigerian novel. They also represent some of the issues which Adichie's novel rearticulates differently through negotiation.

4.2.2. Post-Biafra Literature

Confirming the early imbrication of novel writing with the nation-building project, both Imre Szeman and Obi Nwakanma note that the crisis of the Nigerian nation during and after Biafra extends to the realm of the novel as novelists fail to produce a viable rearticulation of the national space after 1970, despite the abundance of war fiction. Nwakanma observes that the "trauma of the civil war expressed in terms of a separation from the idealized space of the nation, is clearly reflected in the evident paucity or even absence of Igbo imaginative figuration of the nation between 1970 and 1983, using the mode of the novel." He recognizes, however, that this is also true of Nigerian writing in general (7). For Szeman, in turn, Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) and Soyinka's *Season of Anomy* (1973)[94] epitomize the failure of the novel to uphold convincingly the forced political reunion of Nigeria in 1970. Notwithstanding the two writers' respective attempts to rearticulate the nation "*after* the nation" (119), as Szeman puts it, their novels reflect the rupture at the heart of Nigerian unity and the confusion of intellectuals in its wake. Despite their different focus, then, both critics agree on the joint crisis of the Nigerian novel and nation. Their insistence on this genre rather than literature in general is

---

[94] While *Anthills of the Savannah* (Achebe's first and last work of long fiction after the war), as Szeman notes, insists on the need to open up the elitist political sphere to allow a pluralistic community to emerge but fails to articulate that possibility beyond the existing power structures (136), *Season of Anomy* slides from its initial theme of the nation's breakup into an indictment of the intellectual and the act of writing (147).

not incidental and evokes the earlier assumption that the nation (and nation building) constitutes the postcolonial novel's main object and project.

For Szeman the parallelism between the novel and the nation forms a premise for rehabilitating Frederic Jameson's concept of national allegory in postcolonial fiction. As an "interpretive strategy," (53) he argues, national allegory helps reveal rather than reduce the complexity of the postcolonial text (55-6). Although he predicts that national allegory will become increasingly important (203) as the nation "has been one of the main sites of struggle in globalization" (203-04), Szeman analyzes the two narratives in relation to their authors' earlier conceptualization of the nation and the novel. In other words, given his focus, it remains unclear how well his understanding of national allegory survives the post-war 1970s and 1980s and applies to new Nigerian novelistic productions concerned with the nation. To a certain extent, Szeman's "verdict" that the texts' failure to sustain the authors' publicly proclaimed faith in the nation reveals the "explanatory," not to say prescriptive, expectations that remain attached to the concept despite Szeman's attempt to expunge them. While Szeman's particular focus on Achebe and Soyinka justifies his conclusions about the end of the *nationalist* novel, the terms of the correlation between the nation and possible literary representation are greatly modified when it comes to the contexts and perspectives through which Adichie and Atta produce their novels.

Writing from a different historical and a transformed national context, Adichie's narrative departs from the confidently "formative" perspective[95] of early independence

---

[95] In practice, many African intellectuals are soon confronted with an increasingly repressive state nationalism, promptly transforming their attempts to "teach" people and denounce elitist government

literature. *Half of a Yellow Sun* revives a collective experience that had rarely been so vividly resuscitated in a novel with, to use Adichie's words, "unapologetic Biafran sympathies" ("African" 50) since the time of the Nigerian Civil War narrative. Bearing in mind the recursive if tangential presence of Biafra in Nigerian fiction (Otiono), symptomatic, as it were, of its surreptitious haunting of the contested nation, *Half of a Yellow Sun* inscribes itself openly in the politics of remembering and re-presenting past trauma despite the official closure imposed on the war. Notwithstanding the differences in writing between the first generation and contemporary novelists, this renewed *direct* engagement with Biafran history also takes us back to Achebe's early articulations of the novelist's role in relation to the nation. Without limiting the African novel to a formula of either "righting wrongs" or forming new citizens for a new world, the issue of narrative responsibility inevitably arises here given the collective character of war especially from a Biafran perspective,[96] on the one hand and the fact that "many of the issues that led to the war remain salient" (Adichie, "Truth"), on the other. By multiplying the narrative perspectives, however, *Half of a Yellow Sun* problematizes and negotiates the narration of national trauma and performs its instability rather than claims a singular authority and representation. My reading of Adichie's and Atta's novels does not seek to identify an allegory of the nation, itself a fraught and irreducibly multilayered site of contested

practices into a threat for the state. While Achebe was suspected of participating in the political upheaval in Nigeria in 1966, Soyinka was jailed for his efforts to promote peace. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, also jailed in post-independence Kenya, is yet another famous example illustrating how the early idea of "nation building" develops into discordant conceptions, many of which are eventually perceived as seditious voices to be silenced.

identities and practices. Rather, my aim is to explore negotiation as a reading and narrative strategy through which the novelists approach Nigeria's contested national history.

Unlike Achebe's, Soyinka's and Atta's aforementioned works, Adichie's novel rewrites the moment of the symbolic rupture of Nigeria during the riots and its official actualization with the secession. The narrative space is therefore split according to respective Nigerian and Biafran geographies and nationalities. More specifically, the former correspond to the pre-war sections of the narrative and are marked by the characters' mobility across cities in eastern (later to become Biafra), northern, and western Nigeria. The Biafran spaces, in turn, unfold as we follow the main characters as refugees who move from one location to another, in the process mapping out Biafra and its gradually shrinking territory with the advance of Nigerian troops. In his reading of the novel as what he calls "failed-state fiction" (597), John Marx notes that Odenigbo and Olanna's "romantic turmoil directly parallels Nigeria's defining postcolonial crisis" (612). Such an allegory, however, soon becomes unsustainable as the novel oscillates between pre-war and post-secession sections with their respective national spaces. Further, Olanna and her twin sister Kainene have an important allegorical function which relates to Biafra and its liminal status at the end of the war as it is forcibly (re)incorporated by the Nigerian nation-state. Significantly, this "partial" national allegory foregrounds a female gendered perspective to historicize the nation-state. The doubling of the sisters, which I will discuss later in more detail, replicates the splitting of a nation, be it the Nigerian or Biafran nation, on the one

---

[96] The responsibility to record the collective story as experienced by Biafrans becomes even more urgent in the context of their defeat which entails the prominence of the federalists' war account and erasure of the

hand, and that of the concept of allegory, on the other. For allegory, as Margaret Hillenbrand aptly notes, is also an inherently split structure (658). I am not suggesting that the couple of Olanna and Odenigbo might function as an allegory for Nigeria—in fact the parallel evolution of the couple and the country is not totally accurate—while Olanna and Kainene play the same role for Biafra. What I want to suggest, instead, is that there is no possible unitary national allegory for the narrative because the novel is marked by repetitious doubling.

If Adichie's writing acknowledges the instability of narrative authority by foregrounding different characters' perspectives, Atta's text presents the unique voice of her first person narrator from her particular middle class, gender-specific, and Lagos-centered perspective. The coming-of-age structure of the novel and her birth in the year of Nigeria's independence seemingly suggest the classical correspondence between the nation and the individual. The novel registers some of the main political and economic upheavals as the protagonist moves from her belief in private responsibility to a more collective understanding of engagement. At the same time, Atta's novel represents a vivid configuration of city life in Lagos. While the city in general is often conflated with the nation, here Lagos is hardly represented metonymically in relation to the Nigerian nation as a whole.[97] In fact, when Enitan attends college with girls hailing from various regions of

---

Biafran perspective.

[97] In his study of the allegorical function of the representation of colonial and postcolonial Nairobi in Marjorie Macgoye's novel *Coming to Birth*, Joseph Slaughter notes how the city becomes both the "metonymic condensation of the Kenyan nation" and an "administrative substitute for the nation" ("Master" 37). *Everything Good Will Come* does not foreground such a metonymic link between the city and the rest of the country,

Nigeria, she mentions the unfamiliarity of their stories and families (43-4). This remark subverts the classical and teleological opposition between rural traditionalism and urban postcolonial modernism (Slaughter, "Master" 35), with the latter being presented as a precursor to what the entire nation supposedly strives to achieve. Except for her years in London, Enitan's world remains entrenched in specific Lagos spaces. In fact, for Rita Nnodim, the novel is representative of a narrative pattern which clearly locates characters in their city of Lagos, rather than in the nation and emphasizes "urban activism" and "local concerns" instead of creating "new utopian perspectives or imaginations of the postcolonial nation" (331). With reference to *Everything Good Will Come*, she argues that the text traces Enitan's *local* political activism rather than an engagement with a larger concept of the nation. Nevertheless, while Enitan's reflection and novel desire to take action in her society emphasize the potential value of personal and local commitment, however limited in scope, the city remains unavoidably subjected to interrelated national and global politics. Reiterating her ignorance of Nigerian life outside Lagos, part of her activism still consists in interpellating, rather than circumventing, national authorities and institutions. Atta's text does not evoke the kind of national doubling that Adichie's novel does; nonetheless, the nation still figures as a contested yet incontestably persistent presence. Locally, nationally, and globally interdependent, the spaces in which Enitan transforms her disengagement into engagement still complicate a straightforward reading of the novel as national allegory. Enitan's "coming-of-age" in no way parallels a similar trajectory for the nation as a whole. Significantly, Enitan's euphoric state at the end of the novel as her father is liberated from

prison does not symbolize the end of Abacha's regime. Both novels' approach to the nation and national history is not limited by the structure of the national allegory.

4.3. Biafran Re-articulations in Half of a Yellow Sun*: Negotiating Trauma and Responsibility*

By engaging with the particular history of Biafra, writers, like Adichie, who did not experience the war directly, clearly state that the civil war narratives of the 1970s have not exhausted the possibilities of narrating Biafra. This interest does not simply testify to the need to reconnect with earlier narratives but also to "re-narrativize" (x) the war, as Pius Adesanmi and Chris Dunton put it. More specifically, reintroducing Biafra in the literary landscape whether through the marginal figure of the former Biafran combatant[98] or as the central theme (as in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*) does not simply amount to a denunciation of war atrocities but also forms a reaction against the extended silence and Nigeria's failure to recognize the history of the war, on the one hand, and to address (and redress) the sense of marginalization that continues to fuel regional disparities, on the other. The novels seek to renegotiate the current Nigerian nation-state by returning to an alternative narrative of origin based on dissent rather than unity.

Alternating sections set in the early and late 1960s in newly independent Nigeria, *Half of a Yellow Sun* recreates the main events preceding and marking the Nigerian-Biafran Civil War by carefully exploring the scope of collective trauma through the personal and

---

[98] Helon Habila's two novels *Waiting for an Angel* and *Measuring Time* evoke the marginal and physically or psychologically scarred Biafran veteran. A comparable character also appears in Abani's *Graceland*.

mainly middle class world of its main characters. The private lives that converge with a massive and communal tragedy are recounted from the personal perspectives of Olanna, Richard, and Ugwu. Many of the characters come together through the twin sisters, Olanna and Kainene, who at the opening of the novel have both just graduated in England and resettled in Nigeria. Rejecting her family's public life and dubious political and business practices as members of the Lagos elite, Olanna lives with Odenigbo in the southeastern town of Nsukka where both work as university instructors. Kainene's English lover, Richard, struggles with the general perception of his foreignness and his desire to belong first to Nigerian then—after the secession—to Biafran society. Ugwu, the third voice in the novel, leaves his village to work as a houseboy at Odenigbo's house. His forced conscription in the Biafran army adds a different perspective to the otherwise civilian experience of the war. As Kainene disappears at the end of the war, the characters are united in their vain search for her. Mainly set in the southeast, the novel also includes passages set in Lagos and Kano before the war, which allows Adichie to register the mounting anti-Igbo sentiment culminating in the riots. In addition to depicting the traumatic experience of persecution, bombings and starvation, Adichie also documents the birth of Biafran nationalism, the mobilization and organization of the population under increasingly unbearable living conditions, and the fierce hope for a potential breakaway nation if allowed to survive.

4.3.1. Negotiating Trauma

The novel then recreates multiple Biafra stories that add layers of meaning to the famous images of starvation associated with the conflict. But, what can Adichie say now that Buchi Emecheta, Chinua Achebe, or Wole Soyinka did not in their contributions to the Nigerian civil war literature? What can her text contribute to the current national and global public discourse on responsibility or reconciliation? Nwakanma notes that "the contemporary Igbo-Nigerian novel takes a radically ambivalent and ironic stance" (7-8), which as he hastens to add again is also characteristic of contemporary Nigerian fiction, in general (8). Acknowledging this unstable relation with history and representation, as this novel arguably does, highlights the issue of narrative responsibility when it comes to narrating trauma and its collective implications. It is precisely this ambivalent stance symptomatic of the persistent destabilizing effects of civil war trauma that requires the text to negotiate the individual and collective aspects of Biafran history and their inclusion in the public debate, on the one hand. What it also negotiates is the gradual doubling of Biafra into a political entity and a symbol of resistance and emancipation along regional and global axes. Both levels of negotiation extricate the narrative from an exclusively local context to invoke deeper colonial, neo-colonial, and global interrelations, which allow this traumatic event to relate to the larger historical traumatic violations of history (Eze 39).

The concept of negotiation I use to read *Half of a Yellow Sun* works in tandem with the "ambivalent and ironic" (Nwakanma 7-8) distance characteristic of the new Nigerian novel. In other words, negotiation here refers to and brings together different and sometimes paradoxical narrative elements of individual, communal, and national history

while foregrounding the instability of historical and identity politics. More importantly, negotiation also implies a more careful approach to the "ethical charge driving trauma theory" (339), to use Tom Toremans' words, and to the assumptions about the supposedly unproblematic translatability of individual trauma and testimony into the collective trauma.

Olanna's and Ugwu's agonizing attempts to deal with their war experiences by repressing or sharing them exemplify the limited translatability of trauma from individual into collective terms (and vice versa). The literature on postcolonial loss addresses the undeniably communal dimension of the postcolonial condition, starting with Fanon who emphasizes the individual and collective impact of colonialism and thus notes "the need for combined action on the individual and the group" (*Black* 100). For Craps and Buelens, Fanon therefore recognizes the limitations of a strictly individualist approach to postcolonial trauma, yet does not assume "an unproblematic translation from individual to collective trauma" (Craps and Buelens 4). More generally, this issue also relates to the problematic "exportation" (Whitehead 14) of trauma discourse from its Western birthplace to non-Western contexts without pondering the "relevance" of its strongly individualist basis for different communities (14). Pointing out the possible inadequacy of the existing trauma discourse, Annie Whitehead also hints at the limitations of a reversed assumption that all trauma, by virtue of being postcolonial, is solely expressed and experienced collectively. Further, while literature dealing with colonial trauma seeks to create a sense of "a collective experience of loss," as Sam Durrant argues (54), the very notion of a community that shares a common postcolonial loss is complicated by post-independence violence, which reinforces or even reshapes new communities, alliances, and enmities

within the same national territory. In the novel, the difficulty of narrating their trauma underwrites the characters' deferred need to negotiate their personal involvement with the surrounding collective suffering. Yet, as Olanna's and Ugwu's experiences illustrate, ambivalence also marks this gesture when it finally occurs because individual experience cannot easily be rendered public and representative of the collectivity.

Olanna evolves through this gradual negotiation of personal memory within communal history as she moves from her incapacity to voice her trauma to a spontaneous evocation of it and even desire for it to be heard and recorded. Her audience expands metaphorically as Ugwu proceeds to write her story into a regional and global context of Biafran history. By placing Olanna in northern Kano during the massacre of Igbo residents, Adichie documents the riots from her perspective while also setting her apart from other characters with whom she shares the experience of war, bombings and deprivation, but not the traumatic images from Kano or her flight back to the east together with persecuted refugees.[99] Towards the end of the journey, a woman sitting next to her on the train invites passengers to look into her calabash at her daughter's severed head. When Olanna tells Odenigbo about all she saw in Kano, her lips grow gradually "heavy" and speaking becomes "a labor" (197) and by the time her parents and sister come to visit her, it is Odenigbo who tells them about the events. As for Kainene, her considerate words that she need not talk prove unnecessary because "Olanna had not even tried to talk about it" (197).

---

[99] Adichie also introduces the mounting anti-Igbo sentiment in Lagos when Olanna and her cousin Arize witness men harassing Igbo passers-by. When the attacks begin, Richard is present at another scene of the massacre at the airport in Kano. In contrast to Olanna, who is spared only because she was shielded from the

In addition to her failure to interact with her visitors, the physical manifestations of her shock as "Dark Swoops" (196) and her inability to walk for weeks maintain her in a state of bedridden isolation reminiscent of *The Stone Virgins'* Nonceba's immobility and psychological seclusion at the hospital after Sibaso's attack. For both characters, then, the traumatizing events they experience during acts of collective violence are first and foremost experienced in an individual and almost intransitive fashion.

