

**Fighting Tomorrow: A Study of Selected Southern African
War Fiction**

By
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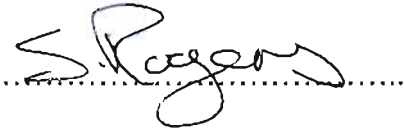
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Declaration

This study represents the original work of the author and has not been submitted in any form to another University. Where use has been made of the work of others, this has been duly acknowledged in the text.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Rogers', is written over a horizontal dotted line.

Sean Anthony Rogers

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Acknowledgments

I wish to thank my parents, Mike and Pam Rogers, for their unwavering support during the writing of this thesis.

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Finally, thank you Thandi.

Abstract

This research provides an analytical reading of five southern African war novels, in a transnational study of the experience of war as represented by the novels' authors. In order to situate the texts within a transnational tradition of writing about modern warfare, I draw on Paul Fussell's work on the fictional writings of the Second World War in combination with Tobey Herzog's work on the writings of America's war in Vietnam. Through a reading of Sousa Jamba's Patriots and Mark Behr's The Smell of Apples, I illustrate that while these and other southern African war texts can be situated within a transnational tradition of writing about modern warfare, they also extend the tradition by adding new and previously silenced voices. I then turn to a focus on specific experiences of southern African anti-colonial war as represented in Pepetela's Mayombe and Mark Behr's The Smell of Apples. These texts are read in light of Franz Fanon's extensive writings on the nature of colonial violence and with a focus on the role of the victim and perpetrator in violent resistance to colonial oppression. Following this, and keeping with my examination of the experience of war in southern Africa, I read Pepetela's Mayombe, Sousa Jamba's Patriots and Chenjerai Hove's Bones with a view to highlighting their writing of women in times of war. Using the work of Florence Stratton, this section exposes the great difficulties faced by women in times of war as a result of war's complicity in the maintenance of patriarchal societal structures. Finally, I read Chenjerai Hove's Bones and Mia Couto's Under the Frangipani as post-war texts so as to highlight the authors' use of organic images to imagine post-war futures that are not tainted by the experience of war.

In examining this topic, I aim to suggest that all of the texts studied show war to be a continuum that results in failed societies. I therefore read the texts as active interventions that seek to break the destructive cycle of the region's wars in the hope of better and constructive futures.

Introduction

Violent conflict, though by no means unique to southern Africa, has been central in its modern history. It is very difficult to write about the region in the twentieth century without constant reference to wars, conquest and violence. (Beinart 455)

As William Beinart points out, “violent conflict” has been a horrific and enduring aspect of southern Africa’s experience of the twentieth century. However, if Beinart finds it “*difficult* to write about the region in the twentieth century without constant reference to war, conquest and violence” then I would argue that it would be *impossible* to write of the region in the last forty years without “constant reference to war”. In fact, out of the ten states of which southern Africa¹ is made up, only Zambia, Botswana, Malawi and Swaziland can be said to not have been at war at some time from 1960 to 2000. Nevertheless, this does not mean that these states were not influenced and affected by the wars that were being fought in the states surrounding them. Zambia, for example, is still host to hundreds of thousands of refugees from the nearly forty-five years of continual war in Angola. The region’s wars, however, not only forced millions to move beyond their country’s borders in search of safety, they also resulted in an unprecedented flow of people to neighbouring countries in search of secure places in which to train soldiers who could then return to their homeland to fight for various causes. It seems therefore, that despite the wide spread violence and destruction that the region’s wars caused, these wars also resulted in wide spread interaction and exchange of ideas between the peoples of the different nations. It is this very interaction that has ultimately resulted in many of the diplomatic and economic relationships that are in existence today. Accordingly, war

in southern Africa should be seen as a fundamental aspect of the region's development from 1960 onwards and the point recognised that as a result of the role war has played in this development, it is *impossible* "to write about the region in the twentieth century without constant reference to wars".

Having noted the importance of the role that war has played in southern Africa's development, however, it is also important to note the role war has played in the formation and development of many of the region's individual nations. Anti-colonial, civil and international wars have all, at one time or another, been key points of reference in the creation of many of southern Africa's nations. Such an understanding of the relationship between war and the creation of a nation-state has prompted Isabel Hofmeyr to write of the war writing of Zimbabwe that, "[w]arfare is after all one of the crucial processes which lead often disparate peoples to call themselves a nation and war consequently lies at the heart of most bodies of writing that we commonly designate national literatures" (61). Such a claim is, however, in contrast to Patrick Chabal's claim concerning the region's Lusophone literature that:

The consequences of nationalist war on the evolution of literature were many. First and foremost, there emerged a considerable body of anti-colonial literature, growing out of the vagaries of the nationalist struggle and, implicitly or explicitly, erecting a model of 'correct' political literature. While political literature has sometimes been remarkably good (e.g. the poetry of Pablo Neruda), most anti-colonial writing has seldom been anything other than sloganising and propaganda. If it has its place in the history of the nationalist struggle, it contributed little to the construction of an African literature.

[...]

In times of war, writers, particularly if they are convinced nationalists, cannot fail to feel the pressure to write 'relevant'

literature. Hence the influence of war literature cannot be discounted altogether, even if it should not be exaggerated. (1996; 22)

While Hofmeyr and Chabal may disagree about the importance of war literature in the formation of national and African literatures, their comments do illustrate a significant point about the position of war literature within bodies of literature. The point is that southern Africa's war literature has only ever been considered and read as part of a larger body of literature about the nation from which it is seen to have come. This is not to say that the situation and consideration of war writings as part of national literatures does not result in meaningful discussion of writings about war; as Michael Chapman's Southern African Literatures (1996) and other² such studies clearly demonstrate that it does. Rather it is to say that by reading southern Africa's war literature as a body of work that exists as both part of and yet independently from national literatures, previously unnoticed aspects of the literature will emerge. It is upon this understanding of the effect that such a re-situation of southern Africa's war writings, particularly fictional writings, will have that this study is premised. In order to explain fully the purposes of this study, however, it is necessary to elaborate on the grounds upon which this re-situation has its foundation.

The first point that needs clarity is what the study understands by the term war. For this I turn to the definition cited by Martin Navias and Tim Moreman as the generally accepted military definition of war. They define war as a conflict in which at least one thousand combat related deaths are recorded in a year (312). By this definition southern African war fiction would include fictional writing that has as its setting South Africa's involvement in Angola, but not fictional writing that has as its setting the June 1976

student uprising in Soweto. The difference between these two violent conflicts is that while both may ultimately have resulted in the deaths of over one thousand people, most of those that were killed in Soweto were not armed combatants. Interestingly though, it is quite possible that some of the students that were involved in the uprising joined the African National Congress (ANC) and were later active combatants during the battles against the South African Defence Force (SADF) at Cuito Cuanavale in Angola. Were such a hypothetical person to write one piece of fiction set during the June uprising and one based on their experiences at Cuito Cuanavale, I would consider only the second an example of war fiction. The reason that I find such a definition of war to be useful to this study is that it offers specific parameters through which the study can highlight the one aspect that all war fiction read in this study share: a focus on the experience of war.

As the second point of clarity needed before the discussion of the aim of this thesis can take place, I offer the notion of “the experience of war”. Writing fiction that is set in times of war that does not actively discuss or represent an individual or country’s experience of the war, I argue, cannot be said to be war fiction. This does not mean, however, that a text has to attempt to represent the actual fighting that took place, but rather that it must deal specifically with the effects that war has had on the individual or nation. Such an approach allows for war to be examined as both a personal and a national experience and allows for the inclusion of many different forms of fictional war writing.

The use of “the experience of war” as a notion upon which to re-situate the texts read in this thesis also allows for the reading of texts that are originally written in different languages and thus becomes vital to a study of southern Africa’s war fiction. Perhaps the

greatest irony of war is that an act of such great violence and, which is of necessity, about the demarcation between groups can in fact offer those same groups a common experience that binds rather than separates. If one then accepts that this experience is perhaps the only one that all nations in southern Africa have been affected by in one way or another, one can then read beyond the demarcations of nation and language that are so often used to separate the region's writings. In addition, this approach allows for the inclusion of such writing in a global, transnational body of war writing, thus introducing the possibility of comparison with an, unfortunately, ever growing body of writing.

Having thus established the grounds upon which the texts considered in this thesis are read alongside each other, I will now move a discussion of the intentions of the research offered in this thesis. The aim of this thesis is to use war as the basis for grouping a selection of southern African texts in a new way so as to allow for their reading in a manner that illustrates the impact that war has had on the region, its nations and its people. In doing so I hope to establish, on a number of levels, that while the region's wars may be seen to have been fought for political reasons, their impact has forever been stamped on southern Africa's people and their communities. To do so, I draw on the work and writing of many different theorists and critics, many of whom do not write about war specifically and yet can be seen to offer significant insights into the many areas of life affected by war in their work.

As to the structuring of the thesis, I make use of the stages that Paul Fussell identifies in what he terms "the evolution of the soldier" (Herzog 157). While Fussell's work is

described in far greater detail in Chapter One, it should be noted at this time that he identifies three stages through which a soldier develops as a result of her or his exposure to and involvement in war. The three stages are: “innocence, experience and consideration [also termed reflection]” (Herzog 14). In this thesis, I use these three phases to guide and structure my exploration of the experiences of war that are represented in the texts studied. I have chosen to do so because an important aspect of Fussell’s work is to highlight a continuum within the development of a soldier that I argue is also evident in the fictional writings selected for study. This is not to say that the works can be seen only to deal with aspects of war related to the distinct stages that Fussell, and later Herzog, illustrates soldiers to go through, but rather that the works read within the frame of each stage exhibit and discuss aspects of the experience of war similar to those of the soldiers during their movement through the stages. To clarify this point, what follows is a brief overview of each chapter.

Chapter One makes use of the work done by Paul Fussell on the writing of the First World war, Tobey Herzog on the writing of America’s war in Vietnam and Gary Baines on the writing of South Africa’s Border War in order to read Sousa Jamba’s Patriots (1990) and Mark Behr’s The Smell of Apples (1995) with a view to situating them in a transnational tradition of writing about modern warfare. The choice of the texts for this chapter is based on their illustrating a clear tripartite structure in the development of the main character’s experience of war. In addition, both texts deal with issues relating to the nation before it was involved in the war that the main characters are to fight in. Thus, the texts can be seen to be rooted, although both deal with all three stages, in the “innocence”

stage of Fussell's "evolution". Through a situation of these texts within a transnational tradition of writing about modern warfare, the chapter illustrates that while the texts can be seen to be similar in many respects to texts set in other, non-African, wars they also illustrate an understanding of war and its effects on the individual that is specific to the situations that lead the main character to war; situations which are specific to southern Africa.

Chapter Two reads Pepetela's Mayombe (1983) and Mark Behr's The Smell of Apples in the light of Frantz Fanon's theorising about anti-colonial struggle as it is presented in The Wretched of the Earth (1965). Pepetela and Behr's texts were selected because they clearly defy simple notions of the position and experience of the oppressor and the resister in anti-colonial war and thus point to a more complicated understanding of the results of Fussell's "experience" stage. The selection of Fanon for the chapter is based on his extensive work on the nature of colonial and anti-colonial violence and its effects on those that perpetrate such violence. By reading the texts in light of Fanon's work the chapter also illustrates the potential for the experience of war, and the violence that it entails, to be a difficult experience to render in a form that allows for easy resolution.

Chapter Three discusses the representation of women's experience of southern Africa's wars in Pepetela's Mayombe, Sousa Jamba's Patriots and Chenjerai Hove's Bones (1988). In order to highlight the impact that the patriarchal undertones of southern Africa's wars have on women and the manner in which they are represented in the texts, extensive use is made of Florence Stratton's work on the representation of women in

African Literature in Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender (1994).

This chapter fits broadly under the “experience” stage of Fussell’s tripartite structure as all of the texts selected illustrate, whether by design or not, the increased difficulty that southern African women experience during times of war as a result of the processes of war’s complicity in the maintenance of patriarchal structures.

The final chapter, Chapter Four, deals with the representation of post-war Zimbabwe and Mozambique in Chenjerai Hove’s Bones and Mia Couto’s Under the Frangipani (2001) respectively. Both novels were selected because they can be seen to fit into Fussell’s “reflection” stage and, in addition, illustrate the differences between the “aftermath” (Herzog 167) stage that soldiers returned to, following America’s war in Vietnam, and the “aftermath” that was created in Zimbabwe and Mozambique as a result of the war having been fought within the country that is depicted by the authors. Hove and Couto’s use of organic images in their attempt to illustrate desired futures in the face of post-war realities that are marked by corruption and a failure of society is highlighted as it shows, I argue, an inability on the part of the authors to write a future that is not tainted by the experience of war. Also highlighted is the novel’s signalling of memory as a means of linking post-war realities with pre-war societal structures in order to enable the growth of a national future that was stunted by the atrocities of war.

Chapter One

Dead Ideals: *Patriots*, *The Smell of Apples* and Transnational Writings of Modern Warfare.

1 Introduction

Do not weep, babe, for war is kind.
Because your father tumbled in the yellow trenches,
Raged at his breast, gulped and died,
Do not weep.
War is kind.
– Stephen Crane, from “War is Kind”. (1899)

This chapter attempts to situate two Southern African texts, *Patriots* (1990) by Sousa Jamba and *The Smell of Apples* (1995) by Mark Behr, within a transnational tradition of writings of modern warfare. In order to do so, I draw, primarily, on the work of Paul Fussell, Tobey Herzog and Gary Baines, who deal with the writings of the First World War, America’s war in Vietnam and South Africa’s involvement in the Angolan conflict respectively. I contend that that such texts should be seen to be a part of a transnational tradition as they lend it new – and in some cases previously silenced – voices that are able to offer imaginings of war that extend and enrich the tradition.

1.1 Situating Angola's Patriots

The first point that I raise about Patriots is the lack of information available on either the novel or its author. Reliable information about Sousa Jamba is restricted to a very brief biography in Patrick Chabal's The Postcolonial Literature of Lusophone Africa and another in Michael Chapman's Southern African Literatures; on the internet, multiple searches on multiple engines elicited only mentions of him as an Angolan refugee living in London, an author, a journalist, a União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (Unita) member and former translator for former Unita leader, Jonas Savimbi. This silence may well be as a result of his – possibly erstwhile– affiliations to an organisation that is widely believed to be the villain in the many tales of Angola's woe, but it does not, I argue, excuse the silence surrounding an author of two significant novels, Patriots and A Lonely Devil (1993). Similarly, the only critical mention of his work that I have managed to find is restricted to the four pages in Chabal, six lines in Chapman and one paragraph in an essay titled "Travel and Metaphors of Exile in African Literature in Portuguese" by Alberto Carvalho of the University of Lisbon.

While the exact reasons – other than those mentioned above – for the silence surrounding Jamba and his work may not be clear, there are a number of possibilities that I would like to offer. The first is that Sousa Jamba was educated in Zambia and therefore in English, his writing, too, is in English, so he is in the unusual position of being an Anglophone author in a Lusophone country. The situation of the book can therefore be seen to be difficult, as the study of Angolan literature is most often carried out – with a few notable

exceptions – by Lusophone scholars. The result, it seems to me, is that Sousa Jamba's work occupies an interstitial space created by the artificial separation of English and Portuguese speaking writers by scholars of the region's literatures.

The final point I would like to raise about this perceived silence relates to the nature of the conflict in Angola from 1975 to 1991. Perhaps the greatest irony of what was referred to by historians as Angola's civil war is that it was influenced and informed by both the international policies of the Cold War and the regional policies of southern Africa. With, on the one hand, the involvement of troops from South Africa on the side of Unita, the supply of material and funding to Unita by the USA, and, on the other hand, the involvement of Cuban troops on the side of the Movimento Popular Libertação de Angola (MPLA), and the supply of material and funds by the USSR to the MPLA, the conflict took on an international reputation as a Cold War conflict fought by proxy forces, most notably South Africa and Cuba. Consequently, the dominant voices emanating from the conflict are those of South African combatants, with little space given to MPLA fighters and practically none to given those of Unita. It is for this reason that I argue that the voices contained within Patriots should be re-evaluated as an important aspect not only of an Angolan tradition of war writing, but also part of an ongoing, transnational tradition of writing about the experience of modern warfare. I shall return to this point later, following a brief description of the narrative and some discussion of the critical writings on Patriots.

Patriots is narrated in the omniscient third person and divided into four books. It tells the story of, primarily, Hosi Mbueti, a young Unita supporter, and his experiences of Angola's movement from colonial state to a country in the grip of civil war. It is a story that most believe to be a fictionalisation of Sousa Jamba's own exile and return to Angola. The first book opens with Hosi as a refugee in Zambia who has "decided to go and fight them. I am going to Angola to fight with Unita. I am prepared to die. I don't want no motherfucking Cubans to have Angola." (10). The narrative then continues with a brief depiction of the issues facing Angolans living in Zambia until, in order to explain how Hosi came to be both in Zambia and a Unita supporter, the story moves back to his childhood in the late 1960s and 1970s, the final stages of Portuguese colonial rule of Angola. Book Two, set in 1984, tells of his return to Unita-held territory and military training. In Book Three the narrative returns to tell of the lives of some of the characters introduced in Book One; for example, Hosi's half-brother Osvaldo, an MPLA supporter who remained in Angola. The final book, Book Four, is dominated by Hosi's first experience of battle in 1985 and his subsequent capture by MPLA soldiers.

The most notable aspect of the narrative structure is, however, the manner in which Jamba presents it as, at times quite literally, Hosi's journey from exile and then victim of Angola's protracted conflict to becoming an active participant in it. It is this view of the narrative as a journey that prompted its brief inclusion in the Carvalho essay and is one that underscores the reading offered by Ana Leite in Chabal's The Postcolonial Literature of Lusophone Africa. In their readings, both highlight the journey as one that encapsulates the difficulties faced by Angola as a result of its divisions along ethnic and

political lines, divisions that are enforced by the fact that Angola's political lines are viewed to be drawn along ethnic ones. Thus Leite claims of the novel that:

It is difficult to read *Patriots* without reference to [Pepetela's] *Mayombe* since it speaks directly to many of the questions which Pepetela raised in his novel. Hosi finds himself engulfed in a civil war in which the fundamental issues of tribalism, racism, the struggle for power, opportunism, the divisions between the educated and the peasants are as salient as they were in *Mayombe*. (121)

Leite continues by pointing out that because of its structuring as a journey during which Hosi meets and talks to people of diverse political and ethnic backgrounds, the reader is presented with the “ideologies and posturing of the three nationalist parties – Unita, the MPLA and even the Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola (FNLA)” (121). This trajectory, she argues, causes Hosi to re-evaluate his personal standpoint on these ideologies and political positions and she therefore concludes that “for better or worse, the novel intends to deconstruct ideology” and that “this in effect is the meaning of the life story of the main character” (121). In a similar vein, Chapman concludes of the novel that it “is an indictment of all who would commit atrocities in the name of love for a country” (288). I will argue, however, that while the deconstruction of ideology may well be a vital aspect of the novel, *Patriots* offers a far more complex reading than either Chapman or Leite present. To illustrate this I return now to a point I raised earlier, that of *Patriots*' position within a larger transnational tradition of writings on modern warfare.

In his work *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Paul Fussell identifies an underlying three-part structure to most writings, including poetry, of the First World War. The construction of this structure he defines as follows:

First, the sinister or absurd or even farcical preparation [for battle]; second, the unmaning experience of battle; and third, the retirement from the line to a contrasting (usually pastoral) scene, where there is time and quiet for consideration, meditation, and reconstruction. The middle stage is always characterised by disenchantment and loss of innocence. (130 – 131)

This reading of war writing is expanded upon by Tobey Herzog in his study of the literature of America's war in Vietnam, Vietnam War Stories: Innocence Lost, when he concludes that:

Fussell's tripartite pattern of innocence, experience, and consideration has archetypal connections, and in various forms shapes much of the general *Bildungsroman*, or rite-of-passage, literature focusing on the education, spiritual growth, or mythic quest of a central character. (14)

Herzog continues by illustrating how this "war writing as *Bildungsroman*" structure is reproduced in various forms and underpins a very large number of the writings that emanated from America's war in Vietnam. In addition, Herzog uses other, older examples of writing about modern warfare to contextualise the Vietnam writings and place them within what I would term a transnational tradition of writings of modern warfare. As far as my reading of Patriots is concerned, the structural formation outlined by Fussell, when combined with Herzog's observations, makes the war-*Bildungsroman* reading an extremely useful one. It is therefore that I shall, as Herzog did with the Vietnam texts, use a text set in the First World War and one set in the American Civil War to place Patriots within the broader context of a transnational writing of modern warfare. The texts I shall use are Erich Maria Remarque's All Quiet on the Western Front (1929) and Steven Crane's The Red Badge of Courage (1895).

All Quiet on the Western Front tells the story of Paul Baumer, a German soldier during the First World War, and his experiences of the horror, brutality, struggle for survival, fear and death – including his own – of modern warfare. The text has been referred to by many critics as the “Bible of the common soldier” (Herzog 61) and – like Patriots – is considered to be largely autobiographical. In terms of its structure, the narrative is similar to Patriots in that it begins with the main character already on the path that will lead – in *Bildungsroman* fashion – to his final realisation that war is not what it had seemed it would be when he decided to join the army. Paul’s decision is based – as is Hosi’s – on what he perceived to be the wisdom of his elders. In what Fussell would term the beginning of his innocence, we read that Paul joins as a result of the continual references to the glory of battle and the importance of patriotism in the lives of young German men made by his school teacher, Mister Kantorek, and is clearly illustrated by the following comment made by Paul: “our heads were full of nebulous ideas which cast an idealised, almost romantic glow over life and even the war” (15).

In Hosi’s case it is his father – Nataniel Mbueti – who shapes the political views that ultimately result in Hosi’s deciding to join the conflict on the side of Unita. This is illustrated in the following passage taken from early in the novel, before Hosi’s parents are killed during the very first post-independence violence and he is forced into exile:

‘We built this country. We the Ovimbundu. Not the mulattos, not the Bakongo. [...] If the northerners come to power, they will be at the top, enjoying themselves while we are at the bottom, breaking our poor necks. I’d rather die than see that day [...] Only Unita can save us.’

Hosi and his mother were dumbfounded. Till now Hosi had known little about the different tribes in Angola. After his father had

spoken, he began to hate those that were not Ovimbundu. He believed immediately that his father was right. (72)

It is from these two points in the two narratives that both Hosi and Paul enter the first part of the Fussell tripartite structure – these points mark their innocence – and thus set them up for the inevitable experience of war that will change the views that have been transplanted from the older generation.

This innocence is only reinforced during Paul and Hosi's training. Paul tells of an absurd

ten weeks of basic training and that changed us more than ten years of school. We learnt that polishing a button is more important than a set of philosophy books. [...] Saluting, eyes front, marching, presenting arms, right and left about, snapping to attention... We had imagined that our task would be different from all this, but we were being trained to be heroes the same way they train circus horses. (16)

The same absurdity is noticeable in Hosi's recount of and response to basic training in Jamba, Unita's base:

The training was getting harder... Hosi had begun to enjoy it all. He no longer felt nervous throwing a grenade. And that was not all. He and a few other soldiers had been selected to be trained on a new anti-tank missile that had just been introduced to the army. (210)

Hosi's account – more than Paul's – illustrates what Fussell calls the “farcical preparation” for battle that will ultimately be one of the reasons that make the true experience of battle such a shock to the soldiers. It is a “farcical preparation” based on the very same set of principles handed down from an older generation in much the same way as the ideals of war and patriotic duty to country and “tribe” are handed down to Hosi and Paul.

While the Paul that we read of in the very first page of *All Quiet on the Western Front* has already been introduced to the hardships and terror of combat, and the subsequent descriptions of battle are therefore tainted by Fussell's "experience", the descriptions should still be read with his comment about the glory of war in mind. When they are read in this manner, I argue, they can be seen to illustrate the gap between the "innocence" and "experience" of battle. This point is most obvious in the following passage in which Paul describes an encounter with a new recruit who has just had his first experience of battle:

Some of the men scream. Green rockets go up over the horizon. Dirt flies up. Shrapnel buzzes...

Close by us there is a recruit, a blond lad, and he is terrified. He has pressed his face into his hands. His helmet has rolled off. I reach for it and try to put it back on his head. He looks up, pushes the helmet away and huddles in under my arm like a child, his head against my chest.

