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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Context and statement of purpose

This study is a metacritical discussion of the interplay between 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' and 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel.' It conceptualises and approaches 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' as a regime of critical discourse developed by white literary critics out of their reading of 'the black Zimbabwean novel.' The emergence of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is linked to the birth of black Zimbabwean literature under the auspices of the then Rhodesia Literature Bureau and British colonialist politics of patronage and hegemony which required 'the black Zimbabwean novel' to function as one long homily in honour of colonialism through, among other means, the direct celebration of colonialism as "the mission to civilise" (Kipling, in Laremont & Kalouche, 2002: 417) the supposedly savage and barbaric people of Africa, or, avoidance of politically subversive themes (Chiwome: 1996). Written largely during his tenure as the editor of the Rhodesia Literature Bureau, Krog's (1966, 1972, 1974, 1978, 1979) articles represent the earliest pieces of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. As a body of critical disputation on 'the black Zimbabwean novel', 'white critical thought' develops in a complex intellectual matrix in which it does not only share, but also competes for 'space', 'voice', and 'authority' with other versions of critical discourse such as 'black critical thought' on the same literary canon. In addition to this is the focus that it also directs towards other versions of the Zimbabwean novel such as the erstwhile 'Rhodesian novel' which, following the advent of Zimbabwean independence in April 1980 and the consequent transformation of the nomenclature at the heart of the colonialist establishment, would mutate into 'the white Zimbabwean novel'.

In this study, white critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' are identified as scholars of European extraction whose critical works on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' are susceptible to association with the European cultural agenda to define the world's multifarious realities from the vantage point of the assumed universality of the European worldview which, as Ani (1994: 23) avers, applies emphasis on "commitment to [European] supremacy…expansion and…the

destruction of other cultures." Given the fact that the European worldview against which the literary scholars under analysis in this research are emerging "is created, not by diversity, but by the perception of [European] unity" (Ani, 1994: 19), this study discusses 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' against the backdrop of the idea of Africa expressed in the works of European missionaries [Thomas (1970) and Moffat (1976)], hunters and travelers [Selous (1972) and Darter (1994)], archaeologists [Mauch (1969) and Bent (1969)], native commissioners [Bullock (1927) and Posselt (1994)] and later-day European ethnographers [Gelfand (1959, 1973, 1977, 1979) and Bourdillon (1998)] who precede contemporary white critics in the discussion of cultural data relating to Zimbabwe. Thus, within the context of its commitment to teasing out the aspects that construct 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' as an instance of European cultural thought, this study refers back to these and other European texts in which the Zimbabwean cultural experience is discussed.

In addition to the works of European missionaries, hunters and travelers, native commissioners and later-day ethnographers, the context in which 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is examined in 'white critical thought' is also framed by a growing corpus of works of European authorship addressing various aspects of the Zimbabwean experience outside the domain of literature and its criticism. This body of contemporary European scholarship on Zimbabwe encompasses post-2000 texts addressing Zimbabwean economic and political challenges of the period. Some of these texts include *Zimbabwe's Plunge: Exhausted Nationalism, Neoliberalism and the Search for Social Justice* (Bond & Manyanya: 2003), *Guerillas in Post-War Zimbabwe: Symbolic and Violent Politics, 1980-1987* (Krigger: 2003), "Remembering and Forgetting "Zimbabwe": Towards a Third Transition" (Sylvester: 2003), "Nationalist Historiography, Patriotic History and the History of the Nation: The Struggle Over the Past in Zimbabwe" (Ranger, in Primorac & Muponde: 2004), *Skinning the Skunk: Facing Zimbabwean Futures* (Primorac & Palmberg: 2005), *The Unsettled Land: State-Making and the Politics of Land in Zimbabwe, 1993-2006* (Alexander: 2006), "The Poetics of State Terror in Twenty-First Century Zimbabwe" (Primorac: 2007) and *Zimbabwe's New Diaspora: Displacement and the Cultural Politics of Survival* (McGregor's & Primorac: 2010), among others. In these texts, the authors explore the experiences of 'otherised' African people who are largely seen in stock terms. Given the hypothetical possibility of the existence of a nexus of interests between 'white critical thought'

on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' and the various 'communities' of white-authored texts on the black Zimbabwean experience, part of the burden of this study is to examine the ways in which 'white critical thought' affirms and perpetuates, or challenges and negates the hegemonic tendencies of the European worldview as expressed in European colonialist texts in which Africa is understood as culturally impoverished.

In this study, 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is defined as that corpus of black Zimbabwean novels in Ndebele, Shona and English. As a regime of novelistic texts of black Zimbabwean authorship, 'the black Zimbabwean novel' does not only rehearse the experiences of black Zimbabwean people in history; it also experiments with a variety of options that black Zimbabwean people may adopt in the context of the challenges they face. Like the various versions of critical discourse that have accompanied its development, 'the black Zimbabwean novel' emerged in the 1950s in the wake of the introduction of the Roman alphabetic mode of writing, the spread of European missionary and colonialist education and the collusion of these developments with indigenous Zimbabwean oral literary traditions, a phenomenon which explains the ambivalent nature of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' and the ease with which it finds itself implicated in both the entrenchment and contestation of European hegemony in Zimbabwe. The earliest contributions to this corpus of works were made by authors such as Mutswairo (1956, 1959), Sithole (1956), Chidzero (1957), Ndoda (1958), Chakaipa (1958, 1961, 1961a, 1963, 1967), Marangwanda (1959), Ndondo (1962), Sigogo (1962, 1967, 1971, 1982, 1982a, 1984), Kuimba (1963, 1965, 1976), Samkange (1966, 1976, 1978) and Ribeiro (1967, 1968, 1974). These early contributions to the black Zimbabwean novelistic canon are in Shona and Ndebele, except Samkange's (1966). Later contributions to 'the black Zimbabwean novel' would be made by authors such as Mungoshi (1970, 1975, 1975a, 1983), Runyowa (1974, 1974a, 1982), Hamutyinei (1975, 1981), Moyo (1975, 1977, 1982), Katiyo (1976, 1979), Zvarevashe (1976, 1978, 1983), Makhalisa (1977), Ndhlala (1978, 1984), Marechera (1978, 1980, 1984, 1992), Matsikiti (1978, 1980, 1982, 1990), Mutasa (1978, 1982, 1983,1990, 1994), Nyamfukudza (1979), Dangarembga (1988), Vera (1993, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2002), Hove (1988, 1992, 1996), Chinodya (1982, 1984, 1991, 2000) and Kanengoni (1985, 1987, 1993, 1997), among others. Veit-Wild (1992b) categorises these authors in terms of a 'generational typology' in which each generation is separated from the others by virtue of a brand of novelistic

consciousness exclusive to it.

The delimitation of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in terms of its triple linguistic manifestation in this study as is the case in Veit-Wild's *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers: A Social History of Zimbabwean Literature* (1992) and Muwati's "Interface of History and Fiction: The Zimbabwean Liberation War Novel" (2009), transcends erstwhile definitions that keep the episteme dichotomised in terms of the choice of language of literary expression. Critical texts such as Zimunya's *Those Years of Drought and Hunger: The Birth of African Fiction in English in Zimbabwe* (1982), Kahari's *Aspects of the Shona Novel and Other Related Genres* (1985) and *The Rise of the Shona Novel: A Study in Development, 1890-1984* (1990), Matshakayile-Ndlovu's "The Influence of Folktales and other Factors on the Early Narratives in Ndebele Literature" (1994), Chiwome's *A Social History of the Shona Novel* (1996), and *A Critical History of Shona Poetry* (1996a), Zhuwarara's *Introduction to the Zimbabwean Novel in English* (2001), Vambe's *African Oral Story-telling Tradition and the Zimbabwean Novel in English* (2004) and Chiwome and Gambahaya's *Zimbabwean Literature in African Languages: Crossing Language Boundaries* (2012) emerge against that conceptual backdrop in which the language of literary expression functions as a critical classificatory tool. The impact of the compartmentalisation of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' has been the institutionalisation of a literary-critical framework in which 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in English is deemed superior and its counterpart in indigenous languages is vernacularised to the detriment of the complex black Zimbabwean story that the two versions of the episteme are supposed to co-narrate. However, the attempt to bridge the language dichotomy in this research constitutes only part of the answer in the attempt to resolve the complexities of the black Zimbabwean literary conundrum. The majority of critics in black Zimbabwean literary-critical studies, for instance, still have to acknowledge the importance of black Zimbabwean oral literature in re-drawing the margins of the black Zimbabwean literary episteme.

Within the confines of the conceptual framework outlined above, this study does not only interrogate the ways in which white critics affirm and perpetuate, or question and negate the prescriptions of European culture in their criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'; it also explores the contradictions at the heart of the white critical quest for 'space', 'voice' and

'authority' in the discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. The concept of 'space' in this research speaks to the gamut of cultural values that inform critical practice. 'Space' determines the nature of questions that critics raise, the methodologies of investigation they adopt and the kind of research conclusions they anticipate. It speaks to perspective, location and orientation in relation to a given set of data (Asante: 1998). Deriving from the priorities of 'space', 'voice' is conceptualised in this research as the articulation of the critical arguments that project critics as products of, and participants in a particular culture. It stands at the centre of all the assertions and counter-assertions that critics in any given area of enquiry make with a view to registering intellectual primacy. 'Voice' connotes presence and visibility in the development of critical discourse while 'authority' has to do with whose and which ideas will prevail in the delimitation of the meaning of the human experience in literature and its criticism. Thriving on the capacity to persuade or impose, 'authority' in the critical interpretation of literature entails "the ability to define [literary] reality and have others respond to [one's] definition[s] as if [they] were their own" (Nobles, 1985: 107). Given that it constitutes one version of critical discourse on 'the black Zimbabwean novel', 'white critical thought' contests for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' with other critical discourses on the same novelistic corpus. This study explores the ways in which 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' affirms or negates European cultural 'space', articulates or muffles European 'voice' and asserts or undermines European 'authority' in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'.

The analysis of white critical contestations for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in this study derives from two basic realisations. First is the fact that the ideas generated by literary critics are cardinal in shaping the readership's consciousness of the world. The synergy that obtains between literary creativity and criticism means that literary-critical ideas exert influence on the ways in which group survival, as a life-defining guidepost, is handled in works of art, hence the need to keep literary-critical discourse under constant surveillance. The second observation is that, over the centuries, the European scholarly undertaking to achieve control over African cultural spaces has not only swelled, but has also had to re-package itself in order to be more effective (Mazrui, in Laremont & Kalouche: 2002). Thus, taking due cognisance of these realisations, this study explores the ways in which 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' recoils from, or participates in the

entrenchment of European literary-critical hegemony.

This study limits itself to 'white critical thought' insofar as it relates to 'the black Zimbabwean novel' without losing cognisance of the fact that white critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' have also published extensively on Zimbabwean literature written by non-black Zimbabweans in much the same way that black Zimbabwean critics have also evolved a universe of critical thought on 'the white Zimbabwean novel'. Critical works such as Chennells' "The Treatment of the Rhodesian War in Recent Rhodesian Novels" (1977), "The White Rhodesian Novel" (1979), "Settler Myths and the Southern Rhodesian Novel" (1982), "Just a Story: Wilbur Smith's Ballantyne Trilogy and the Problem of a Rhodesian Historical Romance" (1984), "Reading Doris Lessing's Rhodesian Stories in Zimbabwe (1990), "Rhodesian Discourse, Rhodesian Novels and the Zimbabwean Liberation War" (1995), "Self-Representation and National Memory: White Autobiographies in Zimbabwe" (2005) and "Great Zimbabwe in Rhodesian Fiction" (2007), and Primorac's "Rhodesians Never Die: The Zimbabwean Crisis and the Revival of Rhodesian Discourse" (2010) exemplify the variegated preoccupations of white critics of Zimbabwean literature.

Given the focus that white/European scholars have dedicated to issues pertaining to Africa from the time of Plato to the present, this study historicises 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' as one instance of white scholarly interest in cultural phenomena relating to Africa. White critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' whose works will be examined in this study include the former editor of the Rhodesia Literature Bureau, Krog, some of whose critical works on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' include *African Literature in Rhodesia* (1966), "An Emergent Literature" (1972), "Rhodesian Literature: The Rhodesia Literature Bureau: Its Aims, Objectives and Achievements (1974), "African Creative Writing in Rhodesia" (1978) and "The Progress of Shona and Ndebele Literature" (1979). Also under the spotlight in this study are Veit-Wild's critical works that include *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers: A Social History of Zimbabwean Literature* (1992), *Survey of Zimbabwean Writers – Educational and Literary Careers* (1992a), "The Elusive Truth: Literary Development in Zimbabwe Since 1980" (1993), "Festivals of Laughter: Syncretism in Southern Africa" (1996), *Emerging Perspectives on Dambudzo Marechera* (1999), "Carnival and Hybridity in Marechera and Lesego Rampolokeng"

(1999a), "Introduction: The Man Who Betrayed Africa" (1999b) and *Writing Madness: Borderlines of the Body in African Literature* (2006).

In addition to the above, this research also focuses on Primorac's critical works on 'the black Zimbabwean novel.' These works include "Crossing into the Space-Time of Memory: Borderline Identities in Novels by Yvonne Vera" (2001), "Iron Butterflies: Notes on Yvonne Vera's *Butterfly Burning*" (2002), "Introduction: Writing against Blindness" (2005) and "The Eye of the Nation: Reading Ideology and Genre in a Zimbabwean Thriller" (2005a) and *The Place of Tears: The Novel and Politics in Modern Zimbabwe* (2006). Chennells is also yet another prolific white critic of Zimbabwean literature whose work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is discussed in this study. Compared to other white critics of the literary canon in question, Chennells is outstanding because of his critical interest in both black and white Zimbabwean literature in English. This aspect of his work on Zimbabwean literature provides unique opportunities for understanding the complexity of the intellectual context in which 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is emerging. Chennells' critical works on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' which will come under scrutiny in this study include "Marxist and Pan-Africanist Theories and a Sociology of Zimbabwean Literature" (1993), "Introduction: The Man who Betrayed Africa" (1999) "Unstable Identities, Unstable Narratives in *Black Sunlight*" (1999a), and "The Grammar of Alienation in *Waiting for the Rain* (2006).

McLoughlin's "The Past and the Present in African Literature: Examples from Contemporary Zimbabwean Fiction" (1984), "Black Writing in English from Zimbabwe" (1984a), "Cultural Authenticity in Black Zimbabwean Literature in English: A Case of Metonymy" (1986) and "Zimbabwean Short Stories by Black Writers: Still-Birth or Genesis" (1987) will also constitute part of the primary sources of this study. Gaylard's "Dambudzo Marechera and Nationalist Criticism" (1993), "Menippean Marechera: Africa's New Anti-realism" (1995), "Marechera's Politic Body: The Menippeanism of a "Lost Generation" in Africa" (1999) and Shaw's "X-Rays of Self and Society: Dambudzo Marechera's Avant-Gardism and its Implications for Debates Concerning Zimbabwean Literature and Culture" (1997) and "Transgressing Traditional Narrative Form" (1999) will also be discussed in this study.

In the discussion of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in this study, note is taken of the fact that the discourse dedicates more critical attention to 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in English compared to its counterpart in indigenous languages. This is one of the results of the colonialist vernacularisation of African languages and the worldview they express. The vernacularisation of African languages renders it difficult for critics emerging against a backdrop of instruction in the superiority of European languages to accord uniform attention to 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in its various linguistic manifestations. White critical inclination to dedicate more analytical attention to 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in English is also a result of the fact that 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in indigenous languages is written in languages that the critics do not understand. However, the arguments that white critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in English make in their works resonate with significance for 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in indigenous languages, considering that quite a significant number of black Zimbabwean novelists write and publish in both English and indigenous languages.

1.1 **Statement of the problem**

Since its emergence in the 1950s, 'the black Zimbabwean novel' has been subject to criticism by both black and white critics. The availability of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' to both white and black critical exegesis has, as is evident from the wealth of critical publications that has attended its growth, given rise to the birth and development of what is cast in this study as 'black critical thought' and 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. As bodies of critical discourse on 'the black Zimbabwean novel', 'white critical thought' and 'black critical thought' exert influence on authorial orientation and the general development of the literature. The capacity of these critical discourses to inform the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' makes it important for both of them to be subjected to metacritical investigation. However, while 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' has received significant metacritical attention in Furusa's Doctoral study (2002) and Primorac's *The Place of Tears: The Novel and Politics in Modern Zimbabwe* (2006), this is not the case with 'white critical thought'. The publications of both black and white critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' show that where the critics deviate from the analysis of the novels, their focus detracts into 'black critical thought'. They seldom discuss 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. This

meta-analytical disparity facilitates the solidification of 'white critical thought' into a settled critical discourse on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. However, 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is a thriving discourse whose tenets black Zimbabwean metacritics would do well to understand, especially given that awareness of what others know about one's cultural experience is critical in the construction of knowledge of self and the wider world. The exclusive focus on 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' creates a fundamental scholarly enigma that affirms the misleading impression that it is only 'black critical thought' that needs constant metacritical discussion. In the absence of metacritical engagement with 'white critical thought', its implications in the study of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' will remain understated. This is untenable when it is considered that political, cultural, economic and intellectual decisions in the 21st century are increasingly being made against the backdrop of what given groups know about what others think of them. More importantly, the poverty of metacritical discourse on 'white critical thought' also occludes the galaxy of ways in which black and white critics jostle for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the analysis of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. The discussion of 'white critical thought' in this study helps locate critical debates on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in their proper developmental perspective.

1.2 Aim of the study

Against the backdrop of the contestations for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' that have historically defined relations between Africa and Europe, and the complexity of these relations, this research aims at establishing the various ways in which 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' participates in either the perpetuation or negation of the politics of European cultural hegemony in Africa. The vantage point from which this aim is pursued is the realisation that "[t]he problem of knowledge regarding Africa is that too many of the Europeans who have written on Africa had the European project of white domination, of white power, of white race supremacy at the very top of their agenda in the[ir] explanations and interpretations of phenomena" (Asante, 1999: 29). Thus, through the metacritical analysis of theoretical preferences in 'white critical thought', the classification of black Zimbabwean authors and the handling of the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in 'white critical thought', this study aims at achieving a deeper appreciation of the ways in which 'white critical thought'

affirms or negates European cultural hegemony in Africa.

1.3 **Objectives**

This study sets out to:

(a) explore the dynamics of 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the development of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'.

(b) examine the ways in which white critics affirm, perpetuate, question and/or negate the teachings of their culture in their criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'.

(c) unveil the consistencies and contradictions at the heart of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel.'

(d) identify and explain the ways in which 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' embraces or recoils from the critical perspectives raised in other critical discourses on the same literary canon.

1.4 **Justification of the research**

'White critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' participates in the construction of knowledge about African/Zimbabwean literature. The knowledge constructed reflects its creators' "perspective about Africa's place in the world" (Keto, in Martin and West, 1999: 178) and is, hypothetically, linked to "[k]nowledge about Africa based on the Europe-centered paradigm [that] has dominated the global understanding of African people for the last two centuries" (Keto, in Martin and West, 1999: 179). This renders it easy for 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' to be identified with the European project of world cultural and intellectual domination which places it in conflict with the African liberation agenda. The fruition of the African liberation agenda is impossible without the criticism of all bodies of knowledge that possess the capacity to further the interests of European domination in Africa. Given that "almost all [European] knowledge about Africa is Eurocentric…[and] has been mediated or delivered…for the purpose of fitting Africa into the European world" (Asante, 1999:

27), it emerges that 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' merits metacritical investigation with a view to discovering its place, role and significance in the furtherance of European hegemony in Africa.

Although European-originated knowledge about Africa in general is increasingly receiving the metacritical attention that is necessary in the effort to locate it in its place as one regime of knowledge about Africa as is evident in Africa-centred critical works such as *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature: African Fiction, Poetry and their Critics* (Chinweizu *et al*: 1985), *Yurugu: An African-centered Critique of European Cultural Thought and Behavior* (Ani: 1994) and *The Painful Demise of Eurocentrism: An Afrocentric Response to Critics* (Asante: 1999), among countless others, 'white critical thought' insofar as it relates to 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is yet to receive such metacritical attention as would render its contributions to the understanding of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' more intelligible. To the extent that this study avails the black Zimbabwean metacritical 'voice' in the study of the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in an intellectual atmosphere in which various and often antagonistic cultures compete for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority', it constitutes a "repositioning of…[African scholarship] in a place of [intellectual] agency where, instead of being spectators to others, African voices are heard in the full meaning of history" (Asante, 1999: ix). This study reconfigures literary-critical debates on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in a context in which only 'black critical thought' has been the subject of extensive metacritical investigation.

Outside the context of Chiwome's (1994) passing remarks on Veit-Wild's (1992) theoretical preferences in *Teachers, Preachers and Non-Believers: A Social History of Zimbabwean Literature,* and a handful of metacritical works such as Gwekwerere's Master of Arts dissertation on "The Postcolonial Critical Trajectory on Zimbabwean Literature" (2004), Vambe's "The Poverty of Theory in the Study of Zimbabwean Literature" (2005) and Chirere's (2007) book review article on Veit-Wild's *Writing Madness: Borderlines of the Body in African Literature* (2006), scholarship discussing 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is very negligible. This scenario invites the intervention of scholars of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' and the criticism that has grown around it, given that as a critical discourse, 'white critical thought' continues to grow and contribute towards the development of critical consciousness on

the literature. The development of metacritical scholarship on 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' checks the possible degeneration of the discourse into a hegemonic body of thought. Asante (1999: 96) notes that "[scholars] of one epoch, of one ethnic group, and of one persuasion, will tend to create history as self-confirmation unless checked by the restraint of logic, review, and peer evaluation." This study is an exercise in intellectual peer evaluation within the context of black and white critical engagements in the search for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'.