While Nonceba moves to the city away from guerilla violence and learns to live with the silent presence of her dead sister, Olanna's experience in Kano only marks the start of atrocities for Biafrans—Igbo and otherwise—and her forced adaptation to arduous and more collective living conditions. During the war, Olanna endures the same fear and deprivation as the thousands of refugees with whom her family relocates but what she sees in the northern city remains her personal untellable story despite her interaction with refugees from the north with similar experiences. When Odenigbo angrily mentions her cousin Arize's death to contend that all northerners, including her friend Mohammed, are equally complicit in murder, Olanna is shocked that he "cheapened Arize's memory in order to make a point in a spurious argument" (238). Aside from her rightful anger that he appeals to her terrifying memories to justify his position, her reaction also reveals how she perceives the tragic end of her relatives to be *her* story, "irreducible," as it were, to a collective and therefore nameless tragedy. Significantly, she "recoils" from Odenigbo (238) and is not surprised to experience another "Dark Swoop" (239), a fit which she has to fight

---

mob, Richard knows that his Englishness and whiteness set him apart from the targeted Igbo who were executed.

alone. Likewise, when she is literally summoned to a communal sharing of her testimony at her grandfather's compound, she withholds it from Odenigbo and recognizes her unwillingness "to talk about it" with him (239), thus reinforcing his exclusion from her personal experience.

After her relative recovery, Olanna is required to relate her memories of the killings at a family meeting to which she is summoned. As the sole member of the family to have survived the bloodshed in the north, she must confirm the deaths her extended family now has to mourn. However, this forced sharing does not break her isolation. Since she stands apart and alone not only as the sole witness and bearer of tragic news but also as the only one who returns from the north alive. Her guilt-ridden wish that her cousins would "question her for being alive" (241) only exacerbates her isolation and singular responsibility for "funerals based not on physical bodies but on her words" (241). In the midst of a collective tragedy and a family mourning, her decidedly individual position as the one who survives and has to act as the testimony forecloses a feeling of connection with the group despite their shared loss. Instead, she wonders if she should trust memories no one else can confirm (241) and she relapses into the "strange silence" (243) that had started with Odenigbo's comment. The solemn and public context of her revelations in addition to the fact that her words act in lieu of the concrete bodies as ultimate proof of death transform her story into a testimony. But while, according to Shoshana Felman's study, the existence of the other—the audience—validates a testimony ("Education" 15), this scene dramatizes the imperfect solace that the act of testifying is expected to bring Olanna or Mama Dozie, the sister of the deceased who angrily questions Olanna's words. No sense of

closure or closeness results from telling or hearing the story respectively for either woman. Instead, the public and forced aspect of the testimony—in the sense that Olanna does not spontaneously choose to talk—becomes a traumatizing act in itself.

It is not until the three years of the war have passed and Kainene has disappeared that Olanna unexpectedly starts talking about the girl's head in the calabash. This time she initiates the story and then continues because "Ugwu was writing as she spoke, and his writing, the earnestness of his interest, suddenly made *her* story important, made it serve a larger purpose that even she was not sure of, and so she told him all she remembered [*italics added*]" (512). This moment marks a shift in Olanna's perception of her story as no longer exclusively "hers," but as one that can be shared by virtue of being evocative of a collective violation. Significantly, what provokes this change is the fact that Ugwu is writing, thereby introducing her story into the realm of representation and, most importantly, representability. While her earlier public testimony does not liberate her from the isolation of her traumatic memories, she now recognizes its collective relevance and spontaneously engages in recording it.

Thus staging the difficult translation of Olanna's terrifying experience into collective loss, the text also carefully negotiates the limits of narrating (collective) trauma. Linda Belau argues that trauma's "seeming incomprehensibility," which trauma theorists such as Felman and Cathy Caruth posit, " has . . . invited a dangerous elevation of traumatic experience to the level of the ideal" (par 1), and by implication beyond the realm of representation. In the same special issue of *Postmodern Culture* on trauma literature featuring Belau's article, Petar Ramadanovic reiterates the contributors' position that

trauma does not lie beyond representation. I would argue that this belief in the possible *and* imperfect narration of trauma underlies the project of *Half of a Yellow Sun* that recreates the Biafran civil war "head on" (58), as Jane Bryce puts it. Nevertheless, the implications of Olanna's narration remain obscure for her even though she senses a "larger purpose" to it, that is, a purpose larger than herself. Further, the act of recording, and therefore sharing, cannot subsume the individual aspect of trauma to its collective dimension. More specifically, the ambivalence implied by the persistence of dual dimensions of trauma dictates her reaction to the radio announcement of the Biafran surrender. To Ugwu's baffled question "What now, mah?" she quietly answers: "Now I can go and find my sister" (515). Not unlike Marita in Hove's novel *Bones* for whom Zimbabwe's independence barely represents more than an opportunity to start searching for her embattled son, in this passage, Olanna detaches herself from the collective implications of the dismantlement of the Biafran state, and equates the end of the war with the timely reopening of roads and potential reunion with Kainene. In other words, Olanna's trauma, like everyone else's, will always be doubled as individual and collective.

While this doubling of trauma into an individual and a collective dimension seems obvious, it complicates the debate around the (in)accessibility of trauma through representation and the witness' position. If like Belau and Ramadanovic we accept that trauma does not exist at "the level of the ideal" and that victims are not "ambassadors of an exceptional realm" inaccessible "to the rest of us" (Belau par 1), this should not be understood as an affirmation of the systematic translatability of individual into collective accounts even among victims. Nor does this argument imply the rendition of trauma as an

understandable experience for those who have not endured the same event. For Belau's stance is also premised on the impossibility to recreate the traumatic event, in the sense of returning to the original occurrence: "It is only because the symbolic cannot address the logic of trauma adequately that trauma is registered at all" (par 32). The idea that trauma should be registered through the inadequacy of representation sheds a different light on Felman's assertion that "to testify is . . . to take responsibility—in speech—for history or for the truth of an occurrence for something that, by definition, goes beyond the personal in having general (non-personal) validity and consequences" (Felman, "Return" 204). Here the individual's responsibility for truth is taken for granted along with its systematic representation of the larger community. In fact, while trauma does not preclude representation, its expression and translatability remain inadequate and unstable. That responsibility to tell, therefore, remains circumscribed by the tension between individual and collective narratives.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the tension that underlies the negotiation of individual and collective aspects of trauma also relates to representation, to writing, and to the writer. The resulting sense of instability underlies Ugwu's "formal" historical narration of Biafra. The narrative voice recedes at the end of the first eight chapters to include passages describing the book that Ugwu writes. But why does Ugwu write? The urgent attempt to extract something positive from the traumatic experience fuels resistance to the official erasure of Biafra. The desire for a constructive approach, for a benefit, so to speak, to emerge from the revival of the traumatic event, which is perhaps what Felman on another level translates into the ethical and the pedagogical dimension of narrating trauma, reflects the desperate

resistance of the Biafran population during the war and the subsequent disbelief that it still led to defeat. Ugwu's question to Olanna at the surrender to Federal forces: "what now, mah?" (515) captures this disbelief that sacrifice did not ensure victory. Like Olanna, Ugwu believes in a larger purpose for the book, and like Debbie in Emecheta's *Destination Biafra* who at the end of the novel plans to write a manuscript about the war, Ugwu wants to record the Biafran experience not only to "appeal to a community" (Felman, "Return" 204), but also to foreground the war in a regional and global narrative of (shared) responsibility. While we see him writing Olanna's personal memories towards the end of the novel, he could only have added other entries retrospectively, such as details about reactions to the war in Britain, the United States, and Canada (324) and the photographs that prompted little action (470), both of which he could not have known during the war. His book, then, incorporates his personal experience of Biafra with what many Biafrans ignored during the war.

For Ugwu to write about the war trauma from a historical perspective entrenched in colonialism and the continuation of British power throughout the war (324), in other words, for him to write about the collective trauma, he seems to have evaded his own subjective and individual experience. The latter is shaped by his past as a Biafran soldier implicated both in the defense of Biafra and in civilian abuse. Symbolically, Ugwu takes over the narrative task from Richard who abandons his project to write a book about Biafra. While Ugwu proves a more representative voice than the English writer, the novel continues to be concerned with the (un)reliability of the act of writing. For Jane Bryce, "The Book," which Ugwu writes, is a device that "allows Adichie to gracefully relinquish her position as

narrative authority, in favor of a spokesman for the voiceless—which she does not claim to be" (62). However, if the narrative voice acknowledges the impossibility of writing through the gap of time and thus appeals to the apt firsthand experience of the soldier and displaced Biafran that Ugwu is, the Book does not replace it and Ugwu's authority and authorship reflect a certain instability. In fact, the first time he hears Richard's title that he is to appropriate as his own, *The World Was Silent When we Died*, it "fills him with shame" (496). What he first hears in it is an indictment of his own silence and participation in a gang rape of a Biafran girl with other Biafran soldiers. In Olanna's case, the possibility that her memories may have a collective implication triggers her personal narration. For Ugwu, in turn, the collective narrative and larger sense of responsibility to perpetuate Biafra become a way for him to evade the guilt that haunts his thoughts and dreams and to "atone for what he had done" (497).

The shift from the personal to the collective only happens gradually, and probably unwittingly at first. After a few false starts, "[f]inally, he started writing about Aunty Arize's anonymous death in Kano, and about Olanna losing the use of her legs . . .   He wrote about the children of the refugee camp" (498). While it starts as an occupation, his writing metamorphoses into a committed attempt to create a memoir of Biafran lives and history. In doing so, his dreams recede (498) and he seems to have displaced his guilt into a responsibility to record Biafrans'collective history. Yet the text does not allow for an easy possibility for atonement. When Kainene, who now manages a refugee camp, discovers that Father Marcel has been sexually abusing girls in exchange for food, she orders the two priests of the camp to leave. Ugwu is transfixed by Kainene's uncharacteristic rage and sees

"something magnificent" in it (499). What is magnificent about it is not simply the sheer power of it that transforms her beyond recognition (498) but also the fact that she *reacts* against and refuses an outrageous situation in spite of the exceptional conditions of the war. Her reaction and action are not only a reminder of what Ugwu did which, he feels, would earn him the same treatment as Father Marcel, but it is yet another indictment of his failure to react when he *should* have been outraged. Now in charge of many of the departing priests' tasks, Ugwu feels "stained and unworthy" (499). His sincere wish to atone for his act accompanies his need to keep it a secret. Convinced that if uncovered "[Kainene] would loathe him, so would Olanna, so would Eberechi" (499), Ugwu needs to present an impeccable and selfless image of himself.

While the book does not become an autobiography, Ugwu's internal struggle frames and gives sense to his "ambitious" project as Richard describes it (530). Recounting the collective experience of Biafrans allows him to negotiate his own responsibility in the girl's abuse with his larger responsibility in recording "anonymous" (498) deaths and suffering especially in the absence of a concrete Biafran Republic to attest to them. His double imperative of atonement and responsibility underwrites his first choice for a title for his book: "Narrative of the Life of a Country" (530) modeled on Frederick Douglass' *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave: Written by Himself*. While he relies on his experience of the war, the bombings, and scarcity that he lives, hears and observes as a Biafran, Ugwu clearly shifts the focus from the autobiographical frame in the original title to transform into the collective "biography" of a *country*. We do not know what he chooses to write or omit or how—and to what extent—the girl at the bar, as he

thinks of her, figures in the collective narrative of abuse and loss, but he negotiates his personal involvement by immersing himself in the collective record. Ugwu's text, then, reiterates rather than solves the problems related to the idealized notion of the survivor's testimony and trauma narratives thus problematizing his position as a "spokesman for the voiceless" (Bryce 62). While complicated by his individual guilt, the need to remember rather than forget collective injustice is reminiscent of Debbie's decision to write a book in *Destination Biafra*, Olanna's eventual and spontaneous narration, and Kainene's desire to talk to Olanna despite their estrangement after she witnesses Ikejide's death. This need to share, then, counters the official disappearance of Biafra. In other words, the instability of the text, or Adichie's refusal to write Biafra as "a *utopia-in-retrospect*" ("African" 50) does not incapacitate its power to disturb the official Nigerian narrative and evoke global responsibility. Rather, it resists the official narrative of the war as it eschews a simplistic representation of Biafra.

Ugwu's final title, *The World Was Silent When We Died*, indicates the global direction his narrative eventually takes. His gradual negotiation of the ambivalent implications of responsibility also echoes the oscillation between individual and collective narrations of trauma. As mentioned above, different critics have highlighted the possible inadequacy of trauma discourse based on its individual focus aspect to the detriment of different modes of communal expressions in postcolonial contexts. By problematizing the assumption of translatability of individual trauma into "larger social entities, such as communities, nations" (Craps and Buelens 4), Adichie also highlights the collective resonance of Biafra in the past and present. The idea of "postcolonizing trauma" then not

only evokes the possibilities of communal expressions of trauma, but it also traces the postcolonial condition back to its colonial origin. The gesture is foregrounded here in the way Richard abandons his project to write about Biafra and Ugwu slowly expands his. At the beginning, Richard perceives the formation of Biafra as an opportunity to truly belong to this new and still undefined nation—or so he sees it—and accordingly says "we" when referring to Biafrans (466), but he eventually realizes that "[t]he war isn't [his] story to tell really" (530) as he confides to Ugwu after reading some of his notes. The latter approves and "t[akes] the sheets of paper from Mr. Richard" (531). Ugwu thus symbolically taking over the act of chronicling the war from Richard "mark[s] the exit of the Western subject from narrative control" (40) as Novak aptly puts it.

On one level, the novel privileges Ugwu in the writer's position given his unequivocal and uncontested belonging to Biafra, in contrast to Richard, who notwithstanding his emotional and physical commitment to Biafra, has the possibility of leaving and claiming England as home if he so chooses. On another level, Ugwu's narrative "takeover" reveals further implications since it allows for a colonially imbricated historicization of the war from a West-African perspective. Widening the scope of Richard's plan for his unwritten book to be an "indictment of the world['s]" (469) silence during the war, Ugwu ties the horrors of the bloodshed not only to the international indifference to human suffering (though not to geopolitical and economic interests) but also to the colonial violation of the region and the British legacy of a precariously united and unevenly ruled nation (195). Ugwu's book, therefore, postcolonizes the trauma narrative of Biafra both through his authorship and his historical perspective.

The colonial and postcolonial contextualization of the Biafran narrative helps his book invoke the globalized dimension of the war and its representation. In other words, as he negotiates his personal involvement and his responsibility in telling the collective tale of loss through the act of writing, Ugwu also negotiates a still broader meaning of responsibility by extending Biafran history beyond its geographical and historical limits. If as Onyaemachi Udumukwu asserts, writing represents "attempts made in the post-colonial and post-apartheid condition to *communicate* the fundamental relationship between knowledge and experience [*italics added*]" (353), Ugwu's writing not only communicates but also interpellates the "Western gaze" (Novak 41**)** in his poem about starving children in Biafra. In an interesting reversal, Novak argues that trauma here is not incomprehensible because of the inaccessible position of the traumatized other, but because of the addressee who "cannot hear" (41). Yet the world ignored Biafra not because it *could* not see or hear. Quite the contrary, Ugwu insists: "You needn't imagine. There were photos/ Displayed in the gloss-filled pages of your *Life*" (470). After an earlier section of his book in which he lists some Western countries' inaction premised on Britain's stance and influence, Ugwu here "distributes" responsibility, to use Chad Lavin's word, among the perpetrators and those to whom the media presented the war. In this sense, his book and Adichie's novel do not only aim at the national space of Nigeria and its public discourse. The nation-state here is inseparable from the colonial context of its birth, the neo-imperial involvement in its post-independence politics, as well as the global implications of its postcolonial conflict. Ugwu's sense of responsibility doubles ambivalently to signify both his culpability and his self-assigned duty to record collective trauma.

4.3.2 Re-Presenting Biafra and its Double

Ugwu's negotiation of Biafra within a global narrative of responsibility represents one of the ways in which the novel globalizes trauma and Biafran history while retaining their specificity. Attempting to come to terms with recent war memories explored through Olanna and Ugwu relates to the question of how to remember Biafra now, which informs the project of the novel. As a text produced in 2006, *Half of a Yellow Sun* represents a contribution to rewriting history by inviting and staging a common memory. Yet remembering Biafra is necessarily a dual act of resisting erasure and underscoring the fact that the history and much of the social and political tension leading to the war remain unresolved. The Biafra which Adichie recreates and helps circulate, then, is not limited to the spatio-temporal context of the war; rather, the text re-presents it not only as a past southeastern history and a short-lived state, even if primarily so, but also as an ideal, or what has become the "country of the mind" (Ezeliora) with a powerful resonance for (Nigerian) postcolonial issues of nationhood, justice, and global accountability. It is this gradual doubling of Biafra that *Half of a Yellow Sun* negotiates first through its choice of representation of the war in context, and second through the characters who, while limited by their own setting, prefigure this split. Writing this story as an act of remembering and reasserting the continued valence of the Biafran experience beyond its territoriality and temporality evokes and refashions Michael Rothberg's call to "decoloniz[e] and globaliz[e]" (226) trauma discourse. In the novel, the trauma of Biafran war is globalized in the sense that the text evokes the symbolic persistence of Biafra on a regional and global

plane which exceeds the temporal and geographical limitations of Biafra and the national borders of Nigeria.