Slowly he comes to himself. Then suddenly blushes scarlet and his face has a look of embarrassment. Cautiously he puts his hand to his rear end and gives me an agonised look. I understand at once: the barrage had scared the shit out of him. (43 – 44)

Paul has been in this situation before, but what can his first experience of battle have been like? We are not told and can only assume that it was similar to this one and hence the understanding with which he treats the recruit.

In Patriots there are only two descriptions of battle, only one of which involves Hosi. It comes at the very end of the novel and it is therefore quite easy to identify it as the moment of experience to which much of the novel has built up. During training – prior to the his first battle – Hosi "dreamt of battlefields, tanks and jet fighters" (149) in an almost

adolescent manner, but as the following illustrates, his experience of them is very different:

It was as if the soil was trembling. Hosi felt that it was the end of the world. He looked around. Everyone lay still on the ground, as if they were dead. A huge MI25 helicopter was hovering above, its wings tearing the branches of the tree apart. Hosi closed his eyes for a while. The helicopter was still droning. He was being covered in dust and felt unable to breathe. (278)

Hosi – lying prone on the ground in the face of the enemy helicopter – is far from the Hosi running fearlessly into the attack as he imagined he would be. When later we read that he is captured by three MPLA soldiers, the following is his reaction: “Hosi wet his trousers. The short soldier hit Hosi with the butt of his rifle. Hosi sobbed” (280). It is a reaction that mirrors that of the young recruit that Paul observes during the above description.

Herzog notes of the literature of the Vietnam War that the beginning of the “reflection” is often marked by an experience involving the death and subsequent musing over the body of a soldier, friend or enemy (34). To illustrate this Herzog draws on a text that he identifies as the first written about the experience of modern warfare and the first to have a clear tripartite *war-Bildungsroman* structure, Steven Crane’s American Civil War novel, The Red Badge of Courage (1895). In it, the novel’s hero – Henry Fleming – flees his first battle only to come across the body of a dead soldier. Henry’s response is to “shriek as he confronted the thing” (88) – certainly not the reaction of a trained soldier, but one that marks the beginning of his development into the brave and warrior-like soldier that he is expected and turns out to be.

There is a similar moment in *All Quiet on the Western Front* when – returning from a failed charge across no-mans-land – Paul is forced to spend twenty-four hours alone in a shell-hole with a dying French soldier whose throat he has slit. While in the shell-hole he begins to realise that the French soldier – we learn that his name is Gerard Duval – is just like the soldiers that Paul serves with and counts as very close friends; is indeed, just like him. This moment of recognition of a common humanity and the epiphany that follows is marked by the following passage:

His wife is bound to be thinking of him just now: she doesn't know what has happened...

My mind is getting worse all the time, and I can't control my thoughts. What does his wife look like? Like the slim dark girl in the house by the canal? Doesn't she belong to me? Perhaps she belongs to me now because of all of this...

The dead man would be able to live for another thirty years if I'd only taken more care about how I was going back. ...

I have killed Gerard Duval, the printer. I think wildly that I shall have to become a printer. (158 – 159)

Unlike in *The Red Badge of Courage*, however, this epiphany does not result in Paul's becoming a brave soldier, able to charge at the enemy without fear or guilt as a result of his killing of another human. Nor does his being wounded later on in the narrative represent – as the title of *The Red Badge of Courage* suggests – a badge of courage to be worn with pride, but rather a mark of survival. It is this difference in the result of the “reflection” that marks, Herzog argues, the difference in the authors' understandings of the role of war in the shaping of combatants. The ending of the war-*Bildungsroman* structure of *Red Badge of Courage* sees Henry conquer his fear and wear his wound as the eponymous badge. Paul, however, becomes a survivor, with each day becoming just another escape from a pointless death at the hands of an enemy forced – by circumstances

similar to his own – into a trench facing his trench. Paul’s death – a few days before the Armistice is signed – highlights what Herzog views as Remarque’s assertion that to fight in battle for political ideals is a pointless waste of human life.

It is in Paul’s above-mentioned response that the similarities between All Quiet on the Western Front and Patriots become evident. After Hosi has been captured he – and his four captors – get lost on their return to the MPLA base and in the course of the three days that they are therefore alone in the wilderness, the “short soldier” that hit Hosi with his rifle during his capture is mortally wounded by a landmine. Hosi is then forced to carry the dying soldier, Nando, until his death. The following is a conversation between Hosi and the other three soldiers – Figueredo, Manuel and Filipe – shortly after Nando’s death:

‘You seem to have liked Nando. He kicked you when he was alive, aren’t you happy that he is dead?’

Hosi said: ‘It doesn’t matter that whether I liked him, dead or not. What matters is his mother or his sister or his girlfriend.’

...

Figueredo said: ‘Our lives are cheap. The politicians decide; we die. I am sure that both the MPLA and Unita leaders have a lot in common.’

Hosi said: ‘I agree. Just as there is no difference between the MPLA soldier and the Unita soldier. We are all patriots. We all love Angola and we are prepared to die for it in our way.’

Figueredo grunted and said: ‘What is good is that very soon there will be very few patriots left, so the politicians will have to find a solution to this bloody war.’(283)

Hosi’s recognition of the MPLA soldiers as “patriots” stands in stark contrast to his earlier description of them as the “extra-terrestrial beings” (161). His realisation of their common humanity, with mothers and girlfriends, also mirrors Paul’s discovery of a

common humanity with the French soldier. It is, however, in the line with which Jamba concludes the narrative that the inherent difference between these novels is highlighted.

“Although they disagreed on many things, there was one point they agreed on – they all loved Angola. Yes, they were all patriots!” (286). This line reinforces the irony contained within the novel’s title, Patriots. What brings these soldiers together is also what separates them. The experience of war is what they have in common, but it is also war that will separate them. While in All Quiet on the Western Front, the irony of the title is that all is not quiet on the Western Front. On the day that this message was transmitted, Paul died. This point emphasises the difference between the experience of war of those who start it, and the experience of the “common soldier”.

This difference in understanding about the nature of war that the conclusion of the war-*Bildungsroman* structure’s “reflection” stage brings in the two novels is, I argue, as a result of the difference in the nature of the two conflicts. On the one hand, Paul’s war is one that is fought away from the people for whom it is supposedly being fought, while on the other, Hosi’s war is fought in their midst. In the latter, the difference between combatant and non-combatant is often difficult to distinguish and as the separation and subsequent reunion of Hosi and his half-brother Osvaldo illustrates, the difference between enemy and friend is often not at all clear. This point is further illustrated by the fact that not only is Hosi’s journey a journey of self-discovery, but also a journey from the idealised exile’s vision of Angola to the discovery of an Angola brutalised by twenty years of war. It is an Angola in which brother kills brother in the name of patriotism and

one that will continue to be thus until its leaders stop making and believing statements such as the following made by Jonas Savimbi: “The day the MPLA decides to consider other liberation movements as patriots...then we will say to the MPLA: ‘Come here brother’, [...] Anything other than this we cannot accept” (Alao 17). Hosi’s loss of innocence can therefore be seen to operate on two levels. On the first level it is his loss of personal innocence, his becoming. On second is his loss of the innocence of the political belief that was instilled in him by his father. War’s destruction of the certainties passed from father to son is also a key feature of the next novel, which this chapter seeks to situate within a transnational tradition of writing about modern warfare.

1.2 South Africa’s Dead Reflections

In an article that seeks to establish a link between the literature of the Vietnam War and that of South Africa’s so-called Border War, Gary Baines asserts that “America’s war in Vietnam became a point of reference for South African soldiers who served on the so-called Border” (172). To illustrate this point, Baines begins by turning to the work of L.B. Lewis and his contention that the American media was “one of the agents by which the ‘symbolic universe’ borrowed exclusively from the Second World War was transmitted from one generation to the next (the other agents were the family and the military)” (174). Baines continues by pointing out that both the decision of South Africa – especially white, Afrikaans South Africa – not to go to war with Germany and its allies, and its almost complete media blackout of the Border War resulted in “the values of duty, honour and sacrifice” not finding reinforcement in film, television or by “fathers and

other male relatives [that] were veterans of the ‘Good War’” (175) that ended the evil of fascism in Europe. The result, in Baines’ view, is that,

[i]nstead, patriotism and conformity to the ideology of white supremacy was reinforced by a value system upheld by the family, the church, an education system which included cadets for white male school-goers, and military service itself. The media played less of a role reinforcing a worldview than in the construction of a frame of reference which enabled soldiers who served on the border to understand their experiences. (175)

He therefore contends that:

South African soldiers related to American Vietnam war films and literature in order to make sense of significant episodes in their life stories. This was because, at the time, local productions of war adventure films with Border setting lacked credible story lines and heroes. The Border War film resembled poor versions of American Second World War ‘propaganda-as-entertainment’ films. And the literature of the Border War [during the late 1970s and early 1980s] did not amount to much³. (175)

Baines, having thus illustrated his understanding of the link between the writing of the Vietnam War and the writing of the Border War, then draws – as I did in the previous section – on the work of Tobey Herzog in order to illustrate his contention. In doing so, he highlights themes, originally set out by Herzog, that are to be found in a large selection of the fictional writings of both the Vietnam War and the Border War. Thus, Baines situates – as I have done with Sousa Jamba’s Patriots – South African Border War writing within a transnational tradition of writings about modern warfare. What he does not do, however, is show how such writings – while still incorporating themes common to both the writings of the Vietnam War and of modern warfare in general – interrupt and extend both the war-as-*Bildungsroman* narrative and its tripartite structure in a manner

that illustrates the flexibility of the structure. Moreover, I will argue in this section that it is precisely as a result of such flexibility that new writings of war are able to question and problematise earlier notions of war. It is with such a view in mind that I offer the following reading of Mark Behr's The Smell of Apples (published as Die Reuk van Appels in Afrikaans 1993 and in English in 1995).

Susan Gallagher writes of The Smell of Apples that its publication was “immediately heralded as that oxymoronic entity in the publishing world – a new classic”, but continues by pointing to the fact that “a great deal of the novel’s notoriety stemmed from the fact that it included one of the first straightforward South African accounts of homosexuality, long a forbidden topic under the strict censorship laws, and was written by an openly gay author” (387). This is undoubtedly true; however, as a result, the overwhelming majority of the work that has been done on the novel has remained focused on its “meticulous dissection of apartheid’s mouldy old corpse” (Barnard 207) through the lens of gender theory⁴. While I will be giving such work greater voice in Chapter Two, I will be treating The Smell of Apples as a “war novel” for the purposes of this chapter as such an approach allows me to, at first, situate the novel within a South African tradition of writings about the Border War.

The term *grensliteratuur* – literally ‘border literature’ in Afrikaans – has come to be used when referring to “works of fiction written in the last decade or so [1980s and early 1990s], almost exclusively by young Afrikaner intellectuals who use the border war as a setting for their works” (Koornhof 274). In addition, Koornhof holds that “[t]he writing

explores not so much the war, but the breaking up of the monolithic Afrikaner ethnic identity” (276). To this Baines adds that “[t]his identity, largely constructed around the symbolism generated by the South African War [Anglo-Boer War], was deconstructed around another war – the Border War” (177) through the writings of the *grensliteratuur* writers. Although it may be true that The Smell of Apples author, Mark Behr, may not be seen by most to fit into this tradition, I aim to show that – with the notable exception of the fact that he actually served on the “border” as many other such writers did not (Baines 176, Koornhof 278) – the manner in which Behr makes use of the border trope in The Smell of Apples and his use – albeit in a fractured form – of the tripartite, war-*Bildungsroman* structure illustrate that the novel can be seen to situate him well within both the *grensliteratuur* tradition and within the transnational tradition of writings on war mentioned earlier.

The Smell of Apples relates two narratives of the life of Marnus Erasmus. The first and major narrative describes a week in early December 1973 and sees Marnus, aged eleven, growing up in a “home imbued with Afrikaner nationalism: he attends Voortrekkers every Friday afternoon ... attends the Dutch Reformed Church, and idolises his father, [Johan Erasmus] ‘the youngest major-general ever in the history of the South African Defence Force [SADF]’ (Behr 14)” (Gallagher 387). At first glance, this part of the narrative – set in and around the Erasmus home overlooking False Bay – seems to be a collection of run-of-the-mill trials and tribulations of early adolescence, but as it progresses the reader is made aware of the fact that all is not as it appears. A series of events that is triggered by the arrival of a mysterious American – who is in fact a Chilean

general – called Mr Smith ends with Marnus accidentally viewing the violent rape of his best friend Frikkie by Johan Erasmus. As a result of these events Marnus is ultimately forced to re-evaluate his white, male, Afrikaner identity. It is this section – Marnus aged eleven – of the two narratives that has attracted most of the critical attention and one that I will return to in far greater detail in Chapter Two. However, for the purposes of this chapter, I will remain focused on the second narrative.

This second narrative punctuates the first at seemingly random times and tells of Lieutenant Marnus Erasmus – aged twenty-six – as he leads a platoon deployed in Angola during the final official South African military involvement there in mid 1988. He has become the man that he was supposed to be; that is, he has followed his father's footsteps into the Permanent Force and become an officer. As such, one would expect him to be an outstanding example of the apartheid values that the SADF was seen to defend. This is not so: the Marnus that Behr introduces the reader to is disillusioned, cynical and is seen to have deep reservations about the war and the way it is being fought. This is made abundantly clear in the very first line of the second narrative: "It's over" (11). That it is the war in Angola that is "over" is apparent from the passage, below, which follows the initial statement:

*It's over.
Southern Angola, which forces you in other seasons to search for a
dry spot, has become a sea of dust and desperation.
The explosions and thunder of the Cuban MiGs, invisibly shattering
the blue sky just north of us, get closer every day. I don't know how
long we'll be able to hold out. The messages coming from the South
African side of the border are disoriented and riddled with
contradictions.
No one knows what to believe any longer. (11 –12)*

This is certainly not the voice that one would expect a war narrative that follows the tripartite war-*Bildungsroman* structure – as I argue The Smell of Apples does – to begin with. It may be argued that Behr’s opening is not unlike the voice of the experienced soldier with which Remarque opens All Quiet on the Western Front:

We are in camp five miles behind the line. Yesterday our relief arrived; now our bellies are full of bully beef and beans, we’ve had enough to eat and we’re well satisfied.

...

Fourteen days ago we were sent up the line as relief troops. It was pretty quiet in our sector, and because of that the quartermaster drew the normal quantity of food for the day we were due back, and he catered for the full company of a hundred and fifty men. But then, on the last day, we were taken by surprise by long-range shelling from the heavy artillery. The English guns kept on pounding our position, so we lost a lot of men, and only eighty of us came back. (1 – 2)

The difference is, however, that while Paul’s above description bears the mark of a soldier who has not yet experienced the worst that war has to offer and is therefore happy to cast aside the trauma of the past few days and enjoy the satisfaction that a warm meal brings, Marnus’ description is in the tone of a soldier that, in Fussell’s words, illustrates the “middle stage [which] is always characterised by disenchantment and loss of innocence” (130).

As was illustrated in the previous section, Fussell’s tripartite structure does not always require that the stages are represented in sequence. The narrative sequencing does not have to follow the exact timeline of the innocence-experience-reflection structure. In fact, Herzog goes to some length to prove that many Second World War novels⁵ not only have structures that are easily recognisable as tripartite and of the war-*Bildungsroman* type,

but illustrate a fractured sense of time. Such disruption and fracturing of the timeline upon which tripartite structure is based is evident in even earlier war fiction, as All Quiet on the Western Front proves. Paul – as we are introduced to him – in the very beginning of the middle, or experience, stage. He has yet to be confronted with Gerard Duval's slow death or the loss – one by one – of his closest friends to artillery, machine-guns and other, even more terrible, examples of the violence of modern warfare. Remarque is still working towards the cynicism and desolation of mind and spirit that will mark both the final pages of his novel and the final moments of Paul's life.

What sets The Smell of Apples apart in this regard is that the moment of experience happens before Marnus even joins the army. It is his viewing – at age 11 – of Frikkie's rape by Johan Erasmus that marks the end of his innocence. This introduction to the violence of apartheid's militarist patriarchy is then compounded by a beating from his father for not wanting to wear Mister Smith's epaulettes, which the latter left as a parting gift. Marnus' subsequent submission to his father's wish that he put on a camouflage uniform and stand in front of Johan Erasmus so that the epaulettes can be attached, marks the end of his "experience" stage. This scene also symbolically marks his induction into the patriarchal militarist order that will lead to his involvement in the Border War and can therefore be seen to be a moment that has come to taint – as is evident in the opening phrase of the second narrative – his view of the war. When these final moments of the first narrative are viewed in this manner, it becomes clear that the second narrative can be read as the reflection stage of the war-*Bildungsroman* structure. A point that I argue is illustrated by the following passage from the second narrative:

Perhaps that summer ultimately decided it. Possibly not even the whole summer – just that one week in December. Yet, by now, I know full-well that you cannot satisfactorily understand an event unless you have a picture of everything that accompanies it: the arrival of the visitor cannot be divorced from what preceded his coming. To understand my own choice, I need to muster as much of the detail as possible. (31)

This passage marks the beginning of Marnus' reflection of both his "innocence" stage and of his position within the army and the war that it was involved in. In addition, I argue that contained within the passages of the second narrative that mark this reflection are a number of the themes – originally highlighted by Herzog – that Baines uses to illustrate the link between the fictional writing of the Vietnam War and the fictional writing of Border war, or *Grensliteratuur*. By examining a selection of these themes as they appear in The Smell of Apples, one can show that through his use of a fractured war-*Bildungsroman* structure, the novel can not only be seen to be situated within a transnational tradition of war writings, but can also be viewed as extending the tradition. What follows is just such an examination.

In the passage that I referred to earlier as the one in which the reader is introduced to Marnus at age twenty-six, two overwhelming images are present. One is of the "Cuban MiGs" menacingly "shattering the blue sky" while drawing ever closer. The other is of a land that seems just as menacing as the enemy weapons. Angola is a "sea of dust and depression" and in the next Angola passage we read:

When I opened the last of the ratpacks this morning it took just seconds before everything was covered in a layer of dust. It's useless trying to get rid of it. The radio is positioned beside me on the ground. When I turn the frequency knobs, there's the grinding sound of grains rubbing against metal. (18)

Marnus and the other SADF soldiers, it seems, are forced to fight not only the MPLA, Cubans and South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO), but the very land of Angola too. This is what Baines terms the "war [...] waged against the elements and the land" (185) theme. He does not suggest what such a theme might imply, but I argue that it serves to question the morality of – in this case – the SADF's role in Angola. A role that – although veiled in the political discourse of the Cold War – was without any moral justification or overt international support and one in which the aims are viewed to be so heinous that even the land and environment must fight against it. The result is, Baines suggests, that both the American soldiers fighting in Vietnam and the South African soldiers fighting in Angola and Namibia felt that they were as much at war with the land as with the enemy soldiers⁶. It is interesting that the first injury to Marnus that we read of is caused, not by the Cubans and their terrifying weapons but by the branches that claw and tear at him as he tries to escape capture by Cuban forces:

I consider dropping off my webbing to make running easier. Then I give up the idea. Branches lash my face like whips, and blood wells up in my mouth. The sound of people crashing along behind me, catching up on me, filling my head, surround me. I storm on blindly, desperately to find the river. I must find the river that will lead me to Qalueque. (157)

As well as illustrating the "war waged against the ...land" theme, the passage illustrates another that Baines believes common to the writing of the two wars. The theme is what he calls the "survival mentality" (189). He suggests that – unlike the Second World War, the aim of which was to defeat Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan – the American involvement in Vietnam and the South African involvement in Angola had no clear or

easily definable objectives outside the murky world of Cold War and Apartheid politics. This is coupled with the fact that soldiers in both wars – that is, the Vietnam and Border Wars – did not have, as the Second World War soldiers did, to stay on until their military objectives were reached, but were rotated home, after a series of three month “camps” in the case of the South Africans, and after a year in the case of the Americans. This meant that “survival became of paramount importance” (Baines 189) to the soldiers of the Vietnam and Border wars, rather than the attainment of their military objectives, as was the case with Second World War soldiers. According to Baines, this was particularly true of the conscripted South African troops and the American draftees, but still played a role in the Permanent Force members’ behaviour during action. This is apparent in Marnus’ behaviour in the above passage. He does not stand, fight valiantly and die a hero of the South African “people” – instead, he runs to the nearest point of safety.

That this has become a theme of the writing about the two wars hardly seems surprising when considered in conjunction with another theme identified by Baines. This theme is encapsulated in the “[i]t’s over” (11) line with which we meet the twenty-six-year-old Marnus. The theme is that of the “lost cause” (Baines 190) and is perhaps nowhere more in evidence in the Angola narrative than in the following passage:

Hourly the morale drops deeper into the dust. The conscripts are more nafi [no ambition and fuck-all interest⁷] than ever.

...

The little Englishman in my platoon, a conscript from Durban, has only two months to go. He’s forever moping about his family and his girlfriend... This morning he was telling everyone around him that he hadn’t wanted to do National Service. I walked over to the group, and said:

‘You had a choice, you little fuck-head. You had a choice.’

He answered: but I'm not PF [Permanent Force] like you, lieutenant – I'm National Service and we don't have a choice, we have to come, whether we want to or not. If we don't, we go to jail for six years.'

They hate PFs.

'Exactly,' I said, 'you had a choice – like me – and you made the easier one.'

Then he was quiet.

East of us, in the direction of Xangongo, Cuban T-55 and T-64 roar around as if Africa is their playground. (82 –83)

But it is not just the conscripts that feel the cause is a lost one; Marnus notes the following of some of the new officers:

Even the eighteen-year-olds, those who come directly after completing high school, become more cynical. I noticed it everywhere – not just here in the bush – even when I went back to Infantry School last year to train the cream of the crop – those selected for officers' course. Despite their commitment to getting rank, the sign of the times was there.

*The subtle change wasn't immediately conspicuous ... Yet something was missing, something of the passion and gravity with which we came to the defence force just a few years ago. Back then, even the more negative amongst us accepted the two years of conscription as an inevitable reality which had to be put in the past, but one which nonetheless the best had to be made of. Now, **that** has become the attitude of those who are most positive – a dull shadow of irony already lying across the young faces – long before the war has done its dirty job; a shadow you only notice when you know what you're looking for. (Emphasis retained. 28 – 29)*

Of all the themes that Baines mentions, it is perhaps this one that depicts most clearly the mood of Marnus' "reflection" stage. While he recognises that the war – and perhaps the government that drove it as well – cannot last much longer, there is still some trace of the teachings of his youth. As the first passage shows, he still considers it an important duty to fight for Apartheid ideals, but he gestures towards an inevitability of ending that is shown by the reference to the "Cuban ... tanks roar[ing] around...Africa". There is,

however, great irony in this gesture; the Cubans are – as are the white South Africans – not of Africa and yet it is theirs and not the MPLA’s tanks that we hear “roar around as if Africa is their playground”. “Roar around” in the same manner that the SADF’s tanks once did in Angola. It is perhaps this irony – that neither army should be there – that is the “dull shadow...lying across the young faces” that Marnus saw during his time back in South Africa. There is the double irony of this knowledge that those beginning their service after Marnus are aware of the changes that are starting to take place in Apartheid South Africa’s political landscape and that therefore the war is truly “a lost cause”.

Such a reflection is, I argue, a key component of the novel as a whole because with it comes the understanding of the nature of the betrayal Marnus witnesses during Frikkie’s rape. It is a betrayal of not only the love and trust that Marnus has for his father, but also a betrayal of all that his father – as member of the ruling Apartheid elite – is believed to stand for. By perpetrating such an act of violence on a little boy, Major-General Erasmus shows – at the very least – the same malicious callousness that allows soldiers to be abandoned in enemy territory, as those Marnus hears over the radio in the Angola narrative are:

North of us Van Schoor and his men are cornered. I can hear him calling HQ on the radio...His Platoon is trying to move north-east towards Techipa, but Cuban tanks and armoured cars have cut them off. He calls over the radio, telling HQ that his platoon is done for, they can't run anymore, he begs Ruacana to send in the Impalas...I leave the radio's volume turned up, making sure he can hear Van Schoor's hoarse voice calling the Colonel for help. He is shouting in Afrikaans, English and Portuguese – all at once. (42)

However, such betrayal is not as insidious as that shown by Johan Erasmus in the following passage:

I [Marnus] remember Xangongo, New Year '84. We were two hundred kilometres inside Angola, listening to the Voice of America. Then Dad's voice came over the airwaves, and everyone looked at me. He was telling the world that there wasn't a single South African soldier inside Angola. (83)

This is not a diplomat – without full knowledge of the military's activities – speaking. Johan Erasmus is a General whose own son is “inside Angola” lying for the sake of the state; he is a father putting “nation” above family and expecting his son to do the same. It is not surprising that when Marnus is fatally wounded by bombs dropped by Cuban MiGs⁸ after having reached the supposed safety of Qalueque, his final thoughts are of his father.