Considering that Chiwome's (1994) remarks on Veit-Wild are not made with a view to deliberately subjecting the latter's work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' to metacritical excoriation and Gwekwerere's (2004) dissertation examines only five articles by four white critics while Vambe's (2005) article discusses one white critic of 'the black Zimbabwean novel', the metacritical discussion of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in this study fills a yawning academic chasm. Compared to the critical works of their black colleagues, discussed at length in Furusa's (2002) Doctoral study, the critical views of white critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' have largely gone without metacritical analysis from both black and white scholars of Zimbabwean literature and its criticism. The poverty of white metacritical discourse on 'white critical thought' is to be understood against the backdrop of the European inability to self-critique "from outside the…hegemonic paradigm established as the grand narrative of the European people" (Asante, 2007: 107). The metacritical appreciation of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' connects stakeholders in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' with ideas that either challenge or affirm supposedly settled versions of thought on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'.

While black Zimbabwean critics such as Vambe (2010) and Muponde (2010) are beginning to address aspects of the critical discourses of their black Zimbabwean predecessors such as Zimunya (1982), Zhuwarara (1994, 2001) and Chiwome (1994, 1996, 1996a) within the context of their preoccupation with 'the black Zimbabwean novel', the same cannot be said about 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Thus, the metacritical discussion of 'white critical thought' in this study fulfills part of the expectations that black Zimbabwean critics should satisfy in the meta-analysis of the criticism that has accompanied the growth of 'the black

Zimbabwean novel'. If critics remain focused on literary texts, metacritical discourses on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' remain underdeveloped. The result is that theories of literature are denied another crucial plane from which they could possibly experience further development.

The development of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is accompanied by the rise of other white-dominated historico-critical discourses exemplified by *Zimbabwe's Plunge: Exhausted Nationalism, Neoliberalism and the Search for Social Justice* (Bond & Manyanya: 2003), "Nationalist Historiography, Patriotic History and the History of the Nation: The Struggle Over the Past in Zimbabwe" (Ranger: in Muponde & Primorac; 2004), *Skinning the Skunk: Facing Zimbabwean Futures* (Primorac's & Palmberg: 2005), *The Unsettled Land: State-Making and the Politics of Land in Zimbabwe, 1993-2006* (Alexander: 2006), "The Poetics of State Terror in Twenty-First Century Zimbabwe" (Primorac: 2007) and *Zimbabwe's New Diaspora: Displacement and the Cultural Politics of Survival* (McGregor & Primorac: 2010), which, in much the same manner as 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel', have not received such meta-historical criticism as would help comprehend their contributions in the narration of the Zimbabwean experience in history. The meta-analysis of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in this study is therefore an intervention in an intellectual context in which discourses on Zimbabwe are largely going without meta-critical analysis, creating, in the process, the myth that Africa lacks intellectual agency and is therefore without entitlement to a place in the constellation of groups that constitute the human family properly understood. Asante (2007: 41) avers that "[w]hen agency does not exist, we have the condition of marginality, and the worst form of marginality is to be marginal in your own story." The fact that white critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' are products of a culture responsible for the marginalisation of African people that would be effected through various mechanisms that included the discussion of African phenomena "on the basis of what Europeans think, do and say in relation to the phenomena rather than what the Africans themselves are saying and doing" (Asante, 2007: 42), furnishes part of the rationale for the discussion of their critical work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in this study.

This study also finds legitimacy in that it contributes towards the promotion of inter-cultural dialogue between Africa and Europe. While intra-cultural discourses are vital in generating

group knowledge through self-examination, inter-cultural dialogue is pertinent in the effort to avert scholarly in-breeding. To that extent, this study is significant for white critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in that it furnishes them with a non-European perspective on their work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. It is also significant for black Zimbabwean critics because it affords them an awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the critical views of their non-Zimbabwean colleagues with whom they compete for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. This is important because as products of different but entangled cultures and histories, "we have…arrived at a point at which the entire process of human knowledge is being assessed and reassessed in order to help us discover what we know about each other" (Asante, 1998: 8).

1.5 **Research methods**

This study focuses on the regime of 'white critical thought' that has accompanied the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel.' For its primary sources of data, it makes use of the books and critical articles that white critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' have published over the years. These books and articles are presented under 'context and statement of purpose' above. The majority of the white critics selected for study in this research have published extensively on 'the black Zimbabwean novel', setting the pace in its critical appreciation for many white critical light-weights whose ideas can be subsumed under the over-arching critical infrastructure defined by their prolific counterparts selected for study in this research.

Although its focus is on 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel', the study does not lose sight of the latter. Thus, reference is made to 'the black Zimbabwean novel' since it is the site of exegetical encounter between and among black and white critics of Zimbabwean literature. Reference to 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is indispensable if the linkages and contradictions inherent in 'white critical thought' and the contestations between it and other species of critical thought on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' are to be identified and explained. Thus, this study makes reference to the novels of black Zimbabwean authors such as Mutswairo (1956, 1959), Sithole (1956), Chakaipa (1958, 1961, 1961a, 1963, 1967), Samkange (1966, 1976, 1978), Sigogo (1962, 1967, 1971, 1982, 1982a, 1984), Ndhlala (1978, 1984), Katiyo

(1976, 1979), Mungoshi (1970, 1975, 1975a, 1983), Marechera (1978, 1980, 1984, 1992), Vera (1993, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2002), Hove (1988, 1992, 1996), Chinodya (1982, 1984, 1991, 2000), Kanengoni (1985, 1987, 1993, 1997) and Dangarembga (1988), among others, in analysing the aspects of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' that are of interest in this study. Reference to Zimbabwean novels in Ndebele and Shona is especially made in the sections in which Krogg's, Veit-Wild's and Primorac's critical ideas on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' are examined. The three critics are outstanding for their commitment towards the analysis of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in indigenous languages, compared to their counterparts who confine themselves to the study of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in English. Reference to 'the black Zimbabwean novel' facilitates proper contextual grounding for this research.

While this study does not compare and contrast black and white critical thought on 'the black Zimbabwean novel', it nevertheless adopts an inter-disciplinary approach in which consideration is made of the critical perspectives that black critics of Zimbabwean literature raise on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. The areas of critical convergence and divergence between the two versions of critical thought will provide an important site of critical translation for this research. As highlighted above, some of these black Zimbabwean critics include Kahari (1972, 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1994, 1997), Zimunya (1982), Ngara (1982, 1984, 1985, 1996), Chiwome (1994, 1996, 1996a), Zhuwarara (1994, 2001), Matshakayile-Ndlovu (1994), Chivaura (1998, 1998a), Gambahaya (1998), Vambe (2004) and Muwati (2009). The necessity of reference to 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in this study derives from the realisation that 'white critical thought' is developing in an intellectual matrix in which it subscribes for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' against the backdrop of the existence of both kindred and competing schools of critical thought on the same literary canon. The discussion of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' without reference to other critical discourses that also subscribe for significance in the analysis of the literature undermines the complexity of the context in which the discourses are developing.

In addition to self-completed questionnaires, face-to-face interviews with available white critics whose critical work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is under investigation are carried out with a view to assessing the extent to which the critics have either moved from or remained grounded

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in the arguments expressed in their critical works. Black Zimbabwean critics whose works are referred to in this study are also interviewed with a view to establishing their appreciation of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. The novelists whose works are the subject of white critical investigation are also interviewed in order to establish the ways in which they view both black and white critical discourse on their works. This approach enables the gathering of as much data as possible, thus, creating a broad base from which to discuss 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'.

1.6 **Literature review**

The criticism of critical thought on Zimbabwean literature is a recent development necessitated largely by the growing awareness that "[meta-]critical discourse not only assures the survival of literature, [but]…also determines the condition in which it survives and the uses to which it will be put" (Jeyifo, in Mongia, 1996: 159). This view is shared by Slemon (in Mongia, 1996: 73) who also suggests that "critical taxonomies, like literary canons, issue forth from cultural institutions which continue to police what voices will be heard, which kinds of intervention (textual) will be made recognizable and/or classifiable and what authentic forms of…textual resistance are going to look like." One of the earliest attempts in Zimbabwean scholarship to bring literary-critical thought under analysis is made by Haasbroek in a book review article entitled "The Study of the Shona Novel" (1974). In that particular piece, Haasbroek blasts Kahari for failing to seek critical inspiration from African culture and history in his study of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in indigenous languages. Even though Haasbroek is a white scholar reviewing the work of a black Zimbabwean critic of 'the black Zimbabwean novel', he appreciates the importance of a critical aesthetic in which black Zimbabwean critics derive critical consciousness from their Zimbabwean/African cultural and historical background. The issues that Haasbroek raises in relation to Kahari's critical work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' apply with equal weight in the meta-analysis of the critical works of other black Zimbabwean literary critics such as Ngara (1982, 1984, 1985, 1996). In his works such as *Stylistic Criticism and the African Novel* (1982), *Teaching Literature in Africa* (1984) and *Art and Ideology in the African Novel: A Study of the Influence of Marxism on African Writing* (1985), Ngara relies on Marxist literary-critical aesthetics to the extent of creating the impression

that it is not possible to develop critical benchmarks from African historical and cultural antecedents.

As a white critic of 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel', Haasbroek's discussion of Kahari's critical work speaks to the complexity of debates in Zimbabwean literary-critical studies. Haasbroek's work anticipates the avalanche of abrasive criticism that Kahari would later receive from black critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' such as Chiwome (1994, 1996, 1996a), Gondo (1998) and Furusa (2002). Aversion to the teachings embedded in one's culture for which Haasbroek reproaches Kahari is an exercise in self-nullification that stands divested of the capacity to inspire respect from other cultural groups. The fundamental revelation of contemporary scholarship is that the human worth of any given people is best appreciated against the backdrop of their confidence in their culture as the embodiment of the consciousness on the basis of which they can explain phenomena. The black Zimbabwean scholars' adaptation and utilisation of the blueprints enshrined in African culture and history bears witness to their confidence in the experiential backdrop against which they are emerging. Without such confidence, it is impossible for black Zimbabwean scholars to "find their own particular values and methods and a style which shall be peculiar to them" (Fanon, 1967: 78).

Fortune, a pioneering white professor in Shona language, literature and culture at the then University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, would also contribute to the development of metacritical thought on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in a book review article on Chiwome's *A Critical History of Shona Poetry* (1996a). Fortune identifies Chiwome as a social realist, a Zimbabwean patriot and a cultural purist. While Haasbroek chastises Kahari for looking outside African culture and history for critical blueprints, Fortune decries Chiwome for over-relying on African culture and history in his study of Shona poetry. He castigates Chiwome's scholarship as dogmatic and ethnocentric. Having thus defined Chiwome's critical work, Fortune proceeds to point out a number of 'inconsistencies' and 'contradictions' in the former's scholarship. He singles out Chiwome's volition to "favor themes which are 'mainstream' and broadly political, almost to the extent of merely tolerating others broader or narrower in their purview" (Fortune, 1998: 231) as his major critical weakness. To this, Fortune adds that the presentation of aspects of traditional religious beliefs in Shona poetry is "clumsily interpreted" (Fortune, 1998: 238) in

Chiwome's work. He also argues that Chiwome "stigmatises the poetry in the Literature Bureau's anthologies as the work of poets alienated from their own culture and betraying in their work the acceptance of the values and myths of the colonial society" (Fortune, 1998: 239). The impression in Fortune's meta-analysis of Chiwome's work is that the latter's critical discourse on Shona literature is contrived with a view to advancing unsustainable conclusions.

While Fortune's metacritical discourse on Chiwome's critical work on Zimbabwean poetry constitutes an immense contribution in the understanding of 'black Zimbabwean critical thought' on 'black Zimbabwean literature', there is a sense in which Fortune's work can be read as an exercise in intellectual self-defense. Chiwome's work does not only expose the inherent weaknesses of written Shona poetry; it also indicts the manner in which Shona poetry was taught by pioneering lecturers and critics such as Fortune and Kahari. Their criticism of the emerging poetry was largely celebratory. The celebratory critical inclination of Fortune's generation towards Shona poetry of the colonial period remains unmistakable in his review article on Chiwome's critical work on black Zimbabwean poetry. The desperation to hold on to it renders Fortune's work problematic. Chiwome's vendetta with Shona poets unfolds within the context of the latter's endorsement of the Rhodesian colonialist vilification of African people. Fortune's insistence on the critical discourses of the 1960s and 1970s in his metacritical discussion of Chiwome's critical work on Shona literature renders his work anachronistic.

In a Master of Arts dissertation entitled "A Critical Appreciation of G. P. Kahari's Criticism of Zimbabwean Literature," Gondo (1998) dedicates metacritical attention to Kahari's critical thought on 'black Zimbabwean literature'. The contention in Gondo's (1998: v) work is that, as a black Zimbabwean critic, "Kahari uses theories and approaches that are based on European literary history and traditions which make him fail to appreciate fully African values, beliefs and experiences as brought out in Zimbabwean literature." Thus, in much the same manner as Haasbroek (1974), Gondo takes Kahari to task for deriving most of the titles of his critical works on Shona literature from European antecedents and for categorising classical Shona civilisation as the epitome of naivety. For Gondo, Kahari's major critical handicap is in his poverty of critical originality. Gondo insists on African-derived critical values in the analysis of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. He submits that this is critical in the African people's struggle for

intellectual visibility. His point of departure is the realisation that in the event that African scholars fail to develop literary-critical perspectives from the point of grounding in African culture and history, they participate directly in the misrepresentation of Africa as an intellectual blank slate.

Kahari easily presents himself for metacritical excoriation because he inaugurates a literary-critical tradition of "mimetic philopraxis" (Ramose, 1999: 9) in which "the right to knowledge in relation to…Africa […] is measured and determined by passive as well as uncritical assimilation coupled with faithful implementation of knowledge produced from outside Africa" (Ramose, 1999: 3) at the detriment of a discourse economy informed by the experiences of Zimbabwean people in history. As Gondo argues, it is that regime of Africa-centred literary-critical theories that Kahari's critical work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' should complement instead of displacing. Given that human beings create and escalate on the basis of their grounding in their culture and experiences in history (Asante, 1998: 122), the marginalisation of African-originated literary-critical theories in Kahari's critical work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' furnishes Europe with "a progressive and interminable lead over [Africa]" (Ramose, 1999: 4) in the evolution of critical theories on the basis of which the African literary episteme will be studied.

By regurgitating European critical values in his analysis of 'the black Zimbabwean novel', Kahari participates in the furtherance of the myths that misrepresent Europe as teacher and Africa as pupil, positing Europe as the only and indispensable source of all cultural and intellectual values of significance. Thus, the thrust in Gondo's criticism of Kahari critical work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is that African scholars have to embrace the challenge to think from the point of grounding in the values enshrined in their culture and history. In the event that African critics fail to embrace the challenge to create the critical values that will speak directly to the experiences of African people in their literature and its criticism, their contribution to the study of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' will be nothing but "a darker version" (Asante, 1998: 8) of European critical consciousness. Thus, Gondo, like Haasbroek, emphasises the importance of critical originality for black Zimbabwean critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. His metacritical discussion of Kahari's criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is grounded in the consciousness that the European colonisation of Africa thrived, principally, on the projection of

Africa as the land of intellectual deprivation. The continued African scholarly reliance on European literary-critical models perpetuates that misconception.

Although Kahari (1994: 9) attaches importance to "the matter of Zimbabwe" in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel', he does not theorise the concept's significance in the evolution of African-originated critical perspectives in the study of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Instead, Kahari's thesis on 'the matter of Zimbabwe' and its place in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is that because various versions of 'matter' are invoked in the criticism of the different European national literatures, the same should hold in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. The search for European precedents at the heart of Kahari's idea of "the matter of Zimbabwe" (Kahari, 1994: 9) in his criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' does not only portray his work as incapable of independent provenance without European legitimation: it is also oblivious of the politics of cultural hegemony that define relations between Europe and Africa to the detriment, by and large, of the latter. Kahari's conception of "the matter of Zimbabwe" (1994: 9) against the backdrop of the existence of other versions of 'matter' relating to Europe also furnishes European critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' with the pedestal from which to see Zimbabwean literature in terms of entrapment in literary developmental stages that Europe has since gone beyond. Thus, Gondo's metacritical work on Kahari exposes some of the ways in which Kahari's critical work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' nullifies the significance of critical approaches developed from the experiences of African people. By looking up to Europe for critical inspiration, Kahari understates African intellectual agency.

Prior to Gondo's work, Chiwome (1994) would also take after Haasbroek's 1974 review article, highlighting the conceptual limitations of Kahari's work in a 1994 Doctoral study of the "Factors that Underdeveloped Shona Literature with Particular Reference to Fiction, 1950's-1980's." Chiwome (1994: 5) notes that Kahari makes use of quantitative, evolutionist and formalist theories of literature in his study of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in Shona. He argues that the theories that Kahari uses divest him of the platform from which to critique 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in Shona in terms of its aesthetic value and contributions in the struggle for black Zimbabwean freedom from colonialism. Chiwome's aversion towards Kahari's analysis of

'the black Zimbabwean novel' outside the context of dehumanising black Zimbabwean experiences in history is spurred by the realisation that as an art and a science, literary criticism entails the analysis of literary works for the various ways in which they "offer images of resistance, and fashion out bold alternatives by calculated stories and inspired pictures of heroic action" (Pointer, 2001: xxiii). Kahari's emphasis on the quantitative growth of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in Shona detracts from the pivotal role that it played in the furtherance of the interests of British colonialist settlerism. It is also oblivious of the politics of patronage at the heart of the activities of the erstwhile Rhodesia Literature Bureau and its self-exculpating mandate to oversee the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Chiwome's discomfiture with Kahari's quantitative, evolutionist and formalist criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in Shona is understandable given the European colonialist vilification of black Zimbabwean people against which 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is emerging.

The above notwithstanding, Chiwome's analysis of Kahari's critical thought on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is affected by the fact that it is subsumed under his broader concern with the general underdevelopment of Shona literature occasioned by the dynamics of Rhodesian cultural patronage and political hegemony as championed by the Rhodesia Literature Bureau. His remarks on Kahari's critical thought on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in Shona are made in an attempt to carve a niche for his own work. Thus, the deliberate problematisation of Kahari's critical thought on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is not the major concern in Chiwome's work. Nevertheless, Chiwome's passing remarks on the poverty of critical vision in Kahari's works concatenate with Haasbroek's to create the analytical rallying point from which critics such as Gondo (1998) and Furusa (2002) would subject Kahari's critical thought on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' to more scathing analyses.

Moyana's doctoral thesis entitled "An Historical Study of a Selection of the White Rhodesian Novel in English: 1890-1994; Content and Character" (1999) examines 'white cultural thought' as embodied in novels written by white Zimbabweans between 1890 and 1994. In carrying out her investigation, Moyana (1999: i) is "particularly sensitive to the portrayal of Africans" in 'the white Rhodesian novel'. Her study emerges in the context of the realisation that "in order to capture a lot of what the white people thought and did during and after the colonial era, it is

important to read their literature" (Moyana, 1999: 1). However, this assertion is made in Moyana's work without an accompanying analysis of the interface of history/fact and fiction, given that literature is not obligated to produce a one-to-one replication of reality that would satisfy the orthodox Marxist conception of art as the truthful depiction of typical characters in typical circumstances. Moyana's conception of literature as history/fact vitiates its fictive essence and the malleability of historical detail. Moyana's work is also limited to white novelists in terms of their Rhodesian identity which she conceptualises in spatial terms. This research looks at white critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' regardless of their spatial distribution.

Furusa's Doctoral research entitled "An Appreciation of Critical Practice in Zimbabwean Literature" (2002) discusses various aspects of 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel.' Furusa's study is an exercise in black Zimbabwean intellectual peer-evaluation in which he looks at eleven black Zimbabwean critics in a metacritical research which sets out "to identify and explain the theories and critical approaches that Zimbabweans use to appreciate Zimbabwean literature in English, Shona and Ndebele" (Furusa, 2002: i). The argument in Furusa's (2002: i) study is that "most Zimbabwean critics use theories, concepts and critical procedures that derive from western history, culture and scholarship which were introduced in Zimbabwe by European scholars and teachers." He finds it urgent that "Zimbabwean critics should expose and negate all false ideas about Zimbabwean literature and culture that have been perpetuated by Western scholarship" (Furusa, 2002: i). The challenge that Furusa poses lends legitimacy to the focus on 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in this research. The nexus of interests between this and Furusa's research derives from the fact that both concern themselves with critical thought on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' although the brands of critical thought that the two researches discuss are different, yet not entirely unrelated as will become clear in the unfolding of this investigation.

While Furusa is to be commended for according primacy to literary-critical approaches derived from the cultural experiences of African people, his handicap in his reading of 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean' is to be found in his aversion to the necessity of affording critical 'space' to non-Afrocentric approaches in the analysis of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Furusa's reluctance to acknowledge the importance of non-Afrocentric theories in the study of

'the black Zimbabwean novel' obliterates the fact that as a literary canon, 'the black Zimbabwean novel' "participate[s] in a complex order, rich in unexpected turns, meanders and changes of course…[as well as] labyrinthine entanglement" (Mbembe, 2001: 8). Furusa's exclusive reliance on Afrocentric critical tenets subverts the play of contradictions at the heart of the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. An eclectic metacritical approach in which Afrocentricity is nevertheless the rallying critical axis enables the discussion of 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in terms of its complexity. The shortfalls attendant upon Furusa's exclusive dependency on Afrocentric principles are compounded by the note of finality with which he puts his ideas across as well as his reluctance to discuss the shortfalls of the Afrocentric critical perspective. Furusa's approach misrepresents the Afrocentric critical approach as infallible, thereby foreclosing critical engagement with it. By foreclosing critical engagement with Afrocentricity, Furusa plays into the hands of Post-modern theorists who see Afrocentricity as dogmatic and essentialist. The concurrent deployment of Afrocentric and Postcolonial critical tenets in this research is an acknowledgement of the inadequacy of any given literary-critical theory even when it is deployed to help explain phenomena with which it emerges from the same culture and history.