The Biafran story is globalized through the space(s) of the novel's production, its reach, and the audience that its language and publication can secure. As critics pointed out, many of the Nigerian writers who have been celebrated recently either write from a non-Nigerian location, or are doubly located.[100] Interestingly, the generational and sometimes territorial gap reinforces the internationalism of the Nigerian-Biafran war. As Adesanmi and Dunton note, contemporary Nigerian novelists are creating a "borderless, global, textual topography" (ix), which interrogates a strict delimitation of the framework of the novel within the national space, albeit one could add, without blurring the particular location of the novel. The creation of a "global topography" reflects the globalization of Biafra, not only through the internationalization of the conflict during the war, but also through the role that the global Biafran diaspora plays in preserving the ideal of Biafra decades later. It should be noted that this diasporic attachment to the Biafran ideal does not simply reflect nostalgia for the past short-lived Republic, but it also represents the search for an alternative narrative of belonging beyond the nation-state of Nigeria.

For Nwakanma, this oscillation between "cosmopolitanism and localism" (8) that he attributes specifically to Igbo novelists is symptomatic of what he describes as a "doubleness of Igbo nationalism" (8). While I find adapting Nwakanma's notion of

---

[100] The location of many of the recently published novelists such as Helon Habila, Helen Oyeyemi, Chris Abani, Uzodinma Iweala, including Adichie and Atta, has been commented on as an illustration of the "diasporic *durée*" (Bryce 57) of Nigerian literature, and the production of a "borderless, global" corpus (Adesanmi and Dunton ix).

doubleness useful in figuring how Biafra itself becomes split and doubled as a political entity and a symbol, it would be problematic—although not irrelevant—to view it exclusively through the lens of Igbo nationalism. More specifically, focusing on Igbo novelists' work as a conduit for Igbo nationalism implies that it communicates with the Biafran territoriality and the Biafran global diaspora while somewhat circumventing the national space of Nigeria. This reading, however, risks overlooking how *Half of a Yellow Sun*, for example, negotiates the revival of Biafra primarily by appealing to the communities victimized by it, but also by raising related questions of accountability which necessarily implicate all parties. In *The Man Died*, Wole Soyinka records how he opposed the secession before he was arrested not out of support for the Federal Government but because, he argues, the secession would also allow Nigeria to start anew with "a successful philosophy of genocide" (177) since "if the East goes there is no crime in the new entity still known as Nigeria" (177).[101] To view the narratives of Biafra as unfolding "only" along cosmopolitan and local (i.e. regional) axes risks excluding, and thereby exonerating, Nigeria from the need to confront the national history of the war. Further, this perspective overlooks the traces which remained visible through the subsequent political domination of the army which won the war. In the novel, Ms Adebayo explains, "we didn't really understand what was happening in Biafra. Life went on and women wore the latest lace in Lagos" (528). Nevertheless, the continued repetition of violent inter-communal outbreaks

---

[101] As it later became clear, even reunification did not ensure a proper "moral purge" (Soyinka *The Man Died*, 177). Yet Soyinka's remark is no less insightful. He argues that the advent of a new Nigeria after secession would result in that nation "be[ing] too busy mending its fences to bother with the . . . demand for a complete moral purge" (177). The outcome of the war conveniently offered the excuse to focus on reconstruction.

in the northern and western regions in Nigeria attests to the persistence of some of the tension preceding the war.

The double survival of Biafra through local and global planes reflects another important split and doubling at the level of the conception of Biafra itself which emerges in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. This split springs from the political entity of the Biafran Republic. At the same time it points to its symbolic double that recuperates the ideals of justice and resistance to governmental repression especially as the war ends in defeat. From the limited and specific context of its characters, *Half of a Yellow Sun* prefigures the split that eventually comes to underlie how Biafra is remembered and continues to haunt Nigerian political life and civil society. As Bryce notes the "reconfiguration of national realities" in new Nigerian women fiction is recurrently developed through the trope of twins "as a narrative device" (50) premised on "the notion of selfhood as split or multiple" (50). While Bryce focuses on the return of "the repressed feminine" (50) through the figure of the double, with Kainene and Olanna the trope explores not only different facets of gendered socialization but also the representation of the splitting of Biafra, whereby the twin sisters signify the two facets to which the end of the war gives birth when Kainene disappears.

As the novel ends with the war, the doubling is gradual and initially all the expressions of Biafran agency relate to the idealization of the new Republic and what it would stand for if allowed to exist. More specifically, for Olanna, the symbolic power of the new nation in terms of justice is indivisible from the materiality of the state, Ojukwu, and the troops. Kainene's characteristic cynicism, in contrast, clashes with the general unquestioning idealization and introduces ambivalence in the representation of Biafra,

thereby anticipating the post-war debate on Ojukwu's handling of the conflict. The sisters' different perceptions of the situation are consistent with their personalities. Whereas Kainene once describes Olanna as "the good one and the favorite and the beauty and the Africanist revolutionary" (319) and refuses to engage in her idealism, compliance, and eagerness to please their parents (45), Olanna admires—and lacks—her uncompromising twin's "sharp edges, bitter tongue and supreme confidence" (272). Kainene is also the one who manages her father's business navigating unapologetically in the world of chasing contracts and paying the necessary bribes to win them (102). At the same time, it is precisely her practical materialism that allows her to secure housing and food for her family including Olanna, Odenigbo, and Baby when the war forces them to relocate once again.

Amidst the enthusiasm and desperation of the war and while Olanna thinks fondly of "His Excellency" as the potent savior of the Biafran nation, Kainene's cynical distance allows her to accommodate her unwavering support for Biafra with her distrust of "Ojukwu's ambition" (229) and what she sees as his tendency to "invent" saboteurs in order to neutralize opponents (393). Her conclusion that "when Biafra is established, we will have to remove Ojukwu" (393) clashes with Olanna's idealized vision of both Biafta and Ojukwu as indivisible and necessarily victorious because they are just. Consequently and notwithstanding the rumors about his escape prior to the surrender, she "believed as firmly and as quietly as she believed that Kainene would come home soon, that His Excellency's journey would be a success. He would come back with a signed document that . . . would proclaim a free Biafra. He would come back with justice and with salt" (511). Even if Olanna reasons out of her desperate need to envision a positive, albeit

unrealistic, resolution of their personal and collective tragedy, the association of both "disappearances" is not insignificant here. This is not to suggest a conflation between Kainene and Ojukwu; but his departure puts an end to the concrete existence of Biafra, leaving Biafrans with their dreams of what the country could or should have been. As the pragmatic Kainene as well as the material state both exit the space of the novel simultaneously, what survives is the unrealized ideal represented in part by Olanna as well as the sense of having been "cheated" (519). In other words, the literal split of the twins when Kainene vanishes evokes the fate of Biafra as a concrete republic that leaves behind its symbolic double. At the end, Olanna is left only with the hope of reincarnation and a reunion with her twin in another life, which also hints at the impossibility of reducing the past three years to an experience firmly locked in the past.

This splitting also characterizes the ways in which Biafra has been remembered despite Gowon's edict that mentioning it would be a "disservice" to the nation (qtd. in Obasanjo 136). The idealized and hoped for vision of the free state as well as the unaddressed injustice and trauma of the war merge into the symbolic double of Biafra that now functions as a springboard for issues of accountability bridging the past war and subsequent governance in Nigeria. After they finally return to Nsukka, Olanna decides to burn the few Biafran pounds she has for fear of reprisals by Nigerian soldiers during searches. In contrast to Odenigbo's disapproval of what he sees as burning memory, "[s]he would not place her memory on things that strangers could barge in and take away 'My memory is inside me'" she insists (539). By granting amnesty, by "forgiving" Biafrans their attempt to secede, Gowon ended the secession and the fighting, imposed silence on both the

massacres and losses of the war, while transforming victims into former offenders to whom he was in a position to grant amnesty. In addition to targeting Biafran leaders, the policy "denied ordinary civilian victims a chance to express their suffering, grief and anger" (Amediume 41). Yet the repercussions of this failure, or rather refusal, to address the degeneration of political tension into bloodbaths encompasses Nigeria and has functioned as an excuse for the continued military stranglehold on the government. As Wole Soyinka puts it, "the burden of memory" can be "exorcized" only by addressing and not "sanitizing" ("Memory" 37) a past "that dogs our conscience and collective memory" (*Open Sore* 32). According to Soyinka, the issues of the Nigerian nation, regardless of how and if it is to be resolved or if indeed the nation is maintained, cannot be dissociated from the enormity of the war and the need to openly recognize the role of "external inflictions" and "internal collaborators" alike ("Memory" 37). For him, accountability with reference to Biafra is first and foremost a moral question before being a political one.

While Biafra primarily evokes the atrocities committed against the Igbo and other easterners before and after the secession, memory also stands for the set of ideals of freedom and equity associated with the new republic and that were not to be fulfilled in the Nigerian national space after official reconciliation and amnesty. Even if Biafra might have become "just another state of tyranny" as Adichie admits ("African" 50), the act of writing about it now after the forced reunification both denounces the human tragedy of the war and negotiates the symbolic dimension and ideals of Biafra as a viable and relevant approach to "reconfiguring national realities" (Novak 50). In other words, aside from the short-lived nation-state or MASSOB's current agenda to secede, Biafra also functions as a

powerful symbol evocative of the conditions of inequality, discrimination, and abuse of power characterizing the pre-war time as well as the recent political, economic and social landscape. More specifically, it emerges as a concept that helps negotiate post-independence conflicts and their lingering effects with the question of national and global responsibility that reaches back into the colonial past and the failure of independent governments to truly change the inherited power structures.

For Adichie's characters, Biafra becomes a symbol of resistance against the autocratic deviations of the postcolonial nation-state and a symbol of the emancipation that Nigerian independence did not secure. In addition to Kainene and Olanna who prefigure the gradual splitting of Biafra and its implications, Odenigbo also invests different expectations in the new Republic. His belief in Biafra is not limited to its necessity as a shield against further northern attacks. Rather, Biafra's emancipation comes to represent the "real" independence from colonialism, which he thinks Nigeria never achieved. In one of his numerous evening political conversations and before the first coup in 1966, Odenigbo expresses his outrage at the politics of postcolonial Nigeria which continues to protect British political and economic interests when, as an independent African nation, it should take a responsible and vocal role in forwarding freedom and justice in other parts of Africa: "You think he [Prime Minister Balewa] cares much for other Africans? The white man is the only master Balwea knows...Didn't he say that Africans are not ready to rule themselves in Rhodesia?" (140) He then links Balewa's dependence to a larger betrayal of a particular Pan-African vision of liberation from a global context in which "[t]hey are dehumanizing blacks in South Africa and Rhodesia, they fermented what happened in the

Congo, they won't let American blacks vote, they won't let the Australian aborigines vote"
(140). If Odenigbo denounces these global schemes to sabotage emancipation, he is more
outraged by the African leader's failure to support the cause of Pan-African freedom.

As Nigeria fails to honor this mission and, instead, accepts its role as a facilitator of
neocolonial and cold war battles, Odenigbo transfers his understanding of an ideal
postcolonial society to Biafra. As he addresses a cheering crowd after secession, his words,
"Biafra is born! We will lead Black Africa" (205), echo Ojukwu's promise cited in the
novel that "Biafra will not betray the black man. No matter the odds, we will fight with all
our might until black men everywhere can point with pride to this Republic, standing
dignified and defiant, an example of African nationalism" (484). Here Odenigbo conceives
of independence as a commitment to the notion of global racial equality and national
sovereignty. The responsibility of the independent state and people, then, is not limited to
the consolidation of national unity and power, nor does independence materialize with the
establishment of an official republic. In this sense, Biafra, first presented as a protective
measure, also thrives on the need for a "second" and more fulfilled independence. The
idealized new Republic, however, will not necessarily be immune to the rift that opposes
the politics of the state to Odenigbo's ideals as a supporter of African socialism. More
concretely, and aside from the attitude of the Biafran elite,[102] the bleak materiality of the
war clashes with such a vision, as Biafra, now a battleground for other forces, has to accept

---

[102] At a time when starving refugees are asked to accept even more sacrifices, Olanna visits their old friend
Professor Ezeka, now Director of Mobilization in the Biafran government. She resents the family's comfort,
safety, aloofness, and duplicity as Mrs Ezeka mentions her plan to travel with her daughter on their Nigerian
passports (429).

food aid from both the South Africans and Americans (467) whom Odenigbo sees as upholding dehumanizing racial discrimination.

From this complex context, in which alliances are rarely based on the Biafran cause in itself, the novel negotiates the meanings of Biafran symbolism by way of foregrounding its split. Different as the global context or the concept of Pan-Africanism may now be compared to the 1960s, Biafra symbolically continues to point to a condition in which African populations suffer doubly from governmental repression and externally imposed decisions. Tsenay Serequeberhan posits the complicity of the African state with neocolonialism in terms of a "misunderstanding" (10). Independent Africa, he argues, misunderstands itself and its condition of dependence as the (only possible) actualization of freedom and liberation (10). In other words, specific occurrences of conflict and repressive governance inevitably relate to a condition of unresolved coloniality. As Emmanuel Chukuwudi Eze argues, the writer "mourns specific acts of violation. But should we not also suggest what appears to be the case of a stronger reason for lamentation . . . namely the coming to an awareness, that historical awakening to the fact that a culture or tradition can be so traumatically violated" (Eze 39). Here Eze evokes both a sense of trauma and disbelief at the very possibility of the historical violation of colonialism and its legacy of violence.

Time, which is at the center of Eze's essay, conditions this gradual coming to an awareness of a history of violation that encompasses and exceeds the act itself, hence Ugwu's strategy to trace the "Nigerian" problem to the colonial encounter and classification of the different groups in the region. Here, I am not using Eze's link between

specific acts of violence and the colonial disruption to make the same point as John Hawley who argues that Dulue Mbachu's, Adichie's and Iweala's respective novels dealing with war mark "a gradual movement away from the specifics of the Biafran war, towards the universalizing of what that civil conflict can be made to represent" (23). Even if this is true to a certain extent, especially of Iweala's *Beasts of No Nation*, in which the narrative names no country, city, or village but focuses on the experience of a child-soldier, the novels' publication also draws on the fact that Biafra remains "an unfinished business" (Amediume 41) or an "open sore" (Soyinka *Open*). If *Half of a Yellow Sun* globalizes trauma, it does so by imbricating Biafra in globalization rather than by gradually departing from it. Then, aside from evoking other civil wars on the continent, the present narration of Biafra also addresses the conflict's persistent traces reinforced, to cite but one example, by the long presence of the military at the head of the reunited country. As Hawley argues, in the absence of a forum similar to the South African Truth and Reconciliation Committee, "time and art, may by default, have become the only effective means to digest the poison of the past, and to slowly heal from within the damage that has been done" (16). While time alone falls short of performing what the official policy had expected by imposing silence on the war, literature seeks to remedy the absence of an official reconciliation forum. What Hawley does not mention, however, is that a certain urgency marks the need to narrate Biafra not simply to heal a past harm but also to "transform acknowledgment into responsibility" (Jefferess 177) which attends both to the past and to the present consequences of the war.

4.4. Negotiating Responsibility in Everything Good Will Come

In *Everything Good Will Come*, 10 year-old Enitan, who lives in Lagos, hears about Biafra through her neighbor's driver. She only recalls enjoying the war stories and missing them when the war comes to an end (11). In fact, it is not until her student days in London that these stories acquire a real dimension and she finally acknowledges "the holocaust that was Biafra" (86). The idea of the general and often willed ignorance and indifference to national and international violations within the national space recurs as one of the main themes in the novel especially when, at 35, Enitan realizes that silence and complacency during the dictatorship do not ensure her neutrality but her complicity. From a perspective that differs from Adichie's, Atta's novel also grapples with the notion of responsibility to react against socially and officially imposed silence. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, narrating Biafra takes the form of a responsibility to resist the silence imposed on Biafran history. Yet this responsibility to record collective abuse is problematized through the need to negotiate the individual and collective aspects of trauma with their irreducibility to each other. Bryce argues that Adichie's novel fills the gaps of history exemplified by the limited references to Biafra in *Everything Good Will Come* even though the novel starts in the 1960s.