The black section-leader's face is beside me. He asks whether I have any feeling in my legs ... I try to speak to him, to tell him that I knew all along, just like the others.
But I am dumb.
I feel Dad's face against my chest and my arms around his head, and I feel safe. Death brings its own freedom, and it is for the living that the dead should mourn, for in life there is no escape from history.
(198)

The return to the image of his father at the moment of death and the safety that it brings heralds the end of the reflection stage. Marnus realises that from the moment of his experience of the violence of the militarist patriarchy represented by his father and the acceptance – albeit reluctantly at first – of his induction into it at the age of eleven, he can never return to the innocence he knew at the beginning of the novel. He has become a part of the ideology that sent soldiers into war in Namibia and Angola, thus proving its belief in violence and war. The realisation of his complicity denies any possibility of his return to a South Africa that can no longer enforce the ideology that he has defended and

come to represent. Finally, Marnus knows that he cannot “escape from [the] history” that his decision – whether he understood its impact at the time or not – set in motion.

Behr’s decision to end Marnus’ life is a disturbing one because it questions the possibility of a peaceful introduction of non-racial democracy in South Africa. It does, however, illustrate that by using a fractured war-*Bildungsroman* structure, Behr is able to question and problematise earlier notions of war. Gone is the idea that – as most Vietnam War and Border War writings would have it (Baines 182) – the army did not lose the war, but was betrayed by politicians. By writing two thirds – innocence and experience – of the structure into the pre-war narrative, Behr is able to illustrate that the war was one of ideology and not just political policy. The war could not have been hamstrung by the politicians; it was never a war that could be won because it was founded on a deeply self-destructive ideology. Marnus cannot “escape [his] history” because the violence that the militarist patriarchal ideology is founded upon requires that those that drive it are also those that are destroyed by it.

Erich Maria Remarque is able to imagine that – at the very least – war enabled Paul to experience a comradeship unattainable in a peaceful society. Sousa Jamba imagined the destruction and violence of war as leveller that allowed members of different political and ideological standpoints to see beyond their beliefs and realise that “they [are] all patriots” (286). However, Behr’s notion of a war that cannot be won because it cannot end is an interesting one as it adds an entirely new dimension to this “well-worn theme” of the “futility of war” (Baines 184). His is a notion of war as utterly futile – unlike

Remarque and Jamba who call it futile while still illustrating constructive aspects of a soldier's experience of it – from which there is nothing to be gained and the only freedom it can bring to those that propagate it is death.

Chapter Two

Victims turned Perpetrators and Perpetrators turned Victims in *Mayombe* and *The Smell of Apples*.

2 Introduction

So the survivors stayed.
And the earth and the sky stayed.
Everything took the blame.

No a leaf flinched, nobody smiled.

– Ted Hughes, from “Crow’s Account of the Battle” (1972; 61 –65).

Given the nature of anti-colonial war, it would seem easy to define the role of those fighting in the colonial and resistance forces. The fighters of the resistance would obviously be the victims of the oppressive colonial forces, represented by the soldiers of the colonial power. Defining their experience of the war, however, is far more difficult to define as the exposure to the violence of war has far greater effects than such a simple description can depict. This chapter therefore offers readings of two texts, Pepetela’s *Mayombe* (1983) and Mark Behr’s *The Smell of Apples* (1995) with a view to understanding the effects that exposure to and participation in violence of war has on fighters and soldiers. To do so, I draw on the Algerian theorist Frantz Fanon’s work on the nature of colonial and anti-colonial violence. The decision to use his work is based on the fact that as a psychiatrist working in Algeria during the last years of that country’s armed struggles for freedom from France, Fanon has extensive experience of both the working of colonial violence and of the effects that such violence had on colonised Algerians. In an attempt to theorise the processes that he believed colonised nations to go

through during their armed resistance to colonial powers, Fanon wrote his seminal work on violent decolonisation, The Wretched of the Earth (1961). It was to become a controversial book that would resonate deeply with oppressed people all over the world.

2.1 Victim turned Perpetrator

Geertsema says of Frantz Fanon that he “played a significant role in the Algerian revolution of the 1950s and 1960s and produced highly influential theorisations of it, as well as of black identity and decolonisation more generally” (749). To others, he has come to be “regarded as a prophet of violence following Hannah Arendt’s claim that his influence was mainly responsible for growing violence on American campuses in the 1960s” (Mamdani 5). Regardless of how one feels about the specifics of his work, it cannot be denied that Fanon’s theories have become a cornerstone of post-colonial theory.

In his The Wretched of the Earth, Fanon describes how the colonial state “is violence in its natural state, and will only yield when confronted with greater violence” (48). This reasoning he attributes to the Manichean nature of Western colonial thought, as in his view, the “native” had been ruled by a people who saw “him” as no more than an unreasoning savage who would only respond to the violence that “he” was seen by the coloniser to embody. He posits therefore that:

[t]he existence of an armed struggle shows that the people are decided to trust to violent methods only. He of whom *they* have never stopped saying that the only language he understands is that of force, decides to give utterance by force. In fact, as always, the settler has shown him the way he should take if he is to become free. (66)

The ultimate aim of this violence is a free “life”, which he adds “can only spring up again out of the rotting corpses of the settler” (72).

What form this “life” will take is expressed through an extended Marxist ideal of a utopia where all members are bound to its prosperity through “the work of violence” (73). Any and all partisan or personal thought is subsumed by nationalist thought through the “mobilization of the masses, [which] when it arises out of the war of liberation, introduces into each man’s consciousness the ideas of a common cause, of a national destiny and of a collective history” (73).

However, this “work of violence” would have, in Fanon’s view, not only the practical result of destroying the physical and social structures of colonialism while creating solidarity amongst those involved in the fight for freedom, it would also have moral justification and reason through its restoration of the “native’s” humanity.

This would be a humanity that has been denied through the “settler’s” application of a violence morally justified by a Manichean understanding of the “native” as being without humanity. This Fanon terms “an ironic turning of the tables [as] it is the native who now affirms that the colonialist understands nothing but force” (66). For Fanon then, the native’s willingness to apply force, as enacted through the violent resistance of colonialism, is proof that,

[at] the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self respect. (74)

This notion of violence as a “cleansing force”, or as Emile Capouya puts it, “that killing [the] colonialist is mental hygiene for the colonized” (743) has, however, become the rallying point of Fanon’s critics. This is illustrated by the following statement by one such critic, B. Marie Perinbam:

[Fanon] associated violence with powers capable of changing people and societies for the better. He did not specify the nature of this power. He simply stated its impact on the minds and lives of the Algerian people who were committed to the nationalist struggle. Thus when he claimed that violence ... ‘detoxifies’ by eliminating feelings of inferiority ... he was citing the impact without identifying the process of the power behind it. He never did. (8)⁹

While he may never have “specif[ied] the nature of this power” Fanon certainly did comment extensively on the moment of its enactment. The moment of “detoxification” is viewed, by Fanon, to be akin to a moment of catharsis in which the “alienation” (45) experienced by the native is replaced by the experience of his humanity through the “restor[ation of] his self respect”(74). I argue, however, that this moment can also be seen as a moment of *intoxification*, a moment in which the colonised experiences the power of agency through violence in a manner that is more corporeal than Fanon’s cerebral experience of the returning of humanity and subjectivity. It is a moment of pleasure, an *intoxification of agency*, formed through the enactment of violence, by the colonised, on the body of the coloniser and is ultimately an act that brings with it the pleasure of revenge. I argue too, that this moment is a deeply problematic one, one that is more than just the coming together of the conscious decision to follow the revolutionary teachings of Marx and the need for catharsis or revenge, but one that has an ambiguity unaccounted for by Fanon. To illustrate this point I shall now turn to a text set in what the MPLA

terms the first liberation, or anti-colonial, war of the country with which I began this paper, Angola.

The text is Pepetela's Mayombe. This novel was written in the early 1970s while Pepetela – nom de guerre of Artur Carlos Maurício Pestana dos Santos– was actively involved as both a teacher and combatant in the MPLA during its campaign in the Cabinda region, an enclave separated from the rest of Angola by what was then Zaire and Congo (Hamilton 266). It tells of a group of MPLA fighters as they live and fight against Portuguese colonial forces in the dense forest of Mayombe, from which the novel takes its name. To do so Pepetela makes use of a “straightforward narrative” (Chabal 1996: 118) in his dealings with the day-to-day struggles, activities and events of the group, but punctuates this narrative with “internal narratives” (Chabal 1996: 118) as narrated by individual members of the group. In this way Pepetela is able to make the novel operate on two levels. On one level it is a realist account of the activities of a group of MPLA fighters, while on the other it works to imagine and represent the individual fighters' responses to those activities. These imaginings are not, however, limited to the characters' responses. As with the “straightforward narrative”, Pepetela uses the internal narratives to expose and discuss a large number of issues pertaining to Marxist ideology and its practice in an Angola that is deeply segregated on political, ethnic and racial lines. An Angola that is, in fact, a nation in name only. The novel thus becomes what Peres terms “a type of collective testimonial of the revolutionary struggle” (2002: 72) for Angola, and it is precisely with this view in mind that I shall begin my reading of it.

The following is taken from a moment in the novel, shortly after an attack on a group of forestry workers supervised by a white Portuguese man. The narration is taken over by Miracle - a “bazooka-man” who has just used his bazooka to destroy a bulldozer that was being used by the foresters:

I love to see trucks laden with troops halted by my marksmanship. I think there can be not greater pleasure in life. My land is rich in coffee, but my father was always a poor peasant I was a child in 1961, but I still remember the spectacle of children bashed against trees, men buried to the neck, with their heads above ground and a tractor passing to lop off their heads with a blade made to dig up earth, to provide wealth for mankind. What pleasure I had just now destroying that bulldozer! It was like the one that took off my father's head. The bulldozer is not to blame.....but I cannot lose my hatred for bulldozers, forgive me. (18)

In this case it is made quite clear that Miracle has joined the MPLA and their armed conflict as a reaction to both the extreme violence of the colonial Portuguese and, as one can infer from the reference to the economic factors mentioned in the beginning of the passage, the poverty caused by the economics of colonisation. It is stated later on in the “straightforward narrative” that Miracle subscribes to the MPLA ideal of a Marxist-style utopia, but I would argue that while this may be seen as a driving force in his decision to fight, it is subverted by the statement that he “love[s] to see trucks laden with troops halted by” the extremely violent action of his bazooka. When one considers this in conjunction with the graphic portrayal of his father’s violent death and the killing of babies by the colonists it is easy to see why he states that he found “pleasure” in his destruction of the bulldozer. This “pleasure”, I argue, is rooted in a desire for revenge for the violence of the colonial state, and the moment of destruction can therefore be seen as not only a moment of catharsis but also a moment that illustrates the power of violence to bring pleasure through its enactment. In addition, this moment of pleasure is given great

weight in Pepetela's imagining of Miracle's narrative. It has more validity too than any need to create a utopia such as one proposed by Fanon, or that is the telos of the triumphant Marxist discourse within which the novel is written, but which it finally departs from. Pepetela's representation of this ambiguity between the personal need to come to terms with the violence of colonialism through the satisfaction of a desire to use violence to destroy it – in this case represented by the bulldozer - and the "rational" decision to fight for a future utopia illustrates a flexibility of imagining the adoption of violence by colonised people that goes well beyond that of Fanon.

In addition, there is the question of the use of a bazooka to destroy the bulldozer. In terms of the representation of taking of violent action against a symbol of the colonial state, there can be little to rival the use of an armour-piercing, high-explosive, rocket-propelled grenade. And yet the description of the firing of the bazooka at a "truck laden with troops" is described as "halt[ing]" it, a representation of violence that is far removed from the later image of Miracle's father's head being "lop[ped] off" or of the "children bashed against trees". While I do not intend to promote the sanitisation of the representation of either the colonialists' or the MPLA's violence, I argue that the difference in the language used to describe these acts of violence illustrates another important factor in Pepetela's imagining of the adoption of violence as a means by which to regain agency, both political and personal, by the fighters of Mayombe.

Pepetela's use of Marxist discourse in writing the novel¹⁰ influences and restricts the attempt to nuance the above-mentioned ambiguity between violence to satisfy a personal

desire for revenge, with its resulting intoxication of agency, and violence to further the aims of Marxism. This point is illustrated by the very different representations of the intensity of the two acts of violence and is visible in the following passage, which is taken from a scene in which the group of fighters ambushes a sizable column of Portuguese colonial troops:

Beautiful, like sitting ducks! thought Fearless. And he began to fire... Fearless changed magazine, just as he saw the soldier in front of him stretched out at the roadside and feverishly trying to open the bolt of his G3. The soldier had seen him, but his weapon had jammed. Fearless aimed his AK. The soldier was a frightened kid in front of him, some four metres off, with hands gripped to the bolt that would not release the spent round. Both knew what was going to happen. Inevitably, as in a tragedy, Fearless's bullet opened a neat hole on the lad's forehead and the expression of fright vanished. Inevitably, without either of them imagining any alternative. (32 – 33)

In this case it is Fearless, the commander of the group and the hero of the narrative, who is about to take “pleasure” in the attacking of representatives of the colonial state. The fact that the soldiers are in a position to be slaughtered is to Fearless a thing of beauty, and he proceeds to empty his AK into their massed ranks. It is only when he is face to face with one of the soldiers that there is any sign that Fearless might find this act of violence difficult. When we read later that the soldiers are not Portuguese but Angolan recruits with a few white officers, we are forced to question why Fearless did not, as he did with the foresters, kill the Portuguese officers and attempt to “re-educate” the remaining soldiers. The answer is simple; the foresters were not armed and therefore not a physical threat, but this does not explain the ease with which Fearless overcomes the realisation that he is about to kill a “frightened kid”. Is Fearless’ killing of the “lad” not the same as the “bashing” of children’s heads against trees? Perhaps not, as the soldier is

easily recognisable as an agent of the colonial state and the fact that he is a young “kid” goes further in representing the evil of that state. It is truly Fanon’s “violence in its natural state”— a state that both kills children and uses them to kill for it – and it must therefore be violently destroyed. So it is surprising therefore, that its destruction comes not with the blast of Miracle’s bazooka, but with the understated, “inevitable ... [small]...neat hole on the lad’s forehead”.

The “inevitability” of this ending is enforced by the final line of the extract: “inevitable, without either of them imagining an alternative”. This line again echoes Fanon’s assertion that colonialism can only be beaten by greater violence, but the acceptance of that fact is mediated by Pepetela’s description of that “inevitability” as, “as if in tragedy”. The “inevitability” is, however, still accepted, both the ideology of Pepetela, as a member of the MPLA, and Fearless’ Marxist ideology, which of necessity, as Achille Mbembe states, “required the total surrender of the individual to a utopian future and to the hope of a collective resurrection that, in turn, required the destruction of everything that stood in its way” (2002; 251).

It would seem, however, that Pepetela is unable to write this inevitability. The book ends without the vision of the Marxist utopia being realised, or for that matter, its realisation even being gestured towards. Fearless dies in an attack on an enemy base and at the close of the novel, the group of MPLA soldiers is still deeply divided along ethnic and racial lines. It is as if Pepetela is unable to believe that, as Fanon would have it, “[v]iolence is in action all-inclusive and national” or that “at an individual level violence is a cleansing

force" (73). On the contrary, Pepetela's inability to end the narrative in a conclusive manner, when read in conjunction with the knowledge that the novel was only published in 1980 (Leite 117), four years into a civil war that began immediately after the end of Portuguese rule, could be read as an acknowledgement that what I have termed the revenge aspect of the adoption of violent resistance to colonial rule has a far deeper effect on the subject than Fanon reasoned. Nevertheless, I argue that such a reading does suggest a far more complicated relationship between the adoption of violence by an individual and the effects of that adoption on the state that is born of such conflict. Such view casts into doubt Leite's assertion that:

In the work of Pepetela, the theme of war takes on an heroic and epic dimension since it is a conflict which defines the principle of the foundation of the 'fatherland'. The characters in the novel are emblematic of the founding fathers of the future nation, a nation created in the crucible of the armed struggle. (119)

In the case of Angola, the "future nation" could only be said to have come into being with the death of Jonas Savimbi¹¹ in 2002 (Garztecki 45). This belies Leite's understanding that the "crucible of war" was in Angola's case restricted to the anti-colonial war. It would seem that to Pepetela, war and the violence that accompanies it is not "heroic and epic" but rather tragic. Its protagonists, too, are not "emblematic of the founding fathers of the future nation", but rather the victims of the violence necessary in the reclamation of land and agency. And while such violence is necessary, it is not, as Fanon would have it, over with the fall of colonialism but lives on in the lives of those affected by it. I argue that it is for that reason that the "straightforward" narrative ends with the seemingly ironic and violent mourning of Fearless and Struggle's death described below:

Miracle, the bazooka-man, sighed and said:
'He was a great commander. And Struggle a good fighter!'

He withdrew a few steps from the others and fired a bazooka missile which exploded in the trunk of a mulberry-tree, AKs and Pepeshas sang out, in a last salute. (183)

The choice of a violent send-off, as represented by the firing of weapons, seems to celebrate the manner of Fearless and Struggle's death rather than their lives, which even when they are mentioned during the funeral, are referred to in terms of their military capabilities.

Violence, I argue, has come to be seen by Pepetela as the chosen form of expression to those exposed to it through war. Moreover, the subject identities of the fighters have been claimed and created in the moment of violent action. This is an interesting point, when one considers that Pepetela only ever wrote under his birth name prior to his involvement in armed conflict and continues to use his nom de guerre to this day.

Such an understanding of the result of the taking of violent action to gain freedom, both political and personal, may at first seem to be in stark contrast to the clearly defined liberated "native" and nation that Fanon would have his reader believe it is. However, as Peres points out:

For Fanon, the protracted struggle against colonialism centred on the reclamation by colonized peoples of their history. These reclaimed representations of the past are essential to the transformation of subject formation ...

What is important for Fanon... is that the colonized peoples are necessarily other than their pasts. These pasts may be reclaimed but they can never be fully reconstituted and therefore their representations are always partial and fragmented. (2003; 113)

To this I would add that it is not only the actions of colonisation that have resulted in these “partial and fragmented” representations, but also the effect of the regaining of agency through violent means as the process by which the new subject is formed. In short, the effects of the use of violence by the “victim-turned-perpetrator” (Mamdani 6) have a problematic, lasting and dangerous role to play in the formation of the postcolonial subject and state, one that Fanon does not seem to account for as Pepetela does in the final passage of *Mayombe*. The passage is an “internal narrative” and, narrated by The Political Commissar, contains his final thoughts following Fearless’ death.

The death of Fearless meant for me a change of skin of twenty-five years, a metamorphosis. Sad, like any metamorphosis. I only understand what I had lost (perhaps my reflection projected ten years forward), when the inevitable occurred.

...

I evolve and develop a new skin. There are some who need to write to shed the skin that no longer fits. Others change country. Others a lover. Others a name or a hairstyle. I lost a friend.

...

I think, like he did, that the frontier between truth and lies is a track in the desert. Men are divided on the two sides of the frontier. How many are there who know how to find this sandy path through the midst of sand? They exist, however, and I am one of them.

Fearless knew as well. But he insisted that it was a track in the desert. So he laughed at those who said it was a path, cutting clearly through the green of Mayombe. Today I know there are no yellow tracks in the midst of green. (184)

The Political Commissar has changed; war and the resulting death of his friend and leader have altered him. With this change comes the understanding that nothing is clear; “truth and lies” are separated by a barely perceptible “sandy path through the midst of sand”. Such an understanding of the role of a freedom fighter is in stark contrast to the clearly outlined descriptions of the Marxist fighter that The Political Commissar is seen to be

issuing throughout the novel. Through the representation of this change in what was his novel's firmest adherents to the Marxist doctrine, and its accompanying teachings of anti-colonial violence, Pepetela illustrates an understanding of the effects of violence and its loss that is far more nuanced than that of Fanon. There is nothing of Fanon's clearly defined idea of postcolonial subjects made whole by war, or cleansed by the violence of war. Nor is there anything of Fanon's conviction that there is a truth to be gained from violent resistance. There is only the loss of a friend and an understanding of the nature of truth, rather than a discovery of the truth itself sheathed, as it once was for The Political Commissar, in the triumphant Marxist discourse of Fanon.

To some readers, such a conclusion may illustrate a failure of imagination. I would argue, however, that Pepetela's open-ended conclusion of Mayombe illustrates a tension between Pepetela-the-author and Pepetela-the-MPLA-member and, in addition, that such a tension is a space of great productivity. It is a space that ultimately enables Pepetela to resist writing a conclusion that would be belied by the conflicts that continued in Angola and many other postcolonial African states and is therefore a triumph of the imagination rather than a failure. This triumph of the imagination is perhaps most notable when one considers that it calls into question the need for violent resistance to colonial occupation and thus, the very foundation upon which the anti-colonial war was based. To illustrate this I return now to both the writings of Frantz Fanon and to a text that I discussed in Chapter One, Mark Behr's The Smell of Apples.

2.2 Perpetrator turned Victim

In defence of his statement that “decolonization is always a violent phenomenon” (Fanon 27), Fanon takes his reader on a guided tour of both the Manichean geography of the “colonial world” (28) and of the violence that is used to maintain it. The tour begins with the following:

The colonial world is a world divided into compartments. It is probably unnecessary to recall the existence of the native quarters and European quarters, of schools for natives and schools for Europeans; in the same way we need not recall Apartheid in South Africa. Yet, if we examine closely this system of compartments, we will at least be able to reveal the lines of force it implies. (29)

The “force [that] it implies” can be translated into the violence of the colonial state, the very violence that he argues will only be defeated “when confronted with greater violence” (48). It is the “force” in the form of colonial violence that Mayombe’s fighters are seen to confront; its very existence is the justification for their adoption of violent resistance. This force, its implementation and its effects on those at whom it is directed therefore becomes crucial to Fanon and his explanation and understanding of the processes of decolonisation. To this I would add that it is therefore crucial to any study of southern African war literature of the past forty years as so much of such literature focuses – as Mayombe does – on anti-colonial wars.