In a Master of Arts dissertation on "The Postcolonial Critical Trajectory on Zimbabwean Literature," Gwekwerere (2004) addresses the bearing of Postcolonial critical thought on 'black Zimbabwean literature'. The title of this research is misleading because the research draws particular attention to the works of Dambudzo Marechera and not 'black Zimbabwean literature'. Its focus on just five articles by four white critics in Veit-Wild's and Chennells' *Emerging Perspectives on Dambudzo Marechera* (1999) occludes the existence a whole universe of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. The current research goes beyond this limitation by incooporating more white critics and critical works on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. It also identifies the critics under analysis in terms of their Europeaness as opposed to categorising them on the basis of their grounding in Postcolonial discourse. The realisation in this regard is that because 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is examined in 'white critical thought' and other critical discourses on the basis of the critics' grounding in a variety of theories of literature and criticism, grouping the critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' on the basis of their commitment to the tenets of one given literary-critical theory would limit the research's

metacritical reach. Unlike Gwekwerere's Master of Arts dissertation in which Dambudzo Marechera's works are presented as synonymous with 'Zimbabwean literature', this study appreciates 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in terms of its triple linguistic manifestation, thus, bringing on board more black Zimbabwean novelists and their works.

In an article on "The Poverty of Theory in the Study of Zimbabwean Literature", Vambe (in Primorac & Muponde: 2005) examines the theoretical limitations in Veit-Wild's *Teachers, Preachers and Non-Believers: A Social History of Zimbabwean Literature* (1992) and Chiwome's *A Social History of the Shona Novel* (1996). Vambe's article is unique in that it brings together a black critic and a white critic who make use of the Socio-Historical approach to the study of Zimbabwean literature. Both Veit-Wild and Chiwome are prolific critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Vambe's major achievement in the article is in the emphasis that he places on the necessity of metacriticism against the backdrop of the realisation that "when a theory's assumptions are not subjected to critical contestations and interrogations, the theory runs the risk of pretending to 'think' and 'know' itself as the only approach that can adequately explain literature and life" (Vambe, in Primorac & Muponde, 2005: 100). Vambe's observation delimits the critical framework within which this research approaches 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Thus, even though Vambe focuses only on two critics, his analytical standpoint is important insofar as it urges the constant subjection of all versions of literary-critical thought to metacritical investigation. This is in keeping with the concerns of this study in which the imperative is to evolve a universe of metacritical discourse that may be useful in overcoming possibilities of intellectual enslavement to versions of critical thought that are articulated and presented as immutable. However, in much the same manner as Furusa, Vambe's shortcoming is in his inability to acknowledge the fallibility of the theoretical implements that he summons in his effort to unpack 'the poverty of theory in the study of Zimbabwean literature'.

Chirere's (2007:128) book review article on Veit-Wild's *Writing Madness: Borderlines of the Body in African Literature* (2006) is a metacritical piece in which Veit-Wild is celebrated as "the author of the inimitable *Dambudzo Marechera: A Source Book on his Life and Work* (1992)…and joint compiler and editor of the very impressive book of essays on Marechera called *Emerging Perspectives on Dambudzo Marechera* (1999)". The hyperbolic language in Chirere's

work invites readers to think gullibly of the various arguments that Veit-Wild makes in her criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Chirere's celebration of Veit-Wild and her books on Marechera detracts from the need to rigorously engage the critic's work. It is also oblivious of the politics of 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' within which this research locates the contestations that define the trajectory that the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' has pursued since its emergence.

Black Zimbabwean scholars are yet to seriously engage European critical discourses on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. This contrasts significantly with the fact that African scholars elsewhere have made immense contributions in the study of European critical discourses on African literature and culture. Of note in this regard is the work that has been carried out by African-American scholars such as Ani [Y*urugu: An African-centered Critique of European Cultural Thought and Behavior* (1994)] and Ephraim [*The Pathology of Eurocentrism: The Burdens and Responsibilities of Being Black* (2003)]. On the continent, the works of critics such as Chinweizu [*The West and the Rest of Us: White Predators, Black Slavers and the African Elite* (1978)] and Chinweizu *et al* [*Toward the Decolonization of African Literature: African Fiction and Poetry and their Critics,* (1985)] are exemplary. From the Caribbean islands, scholars such as Padmore and Rodney, respectively renowned for ground-breaking studies in *How Britain Rules Africa* (1936) and *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972), have become unavoidable points of reference in the study of political, economic and intellectual transactions between Africa and Europe. However, the works of Diasporan African critics are more concerned with the global implications of European cultural and political thought. This study limits its focus to 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'.

1.7 **Theoretical framework**

This study makes use of a combination of Afrocentric and Postcolonial critical tenets in discussing 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. The concurrent deployment of Afrocentric and Postcolonial critical rubrics in this study is necessitated by the realisation that "the story of the study of Africa [and 'the black Zimbabwean novel' and its criticism] can hardly be confined to a single epistemic approach" (Martin and West, 1999: 2). In order to emerge with

a balanced account of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel', the metacritical scholar has to benefit from the advantages associated with interpreting phenomena from more than one analytical standpoint. In this study, Afrocentricity is understood as "a consciousness, quality of thought, mode of analysis and an actionable perspective where Africans seek, from agency, to assert subject place within the context of African history [and culture]" (Asante, 2007: 16). Thus, Afrocentricity constitutes an orientation towards data relating to Africa. It places emphasis on the collective interests of African people in culture and civilisation building and in their transactions with other members of the human family. As "the crystallization of a critical perspective on facts" (Asante, 2007: 2) relating to Africa, Afrocentricity seeks 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' for African people in every discussion on the African experience in history. It enjoins the acceptance of Africa as the point of departure in the discussion of data on Africa, "trans-continentally and trans-generationally" (Asante, 2007: 2). Thus, Afrocentricity is:

> African genius and African values created, recreated, reconstructed and derived from [African] history and [African] experiences in [Africa's] best interests…an uncovering of one's true self…the pinpointing of one's center and…the clarity and focus through which black people must see the world in order to escalate (Asante, 1998: 12).

Afrocentricity urges the interpretation of the experiences of African people in literature and its criticism on the basis of critical tools developed from the point of grounding in African history and culture. As a theory and a movement, Afrocentricity invites African scholars to "create their own schemes for understanding and mastering social and historical data" (Mudimbe, 1988: 122). This invitation comes in the context of the realisation that the interests of the world's multifarious cultures are not uniform and therefore incapable of spawning the same schemes for explaining phenomena. As Ani (1994: 23) argues, the creation of such schemes for mastering data pertaining to Africa is critical in the effort to help African people to "liberate and utilize the[ir] energies" and achieve the transformation they desire. These Afrocentric tenets interlock with the concerns of this study, grounded as it is in the contention that if a just African society "in which men and women have an equal right to culture, to material well-being and to dignity" (Fanon, 1964: 113) is to be realised, the intellectual voice of African cultural insiders has to be definitive in the discussion of the various aspects of African culture. The criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is one domain in which the black Zimbabwean metacritical voice should be

predominant.

The recurrent motif in Afrocentric thought is that African scholars have to take the lead in setting the parameters within which the African story is to be told. Thus, Afrocentricity insists that even when the African story is picked up and told by others, as will always happen in the liberalised and globalised village that the world has become, the resultant version has to be subjected to searching criticism in order that African intellectual heritage is not swamped into oblivion. By virtue of the emphasis it applies on the cultural and intellectual agency of African people, Afrocentricity enables the African critic of African literature and its criticism to overcome myths to the effect that the so-called subaltern cannot speak. The significance of Afrocentricity in a study of this nature is that it fosters a brand of critical militancy that emphasises the agency of African people whose voices also deserve global resonance.

In this study, the emphasis on Afrocentric critical tenets rests on the realisation that 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is an aspect of African/Zimbabwean culture. Its criticism in 'white critical thought' entails, of necessity, the criticism of African/Zimbabwean culture. The emphasis on Afrocentricity, therefore, becomes an attempt at ensuring that knowledge created about Africa by non-Africans remains available to both affirmation and contestation in the framework of the African entanglement in a world multicultural context in which the achievement of knowledge of self is the result of a reflective quest that looks both inwards and outwards. This study participates in both the affirmation and contestation of knowledge about Africa as expressed in 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. The affirmation and contestation of the consciousness embodied in 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is possible on the basis of a perspective emerging from the same culture and history as the literature. The fact that 'the black Zimbabwean novel' and "the Afrocentric idea" (Asante, 1998) are emerging from the same cultural and historical matrix means that both possess the capacity to interrogate and cross-validate each other.

The reconsideration of definitions of phenomena and the liberation of information, images, concepts, symbols and definitions pertaining to Africa from all forms of hegemonic control are some of the primary concerns of "the Afrocentric idea" (Asante, 1998). These concerns link with

the objectives of this study in which the realisation is that in the absence of constant surveillance, critical discourses possess the capacity to solidify into hegemonic constructions. The recourse to Afrocentric approaches ensures that the simplistic ratification of all the perspectives in 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is avoided. In the unfolding of the cultural politics of self-definition and definition by others, any culture that overlooks the examination of the views that others hold about it places itself in a position in which it easily cedes 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' to competing ideologies. Asante (2007: 101) employs the Great Zimbabwe analogy to emphasise the indispensability of the Afrocentric approach in the analysis of African literature and its criticism:

> We are caught between the Zambezi and the Limpopo; if we cross the first we are leaving behind the Great Zimbabwe and if we cross the second, we also leave behind the Great Zimbabwe. The resolution of this issue can only come from our cultural centre. As we stand on the pinnacle of the Great Zimbabwe, we must see our world going out to the various ends but not being defined by one or the other.

The life-affirming project of cultural self-definition and self-affirmation for African people to which this study contributes through the analysis of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is best pursued through an Afrocentric critical paradigm which develops from the substance of the African experience in history and is ladden with African-originated blueprints for explaining data relating to Africa. As a critical method deriving from the teachings embedded in African culture and the experiences of African people in history, Afrocentricity is suitable for this research because "its standards are severe [and] its questions uncompromising" (Ani, 1994: 24). It lacks hesitancy in pinpointing the adverse impact of European thought in the development of African culture. It takes the cultural agency of African people as its priority, inviting them to be "conscious of their responsibilities [and] thoughtful about carrying them out" (Cabral, in Davidson, 1981: 94). The meta-analysis of critical discourses that subscribe for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the study of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' satisfies some of the responsibilities that African scholars have to meet in order to ensure that African literature is not reduced to mere footnote status in global literary-critical debates.

As used in this study, the Afrocentric paradigm locates the researcher in a position where it is

possible to appreciate how white critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' handle issues to do with white critical theoretical preferences in the discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel', the classification of black Zimbabwean novelists and literary development in 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Thus, Afrocentricity is critical in the quest for African self-knowledge which African people can acquire if they are aware of, among other things, what others think about them and their culture. Some of the African scholars whose ideas have been definitive in the development of Afrocentric thought include Du Bois (1903, 1996), Fanon (1963, 1964, 1967, 1989), Blyden (1967), Armah (1973), Achebe (1975, 1988), Chinweizu (1978, 1985, 1987), Ani (1981, 1994), Williams (1987), Thelwell (1987), Asante (1989, 1998, 1999, 2007), Clarke (1991), wa Thiong'o (1993, 1997), Keto (1995), Ephraim (2003), and Mazama (2003). The African continental and Diasporan composition of the proponents of the Afrocentric critical framework speaks to its significance in trans-continental African critical practice.

The Postcolonial critical approach with which Afrocentricity shares metacritical 'space' in this study is a body of thought that emphasises hybridity and fluidity. At its most basic, Postcoloniality offers "intermediate concepts, lodged between the local and the global" (Gilroy, 1993: 6) and is notable for the emphasis that it applies on "the loss of absolutes…[and] movement away from a world conceived in binary terms, away from a notion of the people's aspirations sketched in simple black and white" (Bhabha, 1994: 14). As a literary-critical theory, Postcoloniality stresses the interstitial nature of identities and is "rooted in and routed through the special stress that grows with the effort involved in trying to face (at least two) ways at once" (Gilroy, 1993: 3). Thus, in contrast to the primacy of groundedness in a particular worldview as emphasised in Afrocentric critical thought, Postcoloniality urges the fluidity of identities and contradictoriness of consciousness. Basing its contestations on the history of Empire in which European, African and Asian values crossed and re-crossed cultural borders as master and slave struggled to survive, Postcoloniality commits itself to the demolition of cultural frontiers in order that the world's multifarious cultural values may be accessible to all. It challenges entrenched discourses with a view to availing 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' to all the discourses committed to "moving the centre" (wa Thiong'o: 1993). Thus, as an intellectual onslaught on all hegemonic discourses, Postcoloniality is, in much the same manner as Afrocentricity, a resistance theory committed to the accordance of 'space' to the previously restricted, 'voice' to the formerly

muffled and 'authority' to the previously subjugated. Like Afrocentricity, Postcoloniality pulsates with possibilities of going beyond hegemonic ideas.

The point of separation between Postcoloniality and Afrocentricity, as resistance theories, is to be found in that while the latter emphasises grounding in the African conception of reality and accords precedence to African-originated ideas in the discussion of data relating to Africa, a tenet which is often confused with fixation, Postcoloniality recognises no contradiction in appropriating the values of every other culture within reach. The contention in Postcolonial thought is that the contemporary world cultural order is the product of the contributions of the multifarious cultures of the world and must, of necessity, be available to all without restriction. Some of the major proponents of the Postcolonial idea include Saidi (1978, 1993), Bhabha (1990, 1994), Gilroy (1993, 1994), Boehmer (1995), Mbembe (2001, 2002), Appiah (1992), and Ashcroft *et al* (2002).

To the extent that Postcoloniality is concerned with "the historical, political, philosophical, social, cultural and aesthetic structures of…domination and resistance…offer[ing] a way of reading, theorizing, interpreting and investigating colonial [and other forms of] oppression and [their] legacy" (Low & Wolfreys, in Wolfreys, 2001: 201), its concerns connect with those of the Afrocentric idea. The relatedness of the concerns of the two theories helps reinforce the arguments raised from the point of rootedness in either of them. In addition, the fact that Afrocentricity has been criticised as absolutist and essentialist in its approach to phenomena relating to Africa means that it promotes the perception of reality in terms of binarisms in which coloniser and colonised, master and slave and black and white are forever pitted one against the other. If such binarisms lead to the construction of entrenched points of view in the meta-analysis of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel,' recourse to Postcoloniality and the emphasis it applies on "the inescapable hybridity and intermixture of ideas" (Gilroy, 1993: xi) enables the identification of the progressive aspects of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' that would go without acknowledgement in the event that this study relied exclusively on Afrocentric critical principles, particularly those associated with Afrocentric hardliners such as Chinweizu (1978), Chinweizu *et al* (1985), Achebe (1988) and Asante (1998) who are connected by aversion towards European cultural hegemony.

What makes Postcoloniality unavoidable in the meta-analysis of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in this study is its emphasis on the contradictoriness of human cultural experiences and relationships. 'The black Zimbabwean novel' which constitutes the site of critical contestation between and among critics of various persuasions, for instance, is "rooted in a multiplicity of times, trajectories, and rationalities" (Mbembe, 2001: 8) in which the local and the global are entangled in a variety of ways. Thus, even as white critics jostle for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel', they nevertheless make significant contributions in expanding the frontiers of knowledge on the literature. The fact that as a white critic of 'black critical thought' on the 'the black Zimbabwean novel', Haasbroek (1974), for instance, is able to emphasise the importance of black Zimbabwean critical anchoring in African culture and history in the analysis of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' while Kahari, as a black Zimbabwean critic, does not see the importance of literary-critical values derived from the cultural experiences of African people in history, bears witness to the need to look at 'the black Zimbabwean novel' and its criticism in terms of the complexity of critical perspectives accompanying their development. Postcolonial emphasis on the contradictoriness of aspects of phenomena enables the appreciation of the ways in which both black and white critical discourses on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' connect and recoil from each other in ways that defy neat categorisation.

1.8 Scope of the research

This study focuses on 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. It draws attention to the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' by white critics such as Krogg (1966, 1972, 1974, 1978, 1979), McLoughlin (1984, 1984a, 1986, 1987), Veit-Wild (1992, 1992a, 1993, 1996, 1999, 1999a, 1999b, 2006), Chennells (1993, 1999, 1999a, 2006), Gaylard (1993, 1995, 1999), Shaw (1997, 1999) and Primorac (2001, 2002, 2005, 2005a, 2006). The first chapter constitutes the introduction to the research. In broad outlines, it delimits the research's context and statement of purpose and statement of the problem, aim and objectives, rationale, methodology, literature review and theoretical framework. The second chapter discusses the nature of the context in which 'white critical thought' emerges, develops and negotiates for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. The third

chapter outlines the tenets, strengths and shortcomings of Afrocentricity and Postcoloniality as the informing theoretical implements in this research. It also explores the nexus and conflict of emphases between Afrocentricity and Postcoloniality as the informing theoretical perspectives in this study. The fourth chapter is a discussion of the research methods employed in this critique. The presentation and analysis of research findings unfolds in the fifth chapter while the sixth chapter concludes the study.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the major concerns of this study. It highlighted the background against which the investigation is carried out, its aim, objectives and significance. Part of the research methods and theoretical implements to be deployed in this study and the scope of the research are also outlined in this chapter. Also explored in this chapter is the meta-critical literature in which the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is discussed. This chapter sets the stage for the construction of the discursive vantage points from which the discussion of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' will unfold in this study.

1.10 Key Words

Africa
African culture
African literature
Agency
Authority
Black critical thought
Black Zimbabwean literature
Europe
European culture
European hegemony
Imperialism of discourse
Knowledge economy
Literary-critical discourse
Metacriticism
Space
The black Zimbabwean novel
Voice
White critical thought
Zimbabwean literature

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 **Introduction**

As a body of critical discourse, 'white critical thought' emerges in a complex intellectual matrix characterised by an assortment of versions of critical discourses that subscribe for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. The bulk of these metacritical discourses unfold within the context of the critics' preoccupation with the various aspects of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' as a literary canon. In the unfolding of these discourses with which 'white critical thought' competes for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority', the critics discuss each other's critical work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' with a view to achieving visibility in the discussion of the literary episteme. Thus, in the discussion of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel', this study attends to the complex web of metacritical discourses that have developed around the various versions of critical thought on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in order that 'white critical thought' may be examined within its proper developmental context. In keeping with this realisation, this chapter examines black Zimbabwean metacritical discourses on 'black critical thought' and 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Examined in this chapter also are white metacritical discourses on 'black critical thought' and 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. This chapter also engages the works of other black, non-Zimbabwean critics of the European *weltanschauung*, given that this study is best understood as part of an evolving universe of thought on European critical discourse on African literature. The discussion of the varieties of metacritical thought on the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in this chapter facilitates the discovery of points of critical convergence and divergence in the manner in which black and white metacritics attend to the literary-critical discourses that have grown around 'the black Zimbabwean novel'.

2.1 **Black critics and 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'**

The most comprehensive black Zimbabwean exegesis of 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is provided by Furusa (2002) in a Doctoral thesis entitled "An Appreciation

of Critical Practice in Zimbabwean Literature". In Furusa's metacritical research on 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel', the point of departure is the realisation that:

> A close examination of critical practice in Zimbabwean literature is long overdue. No researcher, in Zimbabwe, or elsewhere, has so far studied critical theories and approaches that Zimbabweans use to judge Zimbabwean literature. Existing research concentrates on literary texts (Furusa, 2002: 6).

Furusa's study sets out to "identif[y] [the] theories that inform critical practice in [Zimbabwean] literatures…explain[…] [the] cultures, historical circumstances, literatures and theories which inform these critical practices in Zimbabwean literature…[and] determine the applicability and relevance of these critical practices to Zimbabwean literature" (Furusa, 2002: 1). Against the backdrop of the above observations and goals, the prerogative in Furusa's research is "to encourage Zimbabweans to explain their […] literature using theories and critical criteria that derive from the study of Zimbabwean literature, both oral and written and from their history and culture" (Furusa, 2002: 1). To that extent, Furusa's study contributes to "the process of developing a tradition of original and independent thinking" (Furusa, 2002: 7) which takes cognisance of the fact that "if left unexamined, critical practice in Zimbabwe may turn out to be another noose that will lead us astray and strangle our creative and independent spirit" (Furusa, 2002: 7). Furusa's critical standpoint is incandescent with Asante's (1998: 10) persuasion, albeit in Euro-African cultural studies, that "unless they are subjected to severe criticism, the preponderant Eurocentric myths of universalism, objectivity, and classical traditions retain a provincial European cast" that ensures that "African societies or civilisations [will] be examined as sub-sets of the European experience" (Asante, 1999: xiv). Furusa's critical concerns and submissions identify him as an Afrocentric intellectual nationalist.

While the preponderance of European critical criteria in the appreciation of African literature has occasioned the demise of independent thinking in African literary-critical scholarship, Furusa's projection of endemic critical canons as the only solution to the African cultural and literary-critical quandary raises more questions than answers. His discussion of 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is steeped in the language of cultural purism in which relations between Africa and Europe are defined in terms of interminable conflict. Furusa's conception of Euro-African cultural relations in terms of perpetual conflict obliterates the cryptic nature of

cultural identities and intellectual relations between Europe and Africa. His simultaneous rejection of European critical canons and acceptance of the English language speaks directly to the enigmatic nature of cultural transactions between Africa and Europe that he rubbishes as he gallops towards the contention that only Afrocentric critical implements should be accorded 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. His entrenched submissions on what Afrocentricity can possibly help achieve in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' furnish Post-modern scholars, for example, with the 'space' from which to dismantle Afrocentric discourse on African literature and its criticism as rigid, exclusivist, introverted and therefore susceptible to the vagaries of stunted growth. Bhabha's (1994: 173) theorising on these issues is quite telling, because unlike the Afrocentric perspective as represented by Furusa in the above formulations:

> The Postcolonial perspective - as it is being developed by cultural historians and literary theorists - departs from the traditions of the sociology of underdevelopment or 'dependency' theory. As a mode of analysis, it attempts to revise those nationalist or nativist pedagogies that set up the relation of Third World and First World in a binary structure of opposition. The Postcolonial perspective resists the attempt at holistic forms of social explanation.