The quasi-silence about the war in *Everything Good Will Come* is consistent with Enitan's exposure to the history of Biafra. I am taking the lack of information and will to inform about the war on the one hand and what she later sees as a widespread general inaction in the face of military repression, on the other, as markers of a subtle continuity between two defining moments of post-independence history in Nigeria. The responsibility

to narrate the war in Adichie's text is transformed in Atta's novel into a responsibility to resist a subdued and silent individualistic isolation. In this sense, Enitan seeks to convert personal and collective trauma into an incentive to act. With the second novel, I propose to study the ways in which the idea of responsibility to confront silence, in its individual and collective configurations, operates in a post-war time and in a different Nigerian location—Lagos. In other words, these concepts help explore how the narrator situates herself vis-à-vis the collective spaces that form in the city and how she eventually redefines her position and her engagement. Whereas *Half of a Yellow Sun* represents an act of collective remembrance and an indictment on a global scale for shared responsibility for Biafra, *Everything Good Will Come* gradually denounces disengaged individualism as complicit with and, therefore, also liable for the perpetuation of military rule and the violence associated with it. The novel, however, also exposes the myopic vision of democracy and of the human rights discourse that dominates the active opposition to the regime. In this sense, Enitan strives to shift the "forced" complicity of the population into a collective responsibility to respond to institutional violence while bypassing the limitations of party-led political resistance.

Born in the year of independence in Lagos, the narrator grows up as a lonely child but for her new friend Sheri, whose exuberance and large family contrast with Enitan's life. As she goes to college and lives in England for years before returning to study and work in Lagos, her experiences of the reality of her city and country remain limited as she evolves in a "sheltered" world, as her father puts it (141). References to the political and social upheavals usually provide no more than a background for her own life as she often points

out her indifference to political and social issues. Instead, her rebellion targets the gendered social norms that directly affect her life as a woman. Yet witnessing Sheri's rape as an adolescent also convinces her of her powerlessness. It is not until her father, Sunny, the outspoken lawyer of a dissident columnist, is arrested after calling for a national strike to protest against Abacha's regime that she reexamines the society and her own condoning silence. Only then does she reconnect her career as a lawyer with the idea of collective responsibility in an inevitably political world. Aside from a campaign for the liberation of political detainees such as her father, she becomes an advocate for the rights of women prisoners. The novel ends with the unexpected release of her father but not with the end of Abacha's rule.

To a certain extent, Enitan's initial indifference to national and local politics reflects the decline of the "nation-building" optimism of the 1960s. She also traces her disengagement to her early encounter with violence through Sheri's rape. Enitan's disagreements with her father during their discussions reflect the combined effects of her personal experience and her generation's different politics. When Sunny becomes increasingly vocal making public statements on police brutality and human rights in the 1980s, Enitan calls him "an old rebel," but confesses that she was "secretly" proud because "[a]s a child, this is how I'd envisioned a lawyer's work to be" (80). If this was the case then, her perception changes and by the time she graduates from law school, her interests and priorities remain firmly limited to her private life. Discussing the military regime after yet another coup in 1985, she notes that Sunny "was still passionate about politics," whereas, in her words, "one single event had catapulted me into another realm. I viewed the

world with a bad squint, a traveling eye, after that, seeing struggles I could do little about"
(108). Enitan refers to the day she and her friend Sheri, both fourteen years old, attend a
party at the park. Sheri is raped as Enitan unknowingly sits close by, not "bother[ing] to
look" (63) when her friend cries out. What she sees from the rape scene before the three
boys drive away at her arrival horrifies her, affects her friendship with Sheri, and haunts her
for years. Enitan feels violated by the boys, yet she reacts by framing the rape in the social
codes of female behavior: "If [Sheri] hadn't smoked hemp . . . If she hadn't stayed so long
as she did at the party, it certainly would not have happened. Bad girls got raped. We all
knew. Loose girls, forward girls, raw, advanced girls . . . It was her fault" (65). By thus
ascribing the responsibility for what happened to her friend, she seeks to displace her sense
of guilt. This attitude also conditions her answers to her parents who confront her when
they finally hear about the rape after Sheri is hospitalized because of a disastrous attempt to
end her pregnancy. All Enitan can say to her father is "I didn't do anything," through which
she insists on her friend's "(ir)responsibility" while unwittingly pointing out her own
inaction. Both parents resent her for secretly going to the park, but her father also blames
her for her silence afterward. She, however, does not grasp his accusation since all she
registers from the events is Sheri's and her own powerlessness in the face of what
happened.

The rape traumatizes her into a symbolic paralysis which affects her personal
relations but also metamorphoses into disengagement from the political and social realities
surrounding her. Another noticeable event in the summer of 1975 is the advent of the first
military coup since the war. Following the news about Sheri's near death, Enitan witnesses

a group of soldiers' gratuitous beating of a man: "I flinched from the first slaps on the driver's head . . . Then, I watched the beating feeling some assurance that our world was uniformly terrible. I remembered my own fate again and Sheri's, and became cross-eyed from that moment on. The driver blended in with the rest of the landscape" (69). To her, the two unrelated events equivalently signal violence and the normalcy of abuse and, therefore, the impossibility to challenge it. Yet her feeling of having been subjected to a terrible experience—albeit "by association" as she later says (133)—does not evolve into a feeling of solidarity with the beaten driver; rather, this moment marks her detachment from the institutionalized violence which exacerbates her sense of powerlessness. Blending into the landscape, the abused driver and the state of arbitrary violence the scene exemplifies become as ordinary an occurrence as "a row of rusty-roofed houses" or "the barefooted children" (133) she notices along with the assault. Years later, the lingering effects of the rape still form a screen through which she views the world and which also separates her "realm" from the others'. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the collective dimension of Olanna's trauma eventually allows her to bridge her individual memories, initially delimited by her silence and isolation, with the communal dimension of the massacres, which, in turn, accounts for her desire to help record the story. While by no means similar to Olanna's trauma, to the historical context that produces it, or to the systematic collective aggression that it constitutes, the rape in *Everything Good Will Come* induces Enitan's inability to tell the story for years. Unlike Olanna's, however, Enitan's memories continue to mark an exclusively individual experience, rather than one she can relate directly to a communal violence. Besides, if the gendered aspect of the assault possibly contributes to Enitan's

rebellion against women's status in her society, her protests often take the form of frustration at her inability to act. In other words, the assault convinces her that abuse is inevitable and that her responsibility amounts to self-preservation.

Her disengagement also reflects the spirit of her generation prevalent in the specific social and professional milieus in which she evolves. As is clear from the text's references to Lagos, urbanism with its typical social compartmentalization both replicates and reinforces disengagement from collective and possibly transformative spaces. This is best illustrated by Sunrise, the new housing estate in which Enitan lives with her husband Niyi and which represents a microcosm of middle class Lagos life in the 1990s. The dwellers of the Sunrise plots form a small community of young relatively well-to-do couples living in a closed circle while the gates keep street hawkers and beggars firmly out. If Enitan welcomes Sheri's difference and her insensitivity to "Sunrise people['s]" gossip and boastful materialism (207), she, nevertheless, willfully engages in their contests in consumerism (198) and partakes in their decisively self-centered and money-oriented concerns and conversations.[103] "Urban space, as Rita Nnodim suggests "is ingrained in [Enitan's and Sheri's] identity formation" (328). Years later, through Sunrise and its "small suburban community" (332), the city's spatiality continues to help contain Enitan's subjectivity. In this sense, when she starts questioning their escapism, "their comfort" (332) recurs as an argument that counters her desire for action suggesting that one would

---

[103] About their get-togethers, Enitan says "the men chatted mostly about cars and money; the women about food prices, pediatric medications, work politics, Disney toys" (198). From a generational rather than a social point of view, their interests differ greatly from what animated her father and his friends' political discussions reminiscent of the evening conversations hosted by Olanna and Odenigbo in *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

necessarily exclude the other. The continuous modern (re)designing[104] of the city caters to these " children of the oil-boom" (77) as she calls her fellow students earlier, while also reinforcing their isolation from other sections of the city and the society. This urban division reinforces an individualistic conception of responsibility which, in turn, tends to view political, social, and economic problems in isolation from one another. In contrast to *Half of a Yellow Sun*, which unfolds in part through its characters' mobility, Enitan's Lagos is marked by fenced-in spaces such as Sunrise, prison, or Sheri's first apartment which her lover, "the Brigadier," sometimes forbids her to leave. Not only does this spatiality reify societal isolation, but it also symbolizes the character's inaction.

Reinforced by its inscription in urban space, the modernist cult of individual success works in tandem with the fear of governmental repression to ensure political and social disengagement. Surrounded by the comfort of Sunrise, Enitan does not question their general feeling that "if people were at a disadvantage, it was because they somehow deserved it. They were poor, they were illiterate, they were radical, they were subversive, and they were not us" (231). This unspoken justification of social discrepancies, however, she recognizes only after her father is detained. To hold people responsible for their living conditions and their perceived incapacity to rise above them conveniently serves to legitimate the protective seclusion offered by Sunrise even as it normalizes the conditions of extreme poverty. As Chad Lavin argues in *The Politics of Responsibility*, this liberal

---

[104] Baba, Sunny's gardener, informs Enitan of the eviction of the residents of Maroko. Later, the government claimed the need to evict about 300,000 people in 1990 because of the poor health and living conditions. It has been suggested, instead, that the government responded to the demands of nearby "highly priced

conception of responsibility presupposes the existence of autonomous willing individuals (xii) deserving of punishment or reward for their direct actions and situations.

Aside from blaming the underprivileged for their condition, the position Lavin describes tends to view social problems in isolation from one another while restricting the responsibility of members of society to their respective private spheres. Lavin exposes the limitations of the modern liberal frame arguing that individual responsibility proves inadequate to contextualize specific events and to account for broader phenomena (*Politics* xii) or "ongoing non-event[s]" such as poverty (Lavin, "Who Responds" 144) and social insecurity. By responsibility Lavin here means liability for an act. The way we assign culpability, however, also determines how we conceive of responsibility as an obligation to act for someone or something. Enitan is not entirely oblivious to what she calls the "calamities" dogging Lagos or some of the political and economic malpractices of the military regime. Rather, she refrains from acknowledging their interdependence and what she later comes to see as their collective responsibility for the state of the country. At the peak of Abacha's military repression and popular pro-democracy agitation in 1995, Enitan tries to dissuade her father from his increasingly bold anti-government public statements which eventually lead to his arrest. He, in turn, confronts her about their silence: "Doesn't the situation bother the youth at all?" Enitan answers that "It does [but w]e worry about no money, no light. You form your groups and they beat you up and they throw tear gas in your face. What can we do?" (196). Her answer illustrates how the prioritization of private

---

neighborhoods" and their need to expand (Simone, A.M. *For the City Yet to Come: Changing African Life in Four Cities*, 195).

life and personal responsibility (towards oneself, one's family) together with the likely backlash from the government effectively guarantees silence and neutralizes participation in any collective commitment to both political and social change. Responsibility in both senses remains unambiguously individual and private. At this point Enitan only registers the "recklessness" of her father because, as she warns him, "[a]ctivists end up in prison" (195). This forced *and* internalized disengagement renders collective responsibility and group action meaningless to her.

The individualistic notion of responsibility undermining her faith in collective resistance also marks her rebellion against gender inequality. As Enitan points out Mukoro's double standards as a "social crusader" (139) engaging in secretive bigamy and rages at the culture that sanctions it, Sunny comments "You shouldn't even be discussing the plight of women at all, since you've done nothing but discuss it. How many women do you know anyway in your sheltered life?" (141). According to him, her rebellion remains vain as long as it is neutralized by her inaction, or unwillingness to act, and her isolation. Similarly, a few years later when he interrogates her about the silence of women as a group in the face of dictatorship, her reply characteristically separates and pits women's issues against political oppression: "What do you want to hear from women for? . . . We have our own problems. . . . Human rights were never an issue till the rights of men were threatened. There is nothing in the constitution for kindness in the home" (196). If she presents a valid argument about the limitations of human rights discourse centered on democracy, Enitan, nevertheless, locates the predicaments of women exclusively in the private and individual sphere, which she thinks deprives them of any collective agency. By the same token, she

overlooks the generalized and pervasive impact of the political situation and confirms her suspicion of group action. More specifically, Enitan first envisions the improvement of women's status at the individual level largely through their material independence, hence her suggestion that Sheri start a catering business not to depend on her wealthy lover's sponsorship and rules. Only after the sobering experience of a few hours spent in detention in an overcrowded cell does she realize her isolation from other women and her ignorance of the different ways in which they are economically, socially, and institutionally affected.

Whether she evokes responsibility as liability ("they are at a disadvantage" *because* they deserve it) or as obligation ("we have our own issues"), both, as she sees them, remain firmly severed from any collective solidarity and action. In 1995, it is her father's arrest rather than the impact of the popular anti-government upheaval that leads her to question her assumptions on the neutrality of their "apolitical" lifestyle and choices. What used to be a remote concern now strikes her as an aberration to which they have all contributed with their silence. She wonders:

> How did we live comfortably under a dictatorship? The truth was that we in places like Sunrise, if we never spoke out, were free as we could possibly be, complaining about our rubbish rotten country, and crazy armed robbers, and inflation. The authorities said hush and we hushed; they came with their sirens and we cleared off the streets; they beat someone and we looked the other way; they detained a relation, and we hoped for the best. If our prayers were answered, the only place we suffered a dictatorship was in our pockets. (231)

Silence obviously results from the real threat of governmental retaliation but it is also conveniently exchanged for a certain impression of neutrality, safety, and privilege.

Further, to steer clear of politics while paradoxically complaining about "crazy armed robbers and inflation" (28) depoliticizes the factors behind various aspects of structural violence at their interdependent governmental, economic, and societal levels. By acknowledging compliance as complicity Enitan questions the bases of what Lavin calls the "privatization" of responsibility (*Politics* 105) underlying her husband Niyi's position: "I am responsible for what I have done . . . only what I have done." Enitan now believes they should also be accountable for what "[they] have not done" (231). In a way, Niyi's comment is reminiscent of an earlier instance in which Enitan tries to disengage herself from Sheri's rape and its aftermath by asserting she "didn't do anything." This time, if the possibility of action (or how effective it could be) is still unclear to her, "not doing anything" strikes her as a liability in itself. Be that as it may, her acknowledgement of their joint responsibility in helping maintain the military in power has not quite materialized into an obligation to act yet. In fact, the brief statement the journalist Grace Ameh convinces her to give in lieu of her father and about his arrest hardly qualifies as a planned or committed action. Yet it exposes her to an alternative line of action and forces her to reflect on the collective implications of her personal choices.

Enitan's qualms about the culture of silence only intensify with her husband's opposition to her potential involvement. As she becomes more vocal about the ways "[they] have all played a part in this mess" (228), as she puts it, and thus expresses her—still vague—desire to change, Niyi refuses to compromise evoking, instead, her responsibility to their unborn baby and their life together. Ultimately, his attempt to pressure her by ignoring her for months sharpens rather than mitigates her desire to resist the alleged safety of

disengagement. In fact, the oppressive silence in her own house "echoes," so to speak, the one imposed on the country as a whole. For her, silence with its power to "defeat a person, a whole country even" (252), begins to function as a joint trope for gender and political oppression alike. More specifically, by describing the silence imposed by the dictatorship on Nigeria as "men learning how to be women" (242-3), she denounces silence on a gendered private and a collective national level as well as the acquiescence to it, be it out of fear of repression or loss of privilege. Significantly, then, she no longer sees a radical divide between private and public oppression. Even if calling Niyi a "mini Idi Amin" (250) is a rather amusing exaggeration, this comparison suggests Enitan's growing unwillingness to consent to a political and social disengagement for the sake of her own personal peace at home and outside.

Niyi's pressure tactics probably encourage her to accept Grace Ameh's invitation to a reading in support of political prisoners, which in turn leads to the two women's short detention. Not particularly interested in literature and writing, Enitan is, nevertheless, "in awe" at readers who seem oblivious to the danger of taking a public stand against the government and "denounc[ing] injustices as a group" (263). The very existence of such readings, of which she had been unaware, and the fact that the presenters write and speak "without recognition or remuneration" (263) clash with her familiar notions of silence, on the one hand, and the imperative of individual interest, on the other. While the reading introduces her to people angry enough to surpass fear, the subsequent police raid and the hours spent in detention expose Enitan to arbitrary repression and, perhaps more importantly, to another aspect of the institutional and judicial system in Nigeria.