I will begin then as Fanon does – by describing this “world divided into compartments” in terms of “two zones [that] are opposed” (30): “the settler’s town” and “the native town” (30). The “settler’s town” is described by Fanon as a “well-fed town, an easy-going town; its belly is always full of good things” (30). Perhaps more importantly, he

remarks that “the settler’s town is a town of white people” (30). This description of the settler town mirrors that of the depiction of False Bay and “white” Cape Town within which Behr sets the events of the week beginning on Thursday the first of December 1973. The narrative is strewn with renderings of the area, such as the following taken from very early on in the novel:

Afternoons when we’re alone at the Delport’s house, we [Marnus and Frikkie] sometimes walk down to the Gardens and try to catch squirrels. Or when we have money, we sit and have a milkshake or a coke-float at the Gardens café beneath the big bluegum [tree]. (Behr 8)

Cape Town – as it is described above – is a place safe enough for two white eleven-year-old boys to wander freely. Their progress through the city could certainly be described as, to use Fanon’s term, “easy-going” and that the boys’ “belly[s] ... [are] full of good things” (Fanon 30) is not left in doubt by the portrayal of them sitting at a shady café enjoying “a milkshake or a coke-float” (8). That this Cape Town is indeed a “town of white people” (Fanon 30) is also made clear. During a later passage, Marnus recounts how he and his sister, Ilse, are intrigued by the arrival at their house of a black or “Bantu” man. Their interest was piqued as, in his words,

we’re mainly used to Coloureds, because they’re the only ones allowed to work here [Cape Town] legally. When Bantus come here to work, the police send them away. (Behr 53)

Thus Behr creates a Cape Town in which the movement of non-whites is shown to be highly regulated by the police. Movement was, however, not the only control placed on non-white South Africans during the rule of the Apartheid government. Following the Group Areas Act of 1950, the country’s various ethnic and racial groups were forcibly separated from their communities and relocated to areas designated to them. Marnus

innocently recounts this event as it affected the family's domestic worker, Doreen, in the following:

When Doreen first started working here, she still lived in Newlands [...] But after Oupa died, when we moved into the house with Ouma, she was already living in Grassy Park, where the Government built nice houses for the Coloureds. (Behr 23)

Behr's representation of a Cape Town within which where one may live and work is strictly controlled by the Government and its agents, the police, bears out Fanon's assertion that,

the dividing line [between the settler town and the native town], the frontiers are shown by barracks and police stations. In the colonies it is the policeman and the soldier who are the official go-betweens, the spokesmen of the settler and his rule of oppression. (29)

It is important to note that unlike Marnus' belief that Doreen moved to Grassy Park because "the Government built nice houses for the Coloureds", Fanon is under no illusion that such a move would have been enforced through the use of violence. On the implementation of such violence by the agents of the government he states the following:

In colonial countries, [...] the policeman and the soldier, by their immediate presence and their frequent action maintain contact with the native and advise him by means of rifle-butts and napalm not to budge. It is obvious here that the agents of government speak the language of pure force. The intermediary does not lighten the oppression, nor seek to hide the domination; he shows them up and puts them into practice with the clear conscience of an upholder of the peace; yet he is the bringer of violence into the mind of the native. (Fanon 29)

On the nature of this violence, Fanon has a great deal more to say than he does on the nature of the anti-colonial violence discussed in the previous section. He describes it as being of two types. The first is of the nature described in the above passage, the direct kind that is delivered through "rifle-butts and napalm". The second – and perhaps more

insidious kind – is indirect violence. This violence is located, primarily, in the language of the settler. For Fanon,

it is not enough for the settler to delimit physically, that is to say with the help of the army and the police force, the place of the native. As if to show the totalitarian nature of colonial exploitation the settler paints the native as a sort of quintessential evil. Native society is not simply described as a society lacking in values. It is not enough for the colonialist to affirm that those values have disappeared from, or still better never existed in, the colonial world. The native is declared insensible to ethics; he represents not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values. (32)

The depiction of the “native” as such is well represented in The Smell of Apples. The passage below tells of Marnus’ mother’s reaction to what she believes is the theft of some of the family’s fishing rods by their long-time gardener, Chrisjan.

Mum says that’s exactly the way Coloureds are. You can never trust them. After years of supplying them with a job and a decent income, they simply turn around and stab you in the back. Just like the Mau Mau in East Africa. ‘Thus the viper sucks from your bosom without you even knowing’. (Behr 20)

Marnus’ mother not only depicts “the Coloureds” as being without morals, but also equates “them” with that age-old, Christian image of “quintessential evil” (Fanon 32) – the snake. The passage also illustrates another very important point that Fanon makes during his discussion of the language of the coloniser. We read that it

dehumanises the native, or to speak plainly it turns him into an animal. In fact, the terms the settler uses when he mentions the native are zoological terms. [...] when the settler seeks to describe the native fully he constantly refers to the bestiary. (Fanon 33)

In the narrative of The Smell of Apples, such language is brought to a shocking conclusion in a scene in which General Erasmus is showing the visiting Mr Smith, Ilse, Marnus and Frikkie a collection of slides. The slide show begins with a series of images

of animals that General Erasmus and his father killed during hunting trips in the then Tanganyika.

On the next slide Oupa [Johan Erasmus' father] is standing with his foot against an elephant bull he shot. In the background the Ndorobos are already chopping out the tusks. The bull's intestines are bubbling out of its stomach across the ground like big red balloons. (Behr 170)

This series of slides is followed by a series taken by Johan Erasmus while he was fighting in the then Rhodesia.

'These were taken just north of Wankie. We got these Ters¹² after walking in forty degrees for five days.' The slide shows four naked terrorists standing in a clearing. Their hands are tied above their heads and a soldier's holding a bayonet against the one's chest.

[...]

Now the four terrorists are lying in a heap and you can see they've been shot. The one who was standing in front on the previous slide has his legs stretched open towards the camera and his black thing hangs almost to the ground.

'This is détente,' Dad says. It's a soldier holding up a black arm with pink meat hanging out where it was cut from the body. (Behr 171 – 172)

Behr's positioning of these two images – one of hunting elephants for trophies and the other of terrorists captured during a military exercise – is important as it illustrates the ease with which the language of hunting animals has been transferred to the process of fighting supposed terrorists. Ters are "got" and not captured, as one would expect the soldiers of an opposing military force to be. In addition, Behr draws the reader's attention to the similarity between the image of the triumphant hunter – Oupa – with his foot on the dead elephant and the image of the triumphant soldier as he poses with his bayonet held against a captured fighter's chest. Behr's point is clear: the captured fighters are not to be viewed as human. They are as the elephant is, animals to be shot and left with their broken and bloodied body-parts lying flaccid in the dirt. Even these body-parts are not to be seen as more than trophies similar to the elephant's tusks. The tusks are "chopp[ed]

out”; an action that resonates strongly with the later image of the “soldier holding up [trophy like?] a black arm with pink meat hanging out where it was cut from the body”. It is this scene – more so, I think, than any presented in The Smell of Apples – that shows the complete dehumanisation of non-whites that Fanon’s “language of pure force” creates.

The final form that Fanon illustrates indirect colonial violence to take during its project “to affirm that those values have disappeared from, or still better never existed in, the colonial world” (32) is in the creation of history. He writes that

the settler makes history; his life is an epoch, an odyssey. He is the absolute beginning: ‘This land was created by us’; he is the unceasing cause: ‘If we leave, all is lost, and the country will go back to the Middle Ages.’ Over against him torpid creatures, wasted by fevers, obsessed by ancestral customs, form an almost inorganic background for the innovative dynamism of colonial mercantilism. (40)

To hear Fanon’s colonialist speak in this passage is to hear General Erasmus speak to Marnus in the following:

When Dad and I got out of the car to look at the sunset, the whole sky was turning dark red. The bay was as flat as a mirror, with Table Mountain pitch-black above the city lights in the distance. We stood up there, looking down on it, and dad said there’s nothing more beautiful in the world than what we are seeing in front of us. He said *nothing* and *no one* could ever take it from us.

[...]

While Dad and I stood up there, watching the red sky, Dad said that that was why we can never go back. The blacks drove the whites away [from Tanganyika] and all we have left is here, Dad said, sweeping through the air with his arm.

‘And this country was empty before our people arrived. *Everything, everything* you see, *we* built up from nothing. This is our place, given to us by God and we will look after it. What ever the cost.’

When we got into the car, you could smell the apples everywhere. I turned round to look at the crates [of apples] on the back seat, but it was already too dark to see them.

‘Dad, do you smell the apples?’ I asked in the dark.
‘Ja, Marnus,’ Dad answered as he turned the Volvo back on to the road. ‘Even the apples we brought to this country.’ (Emphasis retained. Behr 122 – 124)

This central passage – from which the novel takes its name – illustrates the similarities between Fanon’s language and violence of the coloniser and the language and violence of the Apartheid state, while at the same time illustrating the fundamental difference between the colonial state and the Apartheid state. Fanon’s coloniser views himself as “an extension of [the] Mother Country” (40), while the Afrikaner nationalist of which Behr speaks views himself – as the very name Afrikaner suggests – as belonging to the land given him by God in much the same way as the Israelites of the Bible viewed Israel¹³. This perceived relationship with the land serves to explain the lengths to which the Apartheid Government went in order to maintain its rule while the colonial states that at one time surrounded it were dissolved through the processes of decolonisation. However – as important as this difference between the colonial state and the Apartheid state is – it must be noted that as I have shown, the Apartheid state was very similar to the colonial state in its geographical structuring and application of the forms of violence discussed by Fanon.

As clear as Behr’s rendering of both the direct and indirect violence of Apartheid is, it is only through a reading of his presentation of the victims of this state that the profoundly destructive nature of Apartheid South Africa is apparent. The Smell of Apples is littered with examples of the victims of Apartheid, such as Doreen. I have already mentioned that she was forcibly moved from the “White” Newlands to the “Coloured” Grassy Park;

however, she is also deeply involved in the novel's most graphic example of Apartheid, racist violence.

Doreen, the reader is told, has been with the Erasmus family for many years. Her role in keeping the household running is repeatedly highlighted through Marnus' narration of his day-to-day life. However, it is not her role of domestic worker that Behr focuses on, but rather her youngest son, Little-Neville, who is about the same age as Marnus. On the Thursday night that Mister Smith arrives, Marnus tells us that

Little-Neville is arriving by train tomorrow from Touwsrivier where he goes to school. I've never seen Little-Neville but Doreen talks about him a lot – much more than about any of her other children. She always says he's a clever boy and that she wants to give him an education. That's why she sends him to school in Touwsrivier, to get him away from the influences of Grassy Park and the Cape Flats. (31 – 32)

Little-Neville does not, however, arrive the following morning. It is not until the following Monday that the reason for Little-Neville's failure to arrive is explained to Marnus. His mother tells him on the way to Ilse's awards evening at her school that,

'Little-Neville and one of his cousins went to the railway yard at Touwsrivier – to steal some charcoal. They wanted to take it to Doreen's sister before he came to Cape Town.' She closes her eyes before going on: 'Then someone caught him. They took off his clothes and rubbed lard or something all over his back. And then ... they held him up in front of the locomotive furnace.' (130 – 131)

It is not until much later on in the narrative – on the Wednesday – that the full extent of his injuries is described. On visiting Little-Neville in the hospital, Marnus describes him as,

lying on his stomach. There are tubes inside his nose and his eyes are shut. [...] He's completely naked and his arms are tied to the bed with strips of plastic to stop him from scratching the burns. His legs are dawn wide apart so that they

won't rub together. Between his thighs, across his bum and all over his back it looks like a piece of raw liver. (189)

This scene is reminiscent of another of Behr's representations of a victim of racial violence, that of the dead "Ter" from the slide taken in Rhodesia. Both lie with their legs spread and the marks of violence clearly visible on their broken bodies. The message seems clear. Both Little-Neville and the Ter – young boy and armed man – were treated in exactly the same manner as the elephant, like an animal. It is an insightful linking of images, and one that forcefully underscores the violence inherent in Behr's depiction of the Apartheid doctrine of racism. There is, however, also a great irony that this scene makes apparent.

Following the passage quoted above in which Marnus tells of Little-Neville's imminent arrival, he relates his understanding of why it is so important that Little-Neville go to school away from the Cape Flats. According to what his mother and father have taught him:

All the Coloureds live on the Cape Flats and at weekends they get drunk and then murder and rape each other. Mum thinks Doreen made a good move by sending Little-Neville away. Mum is sick and tired of reading in *Die Burger* about the Coloured boycotts and the savage goings-on at the Coloured University on the Flats. No one could manage to study amongst those hooligans. (32)

The irony is that, contrary to what the racist stereotyping of the Coloureds might suggest, Little-Neville was not a victim of "those hooligans", but rather of "civilised" white men. With this irony, Behr introduces a key point in his writing of violence in Apartheid South Africa. Having seen Little-Neville "tied to the bed" and with burns that "look like a piece

of raw liver”, Marnus turns away from him and looks out of the window. He describes the scene as follows:

The sun has set and the Cape Flats are covered in a red glow. There are red clouds across the whole sky up to the Hottentots-Holland, and it’s as if there’s a fire in heaven. It looks like the night Dad and I were at the top of Sir Lowry’s Pass. (189)

It was the night on top of Sir Lowry’s Pass that General Erasmus told Marnus that “this is our place, given to us by God” and that, “*everything* you see, *we* built up from nothing” (124). The implication of the linking of these two scenes seems to be that the violence that has put Little-Neville in the hospital room from which Marnus is viewing this second sunset was also brought to the land by the “*we*” that includes Marnus and his family. It is an implication that suggests Marnus’ complicity in the violence of Apartheid that begins long before he joins the army and becomes an easily recognisable Fanonian “agent of [the Apartheid] government” (Fanon 29). Marnus is thus represented as a perpetrator of racist violence as a result of nothing more than his being born to his parents. This point is mirrored in another image used in the scene. Marnus was reminded that the land was “given to us by God” and it is therefore difficult to ignore the later reference to the red sky seeming “as if there’s a fire in heaven” (189). This fire, it would seem, has been passed on by God in heaven to “His People” so that they may rule “our place”. The image of fire and the linking of Little-Neville’s burning to it is again suggestive of the violence Fanon had in mind when he uses the image of “rifle-butts and napalm” to illustrate the dividing line between the “native town” and the “settler’s town” (Fanon 29). Little-Neville is punished with fire for stealing “the settler’s” coal and his place in the Apartheid State is enforced.

Also contained within this linkage of scenes and central to Behr's assessment of Marnus' complicity is another image with strong biblical reference: the apple. While at the top of Sir Lowry's Pass, the General makes the observation that, "even the apples we brought to this country" (124). The uses of the symbol of the apple can, I argue, be seen to operate on two very important levels. On the first and most basic, the apple is – as it is in the bible – a symbol of "original sin". Within the context of the Apartheid State, however, this 'original sin' is the violence that has resulted in Little-Neville being hospitalised. It is Fanon's "colonial violence" (29), the direct violence that results from the processes through which one human comes to view another as less than human; in short, as an animal. Behr's use of it thus signifies Marnus as bearer of "original sin" and as complicit in the violence of Little-Neville's attack.

On the other, far more complex level, the apple is used to illustrate the damage that Apartheid does to all that are involved in it – whether by choice or not – and the damage that it does to the land upon which it is enacted. This use of the image becomes clear when we read of its association with Frikkie's victimisation at General Erasmus' hands. As mentioned in Chapter One, Frikkie is raped by the General. The morning following the rape, the young Marnus says:

Neither of us [Marnus and Frikkie] are really hungry so we take apples from the fruit-bowl on the table.

'These apples are rotten or something,' says Frikkie, and he turns his apple around in his hand after sniffing at it. 'They stink. Smell this,' and he holds the apple to my nose. I smell the apple in his hand. It smells sour.

'Ja,' I say. 'There's something wrong with it. Take another one.' I sniff at my own apple to make sure it's OK.

Frikkie brings the new apple to his mouth, but he pulls a face, and says: ‘this one too.’

‘Let me smell,’ I say, and take it from his hand. It smells like ordinary apple.

‘No, this one’s fine,’ I say. ‘It’s not the apple, man. It’s your hand,’ and I take his hand and sniff the inside of his palm. It smells sour. He pulls his hand back.

(178 – 179)

The smell that is on Frikkie’s hand is the smell of the semen left by General Johan Erasmus following the rape of the night before. Mervyn McMurdy says of this discovery that “earlier the smell of apples had been associated with white supremacy; after the rape the victim associates the smell of semen with rotting apples, with the ‘contaminating seed of militarist patriarchy’” (103). This “smell of apples” that the passage identifies as the sign of the “militarist patriarchy” is what General Erasmus’ “we” “brought to this country” (Behr 124). As was illustrated in Chapter One, it is this militarist patriarchy that destroys not only those that it deems inhuman— such as Little-Neville – but also those that support and fight for it. It is a form of violent rule that makes victims of both those that it rules over and those that use it to rule it and, in addition, it is a destructive contamination that affects all that it touches. Behr’s use of the symbol of the apple thus reproduces the biblical apple-as-original-sin as a sign of an original sin for which – unlike the biblical one – there is no redemption. Marnus – through the fact of his birth as a white South African under Apartheid – cannot escape complicity in the violence done to Frikkie and Little-Neville. Marnus thus becomes both victim and perpetrator of the violence of Apartheid.

To further illustrate this point, I return to the discussion of the *Bildungsroman* nature of the narrative as it was discussed in Chapter One. The build-up to the point at which

Marnus first experiences the violence of the Apartheid State –the experience stage of his progression as a soldier– is mapped out by Behr through his portrayal of Marnus’ learning of the military history of the Afrikaans Nation. Early on in the narrative, Marnus tells of a display at the National Museum.

There is also the most wonderful collection of old uniforms from all our country’s wars in the museum. You can see big wooden dolls that have been dressed up in uniform, and if you walk slowly from one showcase to the next, and if you read the notices carefully, you can get to know our whole history, just by knowing the uniforms and different wars. I wrote an essay for school about it. (8 – 9)

The passage is remarkable for two reasons. First, Marnus’ seemingly innocent comment that “you can know our whole history, just by knowing the uniforms and different wars”, points to a central tenet of any militarist patriarchy. That is, that it is defined by the force that it uses to ensure its existence and that therefore the history of its violence against others is the history of its progression. Second is that it illustrates that a militarist patriarchy’s progression through violent force is marked on the bodies of the men that fight for it, in this case in the form of the different uniforms. Of importance in Behr’s rendering of history in this manner is that it highlights the loss of the individual body to the sign of the uniform. This is illustrated by the fact that all the bodies that were broken and destroyed by the “different wars” have now become “big wooden dolls” that do not question. Marnus’ evolution from individual to unquestioning “wooden doll” is well documented in both The Smell of Apples itself and the critical writings that have followed its publication¹⁴. Most of this critical writing focuses on the gender aspects of this process of indoctrination into militarist patriarchy and while I realise that an understanding of the gender based aspects of this is central to understanding the process,

for the purposes of this chapter I will focus only on the manner in which Marnus is seen to learn the history of his nation. That is to say, the manner in which he learns the indirect violence of his Apartheid world.

The process of his indoctrination begins at home and is carried on at school. That it is successful is left in little doubt by the comments he makes in the essay he mentioned in the above passage. He writes that,

Then the Boers had to make war against the Xhosas at Algoa Bay and later against the Zulus in Natal because the evil Dingane's impies murdered their wives and smashed the babies' heads against the wagon wheels. The further the Boers trekked in the olden days, the cheekier and more wicked the natives became. But the hand of God rests over the righteous and now our country is made up of four provinces and in 1961 we became a Republic. After three hundred years we have one of the strongest armies in the world. Our soldiers also don't use Matchlocks any more, they have FNs. FN stands for *Fabrique Nationale*, because they are made in Belgium. You can learn a lot by walking through the museum and by just keeping your eyes open. Open eyes are the gateways to an open mind. (159 – 160)

Marnus has indeed learnt his lessons well. The listing of the “righteous” Boers, the “cheek[y ...] natives” and the progression of the country’s military and technological might are all in keeping with what a good son of “the Folk” should write of his country’s history. However, the irony here is not as subtle as it is in the passage that follows Marnus’ viewing of the burnt Little-Neville in hospital. His statement that “open eyes are the gateways to an open mind” is in stark contrast to his regurgitation of the Boer’s use of violence as a reaction to the savagery of “the natives”.

The irony of the statement is again highlighted when we read of the beating that he receives when he tries to resist his father’s attaching of the epaulettes. It is quite clear

from this scene that the very last thing that the general wants in his army is a soldier with “an open mind”. In fact, the act that marks Marnus’ symbolic acceptance into the militarist order is that he gives up any further questioning of the General’s orders.

‘Come to me, Marnus.’

I’m scared of him. He speaks but I can’t hear what he’s saying.

[...]

He picks me up by my one arm and carries me into the bathroom. He carries me with one arm and hits me with the other. He hits me on my bum and across my back, and it feels like I’m losing my breath.

[...]

Dad sits down on the bed with me in front of him. He picks up the epaulettes and fastens them on to the shoulders of my camouflage suit.

The placement of the epaulettes on Marnus’ shoulder by the General marks the creation of another unquestioning “wooden doll” that will wear the uniform and use violence in the name of “The Folk” as his father has just done. It also marks the final step in Marnus’ becoming both an agent and victim of the Apartheid State to which he belongs.

That the reader is to consider Marnus’ victimisation in the same light as that of Little-Neville’s is made clear in,

Marnus’s recurrent dream about the “strangely familiar” experience of riding horses on the sand with someone else, a person whose teeth are visible “against his dark skin” (63). Though the first installment of the dream is given early in the novel in one of the Angolan fragments, it is only on the penultimate page of the novel that the over-determined identity of the figure is revealed. The companion [...] is not Frikkie, his abused “bloodbrother”, but Little-Neville. (Barnard 222)

As Rita Barnard points out, there is a strong identification of Marnus with Little-Neville. It is an identification that I argue suggests shared victimhood. Both are victims of the direct and indirect violence that Fanon identifies as inherent in the Colonial/Apartheid

state. The figure of Marnus can therefore be seen as the opposite of the figure of the victim-turned-perpetrator that is outlined in the first section of this chapter: he is the perpetrator-turned-victim.

Chapter Three

“Those thighs are going to slow down the struggle”: Representations of Women at War in *Mayombe*, *Patriots* and *Bones*.

3 Introduction

Do not rejoice in his defeat, you men. For although the world stood up and stopped the Bastard [of war], the Bitch that bore him is in heat again.

-Bertold Brecht, (5th June 1945)

Women have always and everywhere been inextricably involved in war, [but] hidden from history [...] During wars, women are ubiquitous and highly visible; when wars are over and the war songs are sung, women disappear.

-Linda Grant De Pauw (Goldstein 59)

As De Pauw points out, “[w]omen have always and everywhere been inextricably involved in war” and southern Africa’s war have been no exception. Women’s involvement as combatants, “civilian casualties” and rape victims in Southern Africa’s wars has been well documented¹⁵. In terms of their representation in the war writings of the region, however, little work has been done. It is with this in mind that the following chapter offers a reading of the representations of women in a selection of male-authored, southern African war texts, Pepetela’s *Mayombe* (1983), Sousa Jamba’s *Patriots* (1990) and Chenjerai Hove’s *Bones* (1988). In order to do so, I turn to the work of Florence Stratton in *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender* (1994).

In her work, Stratton identifies an African literary tradition that is male-dominated and therefore male-centred and as a result excludes women from participating in both its creation and its criticism. Central to this argument is the contention that male authors have used their representations of women to embody Africa in all of its changing historical experience. Furthermore, Stratton argues that in making these embodiments of women as a symbol and representation, male authors have assumed the role of creator while assigning that of creation and “repository of meaning” (1994: 41) to women. Women can thus be seen to be used in the male author’s examination and exploration of his country or, as is the case in the writing of war, his state at war. Of even greater importance to the study of African war writing is Stratton’s outlining of what she terms “The Mother Africa trope” (1994: 41). This trope positions women as the physical embodiment of Africa. In addition, Stratton identifies two “strands” of the trope. The first is the “pot of culture” strand, in which women are used as repository of an essential, pre-colonial culture that has been lost through the processes of colonisation. The second is identified as the “sweep of history” strand. In this strand, women are again seen to embody Africa, but now they represent, through their actions and the repercussions of those actions, the processes by which it has been changed and degraded through the processes of, among others, colonisation and war. Women, Stratton states, thus serve as an “index of the state of the nation” (1994: 41) whereby a male author could be viewed as being able to “test” the effectiveness of his solutions to the problems faced by Africa or any one of its states.

This chapter employs Stratton's theory to read the above-mentioned texts in the light of their responses to patriarchal rule in war-torn Angola and post-war Zimbabwe. Section One deals with what is discovered to be Pepetela's endorsement of a patriarchal order at the expense of the non-sexist teachings of Marxist-Leninist doctrine in his writing of Mayombe. Following on from this discovery, Section Two exposes Sousa Jamba's Patriots as an attempt to critique the functioning of patriarchal power within Unita held Angola while at the same time being unable to present the reader with an acceptable alternative in the form of proactive female characters. Section Three argues that Chenjerai Hove's Bones is written in a narrative form that makes use of Stratton's "Mother Africa trope", but that makes use of female characters who can be seen, ultimately, to rupture the cycle of patriarchal dominance.