Furusa's reluctance to study 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' from an eclectic theoretical standpoint has its advantages associated with centricity and groundedness in the Afrocentric conception of literary and literary-critical issues. These enable Furusa to propound his argument with 'authority' and conviction. However, the approach denies him the advantages associated with appreciating 'black Zimbabwean critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' from a multiplicity of perspectives. As it is, Furusa's exclusive dependency on Afrocentric critical rubrics imbues his discourse with a note of finality that forecloses debate on 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' instead of rendering it open. This research discusses 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' from an eclectic theoretical standpoint that enables Afrocentricity and Postcoloniality to share and compete for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. The rationale is that, on its own, any given theory is grounded in its own particularity and can only provide a partial picture of the phenomenon under investigation. This enigma is lessened when a variety of analytical implements are used. By limiting himself to the Afrocentric approach, Furusa denies

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himself access to the nuggets of thought that accumulate in the spaces of contradiction when various theories of literature are used in the discussion of a given body of literary works.

The black Zimbabwean critics whose critical works Furusa discusses include Kahari (1972, 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1994, 1997), Ngara (1982, 1984, 1985, 1996), Zimunya (1982), Zinyemba (1983), Gaidzanwa (1985), Matshakayile-Ndlovu (1994), Dube (1994), Chiwome (1994, 1996, 1996a), Zhuwarara (1994, 2001), Chivaura (1998, 1998a) and Mguni-Gambahaya (1998). To his credit, Furusa's conception of black Zimbabwean literature cuts across the language divide entrenched by the erstwhile Rhodesian educational system in an attempt to rank Zimbabwean literature in such a manner that Zimbabwean literature in English would be deemed superior while Zimbabwean literature in indigenous languages would be rated as inferior. This 'ordering' has ensured the entrenchment of the myth that the English language is the language of art, culture and civilisation.

Be that as it may, Furusa's reluctance to accept works authored by non-black Zimbabweans as part of the Zimbabwean literary heritage, going by the phrasing of the title of his study which identifies Zimbabwean literature as literature by black Zimbabweans in both English and indigenous languages, implies a reification of critical thought which derives from, and reinforces the lack of keenness to acknowledge the complexity of the Zimbabwean literary and literary-critical heritage. Furusa's stance speaks to his commitment to the policing of the boundaries of the Zimbabwean experience in literature and its criticism. However, Zimbabwean literature remains an imaginative construct with porous boundaries and cannot be defined as exclusively black as is the case in Furusa's work. Zimbabwean literature is the product of the contributions of Zimbabweans in their racial and ethnic diversity and to limit the idea to one racial or ethnic group establishes that group as superior to the rest. Furusa's exclusionary conceptual tendencies are also conspicuous in the fact that he studies 'black critical thought' without locating it in the context of the complex web of intersections and contestations that define it as one version of critical discourse among other species of critical thought on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'.

What emerges from Furusa's reluctance to study 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' within the confines of the complex scholarly background against which it is

emerging is the impression that the discourse is developing untouched by other analytical discourses desirous of 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. However, the fact that critical discourses on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' are bound, each by the need to achieve more significance, furnishes the discourses with various kinds of critical motivations that link and separate them in complex ways that remain irretrievable should any of them be explored without reference to the others. Effectively, therefore, Furusa relies on the politics of affirmation by inclusion and nullification by exclusion. By steeping his metacritical discussion of 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in such politics, Furusa repudiates the heterogenous nature of the Zimbabwean cultural experience in literature and its criticism. Through role reversal, Furusa reincarnates the discourses of the colonial establishment that claimed all 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' for whites while condemning blacks into oblivion. His discourse on 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' furnishes a conducive discursive environment for the belittling of African-centred discourses on African literature and its criticism as emblematic of "the small world of black cultural and intellectual history…populated by those who fear that the integrity of black particularity could be compromised by attempts to open a complex dialogue with other consciousnesses" (Gilroy, 1994: 215).

Furusa takes black Zimbabwean critics of Zimbabwean literature to task for "adopt[ing] concepts, values and attitudes deriving from the study of European literatures...to conceptualise and criticise Zimbabwean literature" (Furusa, 2002: 88). His contention is that Europe is the antithesis of Africa and therefore incapable of inventing critical implements of relevance in the critical study of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Some of the European theories of literature and criticism that he identifies at work in 'black critical practice' in Zimbabwean literature include Marxism, Formalism, Structuralism, Modernism, Psychoanalysis and Feminism. His conclusion in relation to the critical works of Zimunya (1982), Ngara (1982, 1984, 1985, 1996) and Zhuwarara (1994, 2001), for instance, is that they evaluate Zimbabwean literature "for the benefit of theory and not in terms of how it cultivates humanising values that are capable of uniting Zimbabwean people and providing them with a clear and relevant political, social and economic vision" (Furusa, 2002: 116). In his discussion of Dube's employment of Marxism in his critical work on Ndebele oral literature, Furusa (2002: 146) notes that:

By inviting the Marxists to read the world for him, Dube denies himself Ndebele critical lenses, which would have helped him to perceive the world from a Ndebele cultural perspective. He also denies himself space and critical tools that can adequately discuss Ndebele art as part of the conversations that Ndebele people are holding about their culture, history and projected destiny...Dube ends up studying Ndebele art to prove the validity of Marxism rather than use the theory to explain the literature and its contribution to Ndebele people's existence.

The centrepiece of Furusa's critique of black Zimbabwean critical practice in Zimbabwean literature is that the use of European theories of literature and criticism serves to under-develop Zimbabwean literature and indoctrinate black Zimbabwean people into seeing themselves as "those who are only marginal to Europe, as those who stand on the periphery of Western triumphalism, as those who are only acted upon rather than acting, and as those who are culturally and historically dominated" (Asante, 1998: xii). This is understandable, given that Marxism, in the case of Dube's criticism of the Ndebele novel, for instance, "is mechanistic in its approach to social understanding and development, and…has often adopted forms of Social Darwinism when explaining social and cultural phenomena" (Asante, 1998: 5), particularly where Africa is concerned. This position is corroborated by other Afrocentric scholars such as Armah (in Chinweizu, 1987: 242) who notes that "Marxism, in its approach to non-Western societies and values, is decidedly colonialist, western, Eurocentric and hegemonist." Furusa's discomfiture with non-Afrocentric/Eurocentric critical canons derive from the awareness of the fact that "[e]ven outside the context of the politics of dependency, given sets of ideas cannot function equally well everywhere [because] [w]hen knowledge [is] imported, the system in which [it was] operating…also gets reflected and even recreated in the attempt to put the imported to use" (Chiwome, in Chiwome *et al*, 2000: vi).

While Furusa's reliance on 'the Afrocentric idea' (Asante: 1998) is in order, it is his outright rejection of non-Afrocentric critical canons that needs further consideration for the ways in which it leaves no room for possibilities of adapting critical canons of exogenous origin. Furusa's stance understates the fact that cultures that have grown and thrived have done so because they were willing to embrace ideas from elsewhere although in the case of the European appropriation of African values and ideas, the process has largely transpired without Europeans acknowledging their debt to Africa. This study acknowledges the importance of the Afrocentric

perspective as the point of exegetical departure in the study of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' and its criticism. However, it also enlists the rubrics of the Postcolonial idea in anticipation of some of the pitfalls associated with seeing and explaining phenomena from a unilateral point of view. The need to transcend endemic critical approaches is especially important because "whatever [one is] is never enough; [one] must find a way to accept something from the other to make [oneself] whole" (Achebe, 1987: 154).

Furusa's disenchantment with Ngara's, Zimunya's and Zhuwarara's inclination to study black Zimbabwean literature 'for the benefit of theory' and Dube's volition to 'invit[e] the Marxists to read the world for him' derives from the importance of delimiting one's 'space' on one's own terms, finding one's 'voice' and achieving 'authority' over the interpretation of reality as it relates to, and affects one's group. The backdrop against which Furusa articulates his views is framed by the realisation that should African scholars fail to develop African-centred critical canons, they cede their intellectual agency and relevance in a cultural and intellectual context where the significance of a group's voice in the discussion of the meaning of its cultural experience in history can no longer be overstated. Insofar as Furusa is concerned, the reliance on European literary-critical models enjoins black Zimbabwean critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' to experiment with critical options and solutions that do not connect with the lived experiences of black Zimbabwean people who are also the creators and subjects of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Thus, Furusa argues that there is discomfiture between the critical implements at work and black Zimbabwean cultural experiences as embodied in the literature that the critics desire to interpret.

The discomfiture arises because, for Furusa, critical approaches are most relevant in their cultures of origin in which their evolution is informed by endemic human experinces. The symbiosis that accompanies the refinement of ideas in a particular culture is always overlooked in the attempt to put the imported to use. However, while the Afrocentric approach as exemplified by Furusa is hamstrung by his reluctance to share metacritical and discursive space with other approaches in the study of 'the black Zimbabwean novel', Eurocentric approaches are also affected by the inability to liberate themselves from claims to universal relevance. To that extent, both Afrocentric and Eurocentric approaches do not only stand opposed to "the loss of

absolutes…[and] movement away from a world conceived in binary terms" that Bhabha (1994: 14) emphasises; they are also affected by the reluctance to facilitate thought beyond their superficial adequacy and indispensability. Recourse to Postcolonial discourse in this study furnishes an important site of translation between Afrocentric and Eurocentric discourses in the study of 'the black Zimbabwean novel', given the emphasis that Postcoloniality applies on the hybridity of cultural identities.

Of the eleven black critics of Zimbabwean literature whose works he studies, Furusa applauds Gambahaya as "the first Zimbabwean critic to systematically study Shona and Ndebele literature together as one corpus deriving from and responding to the same historico-economic forces" (Furusa, 2002: 154). This is an aspect of Gambahaya's critical work that speaks to her conception of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in indigenous languages in holistic terms and is also clear in her other critical works such as *Zimbabwean Literature in African Languages: Crossing Language Boundaries* (2012), "Africana Womanism and African Proverbs: Theoretical Grounding of Mothering/Motherhood in Shona and Ndebele Cultural Discourse" (2011), "The Management of Ethnic Diversity in Zimbabwean Literature: An Analysis of Selected Novels in Ndebele and Shona" (2010) and "Remembrances of the Sociology of Nationalism: The Family in Zimbabwe's Early 1980s Liberation War Novel Across Languages" (2007), among others. Mguni-Gambahaya's holistic understanding of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in indigenous languages notwithstanding, Furusa blasts her for "applaud[ing] literature that critiques contemporary Zimbabwean experiences which are dominated by corruption, abuse of political power by the leadership, poverty, [and] disease...without explaining the processes that brought them about and the factors that would overcome them" (Furusa, 2002: 158). He concludes that Gambahaya's critical approach "is more descriptive than analytical, and more textual than philosophical" (Furusa, 2002: 159). While this brand of metacriticism exposes the shortcomings of Gambahaya's critical work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in indigenous languages, it also demonstrates Furusa's discomfiture with critical discourses that promote debate on the challenges confronting the post-Independence black Zimbabwean establishment. The apprehension towards such critical discourses misrepresents Afrocentricity as a theory that thrives on the romantic appreciation of African experiences in African literature.

In his metacritical discussion of Chiwome's criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel', Furusa (2002: 186) commends the former for arguing for the need for "a Shona cultural identity, an African worldview, and a collective consciousness that would not only protect Zimbabwean people from foreign domination but would also lead to development and progress." However, this is immediately followed by the assertion that "unfortunately [Chiwome] searches for...liberating theories within European culture and literary practice" (Furusa, 2002: 187). These contradictions in the critical vision of the black Zimbabwean critics whose critical works Furusa examines points to what Vambe (2005: 89) has termed "the poverty of theory in the study of Zimbabwean literature." For Furusa, the 'poverty of theory in the study of Zimbabwean literature' is the result of the dearth of sustained dialogue with African culture and history. It is Furusa's persuasion that dialogue with African history and culture will lead to the development of ennobling African-centred approaches in the analysis of all issues pertaining to the African experience in African literature and its criticism. He avers that black Zimbabwean critics such as Gambahaya and Chiwome have yet to achieve such critical autonomy as would lead to confidence in the legitimacy of African-centred approaches in the study of African literature and its criticism.

The lack of confidence in African-centred approaches for which Furusa blasts Gambahaya and Chiwome nullifies the significance of African people. It is the contention of leading Afrocentric thinkers such as Asante (1980, 1998, 1999), Clarke (1991), Ani (1994), Keto (1995) and Mazama (2003) that the lack of confidence in African-centred approaches leads to, and reinforces the confusion of priorities that keeps Africa encircled culturally, politically, economically and intellectually. Thus, for Furusa in his meta-reading of Chiwome and Gambahaya's critical discourses on 'the black Zimbabwean novel', it is urgent for black Zimbabwean critics of the literature to be confident with African-centred approaches to African literature. In making such an argument, Furusa is grounded in the consciousness that no one can be respected in the absence of self-respect as expressed through confidence in the legitimacy of one's cultural worldview. The fundamental accomplishment of Afrocentric scholarship within the context of which Furusa pushes his thesis is that the human worth of any given people is best appreciated relative to their confidence in their history and culture as the embodiments of the values on the basis of which they can escalate.

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For black Zimbabwean scholars of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' such as Chiwome and Gambahaya, Furusa's contention is that the adaptation of the values enshrined in their history and culture bears witness to their confidence in the experiential backdrop against which they are emerging. Furusa's discomfiture with Chiwome's and Gambahaya's "search[…] for liberating theories within European culture and literary practice" (Furusa, 2002: 187) derives from the realisation that African culture and history embody the teachings and examples which, in the aftermath of centuries of African intellectual debasement, political subjugation, economic encirclement and psychological decapitation, are indispensable in the African quest for "restoration, renewal and healing" (Carruthers, in Robertson, 2010: 56). Thus, Furusa's is a courageous contention that is only subverted by his aversion towards dialogue with other perspectives. However, dialogue with other critical discourses on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' should be informed by the local needs and challenges or it degenerates into the uncritical acceptance even of perspectives detrimental to the furtherance of the interests of African literature and its criticism. Additionally, it should not be anchored in the self-abnegating tendency to credit non-endemic perspectives with all the significance as is the case in the works of Postmodern scholars such as Appiah (1992: 134) who envisages African emancipation as inseparable from European agency:

> We now have a few generations of literate African intellectuals, and they have begun the process of examining our traditions. They are aided in this by the availability of Western traditions, their access to which, through writing, is no different from Westerners'. This process of analysis will produce new, unpredictable fusions. Sometimes, something will have to give. What it will be I cannot predict, though I have my suspicions, and you will be able to guess what they are if I say that it seems to me that the overwhelming political and economic domination of the Third World by the industrialized world will play its part.

The only black Zimbabwean critic whom Furusa applauds for consistency and relevance of critical vision is Chivaura. Furusa contends that Chivaura's critical thought on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is concomitant with the African-centred imperative to intellectually empower black Zimbabwean people through interpreting black Zimbabwean literature using critical values derived from black Zimbabwean culture and history:

[Chivaura is] one of the few critics who demonstrate a clear understanding of the relationship of literature to a people's culture, history and worldview...[Chivaura] is more interested in the aesthetic orientation of Zimbabwean writers, that is, whether they are African or European and its implications for Zimbabweans. He always asks questions pertaining to the cultural values and political messages that the writers put at the centre of their works, and the African heroes that embody these values and messages. Above all, he insists on finding out the aesthetic mission that the writers communicate to the readers. He therefore stands on the shoulders of many other people of African descent who write and appreciate literature to create a better world for black people (Furusa, 2002: 128).

Going by the questions, arguments and explanations that they raise in their respective critical works on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' and its criticism, it can be observed that both Furusa and Chivaura subscribe to the Afrocentric critical standpoint. The affinity of approaches between them vindicates the view that Furusa's celebration of Chivaura as Zimbabwe's most consistent black critic of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is also an exercise in self-legitimation, given that like Furusa, Chivaura also lacks comfort with the readiness with which black critics adopt European theories of literature in their study of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Furusa's emphasis in his meta-analysis of 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel', therefore, is on the exclusive significance of Afrocentric critical tenets in the criticism of black Zimbabwean literature. This kind of emphasis is also clear in Chivaura's (1998: 3) contention that the "[c]ontinued reliance of Africa on the West…creates the 'dependency syndrome' which contradicts the very notion of [African] independence."

The most problematic aspects of Furusa's meta-analysis of 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel', however, have to do with the fact that his work focuses on 'black critical thought' without harking back to the novels examined by the critics whose works he evaluates. Reference to the literary texts enables the metacritical scholar to authenticate discursive assertions with textual evidence. As it is, Furusa examines critical practice in Zimbabwean literature without paying homage to the literary tradition against which it is arising. This is an oversight that lends a banal ring to Furusa's metacritical work on 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Thus, in much the same manner as critics such as Zimunya (1982), Zinyemba (1983), Dube (1994) and Zhuwarara (1994, 2001), Furusa also stands vulnerable to charges of prioritising theory for theory's sake. This study incorporates literary texts in the discussion of aspects of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Furusa's

meta-analysis of 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' without due reference to literary texts obstructs him from benefitting from the nuances embodied in the novels. This research discusses 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' with due reference to the latter as the site of analytical disputation.

The other problematic aspect in Furusa's meta-analysis of 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' relates to his reasons for leaving out the critical views of white critics of Zimbabwean literature in his study. Furusa (2002: 2) frames his reasons for excluding white critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in his work as follows:

> European critics in Zimbabwe and elsewhere have always insisted on appreciating their own literature and literatures of other people using concepts and critical criteria derived from the study of their own literatures. They have not been historically and culturally dislocated and they therefore source critical theories from their own culture and historical experiences. Above all, they have always presented their own creative and critical methods as universal, modern and global and therefore universally relevant to all the literatures of the world.

Furusa overlooks the fact that cultural and historical dislocation is not the only rationale for bringing a particular literature and the criticism that has grown around it under analysis. By exempting 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' from metacritical analysis because Europeans 'have not been historically and culturally dislocated', Furusa affirms the myth that it is only non-Europeans who should be studied. Studies carried out by Baldwin (1995: 165) show that "one of the things that distinguishes [Europeans] from other people is that no other people has ever been so deeply involved in the lives of [African people]." Thus, the cultural, intellectual, political and economic consequences of the involvement of Europeans in the lives of African people speak directly to the need to study Europeans in the effort to explain global African experiences. But to the extent that Furusa's research singles out black critics of Zimbabwean literature, it remains an important effort at black Zimbabwean self-criticism. Ephraim (2003: xviii) has since observed that "in the absence of self-critique, self-knowledge is impossible; and…without self-knowledge, a proper understanding of one's social reality is unattainable."

Furusa does not only leave out white critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in his discussion of

critical practice in Zimbabwean literature; he also does not venture to review both black and white metacritical discourses on 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. By discussing 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' outside the framework of other canons of metacritical thought that also subscribe for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the clarification of 'black critical thought', Furusa creates the impression that he is the pioneering metacritical scholar on 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. While this may be the case in terms of deliberate commitment to the identification of 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' as an area of study on its own, Furusa's work is preceded by the contributions of scholars such as Haasbroek (1974), Veit-Wild (1992), Chiwome (1994, 1996), Shaw (1997) and Gondo (1998) who all raise important issues on 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Although Furusa's predecessors discuss various aspects of 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' within the purview of their broader concerns with 'the black Zimbabwean novel' and not its criticism, they make important forays into the aspects of the literary-critical discourses that have developed on the literature. The poverty of reference to the metacritical views of these scholars in Furusa's discussion of 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' culminates in a situation where he denies himself the possibility of benefitting from the metacritical discourses that precede his.

In a Doctoral thesis entitled "Factors that Underdeveloped Shona Literature with Particular Reference to Fiction: 1950's – 1980's", Chiwome (1994: 6) singles out Kahari's Doctoral thesis, "The Development of Contemporary Shona Narratives, 1890 – 1984" (1988) as "a scholarly reflection of his comprehensive survey of many aspects of the Shona novel...[which] gives any researcher into Shona fiction as well as Zimbabwean literature an overview of the formal characteristics of Shona fiction." Chiwome (1994: 6) argues that Kahari "analyses the development of colonial fiction in Shona in quantitative, evolutionist-formalistic and also cultural terms" and is concerned that Kahari's critical approach to 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is oblivious of literary content and its impact on the consciousness of the readership. This is a concern grounded in the Afrocentric appreciation of literature in terms of its contribution to the progressive transformation of life. The misrepresentation of classical African history and culture in colonial Shona novels such as Chakaipa's *Pfumo Reropa* (1961) and Zvarevashe's *Gonawapotera* (1978), the celebration of colonialism in Chidzero's *Nzvengamutsvairo* (1957)

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and Chakaipa's *Dzasukwa-Mwana-Asina-Hembe* (1967) and the portrayal of Africans as savages in Chakaipa's *Rudo Ibofu* (1961) are some of the issues that compel Chiwome to argue for the analysis of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' on the basis of its social, political, economic and cultural relevance in the lived experiences of black Zimbabwean people. Chiwome's criticism of Kahari's critical thought on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in Shona demonstrates that it is vital for every version of critical discourse on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' to be subject to constant surveillance. Without such surveillance, critical thought can easily solidify into settled opinion.