In particular, as a lawyer she is used to the slow judicial processes from a courtroom, but in this case, she shares a cell with destitute women who have been awaiting their trial for years in dire conditions. Explaining to one of the prisoners that her father has also been detained, she realizes that the woman would have guessed the political reason because "a man like [her] father would never be in prison unless he was a political prisoner" (277). From these women's economic and social perspective, the notions of "individual agency"[105] and liberal responsibility become untenable in a context of interdependent rather than compartmentalized dysfunctions of the state and its institutions. Even if Enitan continues to believe that the right to vote and dissent will not alleviate the plights of the majority of the population, she becomes, nevertheless, more cognizant of the ways in which the dictatorship insidiously affects all levels of society and threatens all individuals whether they are politically involved or not. In other words, it becomes impossible for her to depoliticize corruption, the stagnation of the judicial system, or the reorganization of urban spaces through the massive eviction of Maroko residents. Thus despite her initial reaction to take the blame for thoughtlessly exposing herself to state security agents at the reading and putting her baby at risk (283), the deterring effect of imprisonment eventually fades.

If Sunny's disappearance forces Enitan to rethink their collective complicity in the general state of the country, her mother's unexpected death finally triggers a concrete transformation. As she later finds out, the expiry date on her mother's medicine had been

---

[105] With reference to Abani's *Graceland*, Nnodim notes how "individual agency no longer produces expected results" in the "dystopian space" (323) of Lagos, and more specifically that of Maroko, as depicted in the

modified. Knowing she probably bought it on the black market for a lower price, she now perceives her mother as yet another (apolitical) victim of the disintegration of the state and its inability to ensure basic needs. For her, the "no money, no light" (196) situation and multiple other "calamities" in Lagos (192) spring from governmental malfunction and corruption, on the one hand, and the general withdrawal from the common responsibility to denounce it and resist it, on the other. A few months prior she had declared that "1995 found me giving thanks for the calamities my family and friends had escaped not protesting against the government. I . . . thought like many Nigerians that my priorities were best kept at home" (192). Now, she realizes the futility of the attempt to protect only one's family when the state of the country "affects everyone" (325).

Contrary to the earlier traumatic experience in the park that provoked Enitan's powerlessness and subsequent apathy, the "loss" of her parents places her personal experience within the national predicament of living under a dictatorship and reconnects her to a more collective vision of responsibility. She had been aware of the impact of Sheri's rape on both their personal relations but with hindsight she now also relates it to her disengaged silence, in her words, noting how "I had opportunities to take action, only to end up behaving in ways I was accustomed, courting the same old frustrations because I was sure of what I would feel: wronged, helpless, stuck in a day when I was fourteen years old" (332). The double loss befalling her 20 years later provokes a reversed reaction. Now she thinks:

---

novel.

> I was lucky to have survived what I believed I wouldn't, the smell of my mother's death. I couldn't remain as I was before, otherwise my memory of her would have been in vain, and my survival would certainly be pointless. Anyone who experienced such a trauma would understand. The aftermath could be a reincarnation. (332)

Whereas in the first instance shock results in immobility, the second renders action inevitable. Trauma becomes a tool for negotiating her individual anxieties with her need to commit herself to a more collective action (or action for a collectivity). Significantly, in the latter quotation she also equates transforming her life with a survival strategy, a personal rehabilitation, so to speak, through which she attempts to remedy what she now views as her past complicit silence. Therefore, the tension between personal loss, feelings of guilt, and self-assigned responsibility to speak for the group, which underlies Ugwu's enterprise in *The Book*, also informs Enitan's engagement to a certain extent. Once again, "negotiation" must be understood in relation to trauma and engagement because this tension initiates Enitan's transformation and continues to guide the ways through which she chooses to "perform" collective responsibility. Despite her initial reservations, Enitan accepts Grace Ameh's suggestion that she head a women's group campaign for the liberation of political detainees including her father. As for Niyi, she solves his unflinching opposition to her activism by leaving him and, symbolically enough, moving out of Sunrise which once represented her (and their) contented isolation.

Her shift from a complacent and passive discontentment steeped in a feeling of powerlessness to an active social engagement materializes through her chosen battles rather

than her integration into the main and high profile opposition movement, even if it was constituted of diverse groups. It is significant that despite Grace Ameh's influence, she never becomes a mentor who initiates Enitan into political activism even if she introduces her to the world of political resistance. In other words, while the novel has been described as a *Bildungsroman* depicting Enitan's growth into a politically and socially engaged subject, this is not the tale of the making of a political activist modeled on Grace. In fact, her engagement is directly involved in politics only insofar as she campaigns for the liberation of political detainees like Sunny and probably has to confront the administrative standstill when she advocates for the rights of women in Nigerian prisons. No longer satisfied with the individual and therefore disengaged sense of responsibility, she is not interested in a ready-made activism affiliated with, and dictated by, a political party. When Grace Ameh proposes the campaign, Enitan, wary of the journalist's interest in "stirring [her] in a pro-democracy direction," questions the nature of the group: "I know your magazine's agenda . . . and I will not campaign for deposed politicians" (296). For her, while the past civilian government did not reach Abacha's levels of tyranny, it nevertheless had no misgivings about corruption, fraud, (107, 296), and one could add political repression. Resisting Grace's, and by extension any movement's, possible instrumentalization of Sunny's detention allows Enitan to negotiate her inevitably politicized involvement without harnessing it to a political party's battle for power.

Enitan's reservations about the pro-democracy movement do not solely emanate from the poor record of the past elected government. Enitan also anticipates the failure of the human rights discourse and its focus on individual rights to address social injustice

given the interdependence of political, economic, and social factors.[106] When they meet

again after her mother's death, she interrupts Grace's absorbed discourse about democracy

and their potential as a people to restore it in order to remind her that appalling conditions

of detention equally affect non-political detainees (323). As she now rejects the position of

silent indifference to the state's excesses, she also grows more sensitive to the structural

violence entrenched socially and institutionally and that will not vanish with a regime

change. Not that she sees the urgency of poverty and social discrimination as an excuse for

tolerating the regime's repression of political freedom; both are bridged in more than one

way. In fact, Enitan readily admits that the value of democracy lies in the possibility of

"challeng[ing] injustices even if the system itself was flawed" (300). Her concern, instead,

is that whole communities or sections of the society already marginalized by interlinked

political, social, and international economic forces—such as the women she meets in

prison—also fall outside the purview of the pro-democracy movement and discourse. In

this sense, Grace Ameh's argument that once democracy is restored, "[g]ood will will take

care of itself" (296), somewhat paradoxically (and unwittingly), reiterates the

individualistic position that initially helped perpetuate the regime and that definitely tends

---

[106] The vast literature on either the limitations or the failure of human rights tends to focus on the universalism of the discourse and its hegemonic implications. From a feminist perspective, the discourse has been denounced for its inattention to specifically gendered abuses (See Gayle Binion's "Human Rights: A Feminist Perspective"). Others focus on the use of the discourse as an excuse for Western interventionism (Mamdani, *Saviors*, 226) and "patronising authoritarianism" (Shivji 3). Paul Zeleza, in turn, insists that the social and political transformations registered in African countries over the past years have resulted from local, "concrete social struggles, not simply textual or legal discourse" (6). Perhaps the last perspective partly reflects Enitan's position. She does not evoke the (ab)use of human rights to justify interventionism, nor does she seem concerned about its universalist implications. Rather, her position stems from her certainty that the individual and democracy-oriented ideal overlooks larger and interrelated factors behind diverse and quotidian instances of social violence.

to normalize social injustice.[107] At the same time it also risks limiting the responsibility for past abuse to the government elite, thereby systematically obscuring and exonerating other social and global factors at the political and economic level. Significantly, besides the campaign, Enitan decides to advocate for a section of the society situated at the margins of the pro-democracy movement and its demands even if her advocacy remains contingent on the general concept of human rights.

I have already addressed some of the ways in which *Everything Good Will Come* diverges from the expectations of national allegory often associated with the coming-of-age novel. Similarly, Enitan's negotiated resistance both to silence and to incorporation into the political power struggle deflates the reader's expectation to see the protagonist and the novel fully embrace the pro-democracy movement premised on a global human rights discourse. Joseph Slaughter, who specifically addresses what he calls the "ideological confluence" (*Human* 4) between the *Bildungsroman* and liberal human rights discourse, posits the genre as "the novelistic wing" (*Human* 25) of human rights law and discourse that serves to disseminate the norms of Enlightenment progress inherent to the law's conception of the individual "human rights person." Here Slaughter emphasizes not only the common basis of personality development but also the role and roots of this discourse in colonial and (neo)imperial (*Human* 5) rhetoric and ventures. Thus tracing the common ideological premises of the law and its literary counterpart, Slaughter concludes that both

---

[107] I am not suggesting that Grace Ameh encourages social disengagement. Thanks to her work as a journalist and involvement with other activists, she is more knowledgeable than Enitan about Nigerian politics and their implications beyond Lagos. She, for example, travels to the Niger Delta to investigate recent detentions

are "necessary but suspicious vehicles" because of "the historically narrow, generic universalism and the residual nationalism" inherent to the "new universal, international citizen-subjectivity" they project (*Human* 33). The democratic state and its public sphere are presented here as the ultimate loci for the growth of the protagonist, and more generally, for the development of the individual human rights person.

In Atta's novel, however, it is precisely the public sphere and the democratic state that are either nullified or greatly compromised. Slaughter argues that even coming-of-age narratives reflecting the "foreclosure of the idealist *Bildungsroman*" (*Human* 150) in the context of national repression confirm the ideological imbrication of the genre with the human rights discourse. In the examples he cites, the protagonists fail to reach the expected "state" of development and to (re)establish a human rights rationale. While subverting the classical and idealist *Bildungsroman*, these novels remain underwritten by the democratic and human rights ideal (*Human* 178), the nullification of which they foreground as the cause of the protagonist's stunted development (*Human* 150). Therefore, the subversion of the genre still confirms Slaughter's main argument that the *Bildungsroman* serves to universalize and "naturalize" the principles of the law (*Human* 5).

Atta's novel, by contrast, narrates the protagonist's transformation under and within a dictatorial state and therefore on the margins of the ideal public sphere thought to enable personality development. Her understanding of collective responsibility, while admittedly still contingent on the rule of law and individual rights, implies more diverse modes of

related to protests against oil companies (297). Yet, as Enitan suggests, rallying protests and resistance exclusively around the question of democracy, as Grace tends to do, risks obscuring other social issues.

resistance than the one represented by the main political opposition. The government's stranglehold on dissent or resistance from all spheres of society fuels Sunny and Grace's belief in democracy as a prerequisite for any political and social change. While Enitan considers the dictatorship as the main cause for Nigeria's tribulations in the 1990s, for her the projected return of democracy does not figure as an ideal. Interestingly, throughout her shift from disengagement to activism, the narrator maintains her suspicion of the pro-democracy movement and democracy itself. For her, the former is inevitably steeped in power intrigues, while the latter promises a governmental change, which will, nevertheless, not solve the problems of the larger part of society.

Although the novel narrates Enitan's "socialization" as an individual, seemingly in the liberal tradition (as Slaughter describes it), it also subverts the expectation that she will follow and imitate Grace Ameh's political activism and stance. In other words, the novel does not tell the story of Enitan's education into human rights and her conversion into a political crusader. When asked about her reasons for resisting the huge military machine despite harassment by the state security agents, Grace answers that "they can't kill the testimony of a country and a people," so she is fighting for "a chance to be heard." Further, she adds, she loves her country (298). Enitan, in contrast, remains undecided on her own national "loyalty," or the relevance of the notion of country for her as she recognizes her limited knowledge and ties to Nigeria as a whole. Even though she decides to resist silence, her engagement with the notion of collective responsibility emanates not so much from the influence of the pro-democracy movement or a grandiose notion of patriotic "love". Rather, Enitan's imperative to speak up and act derives from her newly acquired belief that silence

amounts to complicity with the military rule the excesses of which affect all aspects of society. More precisely, her emphasis on the generalized impact of corruption and repression on the population leads her to choose defending the rights of non-political female detainees. The latter are caught in an economic, social, and institutional bind, which disqualifies them from the national and international attention triggered by the detention of high profile politicians and public figures. The idea of collective responsibility in this sense becomes contingent on the unreliability of the state, including a democratic one. Althoug she remains within the realm of advocacy and law largely premised, as it is, on the notion of individual autonomy, she exposes a blind spot in the political activists' faith in democracy. By extension, the novel unveils the paradoxical liberal notions of the public sphere and its assumptions of democratic participation, on the one hand, and the limitations of related notions of individual will and disengaged private responsibility, on the other. Instead of "establish[ing] the norms and forms of proper participation in the democratic state" (147), as the typical *Bildungsroman* does according to Slaughter, *Everything Good Will Come* depicts Enitan's engagement with ignored communities which, even in the event of a regime change, will continue to exist on the margins of a democratic public sphere.

Enitan's choices, then, unfold as a third alternative to government and opposition politics. Whereas the campaign for her father is a punctual organization aiming at the liberation of a specific group of detainees, her other chosen cause reveals the wish for a long-term commitment. The conditions that provoke a drastic shift in her life derive from the state of affairs in Nigeria at the time, yet she does not align her engagement with the popular and immediate political imperative to replace the government. More specifically,

notwithstanding Abacha's intransigence with activists and her desire to see the end of his rule, she does not view regime change as a precondition to start campaigning for women detainees, nor does she expect a civilian government's "good will" to attend to them. Her interjection about non-political detainees as a supplement to Grace's characteristic concern about political prisoners reveals her conception of collective responsibility as broader than the common obligation to install a democratic state with its promise to ensure freedom of speech and dissent. Although she changes her conception of responsibility from strictly private to collective, she still negotiates her engagement according to her personal approach to activism.

Instead of weakening the argument for collective action, this stance actually expands it in a way that joins Lavin's definition of postliberal responsibility. Postliberalism, he argues, "democratizes the capacities for response by locating them not in the institutional control of forces but in the performative capacities for transformative agency endemic to our daily lives" (132). Lavin posits the postliberal framework as a way to remedy a reductionist liberal responsibility while also recognizing a certain degree of individual agency to respond to a situation. He argues to this effect that "subjects and their wills are both producers and products of the conditions of their existence" (87). This double position accounts for Enitan's growing awareness that the conditions at work largely limit the power of action of a large swath of the population. At the same time, she learns to draw on her potential as an individual to enact various possible responses to the status quo. Lavin argues that the responses of modern societies to specific events as attributable to identifiable perpetrators "releas[e] the community" (126) from the need to recognize shared

responsibility and aim for social change. The postliberal approach, in contrast, "heightens both the possibility and the urgency of political intervention" by broadening the concept of responsibility (58). From this perspective, members of the society are all "dependent contributors to the existing state of affairs" (57). While such a conception of society subverts a liberal and a straightforward system of reward and punishment, it still remains unclear how this acknowledgement alone leads to the actualization of a collective political will and social change. How, in other words, does a community take the responsibility to respond to an event or a situation by sharing the blame, questioning, and most importantly, transforming its role? The novel attempts to provide a sequel to the reappraisal of responsibility in a widely dysfunctional political and economic context. More Precisely, for Enitan, the capacity to "distribute responsibility" (Lavin, *Politics* 9) only becomes meaningful insofar as she translates it into a responsibility to act for the benefit of a collectivity, however small.

Nonetheless, the need to acknowledge complicity and transform it into responsibility (Jefferess 177) necessarily draws on paradoxical, therefore negotiated, collective and individual imperatives. Enitan asserts collective responsibility to act as her incontestable individual *choice* when she decides to oppose and then leave Niyi or to opt out of the popular pro-democracy movement, which would have been an obvious route for engagement. By committing herself to a collective obligation to respond to, rather than overlook, the anomalous banality and normalization of injustice, Enitan also initiates her marginalization from the comfort of her family and certain social and gender expectations. In this sense, not only is her engagement predicated on a connection with realities to which

she had been oblivious, but it is also an "isolating" freedom for which "there [are] bills to pay alone" (330). Referring to her "new life" (330) and to the independence of Nigeria at the same time, she now says that "freedom was never intended to be sweet. It was a responsibility from the onset, for a people, for a person, to fight for, and to hold on to" (330). Further, she also negotiates her desire to break from an illusory private responsibility with her mistrust of a potentially hegemonic collective movement and an "elitist" democracy. Her actions thus inevitably force a negotiation between the desire for communal engagement and the need for her to redefine it critically and personally.