3.1 Testing Ideology

As was mentioned in Chapter Two, Mayombe was only published for the first time some nine years after it was written in 1971 and then only at the insistence of Angola's first post-colonial president, Agostinho Neto. Although most of the controversy surrounding the novel related to its extended discussions on the nature of Marxist-Leninist doctrine, ethnicity and race within the Angolan nation state (Leite 116, Hamilton: 1985; 148, Willis 686) criticism was also levelled at it because of its "more or less explicit love scenes" (Hamilton 148). Even Neto was not entirely pleased with the various relationships between three of Mayombe's male and the novel's only female character, Ondine. Of Neto's reaction to them, Rothwell writes:

In Neto's opinion, Ondina [sic] set a poor example to Angola's youth. In the novel she has sex with three men – Comissário [the Political Commissar],

André and Sem Medo [Fearless] – and it appears to be on these grounds that she was morally repugnant to the country's first president. (2002: 126)

As “morally repugnant” as Ondine might have seemed to Neto, Chapman’s more recent criticism of Pepetela’s representation of her and her relations with Fearless, Andre and the Political Commissar focus on what he terms “the love scenes becoming somewhat self-indulgently ‘male’ in their vicariousness” (287). Vicarious or not, the gaze with which Pepetela constructs and introduces Ondine to the reader is most certainly male. The first physical description the reader is given of Ondine is offered through a description of Fearless’ first meeting with her in Dolisie, an MPLA base in the then Zaire:

They were introduced by Kassule, who was now in the east. She faced up to the appreciative glance he threw her, invited him in for coffee in her room. She sat on the bed, he remained standing drinking coffee. Her skirt rose and showed her thighs. He looked at them brazenly and let his gaze rise slowly from the knee to the flash of white panties that were hinted at, let it linger, and then continued to raise it to her eyes that shone, challenging, leopard’s eyes. She stood up to the look, awaiting the outcome of the examination. He lowered his eyes again, slowly, to her long neck where he saw her throat tighten, on to her small, firm breasts, slender belly, to arrive again at her round thighs. There, Fearless’s gaze remained on the key. (Pepetela 65)

“Fearless’s gaze remained on the key”, just as the reader’s gaze is asked to remain there for all of the novel’s dealings with Ondine. In fact, Ondine is only ever constructed as a physical character. She is not – as are most of the other characters – ever given space in the sequence of internal narratives that both define many of the characters and highlight their personal views. That Ondine is a voiceless character is emphasised by this omission as all such internal narratives begin with the phrase “I [character’s name] am the narrator”. Even the little strength that she is given, marked by the “challenging, leopard’s

eyes”, comes only with reference to an animal-like essential quality and not with the human ability of reason that Pepetela is seen to revere throughout the text. Ondine is never to narrate her life and is only to be constructed and narrated by male characters.

She has, as Stratton would have it,

no autonomy, no status as a character, for her person and her story are shaped to meet the requirements of his [the author’s] vision. One of these requirements is that she provide attractive packaging. She is thus constructed as beauty, eroticism, fecundity, the qualities the male Self values most in the female Other. She is emblem of male desire. (1994, 52)

Such a construction of a female character is – according to Stratton’s theory – emblematic of the use of the “Mother Africa trope” (1994: 41) in Pepetela’s writing of Mayombe. The form that his use of the trope takes, I argue, most closely resembles Stratton’s “‘sweep of history’ strand” in which the female character and her story, “serve as an index of the state of the nation” (1994: 41). Pepetela’s use of Ondine does not, however, exactly mirror Stratton’s description of this strand. I argue in what follows that rather than being the allegorical representation of the state of Angola under various historically accurate political dispensations, the character of Ondine can be read as an allegorical testing ground through which Pepetela is able to “test” the suitability of various ideological standpoints. As such, Ondine’s story thus serves as an index of the possibilities that each form of ideological rule – represented by the male characters that she has sexual relationships with – present a post-colonial Angola. In short, the sexual battle for Ondine represents in microcosm the physical and ideological battles that take place within the novel’s only other feminised character, the forest of Mayombe.

The representation of Ondine has much in common with that of the forest of Mayombe. On the one level, Mayombe is the “uterine begetters of heroes, teach[ing] them [the fighters] how to overcome fear and become invincible” (Leite 118), while Ondine is, literally, the teacher of the next generation of fighters, those that will one day have to face the challenges that life in Mayombe will provide. As such, both become markers of “Motherland” for which the men fight, but without ever being given the autonomy with which the male characters are endowed. Both are seen to have power; however, unlike the male characters, their power is only ever described as a mystical/essential whose presence must, and can only be, dealt with by men. In Mayombe’s case, this is obvious in the novel’s epigraph:

To the guerrillas of Mayombe,
 who dared to challenge the gods
 by opening a path through the dark forest,
 I am going to relate the tale of Ogun¹⁶,
 the African Prometheus.

Here Mayombe is seen to be offering *her body* to the male guerrillas so that they are able – “by opening a path through the dark forest” – to prove their courage and thus become the heroes who “challenge the gods”. By equating “the [male] guerrillas of Mayombe” with the mythical Ogun and Prometheus, Pepetela signals that the story that follows is one that could be described as a myth of creation in which the founding fathers fight to prove themselves worthy of mythic status.

On another level, however, Ondine and Mayombe are seen to operate in two different realms. If the conflict over Mayombe is read as a site where the male characters illustrate their physical bravery and thus their suitability for rule, then Ondine can be seen to be the

site of their ideological conflict. In order to illustrate Pepetela's use of Ondine in this way, I now return to the reader's first introduction to her.

When the reader is first introduced to Ondine, it is as the Political Commissar's fiancée. The only other information that we are given is that her role at the MPLA base in Dolisie is as a teacher of the militants' children and that she arrived from Angola a year before. What immediately sets her apart from other characters that the reader has met is that she is not described as having any personal political ideology. Instead, Pepetela launches into a description of the couple's sexual history, from the Political Commissar's point of view. The focus, it would seem, is on their compatibility, or as I argue, on Ondine's compatibility with the Political Commissar's particular brand of Marxist-Leninism. In this regard, he is represented as being a particularly firm adherent to the tenets of Marxist-Leninist ideology and can therefore be read as representing an Angolan government that would be particularly inflexible in its application of such an ideological doctrine.

The fact that such a government would be unsuitable to rule Angola is illustrated through Pepetela's repeated emphasis on the problematic aspects of their sexual relationship. We read that the Political Commissar's "impression that love-making was better with a tart was difficult to relinquish, even after several experiences with Ondine [...] And he felt that Ondine did not enjoy his style of love making" (55). It is this point, that the image of Ondine's vagina as a "key" that must be claimed by the male character in order for him to be released into a world of sexual pleasure – and thus Angola into a world of freedom – is

first presented. In addition, it is also made apparent that if sexual compatibility marks the route to “the key” needed if Ondine/Angola is to be freed, then the Commissar is certainly not, at this point, going to be the one to both claim and free her. It would seem that just as the Commissar – through naïveté – is unable to agree with Fearless’ continued assertion that it is impossible to implement a pure form Marxist-Leninism in Angola, so too is he unable to understand the view that Fearless expresses when the Commissar asks for his help in dealing with Ondine in the following:

‘You could talk to Ondine. Perhaps you could understand better what the matter is, could advise her...and me.’
 The voice was a shy entreaty. An effort at detachment, thought Fearless.
 ‘If there is time.’
 What a shock it would be for him, if I were to tell him that I could only really know Ondine and advise them by studying her sexually. (64)

Fearless knows what “the key” to possessing Ondine is, the Commissar does not. The Commissar’s belief that love is more cognitive than physical and can be understood through conversation, again displays the gap between his and Fearless’ political standpoints. Fearless understands that the Commissar’s orthodox Marxist-Leninism cannot be implemented in Angola due to the extent that tribalism in particular permeates the thinking of Angolan individuals and, in addition, that the proposed “marriage” – signalled by the Commissar’s proposed marriage to Ondine – of Angola and the MPLA’s orthodox Marxist-Leninism can never be successful. As a result of this focus on the individual, the Commissar labels Fearless a liberal and an anarchist. To add to this, he is seen – until the change of heart brought about by Fearless’ death at the end of the novel – to repeatedly opine that the Angolan people must be forced to change their way of thinking about each other if the war for independence is to be won and Angola to be a

success following the end of colonial rule. The Political Commissar's belief in the use of force and its unsuitability as an implement of political rule is brought into stark focus by the events surrounding Ondine's next sexual relationship.

Andre – the commander of the base at Dolisie – is described as corrupt and only interested in the power that his position affords him. This is in contrast to the self-sacrifice that the sixteen militants of Fearless' group are seen to embody. What is worse – particularly as far as the Commissar and Fearless are concerned – is that he is particularly successful at using his understanding of Marxist-Leninist doctrine to further and protect his position of power within the MPLA. Andre's ability and his willingness to use it is made evident throughout the novel, but it is at its clearest in the following internal narrative that takes place during his journey to Brazzaville, where he is to be tried by the MPLA's senior commanders for, amongst other things, his relationship with Ondine:

Lenin was right to invent self-criticism. What a fine thing self-criticism is! There are some dunces who always refuse it. They haven't yet found the loophole. When you're in a jam, make your self-criticism. All attacks will stop at once [...] who can attack a man who is not defending himself? They will regard me as a good militant, since I have made self-criticism. And they will not demote me, just post me elsewhere. (127)

In this manner, Pepetela represents Andre as the very worst that a leader can be. However, the passage's situation within the sequence of the narrative serves only to highlight what the writing of the relationship between Andre and Ondine has already established. To illustrate this I return to the straightforward narrative.

While the Political Commissar and Fearless are still at the camp in Mayombe, word reaches them that Andre and Ondine were caught having sex. The Commissar – as Ondine’s fiancé – and Fearless – as second in command to Andre– then return to Dolisie to meet with a higher member of the organisation who has been sent from Brazzaville to deal with the problems that the discovery of André and Ondine’s affair has created. It is discovered that the affaire was merely a once-off sexual encounter that is described to the Commissar by Ondine in the following:

‘About a week ago perhaps, I met André on the road to Dolisie. He stopped the jeep, offered me a lift. I accepted. We went to a bar, we drank beer. We went back to school. It was growing dark. He stopped the jeep in the middle of the road.’

[...]

‘...in the jeep he kissed me. Then he suggested we go into the bush, I agreed.’

[...]

‘A militant saw the jeep abandoned on the road, suspected something was wrong, you know how they were spying on André to get rid of him. He saw us return to the jeep.’ (127)

Of interest is the fact that this is the only time a sex act takes place within the narrative and is not described in detail. Perhaps the most telling aspect of it is that it takes place in the bush – a place of wilderness that in some ways represents the antithesis of modernity – and not in a bedroom as all the other instances of sexual intercourse in the novel do. If this is read as representative of Stratton’s “sweep of history” (Stratton 1994, 41) allegory then it could be read as illustrating a view that should Angola be ruled by the type represented by Andre, it will not be able to achieve Marxist modernity. Another, perhaps better, reading is that under such rule, Angola will be debased as is, Pepetela would have the reader believe, a woman having sex in the bush is. It is perhaps because of this that Pepetela does not describe this instance of sex in the same detail as the other instances.

The effect that Andre and Ondine's relationship has on the Political Commissar is a telling one. Shortly after Ondine's relation of both the story of her infidelity and of her plans to break off her engagement to the Commissar, he rapes her. His use of force in an attempt to reclaim her has its desired effect for a short while. Ondine tells him what he wants to hear – that she will stay with him – but come morning, she leaves him again. In allegorical terms, the Commissar's use of force in order to remain in control of Ondine points to both the need for force to be applied if an orthodox Marxist-Leninist¹⁷ government is to maintain control over Angola and to the fact that such force will only be effective for a short while as a collective need for individual expression will force the population into revolt. Angola is thus seen – as was Ondine during her first meeting with Fearless – to be leopard-like in its essential understanding of the challenge of the individual. This incident also drives Ondine to her final lover – Fearless.

Following Andre's departure to Brazzaville, Fearless is left in command of the operation in Dolisie while the Political Commissar returns to Mayombe to command the base there. During this time, Fearless and Ondine become lovers. Their sexual relationship is described in great detail and is one from which Ondine is seen to derive great pleasure. This is made abundantly clear in the following description of their first sexual interaction:

It was at that moment that desire really gripped her, an uncontrollable desire that made her cross her legs and squeeze her sex with her thighs. Fearless eyed her. She turned her gaze away. But she swallowed saliva and he received the message. He allowed himself slowly to be infused with her desire, as his own grew with it. Then he took her by the arm and drew her to him. Ondine offered her lips and he drank in their thirst. (145 – 146)

Fearless certainly knows how to obtain the “key” to Ondine and with it control over her.

So much so, that he is able to toy with her in the following:

She raised herself in the bed and presented her young bosom to him. Fearless lightly bit her nipples as she twisted round in surrender. He moved away.
 ‘Why don’t you come close?’ she said.
 ‘I haven’t finished my cigarette yet.’
 ‘You are hateful!’
 He smiled. He stroked her thighs with his free hand and she squeezed his hand. Fearless let the hand lie and went on smoking. (146)

He is, however, unable to stay with her as he is called to Mayombe with word of an attack on the camp. Nevertheless, before he leaves for the camp, Pepetela has Ondine state unambiguously that Fearless has won the battle for control over her:

‘With you I would stay, Fearless.’
 He nodded his head. He kissed her.
 ‘No Ondine. You did not accept the Commissar because he submitted to you. With me it would be the opposite: you would submit to me.’
 ‘Yes, I don’t mind. It’s what I need. A strong man who dominates me. I feel like a wild animal that must be tamed. Tamed animals are most faithful to their master!’ (148)

This control cannot last, as Fearless must die in order for the Commissar to learn that he must temper his orthodox view with Fearless’ understanding of the need of the individual for self-expression if he is to be a successful leader. That the Commissar has this ability is also expressed in the “sweep of history” allegory. While discussing the rape, Ondine tells Fearless that:

‘We never got on well. He [the Commissar] controlled himself too much’
 [...]
 ‘Except the last time. When he took me by force, it was wonderful. He was violent, passionate, demanding, vengeful, without concern for the pleasure he was arousing in the partner. Why wasn’t he like that before, Fearless?’ (147)

While the passage is certainly disturbing, it highlights the point that the Commissar's rigid belief structure was inhibiting his self-expression. The very self-expression that Fearless views as an important aspect of human nature that Marxist-Leninist doctrine overlooks and one that the Commissar must learn to incorporate into his views if he is to possess Ondine. That this is the intended reading of the allegory is unmistakably presented in its final act. Ondine and Fearless are together for the last time, shortly before he is to lead the attack on the Portuguese base at Fallen Branch, during which he is killed.

He looked at the luminous dial: one in the morning.

'We have three hours,' said he.

'We have our whole life,' said she.

'No.'

She embraced him.

'I am going to win you in such a way that you run to me as soon as you have destroyed Fallen Branch. I have three hours in which to do it.'

'Don't have any illusions. I shall not come to you. See and feel this night as the last. It's for the best.'

'No,' she shouted. I don't want it to be the last. It is as if you were dead to me.'

'Joao [the Political Commissar] is your man. Get that right into your head.'

'For him I feel tenderness.'

'More than that. Love. The need for him, for his presence, will come with time. And you realize that what you love is Joao.'

[...]

'Why are you cruel?'

'I am sensible. I am concerned for your good. It is to your good that you meet Joao again, a different Joao, whom I have already glimpsed but whom you do not know. A Joao who is relativist and human, without the strait-jacket of narrow ideology.' (173 – 174)

It is this "different Joao" whom we meet in the internal narrative with which the novel ends. He is the Joao/Political Commissar that understands "that the frontier between truth and lies is a track in the desert" (184) and the one that we can assume returns to renew his relationship with Ondine. As follows – according to the allegory – the Political

Commissar becomes the type of Marxist-Leninist leader that Pepetela would have rule a post-colonial Angola.

Stratton's claim of an allegorical "index of the state of the nation" can thus be seen to have been extended in Pepetela's representation of Ondine to include the male-authored female character as an allegorical testing ground. I argue further, that the implication of such a move by Pepetela is that while female characters are still "shaped to meet the requirements of his [the author's] vision" (Stratton 52) they can be seen to have a role in the nation-building myths of the post-colonial African state. It must be emphasised though, that this role is not the active, autonomous one that the male characters are seen to play, but rather a passive one, of which the only power to shape the events in which she is involved comes from a seemingly pre-determined and essential feminine quality. Thus – by writing his female characters in this manner – Pepetela can be seen to illustrate a tension between a supposedly non-sexist Marxist-Leninist understanding of power and a patriarchal one. While Mayombe can be seen to tackle, head-on, issues of racism, tribalism and corruption within the MPLA, he supports, if unwittingly, the continuation of a patriarchal order of rule. By doing so, Pepetela casts into doubt any possibility of his Ogun/Prometheus-like founding fathers being able to rule his leopard-like, allegorical Angola. As if in answer to Pepetela's glaring lack of an attempt to deal with the injustices of patriarchal rule, and by extension his support of such rule, Sousa Jamba's Patriots can be seen as an attempt to present the reader with the functioning of patriarchy and its presence within a war-torn Angola.

3.2 Bewitching the State

Patriots ends with a brief coda in the form of a section entitled “Raul’s Notebook: Reflections” (287). The written “reflections” that form the coda, are a series of Raul’s seemingly unconnected musings on “the Paramount Thought formulated by the Elder [Jonas Savimbi]” as they relate to “the motherland [Angola] – that is, life and death” (288). During the last of these “reflections” Raul, a childhood friend of Hosi’s and later a Unita Captain, writes:

The other day David, the signalman, showed me a couple of his poems. There was one about the black sable, which he told me is only to be found in Angola; and there was another about the mulemba tree. Nothing wrong in that. However, I was appalled when he showed me one about Fatima. Those thighs are going to slow down the struggle. When men see them they think of nothing else. David told me that he loves her secretly. He is not a patriot. When people were dying, starving and undergoing the worst men could possibly endure, David took his pen and wrote Fatima a poem. Now, that is not what the Elders do. They love Angola so much. How I wish that we could all love Angola as much as they do! (292)

Raul’s positive response to the poems in which the identification with Angola’s unique flora and fauna – the mulemba tree and the black sable – are used as markers of nationality and his negative response to the poems about “[t]hose thighs”, brings into sharp focus Jamba’s critique of patriarchal writings of Angola. The linking of “the worst men could endure”, Angola’s natural attributes and women forms a fitting close to the novel. As it is precisely through illustrating that by waging war, men gain control over Angola and women, that Jamba outlines his criticism of traditional patriarchy as it is enforced by Unita.

Raul is wrong in claiming that thinking about women when “people are dying [...] is not what the Elders do” – and he, if anyone, should know this. At the time at which Hosi returns to Angola, Raul is in hospital recovering from the loss of a leg during an attack on Kalonga. Hosi goes to visit Raul at the hospital camp and on his way he mentions seeing elephants and black impala. These scenes of an essentialised Angola are then juxtaposed – in much the same way as the poems about the mulemba tree and the black sable are with “the worst that men could possibly endure” in the final passage – with Hosi’s seeing people with “crutches; others were in wheelchairs” (140). This juxtaposition seems to ask the reader to draw the simple and predictable conclusion that it is this essentialised Angola that is being fought for. However, Sousa Jamba dispels the possibility of such a conclusion by having Hosi attend a party for the Elder’s birthday upon his return to the Jamba base.

The setting for the party is described as follows:

Soon the people [...] began to divide themselves according to their position in the in the movement. There was a dais at one end of the pavilion. Members of the movement’s leadership had not yet come [...] but there was a long table there with bottles of J&B whiskey and plates of spicy food. Next to the table sat the wives of the members of the movement’s leadership.

[...]

Next to the wives of the movement’s leadership sat several attractive young girls. These were the official dancing partners of the leaders of the movement. Their relationship to the leaders of the movement was not confined to the dancing floor; it extended to the bed. (151)

So, while Raul, the wounded and the limbless are in hospital “undergoing the worst men could possibly endure”, the leadership of the movement (the Elders) are at a party where women are lined up along side “J&B whiskey and spicy food” for their enjoyment. The

right to such women is strictly controlled and policed, with access only being given to “the leaders”:

Then the dancing began. The first songs were reserved for the leaders. Their official dancing partners would sidle up to the dais and pose. Then members of the movement would take their pick. The soldiers were amazed by this. Most would beg to get a woman to dance. Not with the members of the movement’s leadership: women posed for them instead. Unita, they said, is great!

After seven songs the floor was opened to the public. There was pandemonium. All the soldiers rushed to the women and girls and pulled them on to the floor. Some of the girls refused to dance. [...] The police came forward and told the soldiers to move on and find some other partners.

[...]

One soldier was turned down three times. He walked over to Hosi, patted him on the back and said, ‘Who the hell do those bitches think they are? I mean, Jamba is filled with girls that have vowed not to dance with someone below the rank of captain. Bitches! Man, you know that we men scratch our balls to impotence crawling under enemy fire while these bitches are being fucked. And they think they are too good for us!’ (152 – 153)

As the passage illustrates, fighting and surviving battle offer the soldiers the chance of promotion and thus access to women. This reality is played out throughout the novel and forms the basis of Jamba contention that war – as it is waged by Unita – is the ultimate expression of patriarchy. The point is underscored by Hosi’s reading of Clausewitz’s The Art of War¹⁸; a text that made popular the notion of war as “the continuation of policy by other means” (Freeman 30). That patriarchy is gerontocratic in its functioning is repeatedly pointed to through the continual use of terms “the Elders” for “the leaders of the movement” and “the Elder” for Jonas Savimbi and through frequent examples of older men having authority over the younger men within the camp. At the very top of this hierarchy is “Papa AK47” (204), a phrase that perfectly captures the nature of rule in Unita’s “liberated Angola”. It is “[t]he only God that would liberate Angola” (204) and as such the only power higher than the Elder, the power from which the Elder derives his

power. In short, the notion of “Papa AK47” encapsulates the militarised, gerontocratic patriarchal order that structures Unita life and rule.

This life and rule is, however, shown to be continually under threat from two enemies. The first and most obvious threat is from the MPLA. The second is from women within the Unita-controlled – or “liberated” – territory; women that are described as “witches [that] had formed their own liberated territory” (199). Jamba illustrates that both are seen as a threat to Unita through his description of two scenes; one involving the public display of MPLA prisoners and the other, the public burning of women identified as witches. The display of prisoners, at which Hosi is present, is described as follows:

Early in the morning a man went around with a megaphone telling people that they were to gather at the stadium at around nine o’clock.

[...]

By eleven o’clock the programme was ready to begin. Speech after speech was read.

[...]

Then the Elder himself came forward and gave a long speech. Several tanks that had been captured from the enemy went passed the dais. They were followed by a group of prisoners, dressed in grey trousers and black t-shirts.

[...]

They [the prisoners] had been herded into a clearing, where they sat on tree trunks with vacant expressions on their faces. They were surrounded by fierce-looking military policemen who had machine guns. (160 – 161)

This display takes place at a celebration of the Elder’s birthday. It is therefore not surprising that the event is described as an officially sanctioned one. In contrast, the burning of the “witches” – as identified by a witch hunter at the leadership’s request – is as a result of their having “attacked the Elder’s bodyguards” and caused people in the Jamba camp to “hear voices and visions” (199). This is how Raimundo – a peasant soldier – describes the event to Hosi:

‘The leadership said: “No. This is just too much. What kind of society are we building?’ there was only one solution – burning the witches.”

[...]

‘One morning the activists went about Jamba with their megaphones saying people were supposed to assemble at BI at six in the morning. [...] Anyway, by midday we were all assembled.

‘At some point a number of people were sent to gather firewood. [...] Then the witches were brought in.

[...]

‘The burning began. They were surrounded by the police and began to burn. [...] I felt great; so did everybody else there, even the children. We saw evil die painfully and slowly. That night everybody slept peacefully. One of the witches almost jumped out of the fire but she saw there was no escape and sank back into the flames and in no time they were all gone and the liberated territory became peaceful once again.’ (200 – 201)

The similarity between the two events is evident. Both begin with a summons for all in the camp to be present, both take place at a public area and in both cases the handling of the “enemies” is done by the police in front of men, women and children. As much as these similarities signal that both are to be seen as a public display of Unita’s ability to vanquish its enemies, the manner in which these ‘enemies’ are marked as such is illuminating. The prisoners-of-war are easily identified by their black and grey uniforms and their being paraded alongside the captured MPLA tanks; thus the reader can assume that they were captured on the field of battle. Of the witches’ capture, however, the reader is only told that they were identified by the “witch hunter” Mariano, that they were found with a number of items supposedly related to the occult, such as “hyenas” and “mermaids”, and perhaps most importantly that they “speak difficult Portuguese” (199 – 200). Throughout the novel speaking Portuguese well or speaking “difficult Portuguese” is associated with being educated or not and as Raimundo points out to Hosi,

‘[a]ll the traitors we’ve had have been intellectuals. Name any of the traitors and you will see that each of them had been to secondary school or beyond [...] with

me it is clear. I did not go beyond primary four. I can say whatever I want and all the security men will say is, “Well, what can you expect from such a dickhead?” Now, that is not the case with you. Every word you [Hosi] utter will be looked at closely. If it goes counter to the Paramount Thought, you are in for it – no promotion for five years. (198)

It would seem as though the identification of the “witches” as such had more to do with their being viewed as intellectuals whose practices were “counter to the Paramount Thought” than as women who were practising witchcraft. Also worthy of note is that in Raimundo’s opinion, should Hosi be caught doing the same, he would be punished by having promotion withheld, and not burned alive as the women were. Such a harsh punishment would appear to be the result of being a woman and being educated. Educated men, it appears, are only deemed subversive once they express any views contrary to those of the Paramount Thought. On the other hand, women are deemed subversive if they are educated. Unita’s patriarchal society cannot allow for educated women and therefore has them eradicated by labelling them witches and moral contaminants of the “kind of society we [Unita’s leadership] are building”. Their being educated can therefore be seen to be contrary to the idealised Mother Africa; as carriers of contamination rather than as the nurturing and fecund image that the physical embodiment Angola – as signalled by Raul’s equation of the fauna and flora and women – should be.