Chiwome (1994: 6) also takes Kahari to task for "bas[ing] his evaluation of ['the black Zimbabwean novel' in Shona] on English literary modes." This is an issue that Furusa also raises in his analysis of 'black Zimbabwean critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. It is also an issue that almost all of Kahari's critics raise and is associated with the manner in which Kahari frames the titles of his works such as *Aspects of the Shona Novel* (1986) and *The Rise of the Shona Novel* (1990) after the titles of critical works by European scholars rooted in the European conception of the novel such as Forster (*The Rise of the Novel*: 1970) and Watt (*Aspects of the Novel*: 1957). The centrepiece of Chiwome's (1994: 6) discussion of Kahari's work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in Shona is that as a critic of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in Shona, Kahari does not use his academic space to contribute meaningfully to the struggle to decolonise 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. As the pioneering black Zimbabwean critic of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in Shona, Kahari's acceptance of European critical models is considered problematic because it unfurls without the critic ever venturing to affirm the significance of critical values developed against the backdrop of grounding in the African cultural experience in history. Kahari's stance affirms the European claim that Africa lacks cultural and intellectual blueprints of endemic origination. This is a claim that inspired and justified the enslavement and colonisation of African people because it enabled Europeans to see Africans as sub-human. By looking up to Europe for intellectual inspiration, Kahari mis-represents Africa as pupil, and exalts Europe as teacher. Thus, he binds himself to the myth that Africa epitomises cultural impoverishment that can only be mitigated by looking up to Europe for salvation. Kahari's intellectual homage to Europe endorses Europeans as sole exemplars of intellectual accomplishment.

Chiwome (1994: 7) further notes that like white critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' such as Veit-Wild, Kahari "looks at the positive role played by missionaries and colonial governments in laying the foundation of Shona literature." He is concerned that Kahari does not explore the participation of both the missionaries and the colonial governments in the Rhodesian bid to constrain the intellectual 'space' available to African people in the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Thus, Chiwome looks at Kahari's critical corpus on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in Shona as one long panegyric in honour of white missionaries and the colonial establishment for 'developing' Shona into a language of literary expression. That Kahari's critical work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is part of black Zimbabwean discourses of gratitude to Europe may be the direct result of the critic's exposure to European critical models in the colonial classroom and the mission church in which Africans were inducted to look at their culture as "one wasteland of non-achievement" (wa Thiong'o, 1981: 6). The delimitation of Shona classical civilisation as "the old world" and the civilisation engendered by the British colonisation of Zimbabwe as "the new world" or "the industrial environment" in Kahari's (1994: 8) criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' reflects his confidence in European culture as synonymous with advancement. His critical work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' misrepresents Europeans as sole proprietors of cultural and intellectual agency. Thus, Chiwome contends that Kahari reads 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in Shona in a manner that under-develops black Zimbabwe literature while ascribing undue credit to Europeans as big brothers and big sisters in intellectual and cultural charity.

Chiwome also queries Kahari's emphasis on what he perceives as "the positive side of colonialism" (Chiwome, 1994: 7) in his analysis of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in Shona. The hallmark of Chiwome's criticism of Kahari in this regard is that in his celebration of colonialism, Kahari is oblivious of the fact that "colonialism for the most part aimed at developing the metropoles, and only allowed certain crumbs to the colonies as incidental by-products of exploitation" (Rodney, 1982: 213). Thus, Chiwome contends that Kahari's criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in Shona works effectively for the European cultural onslaught on Africa and defectively for the African-centred quest for African agency. In his meta-analysis of Kahari's criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in Shona, Chiwome does not think that the European cultural and intellectual presence in Africa is favourable to the development of 'the

black Zimbabwean novel' in Shona. The title of his study is quite revealing in this regard.

In a Master of Arts dissertation in African Languages and Literature entitled "A Critical Appreciation of G. P. Kahari's Criticism of Zimbabwean Literature," Gondo examines Kahari's critical thought on 'black Zimbabwean literature.' Gondo's (1998: 8) research is prefaced by an outline of the problematics attendant upon "the concept of literature in Zimbabwe". He argues that the language dichotomy in the criticism of Zimbabwean literature occasioned a critical orientation in which the tendency is to perceive Zimbabwean literature in English as normative, a conception which urges the employment of European critical implements "which struggle to explain Zimbabwean people, history and culture" (Gondo, 1998: 19) as depicted in 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. In much the same manner as Chiwome, Gondo notes that in his reading of Zimbabwean literature, Kahari makes use of European critical tools and focuses "on the technical or formal elements of literature" (Gondo, 1998: 27) to the exclusion of the social and cultural relevance of the novels that he studies. To that extent, Gondo argues, Kahari's critical study of black Zimbabwean literature undermines the social obligations of the artist in a society that is trying to re-discover its cultural bearings after centuries of dislocation. Gondo's criticism is steeped in African liberation consciousness in which art is obligated to "offer images of resistance, and fashion bold alternatives by calculated stories and inspired pictures of heroic action" (Pointer, 2001: xxiii).

In his discussion of Kahari's critical work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel', Gondo argues that in order for the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' to yield the kind of discourse that develops African people, the critical implements that it makes use of must originate endemically. This is a brand of African-centred cultural nationalism that makes use of the same critical language as Furusa's (2002) and Chiwome's (1994) arguments on European theories of literature and criticism as detrimental to the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Gondo's critical stance nullifies the possibility of an interstitial position that "strives for a more complex view of…relations" (Ashcroft *et al*, 2002: 206) in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' and is grounded in Blyden's (1967: 66) assertion that "[w]e are unwilling…to admit that Africans cannot acquire those trusts and convictions and that moral and spiritual development essential to human peace and guidance in this world, and to life everlasting in the world to come,

without being cast in [the] European mould".

Gondo also registers concern with Kahari's discussion of Shona literary plots as simplistic, naive and sentimental because of the novelists' tendency to borrow from Shona oral traditions. Thus, he avers that Kahari's critical penchant to associate classical African pedagogical instruments with naivety is an onslaught on the significance of African-originated implements of explaining data relating to Africa. The onslaught misrepresents Africa as a cultural blank slate. For Gondo, therefore, Kahari avails African cultural spaces to invasion by non-African concepts. This is achieved through the critic's submergence of his own cultural voice and the abdication of his cultural responsibility to "see, explain, and interpret from the vantage point of [his] existential location" (Asante, 1998: 23). Thus, insofar as Gondo is concerned, Kahari fails to "define not only the terms of discussion but also the grounds upon which the discussion [of the 'black Zimbabwean novel'] will be waged" (Asante, 1998: 34). Instead of seizing the opportunity to push the frontiers of critical discourse on 'the black Zimbabwean novel', Kahari regurgitates the lessons of the colonial classroom in his work. His conception of European critical criteria as primary in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' hinges on the thinking that Africa epitomises the dearth of theories of literature and criticism of African origination. However, if indeed there are no African theories of literature and criticism as Kahari's preference of European critical models suggests, it remains the responsibility of African scholars to develop such theories. Achebe (1988: 60) reminds African scholars that "most of what remains to be done [in any given area of human endeavour] can best be tackled by […] the owners." Kahari's search for intellectual refuge in European theoretical discourses is therefore an evasion of the responsibilty that African scholars should discharge in the creation of theories of literature and criticism to be utilised in the discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'.

While Gondo's research is constrained by limited coverage, it inaugurates a black Zimbabwean metacritical tradition that 'black Zimbabwean literature' and its criticism have needed over the years. However, the tradition of metacritical discourse on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' that Gondo inaugurates is handicapped by the reluctance to acknowledge that "the [African] world is an arena for the interplay of forces" (Achebe, 1988: 42) and its art and its criticism should reflect the fluidity engendered by the collusion of Euro-African cultural forces. This is the critical

language that Chiwome (1994), Gondo (1998) and Furusa (2002) have yet to embrace. The fact that African liberation movements challenged European colonialist domination of the continent from the point of grounding in African cultural and historical consciousness using armaments manufactured in European industries demonstrates the complexity of the African cultural experience in history. That complexity should be acknowledged each time submissions are made on the exclusive significance of African-centred approaches to 'the black Zimbabwean novel'.

Vambe's discussion of "The Poverty of Theory in the Study of Zimbabwean Literature" (in Muponde and Primorac, 2005) is unique in that it brings together a black critic and a white critic who are 'united' by two basic factors: 1) the use of the Socio-Historical approach to the study of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' and, 2) the identification of colonial values and institutions as central in the (under)development of black Zimbabwean literature. In his discussion of Chiwome's *A Social History of the Shona Novel* (1996a), Vambe (2005: 96) gives credit to the critic for "identifying the political forces that were ranged against the development of a healthy Shona novel." However, he hastens to add that Chiwome's reliance on the Socio-Historical approach to the Shona novel renders it difficult for him to come to terms with the agency of black Zimbabwean people in the unfolding of the colonial holocaust:

> A *Social History of the Shona Novel* […] lack[s] the critical language to retrieve those moments of resistance to colonial culture…The ways in which the cryptic cultural forms from black popular memory and oral traditions are constantly being transmuted…to offer resistance to colonial culture remain unexplored in *A Social History of the Shona Novel*. The problem with Chiwome's Socio-Historical approach to the Shona novel is that it is wired to the reductive assumptions inherent in the sociological approach to African literature…In *A Social History of the Shona Novel*, the aggressive construction of the image of colonialism as all-pervasive and powerful belongs to the discourse of cultural nationalism. It accords unwarranted unities to colonialism that it did not possess (Vambe, 2005: 97).

For Vambe, Chiwome lacks the critical language with which to theorise the labyrinth of ways in which black Zimbabwean novelists outwitted the seemingly all-powerful Rhodesian colonial system to construct and communicate subversive messages in their novels. He identifies Chidzero's *Nzvengamutsvairo* as one such subversive novel whose moments of resistance to colonial culture stand beyond Chiwome's Socio-Historical approach. However, far from encouraging Africans to be alert in the face of the European colonialist onslaught, Chidzero's

Nzvengamutsvairo chastises Africans who resisted conscription into the colonial scheme of things as indolent. And while Africans could have resisted the European colonialist onslaught, the fact of the matter is that Europe underdeveloped Africa (Rodney: 1972), drawing inspiration from Pope Nicholas V's papal edicts of 1452 (*Dum Diversas*) and 1455 (*Romanus Pontifex*) that gave her "the right to dispossess and eternally enslave Mahometans, pagans and black people in general" (Mudimbe, 1988: 45). While power was not possessed entirely by the coloniser, to argue that there are African spaces that remained unaffected by colonialism is akin to shutting one's eyes to reality, and, as Baldwin (1995: 165) notes, "people who shut their eyes to reality simply invite their own destruction." While Vambe's emphasis on African 'moments of resistance to colonial culture' is critical in the celebration of the agency of African people, his arguments are oblivious of the fact that African culture of the colonial heyday thrived at the pace allowed it by colonialism.

Vambe (2005: 98) bemoans the fact that Chiwome selects and studies only "those novels that openly and predictably reveal the negative influence of the colonial structures of authority on Shona fiction." He makes this point in the context of the contention that "the issue of representativeness in any selection of texts to be studied is ideologically motivated and thus highly suspect, especially where critics favour certain texts that confirm the assumptions that they already hold" (Vambe, 2005: 98). The impression that Vambe creates is that Chiwome's arguments in his criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in Shona are contrived in order to afford him easy critical gravitation towards preconcieved conclusions. Thus, he contends that "in literature, the notion of representativeness is brought under question, and literature's status as both evidence of the spirit of the age and the privileged interpreter of its own time and place is placed in doubt" (Vambe, 2005: 98). To this, Vambe' (2005: 99) adds the contention that:

> [The] conceptual problem in *A Social History of the Shona Novel* is the author's desire to correlate the historical factors that affected Shona literature to the intrinsic imagistic qualities of the Shona novel. To some extent, this is a self-defeating exercise because there is no one-to-one relationship or correspondence between the social factors and metaphors used to describe, confirm or resist those social factors.

Vambe presents Chiwome as a dogmatic critic of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in Shona. His

view that Chiwome's criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in Shona constitutes a search for 'one-to-one relationship[s] or correspondence[s] between the social factors and metaphors used to describe, confirm or resist those social factors' projects Chiwome as a critic steeped in the idea of literature as the truthful depiction of typical characters in typical circumstances. What Vambe does not make clear in his meta-analytical work on Chiwome's criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in Shona is that the latter's is a stock-taking exercise that explains what has happened to Shona literature since its emergence. Vambe's poverty of comfort with issues of 'representativeness' in 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' easily links him with white critics such as Primorac (2006) who defines 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' as 'mimetic' and 'reductionist'. From the many novels that Chiwome discusses in *A Social History of the Shona Novel* (1996a), Vambe selects only Chidzero's *Nzvengamutsvairo* (1957), Chakaipa's *Dzasukwa-Mwana-Asina-Hembe* (1967) and Moyo's *Ziva Kwawakabva* (1977) to demonstrate the critic's 'poverty of theory' in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Thus far, the issue of representativeness on the basis of which he blasts Chiwome comes back to haunt him. Vambe (in Vambe & Chirere, 2006: 78) further blasts Chiwome and Nyawaranda for stating the obvious in their critical work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel':

> Critics Emmanuel Chiwome (1996) and Vitalis Nyawaranda (2006) have both drawn attention to the use of 'stream of consciousness' in the novel. Other than merely asserting that Mungoshi borrowed this technique from the Irish writer, James Joyce (1964), none of the critics attempts to vigorously analyse this technique in relation to the history that made its use possible in a colonial context in Rhodesia.

While Vambe's meta-analytical work on Chiwome and Nyawaranda is abrasive, the keen researcher also notes that he is not as combative in his meta-discussion of Zimunya's, Zhuwarara's and his own work:

> Zimunya's critical forte is his understanding of the emergence of a fractured national consciousness through the prism of the images of drought and hunger. In emphasizing drought and hunger, however, he missed the potentially positive historical agency of the African people that was to manifest itself in 'songs that won the liberation war (Pongweni, 1982) amongst other cultural/oral sites of struggle that formed unmanned spaces of African societies in Rhodesia. Rino Zhuwarara's *Introduction to Zimbabwean Literature in English*

(2001) has brought out the basic ambiguity in Zimbabwean fiction in the sense that the literature shows a desire to both rebel against and conform to colonial aesthetics. Zhuwarara's conclusions modify the picture of cultural malaise that characterises Zimunya's work. In my own book, *African Oral Story-Telling and the Zimbabwean Novel in English* (2004), I have also demonstrated how orality survived in the narrative interstices of the Zimbabwean novel with the result that orality conferred on the novels semantic instability and the possibilities of being re-interpreted in new ways (Vambe, 2005: 90).

Considering that his work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is grounded in Postcolonial critical thought and the emphasis that it applies on the play of contradictions, Vambe's lukewarm criticism of Zimunya and Zhuwarara is linked to the ways in which the two critics seem to lend credence to Postcolonial critical rubrics. Thus, he is at home with Zimunya's understanding of the emergence of a fractured national consciousness as the prism through which to explain the images of drought and hunger in 'black Zimbabwean literature' and Zhuwarara's emphasis on the basic ambiguity in Zimbabwean fiction as exemplified by a desire to both rebel against and conform to colonial aesthetics, an aspect of black liberation discourses that Fanon (1967: 56) articulates in his discussion of African nationalist politics of the anti-colonial struggle in which "the will to break colonialism is linked to the desire to come to friendly terms with it." The fracturing of consciousness and ambiguity of literary images are concepts at the heart of the Postcolonial critical approach to literature that Vambe relies on. Thus, Vambe writes in defense of those critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' whose critical vision is in sync with his. He stops right at the point where Muponde (in Vambe & Chirere, 2006: 80) takes over:

> "Visions of Childhood" in Mungoshi's *Coming of the Dry Season* (1972) and *Some Kinds of Wounds* (1980) have been characterised by Musaemura Zimunya (1982) and Rino Zhuwarara (2001) as constituted by a sense of total vulnerability. I will argue that the critical topoi that have been evolved by Zhuwarara and Zimunya to determine the morphology of the child in Mungoshi's short stories are generally meant to read off childhood as refracting forces that denote the condition of mankind as vulnerable…Such a conceptual framework imposes limits on the scope of childhood as both a lived experience and an artefactual reality…In being obsessed with the cyclic and debilitating tropes of metaphysical 'drought' and 'hunger' from which they draw the insidious and dystopian motifs of vulnerability, Zhuwarara and Zimunya miss the opportunity to discuss how, ironically, Mungoshi erects the child as a figure of resistance. The child as a narrative construct undermines the sense of 'vulnerability' by working as a resilient oppositional critique to a reading that seeks to portray the child as the incompetent other.

The critical discourse that Muponde (2006) inaugurates in his representation of children in terms of their agency has been taken up by other black Zimbabwean critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' such as Muhwati *et al* (2011) and Muhwati and Gambahaya (2012). Muponde (2006: 83) finds it retrogressive in his analysis of Zimunya's and Zhuwarara's critical work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' that while Mungoshi's works "engage […] with dominant concepts of adulthood…Zimunya and Zhuwarara reproduce them in their criticism." Unlike Vambe whose approach to the critical works of the two scholars on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is rather tepid, Muponde (2006: 87) is at odds with "the enervating imagery of 'drought' and 'hunger' which Zimunya and Zhuwarara seem to see as pervasive, archetypal and unassailable." Thus, it emerges from Vambe's and Muponde's metacritical submissions on Chiwome's, Zimunya's and Zhuwarara's critical thought on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' that the struggle for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the interpretation of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is not just a black/white scholarly issue as the title of this research may be read to suggest. Even among themselves, black critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' compete for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. In Vambe's case, his handicap is in the volition to see his theoretical standpoint as capable of providing all the answers to all the questions on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. The recourse to a combination of Afrocentric and Postcolonial tenets in this study speaks to the need for critics to transcend narrow theoretical confinement in order to see 'the black Zimbabwean novel' and its criticism as complex.

Although Muhwati's (2009) Doctoral research on "The Interface of History and Fiction in the Zimbabwean Liberation War Novel" does not set out to examine 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel,' it nevertheless alludes to matters attendant upon the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in the works of some of the outstanding black Zimbabwean critics such as Kahari and Chiwome. With respect to Kahari, Muwati (2009: 15) argues that the critic "explores the developmental history of the Shona novel from a formalist point of view...provid[ing] summaries, biographies and critical insights that illuminate the developmental trajectory of the Shona novel in the colonial period." Muwati neither explores the ramifications of Kahari's critical approach to 'the black Zimbabwean novel' nor makes any reflections on Kahari's critical work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in English. In his analysis of Chiwome's *A Social History of the Shona Novel* (1996a), Muwati (2009: 15) notes that it

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"develops from, and critiques Kahari's critical approaches to the study of the Shona novel." He applauds Chiwome's observation that Shona literature "vindicates oppression by varnishing it" (Muhwati, 2009: 15), arguing that the literature "blundered and stammered in spelling our proper name" (Muhwati, 2009: 15). Like Chiwome, Muwati subscribes to Fanon's (1967: 193) concept of "a literature of combat…[which] moulds the national consciousness, giving it form and contours and flinging open before it new and boundless horizons," hence the ease with which he connects with Chiwome's contributions to the critical appreciation of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in Shona.

2.2 **Black critics and 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'**

While white critics have published extensively on 'the black Zimbabwean novel', 'black metacritical thought' on 'white critical thought' is still quantitavely negligible. The majority of black Zimbabwean critics limit themselves to the analysis of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' at the expense of the critical discourses that have grown around it. Thus, Gwekwerere's Master of Arts dissertation in African Literature entitled "The Postcolonial Critical Trajectory on Zimbabwean Literature" (2004), is, to date, the only study that deliberately sets out to problematise 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Gwekwerere's dissertation examines five articles in which the critics make use of Postcolonial critical rubrics to explain various aspects of 'black Zimbabwean literature'. The articles on which Gwekwerere focuses are all published in *Emerging Perspectives on Dambudzo Marechera* (Veit-Wild & Chennells: 1999). Veit-Wild's and Chennells' volume of essays brings together twenty white critics, two black Zimbabwean critics, a book review article by Dambudzo Marechera and another by the Nigerian writer-critic, Wole Soyinka. Gwekwerere focuses on four critics in the volume.

The fact that Veit-Wild's and Chennells' *Emerging Perspectives on Dambudzo Marechera* (1999) brings together critical discussions only on Dambudzo Marechera's works makes Gwekwerere's reference to 'Zimbabwean literature' in the title of his dissertation misleading. The critics focus on just one Zimbabwean writer and the reference to 'Zimbabwean literature' in Gwekwerere's title creates the impression that 'Zimbabwean literature' begins and ends with Dambudzo Marechera. Thus, Gwekwerere's study does not acknowledge the complexity of the

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very idea of 'Zimbabwean literature'. It also exclusively associates the Postcolonial rubric with white critics in a text that also includes black critical voices. Gwekwerere does not explain why he draws metacritical attention to white critics to the exclusion of their black counterparts given that even outside the context of the text in question, other black Zimbabwean critics have also written and published extensively on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' from a Postcolonial point of departure. Being that as it may, Gwekwerere's research takes note of the manner in which Postcolonial tenets such as hybridity and syncretism, while steeped in the effort to subvert European hegemony, are also directly implicated in European attempts to set the stage for "European penetration of the rest of the world, with considerable danger to cultural autonomy and global human diversity" (Mazrui, in Laremont & Kalouche, 2002: 20). Thus, in its analysis of issues to do with the handling of identity construction, history, culture, nationalism, universalism and Afrocentricity in the Postcolonialist interpretation of Zimbabwean literature, Gwekwerere's study is grounded in the radical Afrocentric conception of issues exemplified by other black Zimbabwean critics such as Chivaura (1998, 1998a), Gondo (1998) and Furusa (2002) who do not see anything positive in the utilisation of non-Afrocentric theories of literature and criticism in the study of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. In contrast to this research and the emphasis that it places on the discussion of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' against the backdrop of a combination of Afrocentric and Postcolonial critical tenets, Gwekwerere's Master of Arts dissertation exclusively draws critical inspiration from the Afrocentric approach. Thus, it stands dichotomised from the advantages associated with interpreting literary and literary-critical data from a variety of perspectives. The theories deployed in this study complement and interrogate each other in the analysis of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel.' Given that different theories explain the same phenomena differently, the side by side deployment of Afrocentric and Postcolonial critical rubrics in this research helps subvert such metacritical provincialism as one finds in Gwekwerere's Master of Arts dissertation which depends exclusively on Afrocentric critical tenets in its discussion of the implications of Postcolonial critical thought on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'.