The paradoxes inherent to engagement evoke a problem Thomas Keenan identifies as crucial to politically engaged responsibility. He pinpoints the philosopher's—namely Foucault and, to a lesser extent, Derrida—dilemma in conciliating ethico-political action or standpoints, predicated as they often are on constructs of the individual and human rights, with the "philosophical necessity of problematizing or 'short-circuiting' the model of rights in which [this ethico-political] gesture is made" (*Fables* 166). While Enitan does not attempt to theorize her decisions, her actions create a comparably paradoxical situation. She sets an ethical obligation for herself to act as a consequence of her novel rejection of a supposedly meritocratic system of individualism. In order to act, however, she needs to uphold a certain notion of individual and human rights and resort to the legal advocacy on which her two campaigns, and status as a lawyer, are contingent. The "double bind," as Keenan concludes, results in the obligation "to negotiate with the rights we have, even 'after' their problematization" (167). Enitan finally adopts this "necessity of negotiation"

(Keenan, *Fables* 171) in order to break with her earlier cynicism vis-à-vis activism while distancing herself from an inevitably manipulative battle for power.

Finally, despite the problematic and seemingly paradoxical choice to resist the system from within (by writing letters to the president to ask for the liberation of her father, for example), I believe Enitan's actions explore some of the possibilities of response, or what Lavin quoting Butler insists is "the ever-present possibility of action" (qtd. in Lavin 57). If, as stated earlier, it is possible to theorize but more difficult to imagine the "community" or society collectively and consensually taking responsibility, the novel helps actualize the expression of collective responsibility precisely by situating it in the quotidian, small-scale, local, and focused actions of individuals and groups with no heroic pretensions as to the (immediacy of their) outcome. The text thus presents resistance as ongoing negotiation with power and contexts rather than a punctual and extraordinary measure to confront a similarly extraordinary event. The narrative confirms this approach with the release of the men for whom Enitan's group had been campaigning. Sunny's liberation ends the novel on a very optimistic note but it does not correspond to the end of Abacha's tyranny, nor does it stand for the end of political persecution, as is commonly known.

In contrast to some of Adichie's characters who emphasize remembering and narrating the war partly as an indictment of the world, Enitan's indictment mainly targets herself, her class and society in general. Unfortunately, by trying to steer clear of power and government politics, and, instead, focusing on her culpability and what she can contribute to her society, Enitan risks oversimplifying some of the global underpinnings of local and

national power relations, opposition politics, and maybe more visibly, economic conditions. Grace Ameh vehemently denounces the futility and interventionism of the Commonwealth for threatening to impose sanctions against Nigeria, insisting she is not "one of those who cry to the West" (323). Enitan, in turn, disagrees with Nigerian "intellectuals" and their systematic rejection of any intervention or pressure from the international community. She argues that the urgency of some issues such as the population's need for aid surpasses such concerns. In an attempt to expand her new conception of responsibility beyond local and national limits, she wonders: "I wasn't sure about the extent of foreign intervention in our local politics—CIA-backed coups and assassinations included—but was it too much to expect other countries to take an interest in our well-being, if most of our stolen wealth was invested in their economies?" (323). According to her, then, the degree of responsibility of "other countries" is premised on their failure to denounce corruption.

While it seems difficult to exaggerate the magnitude and devastating effects of corruption under Abacha, it is equally obvious that transnational politics and corporations have had a wider role in Nigerian politics and economy than that of overlooking corruption. Enitan's objective to emphasize the immediate impact of local indifference and assert the society's responsibility to react even if indirectly involved is valuable in that it also seeks to restore a certain power to the local population to respond to issues of governance. Equally valuable is her focus on sections of the population in need of an urgent change rather than a token shift of power from one faction to another, no matter how democratic. In the process, however, she tends to downplay the political and economic impact of global politics which Adichie's text and characters are so intent on foregrounding. As James Ferguson argues,

"the generally salutary emphasis in recent African scholarship on the centrality of African actors must not be an excuse, either, for evading the complex ethical and historical question of transnational responsibility" (88). About the arrest, expeditious trial, and execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and his fellow detainees, for example, Enitan notes that despite the international outcry, "our government remained unrepentant" (333). Yet MOSOP (Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People) and its resistance to transnational corporate oil interests and the government's complicity testify to the complexity of the question of "transnational responsibility" in Nigeria's political and internal affairs. In a way, then, focusing on the need for international aid without recognizing the underlying national and global mechanisms at work replicates Grace Ameh's prioritization of a regime change with the assumption that other forms of structural violence will recede systematically. Both perspectives overlook essential elements of the postcolonial situation.

Everything Good Will Come does not focus on the outcome of Enitan's engagement. In fact, the narrator does not provide many details of her activities. What the novel highlights, instead, is her initiative to explore her "ability to respond" (*Politics* 17), to quote Lavin, and redefine herself as a member of a community with a collective responsibility. The problematic ethical dimension of responsibility in both meanings of liability and obligation to react complicates any attempt to act for or with a collectivity. Enitan develops a sense of collective obligation to react only as the oppressive impact of the dictatorship becomes personally traumatic to her when her father is detained for months. Then, it is trauma that forces her to negotiate her understanding of individual and collective responsibility and take the initiative to act despite the problematic, and therefore

necessarily negotiated, nature of political and social engagement. Her involvement in human rights is connected to, yet not circumscribed by the human rights discourse advocated by pro-democracy groups. Similarly, *Half of a Yellow Sun* acknowledges the intranslatability of individual into collective traumas and vice versa even as it proceeds to record them. Here, trauma is again at the heart of the negotiation of individual with collective loss in order to assert narrative responsibility. Negotiation could then become a traumatic act in itself re-presenting trauma and acknowledging the problematic aspect of taking the responsibility to speak. It also allows for the possibility of resisting the official silence about national traumas of war or violent repression in the post-independence era. In both cases the imperative of resistance through rehistoricizing the nation necessitates the redefinition of the meanings of responsibility.

Afterthoughts

How does literature negotiate narratives of postcolonial violence? In the introduction, I have stated that the concept of negotiation transforms resistance into an ongoing process rather than a limited temporary strategy. If at times I seem to dwell more on the concept of negotiation than that of resistance, this is because my notion of negotiation implies resistance. More specifically, the negotiating text resists the official silencing or manipulation of postcolonial violence, on the one hand, and reductive analyses of the logic of conflict in an Afro-pessimistic vein, on the other. Approaching the texts and contexts through the framework of resistance and negotiation reveals the necessity to look at different levels in which the concepts operate as they constitute both writing and reading practices. I have emphasized negotiation at the level of the content of the novels, but also through the project of writing itself. As the narratives present alternative stories about violence and different ways in which the characters learn to negotiate tragedy and trauma, as well as responsibility, the texts also problematize their own representation and responsibility to narrate individually and collectively traumatic events.

The novelist's urge to narrate with a difference while acknowledging the limitations of representation constitutes a practice of narrative negotiation. By narrating violence differently, I mean that the texts evoke not only previous representations of conflicts, but also the constant renewal of armed and political violence in the face of persisting national and global power structures. Writing through negotiation represents a conscious political and literary strategy predicated on the desire to reveal subtexts of postcolonial conflict and to demystify violence. Thus, another related impetus for the act of writing, and I would add

reading, is the desire to understand that which seems incomprehensible. This is not to suggest that the novels studied in the previous chapters purport to provide a unitary analysis of the national events they narrate. Rather, their value lies in their attention to the genealogies of postcolonial violence and in their contribution to public and theoretical debates on the broad and interrelated questions of history, trauma, justice, and responsibility. What I wanted to emphasize throughout this study is the fact that resistance and negotiation do not simply represent improvised strategies of survival or of narrating that survival. Rather, these are politically fraught acts through which we engage with a wide scope of globally and locally intertwined issues such as (national) history, memory, and identity.

From a theoretical point of view, this understanding of negotiation requires an interdisciplinary approach that intervenes into multiple social, political, and cultural discourses of belonging and violence. In the previous chapters, I have put a critical emphasis on historical and political contextualization to situate the texts, and more importantly, to interrogate the novels' negotiation of national, global, and historical discourses of violence in the African postcolony. As Ato Quayson argues in relation to his vision of "interdisciplinarity as a mode of reading" (xiv), literature becomes a means "for the analysis and better understanding of the social," which he defines, in turn, as "an articulated encapsulation of transformation, processes, and contradictions analogous to what we find in the literary domain" (xv).[108] Although what I propose as a concept for

---

[108] Quayson develops calibration as "a practice of close reading" (xi) and defines it as the "the action of gradually identifying patterns for comparison across apparently disparate and incommensurable domains

negotiation differs from Quayson's project, the key ideas he identifies in this definition also underlie the act of negotiation. More specifically, through negotiation, fiction and non-fiction articulate and engage with various and, therefore, possibly contradictory social, political, and historical practices harnessed to possibilities of transformation. At the same time, these expressions of literary, theoretical, individual, or collective agency do not strive for a resolution.

The absence of a resolution, or of a possible conclusion, derives from the definition of resistance and negotiation as open processes involving a pluralistic approach to the representation and memorialization of violence. Interestingly, then, these processes cannot be contained but constantly reveal other intertwined responsibilities and histories across time and space. In particular, individual and collective negotiations of postcolonial conflicts are closely related to trauma and to the politics of remembering. Whereas the word "trauma" usually evokes unresolved grief, the expression "politics of remembering" refers both to an acknowledgement and a potential manipulation of the past. Again, reading through negotiation uncovers new routes for the themes of trauma and memory haunting these narratives of violence. If a negotiated reading has raised new questions over the course of the project, they reinforce the need to read postcolonial violence through obvious and less obvious traces from the past and potential haunting sites of the future. The impossibility (or refusal) of the novels' different characters to find closure, or to put it

---

through a process of identifying the heterogeneous, multilayered, and interactive dimensions of such domains" (xv-xvi). His concept emphasizes the idea of comparison between elements, on the one hand, and literature as the starting point for readings for the social, on the other.

differently, the impossibility to *conclude*, inscribes the texts within an ongoing process and

debate in which transformation also hinges on remembering.

Works Cited

Abani, Chris. *Graceland*. New York: Picador; Farrar, Strauss and Giroux. 2004. Print.

Abraham, Nicolas and Maria Torok. *The Shell and the Kernel*. Trans. Nicholas T. Band. Chicago: The U of Chicago Press, 1994. Print.

Achebe, Chinua. *Anthills of the Savannah*. London: Heinemann, 1987. Print.

___. *Christmas in Biafra and Other Poems*. Garden City: Anchor Books, 1973. Print.

___. *Girls at War and Other Stories*. London: Heinemann, 1972. Print.

___. *Hopes and Impediments*. 1988. New York: Doubleday, 1990. Print.

Adam, Hussein. "The International Humanitarian Intervention in Somalia, 1992-1995." *The Causes of War and Consequences of Peacekeeping in Africa*. Ed. Ricardo René Laremont. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2002. Print.

Adesanmi, Pius. "Of Postcolonial Entanglement and Durée: Reflections on the Francophone African Novel." *Comparative Literature* 56.3 (2004): 227-242. Print.

Adesanmi, Pius & Chris Dunton. "Introduction: Everything Good is Raining: Provisional Notes on the Nigerian Novel of the Third Generation." *Research in African Literatures*. 39.2 (2008): vii-xii. Print.

Adichie, Chimamada Ngozi. "African 'Authenticity' and the Biafran Experience." *Transition* 99 (2008): 42-53. Print.

___. *Half of a Yellow Sun.* 2006. Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2007. Print.

___. "Truth and Lies." *Guardian*, Saturday 16 Sep. 2006. *n.pag*. Web. 03 February 2009.

Ahmad, Aijaz. *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*. London; New York: Verso, 1992. Print.

Alden, Patricia and Louis Tremaine. "Reinventing Family in the Second Trilogy of Nuruddin Farah." *World Literature Today* 72.4 (1998): 759-66. Print.

Alexander, Jocelyn and JoAnn McGregor. *Representing Violence in the Matabeleland, Zimbabwe: Press and Internet Debates. The Media of Conflict: War Reporting and Representations of Ethnic Violence*. Ed. Tim Allen and Jean Seaton. London: Zed Books, 1999. 244-67. Print.

Alexander, Jocelyn, JoAnn McGregor and Terence Ranger. *Violence and Memory: One Hundred Years in the Dark Forests of Matabeleland*. Oxford: James Currey; Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000. Print.

Alidou, Ousseina D. and Alamin M. Mazrui. "*Secrets*: Farah's 'Things Fall Apart.'" *Research in African Literatures*. 31.1 (2000): 122-128. Print.

Amadiume, Ife. "The Politics of Memory: Biafra and Intellectual Responsibility." *The Politics of Memory: Truth, Healing and Social Justice*. Ed. Amediume, Ife and Abdullahi An'Naim. London: Zed Books, 2000. 38-55. Print.

Amin, Samir. "The Nation: An Enlightened or Fog-Shrouded Concept." Trans. Edward Ousselin. *Research in African Literatures*. 24.8 (1997): 8-18. Print.

___. *Obsolescent Capitalism: Contemporary Politics and Global Disorder*. Trans. Patrick Camiller. London: Zed Books, 2003. Print.

Amuta, Chidi. "The Nigerian Civil War and the Evolution of Nigerian Literature." *Canadian Journal of African Studies/Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines*. 17.1 (1983): 85-99. Print.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso, 1983. Print.

Appadurai, Arjun. *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger*. Durham: Duke UP, 2006. Print.

___. "Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination." *Globalization*. Ed., Arjun Appadurai. 2001. Duke UP, 2003. 1-21. Print.

Appiah, Kwame Anthony. *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2006. Print.

Armah, Ayi Kwei. *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. Oxford: Heinemann, 1988. Print.

Ashcroft, Bill. "Is that the Congo? Language as Metonymy in the Post-Colonial Text." *World Literature Written in English*. 29.2 (1989): 3-10. Print.

___. *Post-Colonial Transformations*. London: Routledge, 2001. Print.

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back*: *Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature*. London: Routledge, 1989. Print.

Atta, Sefi. *Everything Good Will Come*. 2005. Northampton: Interlink Books, 2008. Print.

Balibar, Etienne. "Violence and Civility: On the Limits of Political Anthropology." *Differences: The Future of the Human*. 20.2&3 (2009): 9-35. Print.

___. *We, The People of Europe? Reflections on Transnational Citizenship*. Trans. James Swenson. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2004. Print.

Balogun, F. Odun. *Adjusted Lives: Stories of Structural Adjustments*. Trenton: Africa World Press, 1995. Print.

Barash, David P. and Charles P. Webel. *Peace and Conflict Studies*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2009. Print.

Barcelona, Antonio. "The Case for a Metonymic Basis of Pragmatic Inferencing: Evidence from Jokes and Funny Anecdotes." *Metonymy and Pragmatic Inferencing*. Ed. Klaus-Uwe Panther and Linda L.Thornburg. Amsterdam: John Benjamins B.V., 2003. 81-102. Print.

Bartolovich, Crystal. "Global Capital and Transnationalism". *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*. Ed. Henry Shwarz and Sangeeta Ray. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000. 126-61. Print.

Baudrillard, Jean. *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*. Trans. Paul Patton. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995. Print.

Benhabib, Seyla. *Another Cosmopolitanism*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006. Print.

Belau, Linda. "Trauma and the Material Signifier." *Trauma: Essays on the Limit of Knowledge and Experience*. Ed. Linda Belau and Petar Ramadanovic. Spec. issue of *Postmodern Culture*. 11.2 (2001): n.pag. *Project Muse*. Web. 18 Oct. 2008.

Benjamin, Walter. "Critique of Violence." *Selected Writings*. Ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael Jennings. Vol. 1. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1996. 236-252. Print.

___. "A Short History of Photography." 1931. *Artforum*. 15.6 (1977): 46-61. Print.

Bhabha, Homi K. "Representation and the Colonial Text: A Critical Exploration of Some Forms of Mimeticism." *The Theory of Reading*. Ed. Frank Gloversmith. Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1984. 93-122. Print.

Binion, Gayle. "Human Rights: A Feminist Perspective." *Human Rights Quarterly*. 17.3 (1995): 509-26. Print.

Boehmer, Elleke. "Stories of Women and Mothers: Gender and Nationalism in the Early Fiction of Flora Nwapa." *Motherlands: Black Women's Writing from Africa, the Caribbean and South Asia*. 1991. Ed. Susheila Nasta. New Brunswisk: Rutgers UP, 1992. 3-23. Print.

Bolton, John R. "Wrong Turn in Somalia." *Foreign Affairs* Jan/Feb 1994. 56-66. Print.

Bose, Brinda. "Review of *Nehanda*." *World Literature Today*. 69.1 (1995): 212-13. Print.

Brendt, Katrin. *Female Identity in Contemporary Zimbabwean Fiction*. Bayreuth: Eckhard Breitinger, 2005. Print.

Brennan, Timothy. "Development to Globalization: Postcolonial Studies and Globalization Theory." *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*. Ed. Neil Lazarus. Cambridge UP, 2004. 120-138. Print.

Brydon, Diana. "Is There a Politics of Postcoloniality?" *Postcolonial Text* 2.1 (2006): n.pag. Web. 20 July 2010.