It is, however, not only as witches that women are shown to subvert Unita’s patriarchal order. The other form that these “sources of moral contamination” (Stratton 53) take is the age-old metaphor of the prostitute. Of such representation, Stratton writes:

the main function of the prostitute metaphor, the flip side of the Mother Africa trope, is to reproduce the attitudes and beliefs necessary for preserving the otherness of women and hence to perpetuate their marginalization in society.

[...]

[I]t is a metaphor for men's degradation under some non-preferred socio-political system. (53)

This is a particularly illuminating position when considered in relation to the following comments by Raimundo:

'By the way, in the Angola that we are going to create, there will be no prostitutes.

[...]

'Imagine the new Angola that will be built. It will be like a house whose foundations have been mixed with the glorious blood of patriots or the best sons of Unita. It will be a shame if there are prostitutes, Angola beauties doing it for money. No way.' (195)

In this case, Stratton's "flip side of the Mother Africa trope" represents men under a "social-political system" in which women are able to disturb the patriarchal hierarchy created through war by accessing the goods money can buy without having to submit to male authority. In the same way young men would have access to women without having to ascend the gerontocratic order. As such, the figure of the prostitute can be seen as the ultimate form of moral corruption in that it expresses women's autonomy in a form that, while still not being able to function without men, is indeed free of the militarised, gerontocratic patriarchal order that structures Unita society.

As a solution to this problem, Raimundo comments:

I have not only been let down by women; I have been betrayed, stabbed in the back. This has happened to me several times. Now the Angolan women won't be able to mess with us men any more. They could toss the likes of me about because there were many men around at the time. Now there aren't enough.

They are dying in their hundreds daily. In liberated Angola polygamy will be the only viable solution. (202)

Through such apparently pragmatic reasoning, Raimundo can be seen to be supporting both Unita's militarised, gerontocratic patriarchal order and its conception of war as a means of gaining access to women. In addition, Raimundo's reasoning illustrates perhaps the most important aspect of Unita's treatment of women. It reveals a situation in which women are, in theory, revered as the symbols of the nation, while in practice, they are treated with suspicion and only tolerated provided they remain within the positions - nurturing mother, dutiful wife and pleasing concubine - allocated to them by the men in power.

As clear as Sousa Jamba's critique of the functioning of Unita's militarised, gerontocratic patriarchal order is, I argue that he is still unable to offer an alternative in the form of a proactive female character. In contrast is Chenjerai Hove's representation of women in post-war Zimbabwe.

3.3 The Next Generation

Most of the large volume of critical attention that Bones (1988) has attracted has focused on Hove's extensive use of language, which to Wylie "reflect[s] a 'Shona' rather than an 'English' sensibility" (41) in both the writing and structure of the novella¹⁹. While it is not my intention to reproduce the arguments that have surrounded Bones' "'Shona' [...] sensibility", it is important to highlight Hove's departure from the realist style that marked both Mayombe and Patriots. Rather than have the narrative recount the thoughts

and activities of a central character as they experience war, as was done in Mayombe and Patriots. Hove reconstructs the actions and words of his central character, Marita, through the voices of various characters in whose lives she was involved. The result is a post-mortem, polyphonic reconstruction of the life and death of Marita as she navigated both war-torn and post-independence Zimbabwe in search of her son, who left the farm upon which she worked in order to join guerrillas fighting against the Smith-led Rhodesian Government.

The narrative begins in post-war Zimbabwe with Marita working on the farm, owned by a white man called Manyepo by the farm workers²⁰. Marita is made to do menial work in the fields for long hours without much rest or pay. Revelations later on in the narrative illustrate that she has had to work like this since well before the war for independence began. It is clear therefore that as far as Marita is concerned, the war and subsequent independence did not do much to change her life of near slavery to Manyepo. In fact, Hove's portrayal of other workers' lives on the farm may seem – following the reading of the first six chapters – a fairly blunt attempt to illustrate the point that independence brought little change to the lives of Zimbabwe's peasant population. However, there is a far more subtle process of depiction and resistance at work in the novel's progression. This process is illustrated through Hove's representation of the female characters, primarily Marita and Janifa.

Of this representation Flora Veit-Wild writes:

In Bones the African woman is depicted in a manner that evokes the early phase of negritude and the rediscovery of the African identity. That is why

Bones has become a cult book for such European readers who like to indulge in the simple, 'authentic' life of the natives in order to escape from their own world of hyper-civilization. Hence Bones will probably offer more to the western feminist researcher than the Zimbabwean woman reader. (10)

It is perhaps descriptions of Marita such as the following that elicited such a heated response from Veit-Wild:

The soul. Marita, she kneels on the brown soil with her cracked knees, and then caresses the few leaves that she tears away from their mothers.

[...]

She shakes her head, her mouth wide open, and then spits on the moist dust. The rains have come, but they do not seem to spit enough. She will help them spit on Manyepo's soil. Yes, this is Manyepo's soil. Marita will be here all the time. She is part of Manyepo's soil. She eats it. She breathes it. She feels it in her insides. (Hove 14–15)

Such tying of woman to the fecundity of the African soil/land is, as Veit-Wild points out, emblematic of the "early phase of negritude" and calls to mind Stratton's description of the "Mother Africa Trope" (Stratton 41) in which women and Africa are conflated and are re-envisioned as "fruitful and nurturing" (40). That Hove's representation of Marita can be read in this manner is difficult to dispute, particularly when she is seen to be debased – "sweep of history" (41) style – at the allegorical hands of various political dispensations. I argue, however, that to view Hove's representation of women as such is to ignore what I view as one of the novel's greatest strengths: Bones' envisioning of women's breaking away from the dual repression of patriarchy and colonialism. To illustrate this I now return to the narrative.

While Marita is on the farm, presumably shortly after independence, she is continually depicted as being subject to the tyranny of both her husband and Manyepo. The latter's abuse is described by her husband Marume:

These things are not good, Manyepo. My own wife has been telling you these things for a long time, but you dared call her a wide-mouth. You even insulted her with her private parts in the presence of all the men and women of this farm. Do you think the girls of this farm will respect me when they hear the private parts of my own wife being mentioned in public? [...] She works until she cannot sleep at night.

[...]

You say we smell of things you do not understand, we lie, we are lazy as children and we should always have someone to make sure that we work, do you think that we are children with all this beard on our faces? Have we, the men, not made our wives pregnant and have the wives not become pregnant after we slept with them? (23 –24)

In passages such as this, Hove succinctly exposes the functioning of the powers that Marita and the other women of the farm are subject to. They are subject to degradation and control by both the men of their community and the white landowner. To make matters worse, their degradation is viewed not in terms of the damage that it does to them, but rather in terms of the damage that it does to the men's standing in the community. In Stratton's terms, such rendering of a female character marks her as allegorical symbol "of the state of the nation" (41) under colonial rule and thus sign of a Zimbabwe that has not changed following the war of liberation. This notion is compounded by the later revelation that, having travelled to "the city" (Hove 26) in search of her son, she dies at the uncaring hands of "neo-colonial" (Stratton 48) bureaucrats. The message seems clear: Marita's trajectory marks Zimbabwe's movement from exploitation under colonial/white rule to similar exploitation under neo-colonial/independent rule.

What such a reading cannot account for, however, is the influence Marita's life has on other women – most notably Janifa – and their situation in society. Janifa is a young

woman that lives on the farm. She has had a romantic relationship with Marita's son and holds what Marita sees as her last remaining link with him, a love letter. Through Marita's repeated request that Janifa read this letter to her— Marita is illiterate — a bond develops between the women. The first and most obvious result of this bond is that:

[w]hen the baas boy gives me [Janifa] my small plot to weed, Marita quickly finishes my small bit and then goes to weed her own share. Child, what are you doing in these fields from which you will never harvest anything? You should be in school so that you do not end up in the same grave that will swallow your mother and me. (Hove 45)

What is evident here is that Marita is consciously attempting to break the cycle that has kept generations of women in a position from which they can be exploited by men. It would seem to be a conscious attempt to create the new generation of women that the war against colonialism could not. Importantly, it is a woman that has taken the lead in its creation.

Marita's other, and more important, influence on the course of Janifa's life is, however, not marked by the conscious action of the previous one. In order to obtain money for her trip to the city, Marita has Chisaga — Manyepo's trusted cook — steal money from Manyepo in return for the promise of sex with her. Marita then leaves the farm without fulfilling her end of the deal. She does, however, leave all of her cooking and domestic utensils to Janifa. To Chisaga this act makes Marita's sexual debt to him Janifa's. This he voices to Janifa in the following:

'They tell me she left all the things of womanhood with you. The pots, baskets, everything that makes a woman feel a woman.'
[...]

‘Marita left you all the things of her womanhood. Know what that means. You can dream about Marita, but know what Marita meant by leaving you all the things of her kitchen.’ (85 – 86)

He claims this debt – with the aid of her parents – by raping Janifa. This act is described by Janifa to the dead Marita.

Marita, Chisaga did bad things to me. He said the pots and plates you left me spoke more than a child like me could understand. ‘You will understand one day’, he said. ‘A child does not know the sweetness of life until it sprouts a beard’.

[...]

I laugh at all this, Marita, but I think my own mother was behind what Chisaga did to me. (90)

Chisaga’s brutality has two major effects on Janifa. The first is that the trauma she suffers results in her spiralling into mental instability. This in turn leads to her being placed in a government-run mental hospital, but only, and this marks the second result of the rape, after she has rejected her parents in the following, which takes place towards the end of the novel:

‘Mother, is Chisaga still alive?’ I ask with hidden fury.

‘Yes,’ she says, tearfully.

‘Then go and live with him,’ I say without hiding my eyes from talking with her eyes. She walks away with her face hidden away from me, she crawls away like an injured cockroach, to go to her place of death. She has prepared her place of death already, but I do not want to know it. She crawls away, injured too, never to come back again to the house where they keep people with crooked heads so that they do not harm others. [...] I will stand here to watch the rising sun, to see the little animals jumping up and down with the power of the early sun with a new fire to cleanse the infected soil. [...] then the keepers of this place will come and say ...We will remove the chains soon when we know you are well ...But I will take the broken chains with my own hands and say ... Do not worry yourselves, I have already removed them by myself. (111 – 112)

This passage is reminiscent of the following one in which Marita tells Janifa that she is going to leave Marume, her husband, because he is not interested in finding out about their son:

'I will leave my husband one of these days.'

'What? Leave a husband just like that? What has entered you? Do you not know that a man without a wife is like a leaf without a tree? Marita talk properly.'

'Yes, I am leaving him tomorrow so that I go and look for my son in the city. They say some women have found their children and returned happy. I want to be happy.'(29 – 30)

For both, the search of a better tomorrow involves the breaking of family ties and the patriarchal power structure that they imply. Marita must leave her husband to "be happy". She must reject his ruling that his son's joining the guerrillas has brought shame on him. Janifa must reject her mother and her reasoning that she must wed Chisaga because tradition demands it if she is to be free of her "crooked head". Her ability to do so, I argue, comes from what she has learned from Marita's illustration of strength and will in the above passage. Marita can thus be seen to work toward a rupturing of the generational cycle that promotes the patriarchal order under which Marita and Janifa have suffered. On the one hand there is the conscious attempt by Marita to keep Janifa from the fields and on the other, the unconscious setting of an example that can be followed by Janifa²¹.

It would seem as though Hove is arguing for the creation of a new freedom, a new order, of the type that the war against the white Rhodesians promised to bring about. That this new freedom did not come about but is still a possibility seems to be written into the figure of the son. The entire text is haunted by the figure of Marita's son. He brings Marita and Janifa together, he is Marita's reason for leaving the farm and it is through the search for her son that Marita and the reader discover that it is not only within the confines of the farm that change has not come. In addition, I argue that while Hove has created a text in which it is the women who are seen to be the bearers of the new

freedom, it is through his writing of the son that we see the possibility of that freedom becoming a reality.

In the last section of the novel, just before we read of Janifa's rejection of her mother, we read that Marita's son has come to visit Janifa in the hospital. His return is described by Janifa as below:

Marita, your son has come back. He limps when he walks, but he is here. Now that he is here, all the insects can sing their songs and run after the scent of the flowers. [...] Yes, you said so in the pain of the loss of this boy who wants to marry me now. Marrying me is not like picking mangoes from Manyepo's big field of fruits. It is a hard thing for a man with so many scars from many fights of guns and aeroplanes. To hear people say without shame ... he married a woman from the house where they keep people with crooked insides of their heads. (110)

The union that is proposed here is one between a man who bears the physical scars of a war against racial oppression and a woman who bears the mental scars of a patriarchal society. The suggestion here, I would argue, is that both "wars" needed to be fought, both wars have their casualties and that neither war has been won. This final point is made clear through the cyclic nature of the ending of the novel.

Bones does not end with the happy union of Janifa and Marita's son. Rather, it ends with the lines with which it opens: "she asked me to read the letter for her again today, every day she comes to me, all pleading" (7 and 112). Through this ending we are made aware that the retelling of the narrative contained within the novel has happened before and will continue until, as Janifa states it, "[t]hen [once I have removed the chains] I will go [from the mad house] without waiting for them to say go" (112). The narrative thus exists in a

state of temporal limbo, caught between the end of the war and the beginning of the changes that it promised to bring about and will continue to be told for as long as the dual exploitation of women – patriarchal and economic – continues.

This message stands in contrast to Veit-Wild's claim that, "Bones will probably offer more to the western feminist researcher than the Zimbabwean woman reader" (10). Bones, I argue, offers the "Zimbabwean woman reader" an alternative to the patriarchal order that they may find themselves in and the very clear message that they must continue to resist, to work towards a rupturing of the cycle of patriarchal dominance, so that they may, as Janifa will, one day "go [from the mad house] without them saying go" (112). As to the "western feminist researcher", the text offers an alternative to Stratton's "Mother African trope" and its "'sweep of history' strand" (41) in that it presents the possibility of male-authored representations of women contributing to an ongoing criticism of patriarchy.

Chapter Four

Living the War: Organic Representations of Post-War Futures in *Bones* and *Under the Frangipani*.

4 Introduction

'Twill vex thy soul to hear what I shall speak;
 For I must talk of murders, rapes, and massacres,
 Acts of black night, abominable deeds,
 Complots of mischief, treason, villainies,
 Ruthful to hear, yet piteously perform'd;
 - William Shakespeare from *Titus Andronicus* (V/II 62 – 66)

In his study of American Vietnam War literature, Herzog adds a fourth stage to Fussell's "soldier's evolution": that of "aftermath" (Herzog 167). He describes this stage as relating the return of soldiers,

[b]earing physical and psychological scars, exhilaration mixed with guilt at surviving the war, and memories of their war experiences, these Vietnam survivors quickly exit the Vietnam battlefields only to return to the United States and another battleground. (167)

This battleground to which the soldiers returned was marked by protestors and anger at the policies carried out by the United States government had generated following the long and, as many felt, morally questionable war. Herzog notes that the war had irreversibly changed the country even though the violence that marked it took place thousands of kilometres away, in a country few had heard of before the announcement of hostilities ten years earlier. His study goes on to illustrate that to read the

writing about this post-Vietnam stage is to enter a realm of controversial views, conflicting statistics, myths, misinformation,

politics, bitterness, sympathy, poignant stories, self-aggrandizement, and media-perpetuated stereotypes. (168)

Herzog's study of the "aftermath" of war is illuminating as it shows the extent to which involvement in war can affect a country and its literature. For the purposes of this chapter however, his conclusions can be seen to be of even greater importance as they highlight the difficulty that authors have had in attempting to represent a post-war country. This difficulty, I argue, would be greatly increased should the fighting and violence have taken place, not in a far off country as it did in Vietnam, but in the very country whose post-war state the author is attempting to represent. It is for that reason that in this chapter, two post-war southern African texts are read with a view to highlighting the similarities in approach that the two authors – Chenjerai Hove of Zimbabwe and Mia Couto of Mozambique – use to represent their war-scarred nations. Section One deals with Hove's representation of inclusive, organic cycles of history as a means of linking the difficulties faced by post-war Zimbabwe with past struggles in his 1988 novel, Bones. Section Two shows Couto's 2001 novel, Under the Frangipani, also making use of the organic in his attempt to find a future beyond the corruption and societal failure that the decades-long civil war created in Mozambique.

4.1 "A conscience of bones"

It was argued in Chapter Three that in Bones Hove presents the reader with a Zimbabwe in which the need to break, or rupture, the generational cycle of patriarchal dominance is as pressing as was the need to violently destroy white minority rule prior to the war of

Liberation. In addition, however, the chapter also illustrated Hove's writing of a Zimbabwe that had, in terms of the lot of its poor, not changed a great deal following the end of white minority rule and the war that brought liberation. In fact, the novel does little to assure the reader that the long years of violent struggle were worth the extreme pain and suffering of the people for whom it was supposedly fought. This lack of assurance is made even more apparent by Hove's presentation of it in a text that is deeply poetic and in which images of war, death and hunger are juxtaposed with the events of everyday life. Nevertheless, with this juxtaposition of images, Hove is able to present the reader with a text that both illustrates the problems facing post-war Zimbabwe and offers the possibility of a better future beyond these problems.

The future is not the only aspect of Zimbabwe's development as a nation with which Bones deals. However, the text also seeks to link the events of the Liberation War with those that preceded it. Of Hove's attempt to do this, Liz Gunner writes that in Bones "Hove [...] seem[s] to be searching for a re-evaluation of the war years and the preceding era, and a means of linking it in people's consciousness with the present" (1991; 77). Gunner continues by illustrating the vital role song and oral narrative had in the transmission and linking of the events of the Zimbabwean War of Liberation – also called the Second Chimurenga – with the earlier events of the First Chimurenga in 1897. By way of illustrating the point at which the "abundance of song" (80) from the Liberation War and the fictional writing intersect in Bones, Gunner contends that:

Songs may be able to comment and to provide a peephole into contemporary popular feeling, but it is difficult for song and poetry to provide any lengthy commentary and imagining of the changes that have brought about disillusionment after the euphoria of a previous decade. Fiction is in a better

position to do this. [...] Fiction – as part of a continuum of cultural forms – has the potential to interrogate, subvert, redefine events and periods, and if necessary work against complacent nationalist discourse eager to mythologise key events of the past. Thus novels written after an important event are sufficiently distant from it to be reflective rather than celebratory, but they can also reproduce the earlier period and [...] put it back anew at the centre of the reader’s consciousness, making at the same time a commentary on the present. This is what [...] Bones do[es]. (1991; 81)

Central to Gunner’s notion of “linking” is Hove’s use of what she and others²² read as the voice of Mbuya Nehanda – a spirit medium executed by the British after having played a role in the Shona uprising of 1896 and 1897 – in the chapters titled “The Spirits Speak”. This voice Gunner identifies as Nehanda’s due to Hove’s inclusion of an extract of “[Nehanda’s] famous song which she [the spirit medium] is thought to have sung as she was being taken to execution” (79). The extract reads, in part, as follows:

...you can torture me,
spread my bowels for the jackals to eat
and tear them to pieces,
[...]
my bones will rise in the spirit of war. They will
sing war-songs
with the fire of battle. They will compose new
war-songs and fight on
until the shrines of the land of their birth
are respected once more. My bones will rise
with such power
the graves will be too small
to contain them. (Hove 53)

According to Gunner,

Nehanda thus becomes a means of linking in this particular narrative with a whole stream of oral memory and collective consciousness about the past struggles, and the present and the way all this is bound together in a way that, typical of oral rather than recorded memory, is outside linear, chronological time. (Gunner 1991; 79)

Gunner's notion of a "continuum of cultural forms" that enables Hove to link the events of past battles with those of the recent war in a manner that allows for "a commentary on the present" is an extremely useful one. It allows for a reading of Bones that incorporates an understanding of the text's use of non-linear time.

More importantly, however, it creates a framework within which Hove's imaginative development of the images present in the above "Spirits Speak" passage – particularly the image of the "bones" – warn of battles that will still need to be fought following independence. In order to illustrate this point, I now return to the description of battle that precedes Nehanda's "famous song". Hove conflates the many battles fought against the British colonials in 1896 and 1897 into the following, which is again voiced by "the Spirits":

Then I heard many voices of war, war-songs revived and war-songs made for the great fight of my people. Mothers, children, trees, insects, birds, animals, they all joined in the war-songs of the people. I saw many bones spread on large plains and on the hills. [...] Some I did not see where they were buried, but they leapt into the sky like a swarm of locusts, with such power that they broke the branches of the sky where they rested in their long journey to places I did not know. Right across the land of the river that flooded all the time, they heaved on the chest of the land until they formed one huge flood which trampled on the toes of the armed strangers. Armed strangers who shot all the time for many days as if they were now hunting forever. They shot into the hearts of the bones and kept firing until they could not be seen in the smoke of their own gunpowder.

Then one sunset I saw them come together in a huge celebration of the success of their battle. They did not see the bones scattered on the battlefield. (Hove 52 – 53)

In keeping with Gunner's notion of song as a means of linking past experience with present events, Hove signals that even this battle that marks the first against the new enemy is connected to the past through the "war-songs revived". These older "war-

songs” are now joined with the new “war-songs made for the great fight” in a manner that is suggestive of an acceptance that the “armed strangers” are not the first to have brought war to the land. Nevertheless, their arrival has marked “the great fight of my people”. So great, in fact, that even nature has joined in the fight, but even that is not enough. The “strangers” win the battles of the First Chimurenga and the battlefield is left littered with the bones of those that had opposed them. Importantly, however, the bones that are the central image around which the novel is constructed do not mark an end as one might expect, but rather a moment in an ever-growing cycle. To Hove, I argue, these bones mark just one moment in what he illustrates to be a continuum that lies at the very heart of the growth and continuation of a nation.

It is a point that the “Spirits” and not “the strangers” are aware of. The strangers are not aware of “the bones scattered on the battlefield”, the very same bones that the Sprits assure the reader “will rise in the spirit of war [... and] sing war-songs with the fire of battle” (53). This association of the image of the bones of fallen fighters and song is a significant one as it suggests a continuation, a passing of experience from one generation to the next. Hove’s representation is of war-songs as more than immutable – fixed in time and experience. So too he represents bones as things that will “arise” rather than remain where the battle has left them. The image of the bones, like Gunner’s notion of song, as the keeper and disseminator of memory that will be of use in later struggles, is suggestive of an understanding of the need to preserve the learning of the past in a manner that is not static, but rather one that can be reconfigured and applied to future situations. Even Janifa’s words illustrate this need to be able to *reconfigure* memory when she says:

Things will change one day, Marita. A year does not come to sit where another one sat. It brings its own stool. It crawls at its own pace, not yesterday's pace, no. (89)

It would seem that this view that every year is different and "crawls at its own pace" is even played out in the reasons for the two wars that are referenced in the text. In the first "The Spirits Speak" chapter, covering the First Chimurenga of 1896 and 1897, Hove writes of the battle being against "armed strangers" who,

have gone to fetch their wives so that they can start multiplying in preparation for the long battle, the battle of many nights and days. [...] They want to wait until they can fight. Do they not know that he who fights without enough preparation is only throwing his spear to the enemy? (50)

These "strangers" are undoubtedly the white British colonials. It is of no surprise that Hove therefore ties their coming in with the images present in the following passage.