That the current research examines more of the critical works of the established white critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' such as Krog (1966, 1972, 1974, 1978, 1979), McLoughlin (1984,

1984a, 1986, 1987), Veit Wild (1992, 1992a, 1993, 1996, 1999, 1999a, 1999b, 2006), Chennells (1993, 1999, 1999a, 2006), Shaw (1997, 1999), Gaylard (1993, 1995, 1999) and Primorac (2001, 2002, 2005, 2005a, 2006), and demonstrates commitment to overcoming the limitations of coverage that are apparent in Gwekwerere's Master of Arts dissertation in which only five critical articles by four white critics are examined. While Gwekwerere's Master of Arts dissertation is limited to white critics who study 'the black Zimbabwean novel' from a Postcolonial perspective, the current research directs its focus on white critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' regardless of the literary-critical theories they use. The transgression of critical-theoretical perspective as the basis for studying white critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in this research enables the appreciation of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in terms of its vastness as a critical terrain.

In his Doctoral thesis on the "Factors that Underdeveloped Shona Literature with Particular Reference to Fiction, 1950s–1980s", Chiwome (1994) takes Veit-Wild to task over two issues in her reading of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. First is the use that Veit-Wild makes of Post-modernist and Post-structuralist theories associated with Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Mikhail Bhaktin, Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault which, as she writes, "transcend former categorical and prescriptive ideological positions" (Veit-Wild, 1992a: 4) in addition to "offer[ing] fresh, more detailed and more varied methods to analyse the new literatures because they are less rigid, less classificatory than previous ones" (Veit-Wild, 1992a: 4). Chiwome (1994: 10) argues that Veit-Wild's use of Post-structuralist and Post-modernist critical elements "detracts from the historicity of the art towards esoteric formal jargon [which] makes the art in question more of an artifact than a dynamic aspect of culture." Further, Chiwome (1994: 10) argues, "in terms of tone, the selected methodology introduces into art criticism more pessimism than is found in the bulk of Zimbabwean literature." Thus, the conflict between Chiwome and Veit-Wild is on literary-critical theoretical preferences. While Veit-Wild (1992: 5) thinks that the Post-structuralist and Post-modernist approaches are "more interesting", Chiwome's (1994: 9) persuasion is that "in the context of a country which is on the threshold of development and which is desperately trying to build a sound culture from a heritage full of contradictions, the most interesting approach is the one that attempts to make human beings more human." What is clear here is the clash of the worldviews that the two critics represent. In this clash of

worldviews, Chiwome enlists the history of black Zimbabwean disenfranchisement engendered by the advent of colonialism.

While Veit-Wild's approach places less emphasis on the use-value of art, Chiwome is more comfortable with art that facilitates transcendence. This orientation places him in the same category with leading African-centred scholars such as Achebe (1975, 1988), Chinweizu (1978, 1985, 1987), wa Thiong'o (1981, 1993, 1997) and p'Bitek (1986) who are bound by the persuasion that the proposition of art for art's sake is detrimental to the efforts of African people to reclaim themselves as authentic and respectable members of the human family in the aftermath of slavery and colonialism. Chiwome's metacritical discourse on Veit-Wild's literary-critical theoretical preferences is grounded in the consciousness that the challenges facing Europeans and Africans are not uniform. Thus, he reasons, their priorities and the theories they develop to pursue such priorities cannot be the same, given that theories are the product of human intellectual engagement in the context of given sets of challenges. This viewpoint gives the impression that human experiences in literature and its criticism are to be understood in terms of their particularity. Thus, Chiwome stands susceptible to criticism for facilitating "the closure of the categories" (Gilroy, 1993: xi) such as centre/periphery, black/white, self/other and Europe/Africa. His separation of African and European literary-critical theories easily links him to schools of thought that disavow "the instability and mutability of identities which are always unfinished, always being remade" (Gilroy, 1993: xi). These are charges that critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' can pre-empty through the adoption of metatheoretical approaches.

The second issue over which Chiwome clashes with Veit-Wild has to do with the manner in which the latter's criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' "shies away from a rigorous analysis of the dominant culture which forms the other side of the history of the artist…[and] analyses the myths of African nationalism to the exclusion of those of colonialism [such that] the dialectical relationship of myths and counter-myths is missing" (Chiwome, 1994: 9). The tendency to shy away from the discussion of aspects of the dominant culture in Veit-Wild's work is in keeping with the Eurocentric standpoint that Europeans have the exclusive right to study everyone except themselves. It testifies to the European aversion towards self-confrontation and is directly linked to the self-exculpating Eurocentric volition "to present the incidental benefits of

colonialism as intended benefits" (Chiwome, 1994: 9). Chiwome's discomfiture with such a critical volition is to be understood in the context of its participation in the misrepresentation of colonialism as a humane system that intended to civilise the so-called savage hordes of Africa. In his work on *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa,* Rodney (1972) unmasks colonialism as a violent system while Fanon (1967) holds it up as a project that vitiated Africans with various kinds of neuroses.

To the extent that Veit-Wild mistakes the colonisation of Africans for development, her critical vision of the issues attendant upon the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' interlocks with Kahari's in that both critics tend to "over-value...the Europeanisation of Africans and the role of missionary education in African advancement, thus understating the essential inhumanity of colonialism" (Chiwome, 1994: 9). The consequences of the two critics' over-valuation of the Europeanisation of Africans are particularly self-negating in Kahari's case in that his critical discourse on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in Shona easily degenerates into a thanks-giving discourse geared towards the celebration of the European colonialist project in Africa as a blessing to the continent. In contrast to both Kahari and Veit-Wild, Chiwome identifies the so-called philanthropic role played by Europeans in 'uplifting' Africans as the historical accident that cannot be glossed over in the attempt to explain the contemporary African cultural, economic and political quandary. In raising his objections to Veit-Wild's misrepresentation of colonialism as a benign system, Chiwome follows in the footsteps of African luminaries such as Cesaire (as quoted in Fanon, 2008: 1) who thinks of colonialism in terms of "millions of men who have been skillfully injected with fear, inferiority complexes, trepidation, servility, despair, abasement." The rallying contention in Chiwome's metacritical discourse on Veit-Wild's criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is that the perception of colonialism as magnanimous to Africa affirms its foundational myths about African backwardness. Such affirmation inflicts psychological damage on African people, in addition to mollifying the conscience of the coloniser. The result is a compromise in which both victim and aggressor convince themselves that the dispensation in which they live should be perpetuated.

The reservations that Chiwome expresses with regard to Veit-Wild's critical work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' contrast with his approval of Haasbroek's (1974) approaches to the study of

'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Chiwome is particularly impressed by the emphasis that Haasbroek applies on the necessity of studying 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in Shona "on the basis of an aesthetic theory which is African-oriented and comprehensive enough to do justice to the crucial issues that relate to the novel" (Chiwome, 1994: 8). He finds such a recommendation relevant in a context where "Zimbabwe is striving to break away from imperial patronage [and] therefore needs a theory which analyses fiction from the vantage-point of the target readers" (Chiwome, 1994: 8). Thus, unlike Veit-Wild, Haasbroek appreciates the need for 'black Zimbabwean culture' to be accorded the 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' to suggest the theories that should be used in the analysis of black Zimbabwean literature. In that regard, Haasbroek work testifies to the complexity of ways in which literary critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' are affiliated to various schools of literary-critical thought that are impossible to neatly delimit on the basis of belonging to this or that particular race. His insistence on the importance of African cultural thought in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' portrays him as a literary-critical path-breaker whose vision would be taken up by black Zimbabwean critics such as Chiwome (1994, 1996, 1996a), Gondo (1998), Chivaura (1998, 1998a) and Furusa (2002). As a white critic of critical discourse on Zimbabwean literature, Haasbroek's emphasis on endemic critical perspectives speaks directly to the assortment of ways in which critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' negotiate positions other than their own.

Chiwome's insistence on endemic approaches in his metacritical discussion of Veit-Wild's critical discourse on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' finds legitimacy in the fact that by detracting from endemic critical fundamentals in the criticism of African literature, Africa is easily distorted into a souvenir to be remembered for peculiar traits. However, the emphasis that Chiwome applies on the need for Zimbabwe to 'break away from imperial patronage' easily renders his work susceptible to classification together with populist propaganda associated with African dictators. For, while the importance of endemic African perspectives cannot be ignored without appearing ridiculous, the solution may not lie exclusively in effecting a radical break with European culture but in the identification and pursuit of possibilities where the two cultures are understood as equal and therefore capable of cross-fertilising each other for the global good. In addition, Chiwome takes it as a given that 'the target readers' of 'black Zimbabwean literature' are solely black Zimbabweans. His vision here tallies with that of Achebe (1988: 67)

whose contention is that while African writers may have a non-African readership in mind, the bottom line is that they are not supposed to. The exponentially accumulating corpus of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' speaks to the contrary. Chiwome would have done well to realise that "in a world where people are constantly on the move and all kinds of new hybrid cultures are coming into being" (Lindblad, in Rutherford, 1992: 89), the participation of human beings in cultures other than their own is unavoidable. To construct and posit 'the target readers' of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' as available to unproblematic identification as Chiwome does, is to retreat into essentialism and its attendant reluctance to face up to the complex nature of the world. For, even when the black Zimbabwean/African writer may not have a non-African readership in mind, s/he cannot control the relationship(s) that her/his work attracts once it enters the public domain, which Bakhtin (1987: 276) defines as "a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgements and accents [in which the work of art] weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merg[ing] with some [and] recoil[ing] from others."

As outlined above, Vambe's article entitled "The Poverty of Theory in the Study of Zimbabwean Literature" (2005) discusses the limitations of the Socio-Historical approach to the study of Zimbabwean literature. Vambe particularly discusses the application of this theory in Chiwome's *A Social History of the Shona Novel* (1996) and Veit-Wild's *Teachers, Preachers and Non-Believers: A Social History of Zimbabwean Literature* (1992). In his critique, Vambe (2005: 91) applauds Veit-Wild for "provid[ing] a detailed link between black literary creations and the stultifying influences of the Rhodesia Literature Bureau on the black literary creations in Shona and English." He is also impressed by the fact that Veit-Wild "organises and analyses the writers of her choice in terms of social and literary generations." However, in keeping with his critical goal to expose 'the poverty' of the Socio-Historical approach in the study of Zimbabwean literature, Vambe (2005: 91) hastens to add that:

> Veit-Wild places undue emphasis on the process of enculturation of the African writers, to a point where one is bound to question her conclusion that the influence of the Literature Bureau on the first and second generation of African writers was absolute. The notion of 'social generation', which informs her book, underestimates the fact that some writers who she places in the first generation continued to write, and their ideological vision and

understanding of a changing Zimbabwean society has also been changing.

The emphasis on the enculturation of African people and the impact of the Rhodesia Literature Bureau on the development of the 'black Zimbabwean novel' lends to Veit-Wild's work a Socio-Historical grounding that links it with Chiwome's (1996) study of 'the factors that underdeveloped Shona literature.' Vambe's discomfiture with such an approach is that it explains the literature in homogenising terms that are incapable of accounting for the conflict of authorial vision to be encountered even among writers of the same 'social generation'. This disparity furnishes Vambe with the leverage from which to push the case for what he perceives as 'the poverty of theory in the study of Zimbabwean literature.' While Veit-Wild's Socio-Historical approach to 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is found wanting, Vambe overstates his case when he argues that the emphasis that Veit-Wild places on the colonialist enculturation of African people is uncalled for. With a few exceptions, the literature is scarred by the reality of its emergence in a socio-political context in which it was expected to applaud the benevolence of the colonial establishment at the expense of the aspirations of African people for freedom and dignity. It bears the scars of colonialist hegemonic control and manipulation to the extent that in most cases, it qualifies as 'black Zimbabwean literature' only because the authors are black Zimbabweans. Ndabaningi Sithole's *AmaNdebele kaMzilikazi* (1956), Solomon Mutswairo's *Feso* (1956) and Thompson Kumbirai Tsodzo's *Pafunge* (1972) are some of the very few black Zimbabwean novels that 'voice' subversion at a time when 'the black Zimbabwean novel' was expected to celebrate the successful induction of Africans into the colonialist cultural matrix.

Vambe's interrogation of Veit-Wild's notion of 'social generations' exposes it as reductionist and averse to the fluidity of consciousness among black Zimbabwean writers. The flight into reductionism on Veit-Wild's part culminates in the over-simplification of social consciousness among black Zimbabwean novelists. The oversimplification enables Veit-Wild to associate each particular 'generation' of black Zimbabwean novelists with a particular social vision. This results in the projection of the vision of the novelists in each 'generation' as homogenous and therefore explainable in all-embracing terms. Zhuwarara (1994: 10) precedes Vambe in pointing out that "Veit-Wild's bold categorisation of writers according to historical periods is too rigid [in that] such a periodisation does little justice to the complex position of each writer." He reasons that

Veit-Wild's "sense of judgement was…more influenced by what was readily accessible to her than what was necessary for more in-depth analysis" (Zhuwarara, 1994: 11).

Vambe (2005:94) also contends that the manner in which Veit-Wild places emphasis on the role of the Rhodesia Bureau in the development of Zimbabwean literature leads her into "assigning unlimited power to colonialism." The impact of such emphasis, as Vambe argues, is that it understates the creative, political and intellectual agency of Africans. It subverts the fact that in the unfolding of the colonial relationship, power was not possessed solely by the colonial master. The denial of the agency of any given people is directly implicated in their psychological enslavement and cultural nullification. By according 'unlimited power to colonialism', Veit-Wild perpetuates the myth that the so-called subaltern cannot speak. This myth nullifies the efforts of African people to voice their grievances and hopes, a process that entailed, in most of the cases, the appropriation of the language and mannerisms of the coloniser. Thus, while black Zimbabwean literature may have been stifled by colonial policies through the Rhodesia Literature Bureau, authors such as Sithole in *Umvukela wamaNdebele/AmaNdebele kaMzilikazi* (1956), Mutswairo in *Feso* (1956), Ndlovu in *Inhlamvu ZaseNgodlweni* (1959), Tsodzo in *Pafunge* (1972) and Ndhlala in *Jikinya* (1978) still managed to communicate politically subversive ideas through proverbs, clan praises, allegories, fables, epics, myths and legends. Zhuwarara (1994: 11) has since revealed that Zimbabwean orature "constituted part of the counter-culture of resistance throughout the colonial era." To his credit, Vambe (2005: 93) manages, in his meta-analytical discussion of Veit-Wild's work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel', to bring to the fore the fact that in large measure, "the 'poverty' of a sociological approach to Zimbabwean literature as demonstrated in *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers* is…demonstrated by the work's under-estimation of the role of black oral forms in influencing the formal composition of the Shona and English novel." Vambe's perception of orature as constitutive of the artistic imagination and the black Zimbabwean novelistic tradition runs in direct contrast to its categorisation as the mark of naivety in Kahari's (1990, 1994) criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'.

Vambe (2005: 94) considers it unfortunate that "Veit-Wild's book is…comfortably lodged within the social science paradigm in which all that is not put down in writing is non-

knowledge." In the context of cultural politics, the tendency to classify everything oral as nonscientific enables the powerful to visualise cultural spaces that do not conform with their own cultural idea of 'science', 'civilisation' and 'progress' as vacant and therefore open to invasion. Viewed from this perspective, Veit-Wild's classification of orature as non-knowledge obliterates the significance of African ways of managing data, given that African orature "is the incontestable reservoir of the values, sensibilities, aesthetics, and achievements of…African thought and imagination…[which] must serve as the ultimate foundation, guidepost, and point of departure for a modern, liberated African literature" (Chinweizu, 1985: 2). The negation of African orature in the development of African literature is an indispensable factor in the syntax of European cultural imperialism in Africa. Veit-Wild's volition to invalidate African orature is tied up with the European cultural commitment to efface African-centred ways of managing and explaining phenomena. The objective in such erasure of African-centred discursive implements is to project Europe as sole holder of the right to determine the framework of values on the basis of which the world should be run. Recourse to a combination of Afrocentric and Postcolonial critical rubrics in this research enables transcendence of the perception of reality in particularising terms that, by virtue of their very nature, are incapable of explaining 'the black Zimbabwean novel' and its criticism in terms of their complexity.

2.3 **White critics and 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'**

While 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is a fairly recent scholarly development that can be traced to the emergence of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in the 1950s, it is appreciated in this study as an aspect of European thought on phenomena relating to Africa. The writings of European authors such as Montesquieu (1949), Hegel (1956), Hume (1987), and others, the travel accounts of Selous (1972), the re-naming of African environmental landmarks and the archaeological accounts of Mauch (1969), for instance, all contribute towards the development of European thought on phenomena relating to Africa. Thus, while 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is a relatively recent scholarly development, European thought on phenomena relating to Africa of which 'white critical thought' is a sub-set can be traced back into history to the time when Greek student astronomers, astrologists, sculptors, philosophers and mathematicians such as Oenopides, Euxodus, Democritus, Telecles,

Theodorus, Plato, Aristotle and Pythagoras submitted themselves to scholarly instruction as students of black African professors of the high culture of ancient Egypt (Asante, 1999: 37), long before the birth of Christ. Plato, the most celebrated European philosopher of all time, and a student of Egyptian philosophers, Seknoufis and Kounoufis (Asante, 1999: 21), for instance, discusses Egypt at great length in twelve of his extant twenty-eight dialogues (Asante, 1999: 21) while "the Hebrew Bible mentions Egypt nearly one thousand times" (Asante, 1999: 21). The invasion of ancient Egyptian civilisation by the Persians (525 B.C), the Macedonians under Alexander (333 B.C), the Romans under Julius Caesar (50 B.C), the Arabs in the 7th century, the Turks in the 16th century, the French under Napoleon and the English at the end of the 19th century (Diop, 1974: 10) is part of the long story of the interest of Europeans in Africa. Thus, from Peter Campier's comparison of African facial and skull measurements with those of monkeys (Asante, 1999: 31) to Arnold Toynbee's contention that "of the 21 great civilizations of the world, not one has been produced in Africa" (quoted in Asante, 1999: 33), evidence can be unveiled to demonstrate the long-standing interest of Europeans in phenomena relating to Africa.

European interest in Africa in the above examples justifies the classification of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' as part of the long tradition of white critical interest in phenomena relating to Africa. The European critical discussion of African oral literature on the basis of evolutionist and diffusionist theories (Finnegan: 1970) which made for the easier projection of Africa as the epitome of backwardness and therefore the antithesis of Europe is also part of European interest in phenomena relating to Africa. The resultant critical discourses would enable Europeans to visualise themselves through supremacist lenses that would render it impossible for meaningful dialogue to unfold between African and European culture. Given that the criticism of any given body of literary works involves both 'writing about' literature and 'writing to' other critics whose voices are implicated in the development of given critical discourses, the discussion of the metacritical views of white critics on 'black critical thought' is important in mapping the outlines of the framework in which 'white critical thought' contests for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'.

In a book review of Kahari's *The Novels of Patrick Chakaipa* (1972), Haasbroek (1974) decries the former for deriving critical inspiration from 19th century European literary culture and critical

history. As Haasbroek (1974: 117) notes, Kahari relies on literary-critical implements developed by "dubious or culturally distant ancestors [such] as Henry James, Allot Forster, Lever [and] Van Ghent." Haasbroek's emphasis on Kahari's dependency on culturally distant ancestors as anomalous demonstrates his conviction that endemic critical theories are the best in the analysis of any given body of literary works. The significance of Haasbroek's views on Kahari's critical work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is in the fact that long before African-centred black Zimbabwean critics such as Chiwome (1994, 1996), Chivaura (1998, 1998a), Gondo (1998) and Furusa (2002) would start emphasising the importance of African-centred approaches in the study of 'the black Zimbabwean novel,' Haasbroek, as a white critic, had already started putting together the building blocks of the arguments that these critics would later use. While Kahari's reliance on European-originated literary-critical rubrics testifies to the infinitude of possibilities of human cooperation across differences such as culture and race, Haasbroek finds Kahari's approach untenable because it excludes endemic literary-critical approaches as inconsequential in the discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'.

Commendable as it is, Haasbroek's thesis on Kahari's analysis of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in Shona is problematic in that it diminishes the importance of intellectual and cultural cross-fertilisation between Africa and Europe in literary and literary-critical studies. Thus, his meta-critical analysis of Kahari's critical thought on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in Shona is anchored in the discourse of cultural purism which defines cultures in terms of their separateness from each other. Although Kahari does not use European analytical implements to subvert European hegemony in Africa, Haasbroek's insistence that Kahari should have used exclusively Afrocentric critical implements in reading 'the black Zimbabwean novel' fosters the impression that it is not plausible to engage Europe "with the intellectual weapons of Europe itself" (Achebe, 1988: 48). In contrast to Haasbroek's emphasis on purely Afrocentric critical rubrics, Postcolonial critical thought urges that "the idea of 'pure' essential culture is a mythic imposition on the contemporary reality of…societies" (Griffiths, 1992: 437). Openness to possibilities suggested by non-endemic worldviews is not only foregrounded but also celebrated in African culture in its multifarious manifestations. In Shona culture, for instance, the proliferation of proverbs, myths, legends and folktales that celebrate fluidity vindicates the fact that the Shona/African people look at fluidity as indispensable for survival. However, Haasbroek's

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shortcomings notwithstanding, it is worth noting that while he treats the necessity of African-centred approaches to the study of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' as a matter of urgency, another white critic, Veit-Wild (1992: 73) treats the preponderance of European critical models in 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in a very lukewarm manner:

> The Literature Bureau also organized writers' workshops to teach writing skills. Here, just as in the written authors' guides, European mentors instructed aspiring African writers in the art of writing a novel, a short story or poetry following conventional British models of writing from 19th century Europe. These models have since served critics such as George Kahari in their assessment of vernacular writings. Until the present, books such as E. M. Forster's *Aspects of the Novel* (1927) appear in the bibliographies of most BA dissertations in the African Languages and Literature Department at the University of Zimbabwe.