Bryce, Jane. "Conflict and Contradiction in Women's Writing on the Nigerian Civil War." *African Languages and Cultures* 4.1 (1991): 29-42. Print.

___. "Half and Half Children: Third-Generation Women Writers and the New Nigerian Novel." *Research in African Literatures*. 39.2 (2008): 49-67. Print.

Bull-Christiansen, Lene. *Tales of the Nation: Feminist Nationalism or Patriotic History? Defining National History and Identity in Zimbabwe*. Uppsala: Nordiska Africainstitutet. 2004. Print.

Bush, George. H. W. " Address to the Nation on the Situation in Somalia," 4 Dec. 1992. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: George H. W. Bush 1992-1993*. Book II-August 1, 1992 to January 20, 1993. Washington: GPO, 1993. 2174-176. Print.

Butler, Judith. "Photography, War, Outrage." *PMLA*. 120.3 (2005): 822-27. Print.

___. *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997. Print.

Calderisi, Robert. *The Trouble with Africa: Why Foreign Aid isn't Working*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. Print.

Carruthers, Susan. "Tribalism and Tribulation: Media Constructions of 'African Savagery' and 'Western Humanitarianism' in the 1990s". *Reporting War: Journalism in War Time*. Ed. Allan Stuart and Barbie Zelizer. London: Routledge, 2004. 155-173. Print.

Cheah, Pheng. *Inhuman Conditions: On Cosmopolitanism and Human Rights*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2006. Print.

___. "Introduction Part II: The Cosmopolitical-Today." *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*. Ed. Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 1998. 20-41. Print.

___. *Spectral Nationality: Stories of Liberation from Kant to Postcolonial Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003. Print.

Chinodya, Shimmer. *A Harvest of Thorns*. 1989. London: Heinemann, 1990. Print.

Chrismam, Laura. "Nationalism and Postcolonial Studies." *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*. Ed. Neil Lazarus. Cambridge UP, 2004. 183-198. Print.

___. *Postcolonial Contraventions: Cultural Readings of Race, Imperialism, and Transculturalism*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2003. Print.

Church, George, J. "Anatomy of a Disaster." *Time*. 18 Oct. 1993: 46+. Print.

Clinton, William J. "Remarks on Welcoming Military Personnel Returning from Somalia." 5 May, 1993. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: William J. Clinton. 1993*. Book I-January 20 to July 31, 1993. Washington: GPO, 1994. 565-66. Print.

Cobley, Evelyn. *Representing War: Form and Narrative in First World War Narratives*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1996. Print.

Cooper, Brenda. *A New Generation of African Writers: Migration, Material Culture and Language*. Woodbridge: James Currey, 2008. Print.

___. "The Rhetoric of a New Essentialism versus Multiple Worlds: Isidore Okpewho's *Call Me by My Rightful Name* and Buchi Emecheta's *The New Tribe* in Conversation." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*. 42:2 (2007): 19-36. Print.

Coundouriotis, Eleni. "The Child Soldier Narrative and the Problem of Arrested Historicization." *Journal of Human Rights*. 9.2 (2010): 191-206. Print.

Craps, Stef and Gert Buelens. "Postcolonial Trauma Novels." Introduction. *Postcolonial Trauma Novels*. Ed. Stef Craps and Gert Buelens. Spec. issue of *Studies in the Novel*. 40.1&2 (2008): 1-12. Print.

Dangarembga, Tsitsi. *The Book of Not*. Banbury: Ayebia Clarke, 2006. Print.

___. *Nervous Conditions*. (1988). Seattle: Seal Press, 1989. Print.

Davidson, Basil. *Modern Africa*. London; New York: Longman, 1983. Print.

De Lauretis, Teresa. "The Violence of Rhetoric: Considerations on Representation and Gender". *Violence of Representation: Literature and the History of Violence*. Ed. Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse. London: Routledge, 1989. 239-258. Print.

Derrida, Jacques. "Force of Law: the Mythical Foundation of Authority." *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*. Ed. Drucilla Cornell, Michael Rosenfeld and David Gray Carlson. New York: Routledge, 2001. Print.

___. *Negotiations: Interventions and Interviews 1971-2001*. Ed. and trans. Elizabeth Rothberg. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2002. Print.

___. *Specters of Marx*: *The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. New York: Routledge, 1994. Print.

Diawara, Manthia. "Toward a Regional Imaginary in Africa." *The Cultures of Globalization*. Ed. Frederic Jameson and Masao Miyoshi. Durham: Duke UP, 1998. 103-24. Print.

DiPrizio, Robert. *Armed Humanitarians: US Interventions from Northern Iraq to Kosovo*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002. Print.

Dongala, Emmanuel. *Johnny Mad Dog*. 2002. Trans. Maria Louise Asher. New York: Picador, 2006. Print.

Dunn, Kevin. "Africa's Ambiguous Relation to Empire and *Empire*." *Empire's New Clothes*. New York: Routledge, 2004. 143-162. Print.

During, Simon. "Postcolonialism and Globalisation: A Dialectical Relation After All?" *Postcolonial Studies* 1.1 (1998): 31-47. Print.

Durrant, Sam. *Postcolonial Narrative and the Work of Mourning: J.M. Coetzee, Wilson Harris, and Toni Morrison*. Albany: State of U of New York P, 2004. Print.

Eaglestone, Robert. "'You Would Not Add to My Suffering if You Knew What I Have Seen': Holocaust Testimony and Contemporary African Trauma Literature." *Postcolonial Trauma Novels*. Ed. Stef Craps and Gert Buelens. Spec. issue of *Studies in the Novel*. 40.1&2 (2008): 72-85. Print.

Ehlich, Konrad and Johannes Wagner, eds. *The Discourse of Business Negotiation*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1995. Print.

Ekwe Ekwe, Herbert. *Biafra Revisited*. Dakar; Senegal: African Renaissance, 2006. Print.

Emecheta, Buchi. *Destination Biafra*. Oxford: Heinemann, 1982. Print.

Encyclopedia of African History and Culture. Vol. 5. 51-3. 2005. Print.

Engelke, Matthew. "Thinking about Nativism in Chejerai Hove's Work." *Research in African Literatures*. 29.2 (1998): 23-43. Print.

Everett, Anna. "'Operation Restore Hope': Recolonizing Africa for the 21st Century." *Ufahamu: Journal of the African Activist Association*. 21.2/3 (1993): 3-13. Print.

Eze, Emmanuel Chukuwudi. "Language and Time." *Research in African Literature*. 39.1 (2008): 24-47. Print.

Ezeliora, Osita. "Why Biafra in 2008?" *Nigeria World*. n.pag., 23 July 2008. Web. 12 Dec. 2008.

Falola, Toyin. "Writing and Teaching National History in Africa in an Era of Global History." *The Study of Africa: Disciplinary and Interdisciplinary Encounters*. Ed. Paul Tiymabe Zeleza. Dakar: Codesria, 2006. Print.

Falola, Toyin and Matthew M. Heaton. *A History of Nigeria*. Cambridge UP, 2008. Print.

Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. 2nd ed. Trans. Charles Lam Markmann. New York: Grove Press, 1967. Print.

___. *The Wretched of the Earth*. 1961. New York: Grove Press. Trans. Constance Farrington. 1966. Print.

Farah, Nuruddin. *Links*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2004. Print.

___. *Close Sesame*. Saint Paul: Graywolf Press, 1992. Print.

___. *From a Crooked Rib*. London: Heinemann, 1970. Print.

___. *Gifts*. New York: Arcade Publishing, 1999. Print.

___. *Maps*. 1999. New York: Penguin Books, 2000. Print.

___. *Sardines*. London: Heinemann, 1982. Print.

___. *Secrets*. New York: Penguin Books, 1999. Print.

___. *Sweet and Sour Milk*. 1979. London: Heinemann, 1998. Print.

Felman, Shoshana. "Education and Crisis, or the Vicissitudes of Teaching." *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Ed. Cathy Caruth. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1995. 13-60. Print.

___. "The Return of the Voice: Claude Lanzman's Shoah." *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. Ed. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub. New York: Routledge, 1992. 204-283. Print.

Fenwick, Mac. "Crossing the Figurative Gap: Metaphor and Metonymy in *Midnight's Children.*" *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*. 39.3 (2004): 45-68. Print.

Ferguson, James. *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neo-liberal World Order*. Durham: Duke UP, 2006. Print.

Gagiano, Annie. "Entering the Oppressor's Mind: A Strategy of Writing: Bessie Head's *A Question of Power*, Yvonne Vera's *The Stone Virgins* and Unity Dow's T*he Screaming of the Innocent.*" *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*. 41.2 (2006): 43-60. Print.

___. "Reading *The Stone Virgins* as Vera's Study of the Katabolism of War." *Research in African Literatures*. 38.2 (2007): 64-76. Print.

___. "Surveying the Contours of 'a Country in Exile': Nuruddin Farah's Somalia." *African Identities*. 4.2 (2006): 251-268. Print.

Gaylard, Gerald. *After Colonialism: African Postmodernism and Magical Realism*. Johannesburg: Wits UP, 2005. Print.

___. "The Death of the Subject? Subjectivity in Post-Apartheid Literature." *Scrutiny2*. 11.2 (2006): 62-74. Print.

Gelder, Ken & Jane M. Jacobs. "The Postcolonial Ghost Story." *Ghosts, Deconstruction Psychoanalysis, History*. Ed. Peter Buse & Andrew Stott. Houndmills: Macmillan Press, 1999. Print.

Gikandi, Simon. "Poststructuralism and Postcolonial Discourse." *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*. Ed. Neil Lazarus. Cambridge UP, 2004. 97-119. Print.

Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993. Print.

Grosfoguel, Ramón. "World-System Analysis and Postcolonial Studies: A Call for a Dialogue from the 'Coloniality of Power' Approach." *The Postcolonial and the Global*. Ed. Revathi Krishnaswamy and John C. Hawley. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 2008. 94-104. Print.

Guha, Ranajit. "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India." *Selected Subaltern Studies*. Ed. Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Oxford UP, 1988. 37-44. Print.

Gunner, Liz. "Power, Popular Consciousness, and the Fictions of War: Hove's *Bones* and Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns*." *African Languages and Cultures*. 4.1 (1991): 77-85. Print.

Habila, Helon. *Measuring Time*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2007. Print.

___. *Waiting for an Angel*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 2002. Print.

Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. *Commonwealth*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 2009. Print.

___. *Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000. Print.

___. *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. The Penguin Press, 2004. Print.

Harlow, Barbara. *Resistance Literature*. New York: Methuen, 1987. Print.

Harris, Wilson. *Selected Essays of Wilson Harris: The Unfinished Genesis of the Imagination*. Ed. Andrew Bundy. New York: Routledge, 1999. Print.

___. *The Palace of the Peacock*. London: Faber and Faber, 1988. Print.

Harrow, Kenneth. "Nationalism: Introduction." *Research in African Literatures*. 32.3 (Fall 2001): 33-44. Print.

Hawley, John. "Biafra as Heritage and Symbol: Adichie, Mbachu and Iweala." *Research in African Literatures*. 39.2 (2008): 15-26. Print.

Head, Bessie. *A Question of Power*. 1974. London: Heinemann Educational, 1986. Print.

Hendrickson, Ryan C. *The Clinton Wars: The Constitution, Congress, and War Powers*. Nashville: Vanderbilt UP, 2002. Print.

Hess, Stephen and Marvin Kald, eds. *The Media and the War on Terrorism*. Washington: The Brookings Institutions Press, 2003. Print.

Hillenbrand, Margaret. "The National Allegory Revisited: Writing Private and Public in Contemporary Taiwan." *Positions*. 14.3 (2006): 633-62. Print.

Hirsch, John L. and Robert B. Oakley. *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope: Reflections on Peacemaking and Peacekeeping*. Washington: Unites States Institute of Peace Press, 1995. Print.

Hitchcock, Peter. *The Long Space: Transnationalism and Postcolonial Form*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2010. Print.

___. *Oscillate Wildly: Space, Body, and Spirit of Millennial Materialism*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 1999. Print.

"Hopeless Africa." *Economist*. 13 May 2000: 17. Print.

Hodges, Hugh. "Writing Biafra: Adichie, Emecheta and the Dilemmas of Biafran War Fiction." *Postcolonial Text*. 5.1 (2009): 1-13. Web. 13 October 2011.

Hove, Chenjerai. *Bones*. 1988. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1990. Print.

___. "Dictatorships are Transient." Interview by Ranka Primorac. *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 43.1 (2008): 135-146. Print.

___. *Shadows*. London: Heinemann, 1992. Print.

Huggan, Graham. "Ghost Stories, Bone Flutes, Cannibal Countermemory." *Cannibalism and the Colonial World*. Ed. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iversen. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998. 126-141. Print.

Huntington, Samuel. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Touchstone, 1996. Print.

Ibrahim, Huma. "Gender and Sexuality." *Encyclopedia of African Literature*. Ed. Simon Gikandi. London: Routledge, 2003. 20-02. Print.

Ikpeze, Nnaemeka. "Post-Biafra Marginalization of the Igbo in Nigeria." *The Politics of Memory: Truth, Healing and Social Justice*. Ed. Ife Amadiume and Addullahi An'Naim. London: Zed Books, 2000. 90-109. Print.

Iweala, Uzodinma. *Beasts of No Nation*. New York: Harper Collins, 2005. Print.

Jakobson, Roman. "Two Aspects of Language and two Types of Aphasic Disturbances." 1956. *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Vincent B. Leitch, gen. ed. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2001. 1265-69. Print.

Jefferess, David. *Postcolonial Resistance: Culture, Liberation, and Transformation*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2008. Print.

Jeyifo, Biodun. "The Nature of Things: Arrested Decolonization and Critical Theory." *Research in African Literatures*. 21.1 (1990): 33-48. Print.

Juraga, Dubravka. "Nuruddin Farah's Variations on the Theme of an African Dictatorship: Patriarchy, Gender, and Political Oppression in Somalia." *Emerging Perspectives on Nuruddin Farah*. Ed. Derek Wright. Trenton: Africa World Press, 2002. Print.

Kaplan, Robert. *The Coming Anarchy: Shattering the Dreams of the Post Cold War*. 2nd ed. New York: Vintage Books: 2001. Print.

Khanna, Ranjana. *Dark Continents: Psychoanalysis and Colonialism*. Durham: Duke UP, 2003. Print.

Kanengoni, Alexander. *Echoing Silences*. Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1998. Print.

Keenan, Thomas. *Fables of Responsibility: Aberrations and Predicaments in Ethics and Politics*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997. Print.

___. "Mobilizing Shame". *The South Atlantic Quarterly*. 103.2/3 (2004), 435-449. Print.

Ki-Zerbo, Joseph. "African Intellectuals, Nationalism, and Pan-Africanism: A Testimony." *African Intellectuals: Rethinking Politics, Language, Gender and Development*. Ed. Thandika Mkandawire. Dakar: Codesria Books; London: Zed Books, 2005. 78-93. Print.

Kristeva, Julia. *Semeiotikè: Recherche pour un sémanalyse*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1969. Print.

___. "Word, Dialogue and Novel." *The Kristeva Reader*. Ed. Toril Moi. New York: Columbia UP, 1986. Print.

Korang, Kwaku Larbi. "Useless Provocation, or Meaningful Challenge: The 'Posts' vs. African Studies." *The Study of Africa: Disciplinary and Interdisciplinary Encounters*. Ed. Paul Tiyambe Zeleza. Vol. 1. Dakar: CODESRIA, 2006. 441-466. Print.

___. *Writing Ghana, Imagining Africa: Nation and African Modernity*. 2003. Rochester: U of Rochester P, 2004. Print.

Kortenaar, Neil Ten. "Postcolonial Ekphrasis: Salman Rushdie Gives the Finger Back to the Empire." *Contemporary Literature*. 38.2 (1997): 232-259. Print.

Kourouma, Ahmadou. *Allah n'est pas obligé*. Paris: Seuil, 2000. Print.

Krishnaswamy, Revathi. "Posctcolonialism and Globalization Studies: Connections, Conflicts, and Complicities." Introduction. *The Postcolonial and the Global*. Ed. Revathi Krishnaswamy and John C. Hawley. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 2008. 2-21. Print.

Labou Tansi, Sony. *L'état honteux*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1981. Print.

___. *La vie et demie*. 1979. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1988. Print.

Lacan, Jacques. *Écrits: A Selection*. 1966. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Norton and Company, 1977. Print.

Laclau, Ernesto and Chantal Mouffe. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Toward a Radical Democratic Politics*. 2nd ed. London: Verso, 2001. Print.

Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By*. 1980. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2003. Print.

Lan, David. *Guns and Rain: Guerillas and Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe*. London: J. Currey; Berkeley: U of California Press: 1985. Print.