Disease comes like a swarm of white locusts covering the trees, breaking the branches with their weight, a weight never seen by any eyes alive today. The locusts of disease will eat into the fields of our harvest until we remain like orphans in the land we inherited of our children. We did not inherit this land for ourselves but for our children whom we have inside us. Look at the cloud of locusts. (47 - 48)

However, as obvious as a connection between the white strangers and the "white locusts" may seem, Zhuwarara points to a "historical associat[ion]" between the two (39). Nevertheless, in his discussion, Zhuwarara also calls Hove's association of the strangers, the locusts and the "diseases which are historically associated with that period,"²³ a "rather predictable reference" (Zhuwarara 39). Perhaps it is, but I argue that it is also one that allows for a space within which to situate the land as more than battlefield upon which two races meet in violence. Within this space, the war - or "uprising" as Zhuwarara calls it - is not only about the "land we inherited of our children" (Hove 48);

rather it actively involves the land in the manner that the Spirits suggest when they say, “trees, insects, birds, animals, they all joined in the war-songs of the people”(52). It also highlights the juxtaposition of the mechanical image of the “kill[ing of] all your enemies with big guns” (49), as the strangers do, with the multiple organic images used when depicting the land and “the children of the soil” (55).

This juxtaposition of images may, at first glance, seem to be another rendering of the old and worn representation of the “settler” as armed modernity, versus the “native” as naive and tied to traditional ways. However, in keeping with Janifa’s assertion that “a year does not come to sit where another one sat”, Hove then presents the reader with a far more complicated rendering of the opposing forces in the next battle scene. The scene below, describing events of the Second Chimurenga, is recounted by Marita to the Unknown Woman during their bus trip to “the city” (22). In it, the opposing forces are described as “the soldiers” and “the fighters” (73). “The soldiers” are the forces of the white minority Rhodesian Government and “the fighters” are the guerrillas of – and this is not made apparent – either ZANU or ZAPU. There is none of the previous distinction made between modern and traditional: both are armed and both shed their blood on the land.

The fighters died, many of them. But the soldiers died also. So many that the rocks and the trees were smeared with blood. [...] It was very bad, many people dying like that. But it told people that the fighters were not like anybody who is in this land visiting their relatives. Do you know that nobody was allowed to see those who had died? It was said that many lorries made many trips to carry dead bodies to a burial place. (73 – 74)

Gone is the racial distinction that the passage describing the battles of the First Chimurenga was at pains to point out. What is left is the image of “people dying” and not the organic fields of bones left after the mechanical “firing until they could not be seen in

the smoke of their own gunpowder” (52). Hove also presents the reader with different reasons for the fighting. In the first passage, the reason for the war is so that “we [... do not] remain like orphans in the land we inherited of our children” (48). In contrast, Marita recalls the fighters as giving the following reason for the Second Chimurenga:

Poverty is worse than war, they say. You can stop war through talking. You can't stop poverty though talking. So we must fight with all we have so that our people cannot continue to be buried in this anthill of poverty. (73)

Importantly Hove is, nevertheless, at pains to point out that the poverty of the people is deeply tied to the factors that initiated the first war. The question of land ownership is still at the heart of the problem. However, unlike in the first war, the aim of the second is not to drive out the strangers from the land entirely, it is to create a situation in which the use of the land is beneficial to all. It is an argument that is very clearly presented in the following:

But the fighters said that the fight was not with the white man, it was with the bad things he had in his palms. If a child has dirt in his palm, do we cut away his palm in order to get the dirt off it? No, we take the child and spank his bottom a little bit. If the child wants to eat the dirt, we take a stick to punish the child harder. If the child takes another stick to fight back, we then take a bigger stick and punish the child and overpower it. Now, the white man has refused to remove the dirt enclosed in his clenched fist. So we have to take a stick and whip the white man. One day the white man will say ... Come my friends, you are not evil people. You know the difference between dirt and cleanliness. Tell us what cleanliness is all about because we have stayed with dirt for many years without knowing that it was dirt which stinks... (75)

The “dirt enclosed in his clenched fist” is the poverty that has been caused by the colonial distribution and use of land. It is an interesting shift in image, from powerful gun-wielding stranger to a child that must be shown the error of its ways. This is truly a year “crawl[ing] at its own pace, not yesterday's pace” (89). There is also another important

shift in images that relate to those fighters of the Second Chimurenga who “take a stick and whip the white man”. In the passage that describes the battles of the First Chimurenga, the strangers shoot at the bones, bones that have now “arise[n]” as the fighters of the above passage. Significantly, this shift of image is also marked by the use of song to link it with the past.

They [the fighters] said singers in far countries had sung songs, songs about running away and coming back to fight again. Fight again so that the fight is not finished until new fighters join to take over where it was left.

[...]

She [Marita] says the fighters would never stop talking even if the meeting went on for a whole year. They always had new things to say. If they had nothing to say they had something to sing. (74 – 75)

I argue that by writing of the songs from “far countries” that have been incorporated into the new fighting style – and singing – of the fighters, Hove is linking the fighters to both the modern, physical world beyond the country’s borders and to the temporal one of the past, as presented in the “The Spirits Speak” chapter. It is the fulfilment of the Spirits’ prediction that:

They will
sing war-songs
with the fire of battle. They will compose new
war-songs and fight on
until the shrines of the land of their birth
are respected once more. (53)

Song links the Spirits’ world of 1897 with that of Marita’s one of the Liberation War, or Second Chimurenga. Crucially though, the songs have been transformed to fit each temporal reality. The old songs have been modified and reworked to incorporate a different understanding of the challenges faced by the figures – all be they spectral – that give voice to the two time periods. They, like the image of the bones, illustrate a

continuum, a conversation between the events of the First Chimurenga and those of the Second Chimurenga.

Bones does not, however, only deal with the moments that mark the time of the two Chimurengas. With the voice of Janifa, I argue, Hove gestures to future battles that must still be fought. If the cycle of voices follows the Spirits-Marita continuum, then Janifa is being set up to voice the next cycle. To illustrate this I turn to the only passage in the novel in which the image of bones and song are directly related. The passage is taken from what Annie Gagiano terms, one of “Janifa’s surreal imaginings” (Gagiano 40).

I walked endless sunny days in search of the smell that would lead me to where all the bones were gathered. Where are the scents from all the breaking pods of the trees, where are they so they can lead me to the bones of my people? Tell me, you who carry the weight of the earth, so that I can know and never forget. Sing to me the songs of the endless bones so that I may not be ashamed to follow the echoes of that endless song. (Hove 65)

Gagiano writes of this passage that Janifa “associates images of bones and seed-pods with songs that record the heroism of the nation and give it life” (40). I would add that not only do the songs “record”, but also transmit learning and link the generations of the different time periods. The songs are thus “endless”; they were there before the voices of “The Spirits Speak” chapter were added to by the generation given voice by Marita and will be added to and passed on by the generation that Hove seems to set Janifa up to voice. Contained within this notion of song, I argue, is Hove’s writing of history as having an organic, season-like growth cycle. This is illustrated in another very important point raised by Gagiano when she writes, in the above quotation, of the connection Hove makes between the image of bones and seeds.

As with Hove's use of the image of bones as sign of the continuation of life and struggle so too does his writing of a metaphor that involves seeds, trees and leaves speak of a strong, growing link between the future and the past. Listen again as Janifa again speaks to the spectre of Marita from within the madhouse:

That is the way to know the tree of life. Leaves fall to the ground, rot in the soil, the roots drink from the rotten leaves and feed the inside of the tree again so that new leaves can sprout, new buds that cannot stand on their own feet until the seed decays to feed new plants near the old mother plant. That way people are also made. (97)

I argue that this image of the "tree of life" suggest two important cycles. First, there is the cycle of a tree dropping seeds and creating new trees that will live on after the "mother plant". It is an image that easily translates into a description of organic generational growth. Interestingly, however, there is also the insistence that the older plant will feed the younger ones that are "near" it. No mention is made of those "new plants" being the offspring of the "mother plant", but there is also the suggestion that they could be. Perhaps this suggests that the "mother plant" will nurture all that are near it regardless of familial ties – as Marita nurtures both Janifa and her son before he leaves. The second cycle speaks of growth within a generation, or an individual of that generation. Here the leaves that fall from the tree also "feed the inside of the tree again". If this representation is read as growth within a single generation, then it can be read as being representative of the relationship between Marita and the Unknown Woman.

Of the Unknown Woman, we read that her husband was responsible for the betrayal of the fighter to the forces of the Rhodesian government. In addition, we read that she did

not find out about this betrayal until after his death and was therefore unable to confront him about it. It seems, therefore, that on one level the loyalty that she shows by insisting – albeit without success – on burying Marita’s body is an act of redemption for her husband’s deeds. Here Marita’s life can be seen to nourish those of her generation as the tree is seen to nourish itself. Thus Marita’s “leaves” can be seen to be deeply involved in the life-cycle of both her own generation and the one that follows it; Janifa’s. More importantly, her life and death are shown to be deeply involved in the growth of both generations. Also illustrated through Hove’s portrayal of the relationship between Marita, the Unknown Woman and Janifa is the post-liberation problems that Janifa’s generation will have to fight against.

Both Marita and the Unknown Woman die at the hand of the official of the new – liberated – Zimbabwe. The reader is not told exactly how Marita dies, but from Janifa we hear that, “they killed you just like that” (101). Who this “they” is, is made clear in the description of the death of the Unknown Woman as related in another “The Spirits Speak” chapter.

The woman [the Unknown Woman] who asked for the body of the woman [Marita] whom nobody knew is not here either, she has nobody to ask for her body from where she asked for Marita’s body. They may go to those who try cases and say the chief of the people in uniforms slapped her to death, but her body has already been opened by unkind hands to see what has killed her. It is in the house where they keep bodies. It is there, not smiling. It is there, very cold. Nobody will come to ask for it. No voices will be heard seeking for the body to bury it in the proper way of the ancestors. (104)

Janifa’s “they” is the Spirits’ faceless “people in uniforms”, representatives of a free Zimbabwe. Of note too, is that these faceless functionaries do not only embody the

violence of the phrase “slapped her to death”, but also the uncaring bureaucracy evident in the following description of the Unknown Woman’s first attempt to claim Marita’s body:

‘If nobody claims the body with proof, what will happen to the body? she [the Unknown Woman] asks with a calm gesture of the arms and the head.

‘Then the government will take the body and bury it,’ the man says.

‘Then can I talk to government to give me the body so that I can bury it myself?’ the woman insists.

‘Government does not do it that way,’ the man nibbles at the fingers of his left palm.

‘Where does the government stay so that I can visit him and ask for the body? I want the body, nothing else. I just want to take the body and bury it properly.’ She winces with much pain.

‘Mother, I think this has gone too far now. Can’t you see I am losing my patience with your stupid request? How on earth do you expect to bury someone you have just met on a bus? [...] Be reasonable!’ He spits between words, showers of anger burst through his teeth. (68)

It is this faceless bureaucracy and its violence that Janifa’s generation will have to fight. The great sadness is, though, that these are the agents of the Zimbabwe for which the fighters gave their lives. This is what that has become of the fighters’ “land of our people” depicted in the following:

But we, the fighters of the land of our people, now tell you to baptize your children with the pain of war so that they can live forever until the enemy surrenders. [...] How can people fear death when they are dying slowly in poverty, disease and ignorance? A people that fears death will never enjoy freedom from the heavy chains of being called boys by people of the same age, men and women. To refuse to die for the motherland is to refuse to wear the medal of birth which gave us this land. (74)

As is clear from the Unknown Woman’s death, people are still – in 1988 – dying of “ignorance” and are still being treated without the respect they deserve. However, the difference between the enemy of which this passage speaks and the enemy that I argue

Hove is urging Janifa's generation to fight, is an important one. The enemy of the above passage is easily identified as the agents of the Rhodesian government, while the enemy of the war to come will be, in part, made up of those very same fighters. The very same fighters that are now Janifa's "they" and the Spirits' "people in uniforms" will be what the "children" of the passage must, "fight forever until the enemy surrenders [... because] to refuse to die for the motherland is to refuse to wear the medal of birth which gave us this land". Zimbabwe's wars, it seems, are not over. It is a point that raises many questions about the Zimbabwe for which Hove is urging the "children" to "fight forever".

In this regard Flora Veit-Wild argues that Hove is attempting to imagine and argue for a Zimbabwe that is deeply rooted in pre-colonial traditions, a Zimbabwe that represents "an exotic and romanticized image of Africa [... that is...] inaccurate and misleading" (5). In short, a Zimbabwe that would be representative of a time before the arrival of British colonials. Matthew Engelke responds to this assertion by pointing out that,

as much as we can recognise the existence and influence of what some critics call 'nativism' and 'nationalism' within Hove's poetry and prose²⁴, we must also acknowledge the impact of Hove's worldview and creativity on the ways in which Africa and Zimbabwe are conceptualised in terms of the postcolonial condition from which he writes. To do otherwise, as critics like Veit-Wild seem to want, is unrealistic, and insensitive to the ways in which Hove and many fellow Zimbabweans understand his work. (41)

The "postcolonial condition from which he [Hove] writes" includes an understanding that the Zimbabwe of which he writes only came into being with the arrival of the colonialists. I argue, therefore, that Hove – while still gesturing to a time before – begins the novel's narrative time in the battles of the First Chimurenga because it is this time of war that marked the beginning of what is now the nation of Zimbabwe. It follows

therefore that there is no pre-colonial Zimbabwe to return to and the only thing that its “children” can do is to accept the one that they are presented with, which includes the presence of whites that hopefully “know the difference between dirt and cleanliness” (75). Such a view, I argue, is again illustrative of the notion of a nation’s history as following organic, inclusive and ever-growing cycles.

Marita and her generation learnt and grew from those that became the Spirits, just as Janifa is shown to have learnt and grown from Marita. In addition, all of the voices that are linked – with the exception of Janifa’s – are however shown to be alive during times of war. One must therefore question why Hove chooses to write Janifa’s voice if the Zimbabwe with which the reader is presented at the end of the narrative time is not obviously at war. To this I answer that what Hove is doing by only representing Janifa in terms of the suffering she undergoes and not in terms that – by the novel’s end – show her to have recovered, illustrates that she is still engaged in her generation’s war. This is highlighted by the fighter’s assertion that, “[t]he suffering of a fighter is a medal” (74). Janifa, it seems, will carry her “medal” into a future that will be linked to that of Marita’s son who is also scarred and “limps when he walks” (110). It is these who will become the Nehanda-like voices of the war that is to come, the war against the violence and inhumanity of the Zimbabwe that “the people in uniforms” represent.

Thus Hove “reproduce[s] the earlier period and [...] put[s] it back anew at the centre of the reader’s consciousness” (Gunner 1991; 81). More importantly perhaps, he creates the “new conscience” of which the novel’s dedication speaks:

For the women whose children did not return
 sons and daughters
 those who gave their bones
 to make a new conscience,
 a conscience of bones, blood
 and footsteps
 dreaming of coming home some day
 in vain.

This “conscience of bones, blood / and footsteps” speaks, I argue, of Hove’s understanding of the need for Zimbabweans to be aware of the inclusive growth, coupled with a recognition of the suffering of the past, that is necessary if the nation is to move forward. Hove’s notion of impending strife, should his call for a “new conscience” not be heeded, appears prophetic when read with the following passage – written by fellow Zimbabwean author Brian Chikwava – in mind:

Today the African’s reality is in the safe ownership of governments, perhaps nowhere more so than in Zimbabwe where the individual has been squeezed out by an obsession to force the “African experience” into the liberation movement’s interpretation of what this should be. What is revealing is that most African states, South Africa being the most visible, have also found it necessary to close ranks with the Zimbabwean government and ignore the brutal experience of the individual at the hands of the state and ruling party. No doubt this is because the individual is perhaps the single most alarming and self-sustaining threat to a liberation project that has metamorphosed into an elite African club, the members of which have realised that the ‘revolution’, nicely wrapped in anti-imperialist rhetoric, can earn them the political capital they need to safeguard their wealth and status. (“Blasting the poet”)

This passage speaks not only of Zimbabwe and could just as easily be used to discuss the post-war situation in another southern African state, Mozambique. In fact, the passage could well be talking to the situation to which Mia Couto also applies an organic approach to the difficulties of writing about living in a war-scarred nation. As the following section will show, Couto’s Under the Frangipani illustrates – in a fashion

similar to Hove's use of it in Bones – organic images and understanding of memory to harness these in service of the imaginative construction of a post-war future, free of the corruption and restrictions that (as Hove, Chikwava and Couto argue) plague post-war Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

4.2 Living Under a New Tree

The Mozambican author Mia Couto – the pen name of António Emílio Leite Couto – has published numerous collections of poetry and short stories and three novels in Portuguese. Of the novels, only two – Under the Frangipani (2001) and The Last Flight of the Flamingo (2004) – are available in English and as a result, most of the critical material that deals with his work is in Portuguese. I am therefore only able to deal with the material that is written in English and, while it is apparent from my research that there is a great deal of interest in his work from Portuguese speakers, there is little critical material available in English. What little critical writing is available in English, however, would seem to agree with Patrick Chabal when he states that Couto is “undoubtedly [...] at the forefront of prose writing in the country [Mozambique]” (1996; 77). Such acclaim is usually based on Couto's “inventive use of language” (Banks 116) in the creation of forceful renderings of the fantastic that are then pressed into the service of social criticism²⁵. Of this, Chabal writes that

[t]he fantastic in Mia Couto's stories is also a response to what he perceives as the death of the imagination brought about by the violence of life in contemporary Mozambique. He [Couto] writes: ‘what is most painful in misery is the ignorance it has of itself. Faced with the absence of everything, man stops dreaming, giving up the desire to be others. There is in nothingness this illusion of plenitude which stops life and obscures man's voices.’ Literature, as practised by Mia Couto, is clearly an attempt to rekindle the pleasure of the dream. (1996; 81)

Couto's "attempt to rekindle [...] the dream" in the face of "the violence of life in contemporary Mozambique" is perhaps most apparent in his second novel, Under the Frangipani – originally published in Portuguese as *A Varanda do Frangipani* in 1996. Before elaborating on this point, however, a brief discussion is needed of the nature of what the "contemporary Mozambique" of 1996 entailed.

Having been colonised in the Nineteenth Century, Mozambique – in a fashion similar to Angola – was the scene of an anti-colonial war until it was granted independence from Portugal on the 25th of June 1975 following the April 1974 fall of the Salazar-Caetano regime in Portugal. The new Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (Frelimo) -dominated Government was led by Samora Machel and by 1977, Mozambique had become a one-party state with Frelimo hailed as a "Marxist-Leninist vanguard party" (Cravinho 741). At this time, Mozambique was also allowing resistance fighters from Rhodesia and South Africa to train and equip themselves within its borders before returning to their countries to fight against their respective racist governments. As a result, Rhodesia began to fund, train and equip the dissident, capitalist Movimento Nacional de Resistência de Moçambique (MNR) in an attempt to destabilise the country so that it would be unable to offer aid to Robert Mugabe's ZANU. Following Zimbabwe's independence, however, the South African Apartheid Government took over the role of supporter of the MNR – now renamed Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (Renamo) – in an attempt to stop Frelimo support of the ANC²⁶. By the mid 1980s the situation in Mozambique had deteriorated

into a full-scale and extremely vicious²⁷ civil war in which hundreds of thousands were killed and millions displaced, both within the country and to neighbouring states. This situation continued until a United Nations (UN)-ratified peace agreement – known as the Acordo Genral de Paz – was signed on the 4th of October 1992. The Mozambican Civil War was, however, not officially recognised as having ended until the successful completion of the country’s first multi-party elections on the 27th and 28th of October 1994 (Cravinho 744). Mia Couto’s “contemporary Mozambique” of 1996 was therefore a nation that had extensive experience of violence and was, as a result of the instability and cost of war, amongst the poorest countries in the world. It was also a deeply divided country with communities that were shattered and isolated, from each other and from the rest of the world.

This sense of a Mozambique that has been worn down and isolated by the experience of decades of war is deeply inscribed in Couto’s setting of Under the Frangipani. The events of the novel take place in the fort of São Nicolau that is now a refuge for the aged. São Nicolau, however, has a long history. We read of it that,

[s]laves, ivory and cloth were all shipped through it. From its stonework, Portuguese cannons blazed against Dutch ships. Towards the end of the colonial times, it was decided to build a prison there to shut away revolutionaries who were fighting the Portuguese. After independence, it was turned into a makeshift refuge for old people. With their arrival, the place went into decline. Then the civil war came, producing a harvest of death. But the fighting took place far from the fort. When the war ended, the refuge remained, unclaimed by anyone as an inheritance. (Couto 3)

And later on in the narrative that,

[d]uring the long years of the war, the refuge had been cut off from the rest of the country. The place had severed links with the world. The rocky beach

hindered access from the sea. Inland, minefields [laid during the civil war] completed the siege. São Nicolau could only be reached by air. All supplies and visitors arrived by helicopter.

Recently, peace had been established throughout the country. But the fort was still surrounded by mines and no one dared to leave or enter it. (14)

With this refuge as his setting, Couto launches the reader into his “attempt to rekindle the pleasure of the dream” with a first chapter paradoxically entitled “The Dead Man’s Dream”. This sense of paradox is significant as it has meaningful implications for the structuring of a novel in which Couto ostensibly employs the detective/murder genre in order to discuss issues faced by post-civil war Mozambique. The use of the detective/murder genre to discuss issues related to a post-war country is not new²⁸. However, Couto’s disruption of some of the classic elements of the genre within Under the Frangipani signal its employment in moving beyond the genre’s usual role as a template for the discovery of truth. In fact, as the paradox apparent in the title of the First Chapter signals, the novel is an attack on the very notion of a unified, rational truth that the genre of the detective novel holds at its centre. Before elaboration on this point, however, a brief outline of the novel is necessary.

There are two major narratives that underpin Under the Frangipani. The first relates the search of Izidine Nafta, a detective from Maputo, for the murderer of the director of the refuge, Vastome Excellency. However, from the moment of Izidine’s arrival at the refuge it is clear that the investigation is going to be anything but run-of-the-mill. Unlike classic detective novels, in which everybody denies being the murderer, everybody that

Izidine interviews while at the fort claims to be the murderer. It thus becomes the detective's job not to sort the guilty from those that claim that they are innocent, but rather to sort the innocent from those that claim to be guilty.

The second major narrative thread follows a dead man's attempt to either die properly, or at least to be allowed some peace in death. Ermelindo Mucanga was a worker at the fort while it was being transformed into a prison for resistance fighters. However, he died before the work was completed and was buried under a frangipani tree – the frangipani tree of the novel's title – on the fort's terrace, overlooking the sea. His death is disrupted by the threat that he will be dug up by the Mozambican government who wish to rebury him as a hero of the anti-colonial struggle even though Ermelindo is no such hero. In an attempt to avoid being dug up, Ermelindo and his *halakavuma* – an anteater that lives with him in his grave – devise a plan to enter Izidine's body for the final days of his life. Ermelindo would thus “die” when Izidine does – a death that the *halakavuma* predicts will happen while he is at the fort – so that Ermelindo can become an ancestor and no longer “one of those dead men who are still attached to life by their umbilical cords” (2) – a state that he has been in as a result of his not being buried according to tradition.

As is apparent from this brief synopsis, Couto's Under the Frangipani is not a conventional murder mystery. The disruption of the classic detective novel format is, however, not only evident in the obvious paradoxes of the storyline; it is also embedded in the logic with which Couto constructs his sentences. For example, the novel opens

with the line: "I am the dead man". The statement claims a subjectivity that by rational logic is defied by death and it thus becomes extremely problematic. I argue though, that by opening with this sentence, Couto is offering the reader an entrance into both a post-war Mozambique gone wrong – or at least one in which there is a need for language and logic to be twisted and inverted for it to be represented – and a world that is beyond the definitions of western notions of an absolute truth. Couto thus creates a world in which the work of a detective who seeks the truth through the utilisation of logic is doomed from the start. It is a paradox that Phillip Rothwell explains as follows:

The search for truth [...] hinges on the recognition and immediate banishment of falsehood, thus depending for its meaning, exclusively and excludingly, on the concept of what is not. But this very concept of falsehood, feeding as it does into what is established to be its opposite, is never erased and always impinges on the domain of the truth, through reference and reversals. Today's truth is believed to be false tomorrow. (2004; 31)

This paradox that is at the heart of the search for truth is played out in Izidine's investigation of the murder. As has been mentioned, all of the old people that inhabit the fort claim responsibility for the murder when questioned by Izidine and this disrupts his plan to write all of their accounts of the murder down so that they can be analysed later and the killer found. However –because all of the interviewees claim responsibility for the murder – Couto renders the very act of investigation senseless and pointless. What the reader discovers through Couto's description of the investigation is that all of the old people are only claiming responsibility because in doing so they are offered a chance to tell their life-stories. The old people's stories thus disrupt the linear, written story of the murder in the same manner that Couto's structuring of the novel interrupts and disrupts the single narrative – related by a single narrator – of the classic murder mystery. In

addition, this telling of multiple stories results in a re-voicing of the murder that allows for the multifaceted nature of the truth to be illustrated. Once this is accepted and understood, the reader is then able to come to terms with the nature of a Mozambique that has been fractured through a civil war in which both sides were fighting for the truth of their political beliefs. To further illustrate this point, I return now to a discussion of some of the characters that narrate Under the Frangipani.