Veit-Wild is the most extensively published white critic of 'the black Zimbabwean novel.' Her metacritical views on 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' are expressed in what may be considered here as her most important critical works on 'the black Zimbabwean novel,' that is, *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers: A Social History of Zimbabwean Literature* (1992) and *Emerging Perspectives on Dambudzo Marechera* (1999). In *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers: A Social History of Zimbabwean Literature* (1992), Veit-Wild celebrates the centrality of Post-structuralist and Post-modern critical approaches in the discussion of 'black Zimbabwean literature'. Her arguments emerge against the backdrop of the prevalence of what she classifies as "classical mimetic methods on one hand and rigorous Marxist and "Afro-centric" positions on the other" (Veit-Wild, 1992: 3):

> In discussions of post-colonial literatures (not limited to African literature), new theories were developed which go beyond the limitations of the classical mimetic methods on one hand and rigorous Marxist and "Afro-centric" positions on the other. Recent perspectives combine elements of structuralist, post-structuralist and formalist approaches (such as those of Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida and Mikhail Bhaktin) and insights of the New Left (for example Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault), forms of criticism which emerged in the context of and in response to new literary forms in post-modern writing. While all such theories assume an intrinsic and intricate interrelationship and interaction between linguistic and social systems, they attempt to set criteria for literary analysis which transcend former categorical and prescriptive ideological positions. The old polarities between hegemonic and anti-hegemonic or subversive powers are newly defined as those between dominant discourses and counter-discourses ... The formalist school criticises the conventional method which defines a text by "point of view", "plot" and "narrative technique"; formalists

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perceive the text rather as "discontinuous" and multi-voiced "heteroglot" (Pechey: 1983, 1987). Structuralist analyses engage in deciphering the linguistic and semiotic configuration of a text.

In much the same manner as Vambe (2005 & 2006), Veit-Wild thinks of all other theoretical approaches to 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in terms of their limitations. Thus, her metacritical discourse on 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is impoverished in terms of commitment to self-criticism. The aversion to self-criticism is detrimental to the development of such self-consciousness that makes it easier to discuss the cultures and literatures of others without prejudice. Although she does not specify which black Zimbabwean critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' use which theories in her work, Veit-Wild subscribes to the view that 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' will develop relative to the extent to which the black critics embrace Structuralist, Formalist and Post-modern critical approaches. There is, in this suggestion as expressed in Veit-Wild's work, echoes of the work of the German missionary, Schweitzer (as quoted in Achebe, 1988: 72) who once argued that "the African is indeed my brother, but my junior brother who, with constant guidance and tutelage, will grow up one day to be like the big brother in Europe." Veit-Wild's (1992: 4) justification for the centrality of European theories of literature in the re-organisation of critical preferences among black Zimbabwean critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is that:

> Such approaches offer fresh, more detailed and varied methods to analyse the new literatures because they are less rigid, less classificatory than previous ones. By emphasising the discontinuities and disruptions in a literary text, its open-endedness, its participation in a dialogical process, they provide flexible analytical frameworks, appropriate to the specific nature of post-colonial and post-modernist texts; they pay tribute to the historicity of such texts, their dynamic and "diachronic" nature and serve to demistify underlying presuppositions.

Veit-Wild insinuates that black Zimbabwean critics have been using critical approaches that are limited and limiting in the appreciation of the issues that are handled in 'the black Zimbabwean novel.' She looks at these critical approaches as obsolete, rigid and less detailed. This aspect of her metacritical work on 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is buttressed by Shaw (1997: 3) in his submission that "[u]ntil the publication of Veit-Wild's ground-breaking *Teachers, Preachers and Non-Believers* in 1992, the established view of black Zimbabwean

writing (represented by Musaemura Zimunya's *Those Years of Drought and Hunger: The Birth of Black Zimbabwean Literature in English*) was a monolithic and nationalist one…deriv[ing] from a belief in the homogeneity of Zimbabwean society and of African culture, and hing[ing] on the nationalist notion of an "ideal course" for Zimbabwean literature." Shaw's work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is largely an affirmation of Veit-Wild's arguments on the literature. He follows Veit-Wild to the extent of submerging his own 'voice' as an independent scholar of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'.

Veit-Wild's tendency to see Eurocentric critical approaches as capable of explaining everything in 'black Zimbabwean literature' obliterates the fact that every approach is fraught with weaknesses and contradictions of its own that claiming perfection for any given set of critical rubrics is the height of intellectual folly. In addition to the above is the school-mistress approach that Veit-Wild (1992: 36) adopts in her discussion of the critical works of black Zimbabwean scholars such as Kahari:

> Kahari subsumes the eight novels in English, published between 1966 and 1978, under the category of "literature of alienation and protest" (Kahari, 1980: 31). This classification is misleading and does not help to determine novels' major tendencies and forces. The terms "alienation" and "protest" are revealingly contradictory: Kahari tries to put under one roof what does not, in fact, have much in common at all.

Veit-Wild's inability to appreciate concepts such as "alienation" and "protest" in terms of their mutual intelligibility bears witness to her rigid conception of aspects of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Her commitment to the neat separation of concepts exemplified by her appreciation of "alienation" and "protest" as unintelligible contradicts her self-professed grounding in the tenets of Postcolonial discourse which urges transgression of all forms of boundaries. That it is possible to read 'the black Zimbabwean novel' of the colonial dispensation as "literature of alienation and protest" as Kahari (1980: 31) suggests should be possible against the backdrop of the ambivalent vision of the authors as products of an education system that implanted in them warring approaches to the challenges of their time. The ambivalence of the vision of the authors that Kahari (1980) discusses makes it possible to read "protest" in alienation literature and "alienation" in protest literature. Chennells (1993: 129), remonstrates with Veit-Wild on this

matter, arguing that "[t]here is, of course, absolutely no reason why the alienated individual…Marechera comes to mind…should not protest his or her alienation."

The climax of Veit-Wild's discomfiture with Kahari's critical discourse on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in Shona is to be identified in her contention that the latter's *The Search for Zimbabwean Identity* (1980) "represents a certain tendency of this period but seems inadequate to describe black Zimbabwean literature as a whole [and is] far too narrow and, for many writers and intellectuals, outdated a programme for defining their stand in a post-colonial state" (Veit-Wild, 1992: 2). She identifies Kahari's undoing in his failure to come to terms with the fact that "[i]n Africa of 1980, a simple repetition of the rebirth of black identity, as experienced in the 1960s, was no longer possible." Thus, while Kahari's conscription of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in 'the search for Zimbabwean identity' unfolds in the context of the African nationalist search for rallying points in the aftermath of decades of black Zimbabwean colonisation and is concerned with exploring the ways in which 'the black Zimbabwean novel' could be utilised in the black Zimbabwean people's quest to strategically define themselves and their interests, Veit-Wild looks at the entire project and its informing consciousness as anachronistic. The classification of Kahari's text as simplistic, inadequate and anachronistic is a space-clearing gesture that anticipates the operationalisation of an economy of discourse that associates Veit-Wild's critical work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' with versatility and significance. Elsewhere, however, Veit-Wild (1992: 38) is comfortable with Kahari's work, particularly his classification of 'the black Zimbabwean novel':

> Kahari distinguishes two categories of Shona novels: the "New World Novel" and the "Old World Novel". The Old World Novels are all set in the country; the New World novels are set partly in the country and partly in the urban area.

Beyond the mere affirmation of Kahari's "Old World Novel" and "New World Novel" dichotomy, Veit-Wild does not venture to unpack the implications of Kahari's dichotomising typology insofar as it creates the impression that the so-called Old World is backward, static, and of no consequence in the so-called New World which both Kahari and Veit-Wild associate with modernity, civilisation, development and sophistication. The fact that Veit-Wild concurs with Kahari's Old World/New World typology is clear in her contention that while many fathers of

what she calls the first generation of black Zimbabwean novelists were peasant farmers, their migration into the cities as cooks, messengers, mine workers and qualification into the professions as teachers, agricultural demonstrators, salesmen, drivers, policemen and catechists constituted "the first step from the Old World into the New World; they were on the verge of a modern life" (Veit-Wild, 1992: 40). Veit-Wild associates the Europeanisation of Africans with modernisation. Her discourses are of no mean significance in the misrepresentation of Eurocentrism as the global cultural standard.

Veit-Wild's and Anthony Chennells' "Introduction: The Man Who Betrayed Africa?" in *Emerging Perspectives on Dambudzo Marechera* (1999) is largely a response to 'black critical thought' on Marechera. Although the two critics do not single out any black Zimbabwean critics as having charged Marechera for betraying Africa, the evidence in their work points to the possibility that they have in mind the black Zimbabwean critics such as Zimunya (1982), Zinyemba (1983), Chivaura (1998, 1998a) and Furusa (1998) who do not have anything complimentary to say on Marechera's literary works. Zimunya (1982: 126) opened the floodgates of black Zimbabwean critical vitriol against Marechera in the early 1980's:

> In Marechera...unfortunately, the vision is preponderantly private and indulgent...Pleading for admission into the neurotic twentieth century is the worst way to go about revitalising a culture depleted by the self-same Europe.

The tradition of black critical abrasion against Marechera's aesthetic orientation inaugurated by Zimunya is taken up by other black Zimbabwean critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' such as Zinyemba (1983: 9) who charges that "[t]o move from Nyamfukudza to Marechera is to move from cynicism to oblivion, from sickness to death, to nothingness." Insofar as Zinyemba (1983: 10) would be concerned, "Zimbabwe needs a literature that reflects its people's heroic efforts to re-discover themselves, literature that is imbued with local colour and perspective." As it would turn out, for Zinyemba at least, Marechera's works lack both 'local colour' and 'perspective.' In defence, Marechera (as quoted in Veit-Wild and Chennells, 1999: 99) dismisses black Zimbabwean critics such as Zimunya (1982) and Zinyemba (1983) and steeped in cultural purism and essentialism:

I would question anyone calling me an African writer. Either you are a writer or you are not. If you are a writer for a specific nation or a specific race, then fuck you. In other words, the direct international experience of every single entity is, for me, the inspiration to write.

Elsewhere, Marechera (1980: 68) classifies Zimunya's and Zinyemba's emphases on 'local colour' and 'perspective' as akin to "act[ing] out a mentally retarded pantomime for a mentally-deficient audience." In the heat of this exchange, Chivaura (1998: 346) would also argue that "Marechera, in *The House of Hunger* depict[s] African life in Zimbabwe in Kafka terms [and] [his] depictions are a permanent nightmare which mocks their efforts [Africans] to liberate themselves and paralyses their hopes and will to live". Furusa (2001: 117) also contributes to the onslaught on Marechera, arguing that the writer "imitates Euro-modernist aesthetics and exhibit[s] a hopeless and absurdist world outlook." The connecting thread in all these black Zimbabwean critical views on Marechera's literary works is that his works do not contribute positively to the struggles of African people to liberate themselves. For these black Zimbabwean critics, Marechera is the African writer who refuses to "march right in front" (Achebe, 1988: 30) and assume an active role in the struggles of his people to "spell [their] proper name" (Achebe, in Chametzky, 1988: 5). They classify him in their critical works on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' as an existential nihilist who "judges human existence to be pointless and absurd...lead[ing] nowhere and add[ing] up to nothing" (Crosby, 1988: 30).

That Veit-Wild and Chennells are writing back to black Zimbabwean critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' can be gathered from their assertion that "Marechera's was an intelligence which refused to be contained within the confines of the cultural nationalism of the 1970s and 1980s" (Veit-Wild & Chennells, 1999: xvi). Their task is made easier by the fact that the critical language of the black Zimbabwean critics cited above easily identifies them as black Zimbabwean cultural nationalists "rooted in an Africa which the political and cultural officialdom of the 1960s and 1970s imagined" (Veit-Wild & Chennells, 1999: xi). Veit-Wild's and Chennells' introductory essay in *Emerging Perspective on Dambudzo Marechera* (1999) sets the tone for the entire volume in which all the critics, in different ways, attempt to defend Marechera from black Zimbabwean critical excoriation. The most enigmatic aspect of this book, particularly for readers and critics grounded in the Afrocentric conception of reality, is in the manner in which all of the contributors in it are largely concerned with celebrating Marechera as

a universalist without unmasking universalism as a euphemism for European interests as global human interests. Veit-Wild and Chennells (1999) and their fellow contributors are actively complemented by Primorac (2006) who writes disapprovingly of black Zimbabwean critics such as Zimunya (1982: 122) whose argument is that in Marechera's works such as *The House of Hunger* (1978), "the social and moral undertaking is cynically dismissed at the expense of the aesthetic motive." Apparently, Primorac is not disconcerted with black Zimbabwean critics only. She is also exasperated by the critical works of other African critics such as the Nigerian, Okonkwo (1981: 89) who deplores Marechera's nihilistic view of reality as well as the South African scholar, Mzamane (1983: 212) who proposes that Marechera should not only have written about "dedicated revolutionaries in the struggle for independence in Zimbabwe" but should also have seen the need "to employ a style intertextually linked to other African rather than European texts." African marginalisation constitutes the backdrop against which these African critics discuss Marechera's works.

In much the same manner as Veit-Wild & Chennells (1999) whose metacritical views on 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' emerge in the context of their critical need to rescue Marechera from black Zimbabwean critical vitriol, Primorac's views on 'black critical thought' also emerge in the context of the struggle for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. She introduces her discussion of 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' by paying homage to Kahari's work:

> George Kahari, who was the first to research on the Shona novel systematically (and whose detailed description/translation of its various aspects allow the non-speakers of Shona to have some insight into the texts' concerns, style and construction), has introduced several categorizations … Kahari's basic division between Old World and New World narratives is tied to theme and setting; a plot typology in *Aspects of the Shona Novel* distinguishes between romances, epics, novels, picaresques, satires, historical novels, social novels, thrillers and detective novels. Although the categories overlap, the typology is suggestive. The presence of the last two categories seems especially interesting since they indicate a link with European popular genres, detectable also in settler fiction (Primorac, 2006: 18).

In much the same manner as Veit-Wild, Primorac discusses Kahari's critical work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' matter-of-factly, particularly his dichotomisation between so-called Old World and New World novels. The two critics' matter-of-fact handling of such categorisations of

'the black Zimbabwean novel' understates important issues handled in so-called Old World novels, thus fossilising the historical era portrayed in such novels as antiquated. It is quite revealing that Primorac finds Kahari's critical work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' significant to the extent that it furnishes non-speakers of Shona with a point of entry into the debates on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in Shona. The submission vindicates the shared argument between Chiwome (1996) and Muwati (2009) that Kahari's critical works are more useful to the cultural cross-border critic of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. In addition to this is the way in which Primorac applauds Kahari for using European popular genres as the basis for his categorisation of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in Shona. Thus, she finds Kahari's critical work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' plausible to the extent that the latter articulates his ideas on the literature from the point of immersion in the consciousness that European scholars generally consider appropriate in the study of African literature. Such consciousness is considered appropriate for African scholars because it does not involve the abrasive interrogation of Eurocentric critical rubrics and their claims to global relevance and indispensability.

The comfort with which Primorac discusses Kahari's work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in Shona contrasts sharply with her revulsion towards the critical works of other black Zimbabwean critics such as Zimunya (1982), Zinyemba (1983), Chiwome (1996), Chivaura (1998), Zhuwarara (2001) and Furusa (2002). In discussing these black Zimbabwean critics, Primorac's (2006: 7) rallying contention is that 'black Zimbabwean critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is informed by "the socialist orientation and 'realist' stylistic accessibility" associated with Kenyan writer-critic, Ngugi wa Thiong'o. She argues that 'black Zimbabwean critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' represented by the above critics also derives impetus from "two intersecting currents of thought which have locked African thinking about identity and freedom into oppositional mode and prevented it from embarking on an intellectual project that would concern itself with the modalities of reinventing a being-together situation in the racial sense" (Primorac, 2006: 8). She identifies these two currents of thought as Afro-radicalism and nativism and argues that they "underpinned the teaching of African literature at the University of Zimbabwe in the 1980s and 1990s [and] legitimised the condemnation-through-interpretation of writers such as Soyinka, Marechera and Vera" (Primorac, 2006: 9). On the basis of these contentions, Primorac's conclusion is that the critical works of black Zimbabwean critics

of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' such as Zimunya (1982), Zinyemba (1983), Chiwome (1996), Chivaura (1998), Zhuwarara (2001) and Furusa (2002) are 'mimetic' and 'reductionist':

> Whether explicitly or not, a significant number of critical texts dealing with individual Zimbabwean novels relates readings of these texts to privileged views of 'authentic' and/or 'objective' reality. Extreme conflict over constructs of 'the real' is inextricably linked with the process of the anti-colonial struggle in Zimbabwe...By 'mimetic tendency', I therefore mean, in short, the critical procedure which locates the source of fictional validity (quality, convincingness) in a form or 'reality' outside the individual fictional text itself. The proponents of this tendency often adopt a prescriptive attitude towards Zimbabwean writing...Mimetic readings of Zimbabwean novels are akin to the realistic illusion in that they assume, by implication, the existence of an empty, opaque materiality, filled with social processes that novels are expected to reflect without distortion…A number - although not all - of 'mimetic' acts of interpretation take inspiration from Soviet-style Marxism (writers such as Plekhanov and Lukacs, as well as the many collections put out by Progress Publishers when the Soviet Union still provided massively subsidised translations of politically correct scholarship) as well as 'Afrocentrist' critics such as Chinweizu, Jemie and Madubuike ... The version of socialist realism offered by the programme for the production of 'socialist art' and criticism of the Zimbabwean critic Emmanuel Ngara appear to have influenced some critics (e.g. Vambe, Kupe, Zhuwarara), whereas others (Chivaura, Furusa, Chiwome) combine 'socialist' and 'Afrocentrist' ideas...Many mimetic readings take place within the context of reviews, overview-type articles and surveys of literary production (Primorac, 2006: 38).

Primorac looks at the 'mimetic' criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' by black Zimbabwean critics as prescriptive and therefore detrimental to the production of multiple and/or diverging readings, based as they are on the 'erroneous' assumption that there exists 'an open, opaque materiality, filled with social processes that novels are expected to reflect without distortion.' Thus, insofar as Primorac is concerned, black Zimbabwean readings of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' epitomise closure and rigidity. The commitment of such readings to what Primorac describes as the depiction of social processes 'without distortion' is thought to invite only certain desired critical conclusions. Thus, so-called 'mimetic' approaches to the study of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' are considered reactionary in Primorac's work on 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' because they deny literary authors the freedom to imagine outside the parameters laid down for such purposes by the 'mimetic' critics. The 'mimetic' critic, argues Primorac, is prone to vilipend all literary artists who fail to fall in step with "privileged versions of 'the historical truth' in their work" (Primorac, 2006: 40). She decries

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black Zimbabwean critics for the contention that black Zimbabwean novelists are active participants in the 'misrepresentation', 'historical falsification' and 'cultural distortion' of the African experience in history.

On the basis of the above assumptions, Primorac (2006: 41) attacks Furusa for charging that Mutasa and other Shona novelists are guilty of distorting Shona culture. Chiwome is also decried for his submission that most post-independence novelists in Shona do not attend to the gestures of peasant resistance (Primorac, 2006: 41) while Zhuwarara comes under siege for the argument that Mungoshi's, Marechera's and Hove's novels unduly undermine the resistance initiatives and agency of African people against colonial domination. Primorac's meta-analysis of 'black critical thought' as represented by Zimunya (1982), Zhuwarara (1994, 2001), Chiwome (1994, 1996) and Furusa (2002) is understandable within the context of her pre-occupation with 'the novel and politics in modern Zimbabwe' as is clear from the title of her work. On her part, however, Primorac (2006) does not take into consideration the political, economic and cultural challenges of the context in which so-called mimetic 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' emerges. The challenges of national reconstruction in the aftermath of colonialism required extensive mobilisation of resources. Literature and its criticism constituted part of the resources that the newly-independent nation needed in charting its course towards a genuine future. European concepts were considered unsuitable in the quest because of their active role in the colonisation and trivialisation of African people. Thus, Primorac levels her charges without countenancing the urgency of African cultural self-reclamation in the aftermath of centuries of enslavement and colonisation by Europe. Ephraim (2003: 17) articulates the importance of African self-reclamation:

> It is an urgent matter for [African] people to reclaim their history [and their culture] NOW. By reclaiming their history, they will thereby reclaim themselves as significant human beings. Self-reclamation entails self-definition. To define oneself, obviously from the standpoint of self-knowledge, is to empower oneself.

The assertion that 'mimetic' black Zimbabwean critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' 'often adopt a prescriptive attitude towards Zimbabwean writing' speaks to Primorac's commitment to the need to read 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in such a manner as to engender a plurality of

meanings as opposed to "a single, unified and agreed meaning" (Ashcroft *et al*, 2002:3). However, this is an assertion that is advanced without due consideration of the fact that the "pluralism [of meanings] is not the only [and indispensable] answer" (Lindblad, in Rutherford, 1992: 89) in the search for appropriate reading models. The challenges associated with it are not addressed in Primorac's metacritical discourse on 'the black Zimbabwean novel, and so are the literary-critical possibilities and advantages that accompany literary-critical readings deriving from the perception of reality in terms of its particularity. The contention that so-called mimetic 'black Zimbabwean critics' read 'the black Zimbabwean novel' on the basis of the illusion that there exists 'an open, opaque materiality, filled with social processes that novels are expected to reflect without distortion' is useful in Primorac's metacritical endeavour to operationalise her literary-critical approach to 'the black Zimbabwean novel' as indispensable.