Lavin, Chad. *The Politics of Responsibility*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2008. Print.

___. "Who Responds to Global Poverty." *Social Theory and Practice*. 31.1 (2005): 143-153. Print.

Lazarus, Neil. "Introducing Postcolonial Studies." *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*. Ed. Neil Lazarus. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004. 1-16. Print.

___. *Nationalism and Cultural Practice in the Postcolonial World*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999. Print.

____. *Resistance in Postcolonial African Fiction*. New Haven: Yale UP. 1990. Print.

Lodge, David. "The Language of Modernist Fiction: Metaphor and Metonymy." *Modernism 1890-1930*. 1976. Ed. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane. London: Penguin Books, 1991. 481-496. Print.

Lovesey, Oliver. "Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Postnation: The Cultural Geographies of Colonial, Neocolonial and Postnational Space." *Modern Fiction Studies* 48.1 (2002): 139-168. Print.

Lyons, Tanya. *Guns and Guerilla Girls: Women in the Zimbabwean Liberation Struggle*. Trenton: Africa World Press, 2004. Print.

Mamdani, Mahmood. *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Colonialism*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1996. Print.

___. *Saviors and Survivors: Darfur, Politics, and the War on Terror*. New York: Doubleday, 2009. Print.

___. *When Victims Become killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001. Print.

Mandela, Nelson. "Statement by President Nelson Mandela at the OAU Meeting of Heads of State and Government," Tunis. 13 June 1994. *African National Congres*s. African National Congress. Web. 29 July 2010.

Mansbridge, Jane, et al. "The Place of Self-Interest and the Role of Power in Deliberative Democracy." *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 18.1 (2010): 64-100. Print.

Marx, John. "Failed-State Fiction." *Contemporary Literature and the State*. 49.4 (2008): 597-633. Print.

Mazrui, Ali A. *The Politics of War and the Culture of Violence: North-South Essays*. Ed. Seifudein Adem and Abdul S. Bemath. Trenton: Africa World Press, 2008. Print.

Mbeki, Thabo. "Speech of the President of South Africa Thabo Mbeki at the Launch of the African Renaissance Institute, Pretoria, 11 October, 1999." *African Union Summit*. South Africa Chairmanship of the African Union, 25 July 2001. Web. 29 July 2010.

Mbembe, Achille. "Necropolitics." Trans. Libby Meintjes. *Public Culture* 5.1 (2003): 11-40. Print.

___. *On the Postcolony*. Berkeley: U of California P, 2001. Print.

___. "*On the Postcolony*: A Brief Response to Critics." *African Identities* 4.2 (2006): 143-178. Print.

McClintock, Anne. "No Longer in a Future Heaven: Gender, Race, and Nationalism." *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*. Ed. Anne

McClintock, Aamir Mufti, and Ella Shohat. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1997. 89-112. Print.

McLuckie, Craig. *Nigerian Civil War Literature: Seeking an Imagined Community*. Lewiston: the Edwin Mellen Press, 1990. Print.

Mezu, S.O. *Behind the Rising Sun*. London: Heinemann, 1972. Print.

Miller, J. Hillis. *Tropes, Parables, Performatives: Essays on Twentieth Century Literature*. Durham: Duke UP, 1991. Print.

Moore-Gilbert, Bart. "Postcolonialism: Between Nationalitarianism and Globalisation? A Response to Simon During." *Postcolonial Studies* 1.1 (1998): 49-65. Print.

Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. 1987. New York: Knopf. 1988. Print.

Mouffe, Chantal. "Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism." *Political Science Series*. Institute for Advanced Studies Vienna. December 2000. Print.

Mudimbe, V.Y. *The Idea of Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana UP; London: James Currey, 1994. Print.

Muponde, Robert. Interview. "Land as the Text of Zimbabwean History." *Nordiska Africainstitutet*. February 2004. Web. 25 July 2008.

Ncube, Mark & Terence Ranger. "Religion in the Guerilla War: The Case of Southern Matabeleland." *Society in Zimbabwe's Liberation War*. Ed. Bhebhe, Ngwabi & Terence Ranger. Oxford: James Currey, 1996. 35-57. Print.

Nelan, Bruce. "Taking on the Thugs". *Time*. 14 Dec. 1992: 41-3. Print.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o. *Decolonising the Mind: The politics of Language in African Literature*. London: J. Currey, 1986. Print.

___. *Something Torn and New: An African Renaissance*. New York: *BasicCivitas* Books, 2009. Print.

Nhongo-Simbanegavi, Josephine. *For Better or Worse? Women and ZANLA in Zimbabwe's Liberation Struggle*. Harare: Weaver Press, 2000. Print.

Njoku, O.N. "Era of Misguided Good Feeling: Yakubu Gowon and the Birth of a New Nigeria, 1970-1975." *Troubled Journey: Nigeria Since the Civil War*. Ed. Levi A. Nwachuku and G.N. Uzoigwe. Lanham: UP of America, 2004. 51-77. Print.

Nnodim, Rita. "City, Identity, and Dystopia: Writing Lagos in Contemporary Nigerian Novels." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*. 44.4 (December 2008): 321-32. Print.

Novak, Amy. "Who Speaks, Who Listens? The Problem of Address in Two Nigerian Trauma Novels." *Studies in the Novel* 40.1&2 (2008): 31-51. Print.

Nwakanma, Obi. "Metonymic Eruptions: Igbo Novelists, the Narrative of the Nation, and New Developments in the contemporary Nigerian Novel." *Research in African Literatures*. 39.2 (2008): 1-14. Print.

Nwapa, Flora. *Wives at War and Other Stories*. Trenton: Africa World Press, 1992. Print.

—-. *Never Again*. Enugu: Nwamife Publishers, 1979. Print.

Nwaubani, Adaobi Tricia. *I Do Not Come to You by Chance*. New York: Hyperion. 2009. Print.

Obasanjo, Olusegun. *My Command: An Account of the Nigerian Civil War 1967-70*. Ibadan: Heinemann, 1980. Print.

O'Brien, Anthony. *Against Normalization: Writing Radical Democracy in South Africa*. Durham: Duke UP, 2001. Print.

Okri, Ben. *The Famished Road*. London: J. Cape, 1991. Print.

Orr, Mary. *Intertextuality: Debates and Contexts*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003.

Otiono, Nduka. "Narrations of Survival." *Wasafiri* 41 (2004): 70-71. Print.

Parry, Benita. "The Institutionalization of Postcolonial Studies." *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*. Ed. Neil Lazarus. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004. 66-80. Print.

___. "Signs of our Times: a Discussion of Homi Bhabha's the Location of Culture." *Learning Places: The Afterlives of Area Studies*. Ed. Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian. Durham: Duke UP, 2002. 119-49. Print.

Patton, Paul. Introduction. *The Gulf War Did not Take Place*. By Jean Baurillard. Trans. Paul Patton. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1995. 1-21. Print.

Pope, Rob. *Creativity: Theory, History, Practice*. London: Routledge, 2005. Print.

Primorac, Ranka. *The Place of Tears: The Novel and Politics in Modern Zimbabwe*. London: Tairus Acedemic Studies, 2006. Print.

Quayson, Ato. *Calibrations: Reading for the Social*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2003. Print.

___. *Postcolonialism: Theory, Practice, or Process?* Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000. Print.

Ramadanovic, Petar. "Introduction: Trauma and Crisis." *Trauma: Essays on the Limit of Knowledge and Experience*. Ed. Linda Belau and Petar Ramadanovic. Spec. issue of *Postmodern Culture*. 11.2 (2001): n.pag. *Project Muse*. Web. 18 Oct. 2008.

Ranger, Terence. "History has its Ceiling: The Pressures of the Past in the Stone Virgins". *Sign and Taboo: Perspectives on Yvonne Vera's Fiction*. Harare: Weaver Press, 2002. 203-16. Print.

___. "Rule by Historiography: The Struggle over the Past in Contemporary Zimbabwe." *Versions of Zimbabwe: New Approaches to Literature and Culture*. Ed. Robert Muponde and Ranka Primorac. Harare: Weaver Press, 2005. 217-245. Print.

___. *Voices from the Rocks: Nature, Culture, and History in the Matopos Hills of Zimbabwe*. Harare: Baobab, 1999. Print.

Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of U of Harvard Press, 1971. Print.

Razack, Sherene. *Dark Threats and White Knights: The Somalia Affair, Peacekeeping and the New Imperialism*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004. Print.

Robertson, Roland. *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*. 1992. London: Sage Publications, 2000. Print.

Rothberg, Michael. "Decolonizing Trauma Studies: A Response". *Postcolonial Trauma Novels*. Ed. Stef Craps and Gert Buelens. Spec. issue of *Studies in the Novel*. 40. 1&2 (2008): 224-34. Print.

___. *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2009. Print.

Sahnoun, Mohamed. *Somalia: the Missed Opportunities*. Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1994. Print.

Samuelson, Meg. "Yvonne Vera's Bulawayo: Modernity, Immobility, Music and Memory." *Research in African Literatures*. 38.2 (2007): 22-35. Print.

Samupindi, Charles. *Pawns*. Harare: Baobab Books, 1992. Print.

Saro-Wiwa, Ken. *Sozaboy: A Novel in Rotten English*. 1985. New York: Longman Publishing Series, 1994. Print.

San Juan Jr., E. *Beyond Postcolonial Theory*. New York: St. Martin Press: 1998. Print.

Schmidt, Elizabeth. Peasants, *Traders and Wives: Shona Women in the History of Zimbabwe, 1870-1939*. Portsmouth: Heinemann; Harare: Baobab , 1992. Print.

Scott, David. *Refashioning Futures: Criticism after Postcoloniality*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999. Print.

Serequeberhan, Tsenay. "Philosophy and Post-Colonial Africa." *African Philosophy: An Anthology*. Ed. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze. Malden: Blackwell Publishing Press, 1998. 9-22. Print.

Shivji, Issa G. *The Concept of Human Rights in Africa*. London: CODESRIA Books Series, 1989. Print.

Sibanyoni, Mxolisi R. "'The Fading Songs of Chimurenga' Chenjerai Hove and the Subversion of Nationalist Politics in Zimbabwean Literature." *African Studies*. 64.2 (1995): 52-72. Print.

Simone, Abdou Maliqalim. *For the City Yet to Come: Changing Life in Four African Cities*. Durham: Duke UP, 2004. Print.

Slaughter, Joseph. *Human Rights, Inc.: The World Novel Narrative Form, and International Law*. New York: Fordham UP, 2007. Print.

___. "Master Plans: Designing (National) Allegories of Urban Space and Metropolitan Subjects for Postcolonial Kenya." *Research in African Literatures*. 35.1 (2004): 31-51. Print.

Slemon, Stephen. "Magic Realism as Post-Colonial Discourse." *Canadian Literature* 116 (1988): 9-24. Print.

___. "Unsettling the Empire: Resistance Theory for the Second World." *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. Ed. Padmini Mongia. London: Arnold, 1996. 72-83. Print.

Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 2003. Print.

Soyinka, Wole. *Kongi's Harvest*. *Collected Plays*. 1967. Vol. 2. London: Oxford UP, 1974. Print.

___. *The Man Died: Prison Notes of Wole Soyinka*. New York; Evanston; San Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1972. Print.

___. "Memory, Truth, and Healing." *The Politics of Memory: Truth, Memory and Healing*. Ed. Ife Amadiume & Abdullahi An'Naim. London; New York: Zed Books, 2000. 21-37. Print.

___. *The Open Sore of a Continent: A Personal Narrative of the Nigerian Crisis*. New York: Oxford UP, 1996. Print.

___. *Season of Anomy*. London: Collings, 1973. Print.

Spencer, Robert. "Cosmopolitan Criticism." *Rerouting the Postcolonial: New Directions for the New Millennium*. Ed. Janet Wilson, Cristina Sandru and Sarah Lawson Welsh. London: Routledge, 2011. 36-47. Print.

Spivak, Gayatri. *Death of a Discipline*. New York: Columbia UP, 2003. Print.

___. "Imaginative Adventure." The University of Toronto. 8 June 2000. Speech.

Szeman, Imre. *Zones of Instability: Literature, Postcolonialism and the Nation*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins UP, 2003. Print.

Ting-Toomey, Stella. "Identity Negotiation Theory: Crossing Cultural Boundaries." *Theorizing about Intercultural Communication*. Ed. William B. Gudykunst. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2005. 71-92. Print.

Toremans, Tom. "Trauma: Theory-Reading (and) Literary Theory in the Wake of Trauma." *European Journal of English Studies*. 7.3 (2001): 333-351. Print.

Tuastad, Dag. "Neo-Orientalism and the New Barbarism Thesis: Aspects of Symbolic Violence in the Middle East Conflict(s)." *Third World Quarterly* 24.4 (2003): 591-99. Print.

Tutuola, Amos. *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*. London: Faber and Faber, 1954.

___. *The Palm-wine Drinkard and his Dead Palm-wine Tapster in the Dead Town*. London: Faber and Faber, 1962.

Turner, Terence. "Class Projects, Social Consciousness, and the Contradictions of 'Globalization.'" *Globalization, the State and Violence*. Ed. Jonathan Friedman. Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 2003. 35-66. Print.

Udumukwu, Onyaemachi "Who Authorizes the Discourse? The Subject of Nation in Soyinka and Ngugi." *Ogun's Children: The Literature and Politics of Wole Soyinka Since the Nobel*. Ed. Onookome Okome. Trenton: African World Press, 2004. 327-355. Print.

United Nations. "Glossary of UN Peacekeeping Terms." Web. 8 Sept. 2008.

___. "Somalia-UNOSOM II: Mandate." Web. 8 Sept. 2008.

Vambe, Maurice Taonezvi. *African Oral Story-Telling Tradition and the Zimbabwean Novel in English*. Pretoria: U of South Africa P, 2004. Print.

___. "The Poverty of Theory in the Study of Zimbabwean Literature." *Versions of Zimbabwe: New Approaches to Literature and Culture*. Ed. Robert Muponde and Ranka Primorac. Harare: Weaver Press, 2005. 89-100. Print.

Veit-Wild, Flora. "The Elusive Truth: Literary Development in Zimbabwe since 1980." *African Literature in the Eighties*. Ed. Dieter Riemenschneider and Frank Shulze-Engler. Rodopi, 1993. Print.

___. *Writing Madness: Borderlines of the Body in African Literature*. Oxford: James Currey, 2006. Print.

Vera, Yvonne. *Nehanda*. Harare: Baobab Books, 1993. Print.

___. *The Stone Virgins*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2002. Print.

___. *Without a Name*. 1994. Toronto: TSAR, 1995. Print.

Von Hippel. "Blurring of Mandates in Somalia". *Humanitarian Diplomacy: Practitioners and their Craft*. Tokyo: United Nations UP, 2007. 298-322. Print.

Waberi, Abdourahman. "Organic Metaphor in Two Novels by Nuruddin Farah." *World Literature Today*. 72.4 (1998): 775-780. Print.

Whitehead, Annie. "Journeying Through Hell: Wole Soyinka, Trauma, and Postcolonial Nigeria." *Postcolonial Trauma Novels*. Ed. Stef Craps and Gert Buelens. Spec. issue of *Studies in the Novel*. 40.1&2 (2008): 13-30. Print.

Wilson, Janet, Cristina Sandru and Sarah Lawson Welsh, eds. *Rerouting the Postcolonial: New Directions for the New Millennium*. London: Routledge, 2011. Print.

Wolfowitz, Paul D. "Clinton's First Year." *Foreign Affairs*. Jan/Feb 1994, 28-43. Print.

Wright, Derek. "Mapping Farah's Fiction: the Postmodern Landscapes." *Emerging Perspectives in Nuruddin Farah*. Ed. Derek Wright. Trenton: Africa World Press, 2002. 95-129. Print.

Young, Robert. *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*. Oxford, UK; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2001. Print.

___. *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*. 1990. London: Routledge, 2004.

Zartman, William I. and Jeffrey Z. Rubin. *Power and Negotiation*. U of Michigan P, 2002. Print.

Zeleza, Paul T. "Colonial Fictions: Memory and History in Yvonne Vera's Imagination." *Research in African Literatures*. 38.2 (2007): 9-21. Print.

___. "The Troubled Encounter between Postcolonialism and African History." The Canadian Historical Association. 17.2 (2006): 89-129. Web. 5 July 2011.

___. "Visions of Freedom and Democracy in Postcolonial African Literature." *Teaching African Literatures in a Global Literary Economy*. Ed. Tuzyline Jita Allan. Spec. issue of *Women's Studies Quarterly* 25.3/4. (1997): 10-34. Print.

___. "What Happened to the African Renaissance? The Challenges of Development in the Twenty-First Century." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*. 29.2 (2009): 155-70. Print.

i