The first narrator that the reader is presented with is the “dead man”, Ermelindo Mucanga. As mentioned earlier in the section, he is not the hero that he is thought to be.

In fact, quite the opposite is true. We read that:

One day [while I was working on the fort] – how I remember that day well – a group of men came up to me. They pulled at my shoulders and asked aggressively.

- Aren't you ashamed of building something to be used as a punishment for your brothers?

Brothers? The ones they called my ‘brothers’ weren’t related to me in any way. They were guerrilla fighters, revolutionaries. They were fighting the rule of the Portuguese. My heart wasn’t in such conflicts. (117)

His being made into a hero of the revolution is thus shown to be based on a lie, but should the process be successful, the lie will be propagated and will eventually become the accepted truth. It is the converse of Rothwell’s statement that “today’s truth is believed to be false tomorrow” (2004; 31) as in this case, today’s lie is believed to be true tomorrow. Ultimately though, the problem faced by Ermelindo calls into question the formation of the history that the country is being rebuilt upon and in doing so, calls into question the ability and understanding of those that have the power to do the rebuilding.

These people in power – the new Mozambican powerful – and their understanding of the world are represented by the detective and the people from Maputo that his narrative gives voice to. According to Rothwell, “Izidine personifies the search for truth” (2004; 36) as he is very rationalistic. To this I would add that he represents a deeply rationalistic way of understanding and making the present and the future. Within this way of making the future there is no place for multiple stories and non-rationalist ways of seeing the world such as the magic, occult and spirits that are fundamental to the old people’s way of seeing the world. It is interesting therefore, that Couto has him narrate the aspects of the novel that clearly illustrate definitive aspects of the detective/murder mystery genre – the definitive genre of modernity. Of him we read that:

He had studied in Europe, had returned to Mozambique some years after independence. Separation had curtailed his knowledge of the culture, of the languages, of the little things that shape a people’s soul. Back in Mozambique he had gone straight into an office job in the capital. His day-to-day experience was limited to a tiny corner of Maputo. Little more than that. In the countryside [the refuge], he was no more than an outsider. (Couto 38)

It would seem obvious that Couto is setting Izidine and Izidine’s Maputo up against what can be seen as the pre-war Mozambique represented by the old people and their “countryside”. However, even here his position seems inverted. Note that he is the outsider in the world of the old people and yet of them, Couto writes:

The world out there had changed. No one respected old people any more. It was all the same whether you were living in a refuge or outside.

[...]

When Salufo Tuco [one of the refuge’s residents] told his friends in the refuge about this, they didn’t want to believe him. [...] Salufo answered them: you are the orange peel on which there is no fruit left. The rulers of our land have squeezed everything dry. Now they’re squeezing the peel to see if they can still extract some juice. (Couto 108 – 109)

Izidine is of “[t]he world out there”, where the old are now the outsiders who have been exiled to the fort because of the break-up of society caused by the trauma of war. The old

have become outsiders in the new Mozambique and the result is that it is losing its ability to function, to grow. Marta Gimo – the nurse at the refuge with whom Izidine has a number of romantic encounters during the course of his investigations at the fort – explains this to the detective in the following, very forceful, passage:

- You'll never understand. What's happening here is a coup d'état.

-A coup d'état?

-Yes, that's what you should be worrying about, mister policeman.

-But here in the fort, a coup? Izidine laughed in disbelief.

-Honestly, Marta...

-It's not here in the fort. It's throughout the country. Oh yes, it's a coup against the past.

[...]

-We must preserve the past. Otherwise, the country will be left without its bedrock.

- I agree entirely Marta. I just want to know who killed Vastsome Excellency. That's all.

Izidine's inability to understand that the old people's claims of murder were on one level just an attempt to get him to enter their world, a world that is unseen by the outsider. It is a world in which, as Marta points out,

the culprit you seek, my dear Izidine, isn't a person. It's war. The war is to blame for everything. The war killed Vastsome. The war tore to shreds the world in which elderly folk could shine and had a role to play. These old timers who are rotting away here, were loved before the conflict. There was a world to welcome them, and families who put themselves out to care for the aged. Then violence brought other priorities. And the old were banished from the world, banished from we ourselves. (123)

The war "killed" Vastsome because it changed him into a man who exchanged the supplies that were supposed to be given to the old people for arms and ammunition that he planned to sell. He was killed by his accomplices from Maputo because the old people found the arms and got rid of them. Mozambique's civil war is, according to Marta,

responsible for the shattered state that the county finds itself in, but Izidine cannot see this. Marta thus becomes his link to this truth that is unseen by the outsider; Izidine. This relationship between Marta and Izidine is at first signalled by the following passage:

- *They're [the old people] all telling you things of great importance. You just don't speak their language.*
- *I don't speak their language? But we always speak in Portuguese!*
- *But they speak another language, another Portuguese. And do you know why? Because they don't trust you. Let me just ask you this: why don't you stop being a policeman?*
- *Well, it just so happens I am a policeman, and that's why I'm here ...*
- *There's no room for policemen here*
- *Look, why don't we stop having this stupid conversation? I'm here to find out who killed...*
- *That's all you want to do: find out who is guilty. But there are people here. They're old, they're at the end of their lives. But they're human beings, they're the bedrock of this same world you walk on over there in the city. (71 – 72)*

The importance of the relationship between Izidine and Marta is only really understood when Marta forces Izidine to face that it is not only “knowledge of the culture” that his education in Europe has curtailed, but also his knowledge of the damage that the war has done to the country. In describing to him why it is that the old “were banished from the world” Marta says this of the nature of war:

War creates another cycle of time. Our lives are no longer measured by years or seasons. Or by harvests, famine or floods. War establishes the cycle of blood. We start saying ‘before the war, after the war’. War swallows up the dead and devours its survivors. I didn't want to become a relic of such violence. (123)

Vastsome Excellency – and the new “rulers of our land” – did become the “relic[s]” of the war and it is this that Izidine fails to understand. In addition, he fails to understand that Vastsome Excellency's death is just a symptom of the “cycle of blood”. In order to understand this, Izidine must look to what was left after “[t]he war tore to shreds the world in which elderly folk could shine and had a role to play” (123). In fact, he must

begin to look at the murder in terms of the whole of which both he and it are a part. This Marta forces him to do by highlighting the bribery and corruption that marks the post-war Mozambique of Under the Frangipani. To do so she says:

The world is a body that's alive thanks to its own sickness. It survives on crime and feeds on immorality. You, for instance, there in the police. Do you ever ask yourself how long it will take for you to be stricken by this disease of bribery? You know only too well what I'm talking about: investigations that can be bought, policemen who accept backhanders. (124)

It is, however, not only the bribery and corruption of the new Mozambique that Couto highlights as being part of the "cycle of blood". Of the arms trade that was the apparent reason for Vastome Excellency's death, Couto writes that the arms are "the seeds of a new war" that were "tending the burning coals of a hell which had already burned everyone's feet" (140). Couto's post-war Mozambique of which Marta still has much to teach Izidine is thus a place to which he gives much detail and narrative space. It is interesting therefore that of the events of the war, he has little to say. This narrative silence, I argue, points to a violence too traumatic to narrate and the war thus becomes a narrative void, a failure of imagination. In the wake of this failure, it is a credit to Couto's craft that he is able to incorporate this narrative void into his narrative. He does this by having one of the old people, Little Miss No, create "where the ground had been [inside the store room that had held the arms], a bottomless hole, the entrance to emptiness itself, a hollow within a void" (142) into which the arms are thrown. The point seems clear: the "seeds of a new war" must be returned to this void that separates "before the war [and] after the war" (123) if Mozambique is to develop free of the contamination of corruption.

Having the old people play such a major role in the events that return the arms to the void does, however, raise some difficult questions. When their actions are considered in light of the novel's earlier depictions of a pre-war world "in which elderly folk could shine and had a role to play" (123), it could be said that Couto is gesturing towards a return to an idealised, pre-war, traditional society. In his consideration of such questions, Rothwell has this to say:

However, Couto's work does not merely rest in the past [...]. He aims to project a future that is able to cope with, and build on, a past that has led to an unsavoury present. The civil war did not break out ahistorically: it was, in part, the result of the colonial legacy and of political systems developed outside the country and then imposed intransigently on a whole nation. In that context, Couto's recourse to ancestral authenticity is a critique of the damage foreign systems dumped on the nation caused. More than a desire to recapture a lost past, through his work, Couto is concerned with imagining a different future. [...] Couto uses a coming to terms with the past as a way of projecting a better reality into the future. (2004: 131)

When read in light of this assertion, Couto's writing of *Little Miss No* using traditional magic to consign the arms to the void shows the possibilities that the incorporation of alternate systems of knowledge have for the creation of a better future. Perhaps more important though, is the "different future"; the "new world" that incorporates both Izidine and the old people's understandings of the world that Couto imagines as the end of the novel.

The end of the novel sees the people from Maputo – those that Vastsome Excellency was involved with in the arms trade, who killed him as a result – return by helicopter. They come, supposedly, to return Izidine to Maputo, but the reader is made aware that they are

actually planning to kill him because of the information that he has gathered about the corruption. He is saved by the dead man and his *halakavuma*, who to do so “would assemble the forces of this world and other worlds, and would unleash a storm to beat all storms” (146) while the dead man takes Izidine to safety. The helicopter crashes into the storeroom that contains the void and disappears. Unfortunately, however, the storm also destroys the fort and the frangipani tree. But as they are led back to the fort from the shelter of the beach by Little Miss No and the old people,

the ruins turned back into perfect walls, the buildings re-emerged intact. Were the fires I [the dead man] had witnessed no more than the figments of my imagination after all? But amid all that remained, there was proof of the recent chaos, a witness to the destruction visited upon that place. It was the frangipani tree. All that was left of it was a crude skeleton, fingers of charcoal embracing a void. Its trunk, leaves, flowers, all had been reduced to ashes. (148 –149)

Significantly, the fall of the helicopter and the world of corruption that those inside it represent, is carried out by the “forces of this world and other worlds”. This suggests, I argue, the need to bring together all aspects of Mozambican society and belief in the face of the materialistic greed that the war has unleashed. At the head of this coming together to restore the damage, as this passage presents it, are the old people and the knowledge that they have of the country and its many, differing beliefs. Couto’s “coming to terms with the past as a way of projecting a better reality into the future” (Rothwell 2004; 131) is being brought about by listening – as Izidine learns to do from Marta – to the voices of the old. The most significant aspect of this coming together and the future it suggests is, however, illustrated in the subsequent rejuvenation of the frangipani tree.

Under the Frangipani ends, as it began, with the relationship between the dead man and the frangipani tree. His action in saving Izidine brings about the following realisation:

I [the dead man] had lived a life of lies. I had crowned myself with cowardice. When it was time to fight for my country I had refused. I had nailed planks of wood when some were building a nation. I was loved by a shadow when others were multiplying themselves with living bodies. While alive, I hid from life. When I was dead, I hid myself in the body of a living person. And when my life was genuine, it was a lie. Death hit me with such truth that I couldn't believe it. Now was my last chance to move in concert with time. And to help to deliver a world in which a man could be respected just for living his life. (147)

Having thus acted and “mov[ed] in concert with time” Ermelindo Mucanga can now continue his journey to becoming an ancestor. To do so, however, he must re-enter the earth by moving through the dead frangipani. The result of his entry into the tree is that it comes back to life. On his way, however, he is joined by the old people and the reader is left with the following, final image:

Just as my [the dead man's] body was in the final stages of disappearance, I looked back and noticed the other old people were going down with us, bound for the depths of the frangipani tree. [...] On the other side, bathed in light, stood Marta Gimo and Izidine Nafta. Their image was fading, all that remained of them was a double crystalline halo, a brief glint of dawn. (150)

With this final image we read of the solution to the problems faced by a Mozambique gone wrong. A natural order is restored and, crucially, this point is underscored by the organic image of the tree being employed as the symbol of this restoration. Within this order, the old have a place and death can once again fertilise life. Couto's use of the frangipani tree as the central metaphor around which this “imagining [of] a different future” (Rothwell 2004; 131) takes place also suggests the inclusion of the history of foreign involvement. The frangipani tree is alien – originally from the Americas – and yet in this image it is deeply rooted in the land and allows for the old to return to their

rightful place. It – like the narrative form of the detective/murder novel – has been imported, transplanted and interrupted in such a manner as to make space for joining of many voices and many truths. Couto underscores this view by signalling very early on in the narrative that another of the signs of modernity will one day be integrated into the land when the dead man says that, “[t]he little notebook [in which Izidine recorded the old people’s stories] will rot away along with my remains [and t]he creatures of the soil will feed upon these ancient voices” (18).

The tree as organic vision of the future that Couto thus imagines is a Mozambique where time and history is re-voiced, re-claimed and allowed to grow according to dictates of a progressive society. It is a place in which memory fertilises the growth of an inclusive and flexible future and not one in which there has been a return to an idealised, fixed vision a traditional past. Couto’s vision is consequently a place where future generations can live under a new, stronger tree in a country in which order has been restored. That there is a hope of this future generation being able to live and grow under this new tree is signalled by the image of Izidine and Marta together, “their image fading” and leaving “a brief glint of dawn” (150). As such, the image is also reminiscent of the gesture towards the next generation that Hove makes in the closing images of Bones. In both cases the image of the man and woman – Marta with Izidine and Janifa with Marita’s son – together are used to suggest the hope of a future in which there is prosperity and yet is still under threat from the problems that the two authors illustrate their countries to be at the mercy of. Included in both of these visions of the future is the notion that although the

wars are over, there is still the need for the next generation to fight against the tomorrows of corruption and repression that are forming within the two countries.

Conclusion

[T]he state of war in contemporary Africa should in fact be conceived of as a general cultural experience that shapes identities, just as the family, the school, and other social institutions do.

- Achille Mbembe (2002; 267)

In writing, in the introduction, of my decision to use the work of Paul Fussell to structure this thesis, I highlight his illustration of a continuum in the development of the soldier that is also evident in the texts selected for study in this thesis. This continuum, as described by Fussell, sees the soldier move from the “innocence” stage through the “experience” stage to the “consideration” or “reflection” stage until the soldier leaves the war zone and returns to a world without war. While, as I have argued in this thesis, the texts considered – Sousa Jamba’s Patriots (1990), Mark Behr’s The Smell of Apples (1995), Pepetela’s Mayombe (1983), Chenjerai Hove’s Bones (1988) and Mia Couto’s Under the Frangipani (2001) – can be seen to follow this structure, it is important to note that unlike Fussell’s soldiers, the texts do not represent an end to the wars that they describe. As Chapter four shows, even the two texts that deal with post-war situations, Bones and Under the Frangipani, do not present countries that are free of war. In fact, in both texts the authors write post-war realities in which there is still the need to fight against the future that is forming as a result of the trauma of war. Both can be seen to represent Achille Mbembe’s “general cultural experience” of “the [African] state of war” through their depiction of a world in which

[t]rauma has become something quasi-permanent. Memory is physically embedded in bodies marked with signs of their own destruction, moving through a general landscape of fragmentation and economic decay. In many

places, life has taken the form of a continuous journey. One leaves one space and establishes oneself in another only to be dislodged by terror, confronted by unpredictable circumstances, and forced to settle once again where one can. (2002; 267)

Of great interest though, is that as much as the above description could be used to describe the post-war realities presented in Bones and Under the Frangipani it could just as well be describing the war-time realities of Angola that Sousa Jamba writes of in Patriots. Hosi's journey from exile in Zambia to battle in Angola could easily be described as: "[Hosi] leaves one space and establishes [himself] in another only to be dislodged by terror, confronted by unpredictable circumstances, and forced to settle once again where [he] can". This simple substitution of Mbembe's general "one" with the specific experiences of Hosi calls into question, as do Hove and Couto in Bones and Under the Frangipani respectively, the notion that the experience of war ends with the cessation of hostilities. It is perhaps such an understanding of the experience of war, and its inherent violence, that did not allow Pepetela to depict an Angola free of war in Mayombe's final chapter.

The inability of individuals and communities to escape the results of war is highlighted by all of the texts studied in this thesis. All of the texts read also illustrate a continuum in which one war feeds the next with the result that there is no certainty of a future without war. Thus, southern Africa's long history of war, as it is represented in the texts read, can unquestionably be understood to be Mbembe's "general cultural experience that shapes identities" (2002: 267). The Smell of Apples, however, suggests a way out of the certainty of an identity shaped by the history of

war. As Marnus is dying, he says that “[d]eath brings its own freedom, and it is for the living that the dead should mourn, for in life there is no escape from history” (Behr 198). The sad truth, according to Marnus, is that the only way that an individual can “escape from history” is to die.

For an individual or a community to die in order to escape history is, however, not an option for the authors of the other four texts. With the exception of The Smell of Apples, all of the texts studied in this thesis all seem to argue, ironically, that it is necessary to continue fighting against the future that a history of war creates. The fighting that Patriots, Mayombe, Bones and Under the Frangipani can be seen to promote is against the very notion of war. Through their representations of the trauma, brutality and suffering caused by war, all of these texts create a space in which alternatives to war can be discussed in the hope that the continuum of war in their respective societies can be broken. The same can be said of The Smell of Apples because the militarist nature of Apartheid society that the novel depicts is ultimately self-destructive. Ultimately, therefore, all of the texts can be seen to be fighting against war and the damaged futures that it creates. Consequently, I argue that all of the texts are fighting not for a better tomorrow, but against the tomorrows that are forming as a result of southern Africa’s many wars.

Notes

¹The states that comprise southern African are: Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

² See Donald Burness (1981), Patrick Chabal (1996) Emmanuel Ngara (1996), James Ogude (1999), Phillip Rothwell (2004) and Jeffrey Walsh (1982).

³

¹ It is perhaps important, when considering Baines' contention to keep in mind that the link between America's war in Vietnam and South Africa's "Border War" was one that had a fair amount of currency within the South African political discourse of the 1970s and 1980s. As Dorian Haarhoff points out, "Vietnamese mythology is of particular relevance to the Namibian situation since the Vietnam parallel has been evoked by government and liberation movements alike" (196). He then cites a letter to the New York Bar Association by the then Minister of Bantu Administration M.C. Botha which compares "terrorism" in Ovamboland - northern Namibia, bordering on southern Angola - to that of the "terrorism" faced by America in Vietnam during the late 1960s and early 1970s. And in a similar vein, Baines cites as his inspiration for the above-mentioned article, a poster produced by the End Conscription Campaign, "an organisation that opposed national service during the 70s and 80s", in which Namibia is referred to as "S.A.'s Vietnam" (172). In addition, Haarhoff references a similar slogan: "Namibia: South Africa's Vietnam", as one that was printed on T-shirts worn by South West African (Namibian) students during the same period (196).

⁴

¹ See Michiel Heyns (1996), Tony Morphet (1996), David Medalie (1997 and 2000), Mervyn McMurty (1998) and Rita Barnard (2000).

⁵ James Jones' The Thin Red Line, Joseph Heller's Catch 22 and Kurt Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse-Five to name but a few.

⁶ This idea of the war in Vietnam being as much against the land as the enemy is carried to an extreme in Stephen Wright's Meditations in Green. The narrative's main character is seen to move from a planner of bombing runs on NVA logistics routes to one in which he plans the defoliation of the jungle using Agent Orange. The jungle, it seems, has become as much of a threat to American victory as the supply of arms to the NVA is.

⁷ The term nafi (acronym for "no ambition and fuck-all interest") is one that has its origins in the soldier slang of the Vietnam War. A good example of the appropriation of the language of the Vietnam War into that of the language of the Border War.

⁸ It should be noted that on the 27th of June 1988, "four Cuban MiGs dropped parachute-retarded bombs on a South African Defence Force position at Calueque [Qalueque...] killing 12 soldiers" (McMurty 101). That Behr intends the reader to believe that Marnus was one of the 12 killed is illustrated by his description of the bombing as, "when they ["the four MiGs"] are above us, they drop their deadly cargo: suspended in slow motion by parachutes, the bombs descend on to the dam wall, right above us". (Behr 187)

⁹ "He did not live to see the torture centres for Algerians in a free Algeria" (Capouya 741) or for that matter the violence and destruction that is all that Angola has known since independence. That "he never did" could be because he died in 1961 and was therefore never to see the unending violence that engulfed many African countries following their violent overthrow of colonial rule

¹⁰ However, much of the novel is at one level an attempt to interrogate that very discourse.

¹¹ Against whose Unita forces the MPLA had been waging a constant civil war that began following Portugal's granting of independence to Angola in 1975 (van der Waals 254).

¹² Contraction of terrorist (Chapman 297). The term was used by both Rhodesian and South African troops to describe the fighters of ZAPU, ZANU and, in South West Africa (Namibia), SWAPO. Its use is and was generally deemed derogatory.

¹³

¹ This point is taken up by Behr in the text and much the same conclusion drawn.

¹⁴

¹ See Rita Barnard (200), Michiel Heyns (1996) and David Medalie (1997 and 2000).

¹⁵ For examples of such documentation see Jacklyn Cock (1991; 96 – 149), Joshua Goldstein (2001; 82), Isabel Hofmeyr (1986) and K.B. Wilson (1992).

¹⁶ Yoruba God of iron-work and war.

¹⁷ There is also the implication that such force is inherent in the teachings of Marxist-Leninism as it was applied during the Soviet rule of Russia and Eastern Europe.

¹⁸ There seems to be some confusion here, as the texts to which Jamba refers is in fact published as On War by Carl von Clausewitz. However, due to Clausewitz's work encompassing and extending the circa B.C. 500 text, The Art of War by Sun Tzu, many have come to view their work as one and the same.

¹⁹ For examples of such criticism see Gunner 1991 and 1994, Veit-Wild, Zhuwarara and Gagiano.

²⁰ Called this because of his repeated assertion that the farm workers always lied to him (see pg 23). Manyepo means "falsehood" or "web of lies".

²¹ I have only discussed one example, but the text is littered with moments in which Marita can be seen to 'teach' Janifa through the example that she sets through her strength and way of life.

²² See Matthew Engelke 27 and R. Zhuwarara 39.

²³ Flora Veit-Wild writes of this historical referencing that it "alludes specifically to the 1897 uprising which was preceded by drought, rinderpest and locusts" (8).

²⁴ In this, the article specifically includes Bones.

²⁵ See also Jared Banks (1998), David Brookshaw (1997) and Patrick Chabal (1996).

²⁶ ANC is an acronym the African National Congress.

²⁷ For testimony to the brutality and viciousness of the Mozambican Civil War, see Abiodun Alao (1994), Malyn Newitt (2002), Marina Ottaway (1998) and K.B. Wilson (1992).

²⁸

¹ There are a number of examples of the narrative structure of the detective novel being employed in the service of post-war examination of the nation, such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Petals of Blood. Another interesting example is Hans Helmut Kirst's The Night of the Generals. First published in German as Die Nacht der Generale in 1963, the text follows the investigation of three murders. The first two murders take place in war-time Warsaw and Paris. The third murder takes place in post-war, communist Dresden. Interestingly, Kirst uses the form in order to examine the responsibilities of those that took part in the Nazi campaigns and atrocities as well as using it to examine the nature of a divided, post-war Germany. This last point is highlighted by the final sentences of the novel, which read as follows:

To him and his like, there was only one thing which existed – and triumphed – above all other. 'That was, is and remains: Germany!'

Interjection: 'Which Germany?' (285)

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