If the charges of 'misrepresentation', 'historical falsification' and 'cultural distortion' that black Zimbabwean critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' raise against black Zimbabwean writers are considered from an Afrocentric point of view, it becomes clear that they are pertinent for a people trying to find their way back to themselves (Armah, 1973: 43) after centuries of cultural, economic and political servitude. The distortion of a people's culture as "a system of interrelated values, active enough to condition perception, judgement, communication, and behavior in a given society" (Mazrui, in Laremont & Kalouche, 2002:3) imposes a lasting impact in the development of the socio-economic, political and intellectual agency of those who participate in it. By celebrating novelists who misrepresent African culture, black Zimbabwean critics contribute towards the perpetuation of the values that demean African people.

In making her critical submissions against so-called mimetic black Zimbabwean critics, Primorac overlooks the fact that human beings are not just tool making animals: they are also renowned for making and unmaking the rules and guidelines that regulate both thought and behavior in their societies. The making and unmaking of such rules and guidelines does not occur in a vacuum. Human beings look into their culture and their history to assess their experiences in order to plan effectively about what they must do to secure the present and win the future. To cede the right to create such rules and guidelines is to give away the right to life itself. People who give away the right to life are not worth civilising. Thus, the pitfalls of 'mimetic black

critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' notwithstanding, it is important for critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' to consider the path that black Zimbabwean people have travelled in history and how that path exerts impact on the cultural, intellectual and political arguments that black Zimbabwean critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' make in their interpretation of the literature. Unlike many other people in the world, African people have been miseducated against the values that would have empowered and developed them and, as Achebe (1988) argues, it is insincere to claim that Africans have since recovered from the impact of their misalliance with Europe. The need for clarity is therefore as urgent among African people today as it ever was in the past. Thus, when 'mimetic' black Zimbabwean critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' descend on black Zimbabwean novelists, behind them is a history that they do not desire to re-visit their people. Thus, their critical standards on the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' are severe. Primorac identifies Chinweizu and wa Thiong'o as the major pontiffs of the mimetic school of literary-critical thought in Africa:

> In his response to Chinweizu written in the mid-1970s, Soyinka had preceded Vera in pointing out the reductionist and ill-founded aspects of such critical practices. Despite this, throughout the 1980s and 90s, ideas linking literature, cultural 'authenticity' and decolonization were applied to the evaluation of Zimbabwean literary texts in the writings of a cluster of Zimbabwe-based academics. Dambudzo Marechera (whose prose was, arguably, influenced by Soyinka's), came in for the sharpest criticism. Together with others, he was, variously, accused of producing writing that was both 'inauthentic' and 'unpatriotic.' These accusations echoed the ideas of Ngugi and Chinweizu in that they understood literary texts as kinds of representation that could (and therefore should) provide an accurate reflection (or: imitation) of the 'outside world.' *The Place of Tears: The Novel and Politics in Modern Zimbabwe* repositions the Zimbabwean novel with respect to both such mimetic criticisms of Zimbabwean literature and the responses they have engendered (Primorac, 2006:8).

Primorac's conception of her own work as intent on "reposition[ing] the Zimbabwean novel with respect to both such mimetic criticisms of Zimbabwean literature and the responses they have engendered" (Primorac, 2006: 8) projects her criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' as an attempt at liberating the literature from 'black critical thought' that she considers vitriolic. The classification of black Zimbabwean critical discourse on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' as reductionist in Primorac's work promotes the view that the literary-critical theories on which black Zimbabwean critics rely supply them with "a poor basis for the writing of cultural history

and the calculation of political choices" (Gilroy, 1993: 188), principally because of their supposedly "absolute and perverse reliance on a model of thinking…which is a long way from the double consciousness that fascinated black modernists" (Gilroy, 1993: 188) in history. Such models of critical thought, according to Ashcroft *et al*, (2002: 222), are incapable of the realisation that literary-critical readings "are not immutable 'truths' but changeable social and political constructions." Thus, Primorac's emphasis is on the plurality of meanings and approaches in the discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. However, her work, like Veit-Wild's, is affected by the inability to see beyond the indispensability of European-originated critical criteria in the discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. This makes her critical work hegemonic.

Throughout *The Place of Tears: The Novel and Politics in Modern Zimbabwe*, Primorac does not quote directly from the works of Chinweizu (1987, 1985, 1987) and wa Thiong'o (1981, 1993, 1997) to authenticate the conceptual and critical charges that she raises in her discussion of their literary-critical theories as 'mimetic' and 'reductionist'. This oversight on Primorac's part creates the impression that she misrepresents the two critics' works in order to advance her thesis with ease. The shared persuasion between Chinweizu (1978, 1987, 1987) and wa Thiong'o (1981, 1993, 1997) as regards the nature of literature is that it is about men and women in society. The two critics see literature as a rehearsal and a criticism of social, cultural, economic and political issues that does not, however, claim to provide the entire picture. For, as Baldwin (1961: 32) notes, "[t]he artistic image is not intended to represent the thing itself, but, rather, the reality of the force the thing contains...[t]he work of art expresses, contains, and is itself a part of that energy which is life." Chinweizu (1987: 257) is clearer:

> Literature is simply the written part of a dialogue which a people conduct among themselves about their history. Their lives, not some abstract categories or theories, are the stuff of that history. And among the aims of a society's literature are the following: to help deepen and expand its people's awareness of their world by illuminating corners of their experience; to clarify their history and identity, and thus prompt them to correct action; to throw light on the society's moral problems and supply inspiring examples.

Chinweizu's and wa Thiong'o's conception of literature is best appreciated against the backdrop of the enslavement and colonisation of African people which dis-membered, dis-oriented and de-

centred African people into slaves and peasants. These realities mean that for African-centred critics such as Chinweizu (1978, 1985, 1987) and wa Thiong'o (1981, 1993, 1997), literature is indispensable in the development of the remedial efforts that African people must institute in order to reclaim themselves as significant human beings. Chinweizu's and wa Thiongo's conception of literature is shared by Pointer (2001: 28) whose also has it that literature in Africa is "not just a matter of the world we have, but the world we want...of peace, for example." Fanon (1967: 193) reiterates that the best kind of literature for Africa and African people is "a literature of combat...[which] calls on the whole [African] people to fight for their existence as a nation...moulds the national consciousness, giving it form and contours and flinging open before it new and boundless horizons." Such a literature, according to Fanon (1967: 193), is a literature of combat "because it assumes responsibility, and because it is the will to liberty expressed in terms of time and space." Thus, without taking note of the background against which African people are emerging and the challenges they face, Primorac (2006:41) argues that:

> In all of these instances, the practical outcome of the critical text's implicitly mimetic stance is a privileging of selected Zimbabwean novelists over others on the grounds, generally, of verisimilitude. This privileging ranges from commendation…to programmatic exclusion from the national literary canon. In a text published in 1998, Chivaura dismisses some of the best-known novelists in English as un-African, and therefore also non-Zimbabwean.

The clash between Primorac and black Zimbabwean critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' such as Chivaura (1998, 1998a) demonstrates that all literary-critical readings are grounded in their particularity. Thus, while Moyana (1994: 27), for example, celebrates Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns* (1991) for realistically registering "the pains and joys of national rebirth", Primorac argues that black Zimbabwean critics celebrate such novels because they render easy provenance to what she categorises as mimetic perspectives in which works of art are expected to depict reality truthfully. It appears that Primorac's discomfiture with 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' arises from a situation where black Zimbabwean critics assume the responsibility to decide which black Zimbabwean literary texts are relevant or irrelevant to the struggles of black Zimbabwean people. The view that such grading of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is based on verisimilitude serves to undermine the whole process as flawed. However, all self-respecting people insist on the right to decide what is, and what is not useful to them in all departments of life. This is the only way the right of any given people to life, culture and

civilisation can be guaranteed.

From the remarks that she makes concerning 'black Zimbabwean critical thought', it can be deduced that Primorac's criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is a 'rescue operation' concerned chiefly with selected black Zimbabwean novelists in English. These include Marechera (1978, 1980, 1984, 1992), Nyamfukudza (1979), Dangarembga (1988) and Vera (1993, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2002). While black Zimbabwean critics have been very critical of the dwarfish nature of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in indigenous languages, Primorac has very little to say on those novels and the criticism they have received from black Zimbabwean critics. That no discussion of such works is carried out in a text that purports to examine the dynamics of 'the novel and politics in modern Zimbabwe' demonstrates the shortcomings of Primorac's idea of 'the Zimbabwean novel'. The tendency to dichotomise 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in English and 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in indigenous languages derives from the tendency in European cultural thought to split aspects of the same reality. Ani (1994: 33) argues that this tendency runs "with frighteningly predictable consistency through European thought, continually gathering momentum for ages to come." Its impact is that:

> The splits become irreconcilable, antagonistic opposites. Holistic conceptions become almost impossible given this mindset. First, the dichotomy is presented, then the process of valuation occurs in which one term is valued and the other is devalued. One is considered "good," positive, superior; the other is considered "bad," negative, inferior (Ani, 1994: 33).

In much the same way that the splitting of realities affords Europeans the illusion of control, it also helps Primorac to place emphasis on, and celebrate one black Zimbabwean literary trajectory at the expense of the others. This is an emphasis and a celebration that subverts the complexity of the 'black Zimbabwean novel' and, as Baldwin (1995: 24) has since noted, the passion for dichotomisation leads to "an unforeseen, paradoxical distress; a breakdown of meaning." The fact that Primorac's critical concern lies with 'rescuing' a select circle of black Zimbabwean writers invites the conclusion that her critical interest on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is inspired only by those black Zimbabwean writers whose works provide easy provenance for her critical views on literature. In that regard, Primorac does not stand apart from black Zimbabwean critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' whom she castigates for judging 'the

black Zimbabwean novel' on the basis of verisimilitude.

Having blasted 'mimetic' 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' as prescriptive, Primorac (2006:45) proceeds to give *prescriptions* of her own on how 'the black Zimbabwean novel' should be read:

> 'Intertextual' readings, on the other hand, relativise the notion of contexts by relativising the notion of boundaries - and promote, in effect, various forms of textual interweaving…This has meant an absence of prescription (the very selection of a text as the object of critical attention implies a positive value judgement) and a drawing of attention to the constructedness of texts and meanings.

The relativisation of the notion of boundaries, projected in Primorac's work as promotive of 'various forms of textual interweaving', explains the background against which a critic like Rooney, for instance, is applauded for "transpos[ing] Lacan's reading of (meanings attached to) Sophocles' character Antigone directly onto Hove's character Marita" (Primorac, 2006: 45). It is also the backdrop against which Plasa is celebrated for "read[ing] clusters of meaning derived from the text and context of Charlotte Bronte's *Shirley* into Dangarembga's novel" (Primorac, 2006: 45). Quite tellingly, Primorac does not theorise possibilities of transposing critical ideas derived from the reading of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' onto European novels. In that regard, she creates the impression that cultural contact between Africa and Europe is to Africa's benefit and never the other way round:

> Now, I do not wish to argue here that such intertextual readings are objectionable as a matter of general principle, or that they necessarily produce misreadings ('distortions') of Zimbabwean novels. I would contend, though, that *in practice, in the area of Zimbabwean studies*, they have replaced systematic attempts to situate novels in their local intertextual contexts - among, that is, other *whole* (in Bal's sense), texts/novels (and, textual/novelistic formations) with which they share a space-time of origin. Such studies are, in other words, by implication, non-materialistic and a-historical: they treat Zimbabwean novels and novelistic opuses as if they existed in a placeless, timeless location of unconfigured intertextuality [emphasis in original] (Primorac, 2006: 46).

Primorac's insistence on 'intertextual readings' enables the treatment of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' as placeless and timeless. Placelessness and timelessness are concepts that speak to Primorac's commitment to universalism, a phenomenon that African-centred scholars see as a

subterfuge for pushing the European cultural agenda without stating that it is European and therefore provincial like any other cultural agenda. Primorac's attempt to universalise 'the black Zimbabwean novel' undermines its capacity at 'direct referentiality' insofar as the Zimbabwean experience is concerned. Primorac envisages that 'the black Zimbabwean novel' will become more universal to the extent that it ties itself to textual meanings derived from readings of European novels. Since she does not emphasise the same requirement for European literature, Primorac creates the impression that European literature does not need anything African in order to develop further. Scholars who have followed English cultural development since the emergence of the African novel in English in the 1950s are agreed that African literature in English injected life into an English literary culture that was on the decline. Thus, the idea that it is only 'the black Zimbabwean novel' that stands to benefit as a result of the cultural contact between Africa and Europe lacks fidelity to historical detail.

The bulk of the arguments that Veit-Wild and Primorac belabour with a view to demonstrating the shortcomings of 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' are also to be identified in Shaw's (1997) critical work. As is the case in the two critics' work that he bridges, Shaw looks at the bulk of 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' as hamstrung by the critics' immersion in the realist-nationalist perspective on literature. He identifies black Zimbabwean critics such as Kahari (1972, 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1994, 1997), Zimunya (1982), Ngara (1982, 1984, 1985, 1996) and Zinyemba (1983) as the most entrenched of black Zimbabwean nationalist literary-critical scholars. Shaw's discomfiture with these critics work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is spurred by the contention that nationalist critical rubrics are incapable of facilitating the understanding of the Zimbabwean experience in literature and its criticism in terms of its complexity:

> It is a fallacy to assume that Marechera's writing is 'Europeanised' while nationalist-realist is not. African nationalist critics often fail to realise the irony that that their own discourse is itself implicated in the "European influences" which it claims to disavow…Zimunya's praise for the structure of Wilson Katiyo's nationalist text, *A Son of the Soil*, exemplifies the nationalist desire for linearity, closure, and a singular, objective notion of 'the truth'…Zimunya indicates a cycle of continuity which instills a sense of restored unity emphasised by this closure (Shaw, 1997: 86).

Shaw (1997: 16) finds it ridiculous that "[m]ore than a decade after the 'Second Chimurenga'…the idea of a pure and homogeneous pre-colonial community still permeates…and informs much literary criticism" on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Particularly disturbing for Shaw (1997: 18) is that critical works on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' such as Kahari's *The Search for Zimbabwean Identity* (1980) and Zimunya's *Those Years of Drought and Hunger: The Birth of Zimbabwean Fiction in English* (1982) "still draw…on the Ranger myths – despite contradicting historical evidence which was emerging in the 1970s, and Ranger's own retraction in 1979." Also exasperating for Shaw (1997: 19) is that in the development of 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel':

> Ngara, Zimunya, Kahari, Zinyemba and other Zimbabwean critics have…privileged traditional realist criteria as a standard for assessing literary works. The result, unfortunately, has been to marginalize and debilitate the work of writers working outside the framework of realism…writers such as Marechera.

Shaw (1997: 13) finds it retrogressive that the above black Zimbabwean critics, as well as their continental counterparts such as Okonkwo (1981) and Mzamane (1983) should argue "in their critical work that conventional forms of realism are necessarily appropriate and progressive for the Zimbabwean writer." It is also his contention that black Zimbabwean novelistic commitment to nationalist aesthetics results in the falsification of history in order to satisfy the requirements of nationalist criteria. Thus, he notes, for instance, that "[t]he shortcomings of *Mapondera: Soldier of Zimbabwe*, ostensibly an 'historical novel' documenting Mapondera's life, is that the author misrepresents historical facts in the interest of promoting nationalist sentiments" (Shaw, 1997:67). Shaw foregoes the realisation that the nationalist novelist operates in the realm of both the fictive and the historical. While the nationalist novelist may closely attend to historical detail, he retains a measure of liberty to transfigure with it. Thus, the nationalist novelist rehearses history imaginatively. It is not mandatory that he should reconstruct history in the same manner that the historian should.

The vitriol with which Shaw discusses this group of black Zimbabwean critics and their continental African counterparts contrasts sharply with the approving manner in which he discusses Muponde's critical work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. This is clear in his

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contention that "Muponde's comments on Marechera's transgression of traditional narrative form corroborate many of my own observations" (Shaw, 1993: 10). Shaw's discomfiture with the version of 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' associated with scholars such as Zimunya (1982), Ngara (1982, 1984, 1985, 1996), Zinyemba (1983) and Zhuwarara (1994) is to be understood against the backdrop of the ease with which these scholars can be linked to Pan-African consciousness of the 1960s and 1970s. Furusa's (2002: 15) emphasis on the need for black Zimbabwean literature "of a serious historical explanation and purpose, of moral and political consequence, rooted in recognizable national experience, informed by styles and resources of indigenous, popular and literary culture" provides Shaw with part of the justification to categorise 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' as steeped in the agenda of decolonization.

2.4 **White critics and 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'**

In terms of commitment to the metacritical study of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel', Primorac stands predominant. As a comparatively recent white entrant into Zimbabwean literary-critical studies, she is emerging in a context where the critical works of 'pioneers' such as Veit-Wild (1992, 1992a, 1993, 1996, 1999, 1999a, 1999b, 2006) and Chennells (1993, 1999, 1999a, 2006) do not only provide the requisite launchpad for her work but also necessitate that she engages them works in her quest for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the study of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Thus, Primorac finds herself compelled to undertake a ground-clearing metacritical exercise to enable her to locate herself strategically as a major voice in a steadily growing corpus of white literary-critical texts on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. In contrast to the manner in which she dismisses 'black critical thought' as demonstrated above, Primorac (2006) discusses Chennells' work approvingly. The superlative discourse in which Primorac pays homage to Chennells' "Settler Myths and the Southern Rhodesian Novel" (1982), for instance, constructs Chennells as one of her literary-critical standard bearers even though Chennells' study brings into focus 'the white Rhodesian novel' and not 'the black Zimbabwean novel':

> In "Settler Myths and the Southern Rhodesian Novel," Anthony Chennells analyses dozens of white-authored, English-language novels published in several countries between the

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1890s and 1978 and thematically connected to the geographical area of today's Zimbabwe. He isolates in them a validating mythology used by white settlers to justify their presence and behaviour in the region. It is the main thrust of Chennells' argument that this mythology had no basis in historical truth. His other work on the subject emphasises the same point and retains the thematic approach. The most recent text, "Rhodesian Discourse, Rhodesian Novels and the Zimbabwe Liberation War," makes it clear that the divergence between fact and myth was not due to the ignorance of isolated individuals but a deliberate attempt at closure by a discourse which sought to suppress all counter-discourses…*The Place of Tears: The Novel and Politics in Modern Zimbabwe* will use the term "Rhodesian" to refer to the settler novel – more specifically, to the self-enclosed body of novels written by white settlers and published *inside* Rhodesia between the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) and independence proper (Primorac, 2006: 20).

In "Settler Myths and the Southern Rhodesian Novel" (1982), Chennells concerns himself with how, in the white-authored Southern Rhodesian novel, Southern Rhodesia "is reduced…to a limited number of images which account for the country and at the same time prevent any more ambitious exploration of its complexities" (Chennells, 1982: xiii). Further, Chennells (1982: xiv) notes that "throughout the novels, there is an emphasis that the settlers are giving shape to the chaos in which Africans have previously lived their lives" and that "not only has the wilderness been ordered but so have been the people of the wilderness" (Chennells, 1982: 474). Primorac's celebration of Chennells and his work does not only contrast with the manner in which she handles 'black critical discourse; it also stands quite tellingly in contrast to her poverty of comfort with Veit-Wild's critical work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Like Vambe (2005), Primorac has critical reservations towards the manner in which Veit-Wild categorises black Zimbabwean writers into social generations:

> Veit-Wild's *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers* divides Zimbabwean writers who published before independence into two generations. The first – comprising Stanlake Samkange, Solomon Mutswairo and Ndabaningi Sithole – wrote novels which combined a Christian moral stance and political judgement. Novels by the second generation – Wilson Katiyo, Dambudzo Marechera, Charles Mungoshi, Stanley Nyamfukudza, Geofrey Ndhlala – are harder to categorise though a sense of greater artistic importance is connected to them. Veit-Wild thus conveys an impression of development compressed into a short time period (Primorac, 2006: 18).

The reservations that Primorac expresses with regard to Veit-Wild's critical attempt to neatly compartmentalise black Zimbabwean writers into rigid sociological generations are also

expressed by Chennells (1993: 128) who has it that Veit-Wild "does not know how to deal with the material her writers produce." Of particular concern for the two critics is the fact that in Veit-Wild's criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel', "there is only one politically correct attitude for each generation" (Chennells, 1993: 129). Thus, the joint contention between Primorac and Chennells is that "Veit-Wild has problems in reading the texts…translating form into ideas" (Chennells, 1993: 129). The same concerns about Veit-Wild's work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' are also raised by black Zimbabwean critics such as Chiwome (1994: 9) who argues that the critic's conception of 'generations' "suggests that there are clear-cut categories" among the writers such that so-called first generation writers "who continue to write into the second generation are not accommodated" in Veit-Wild's generational typology. But even more exhaustive insofar as Veit-Wild's generational classification of black Zimbabwean writers is concerned is Vambe (2005: 91):

> The notion of 'social generation', which informs her book, underestimates the fact that some writers who she places in the first generation continued to write, and their ideological vision and understanding of a changing Zimbabwean society has also been changing…There are uneven levels of consciousness of class, race and ethnicity amongst the writers placed in the same generation. There are also inherent contradictions in the literary voice of an individual author. This is the case with Chenjerai Hove's *Bones*, a novel that can be read both as a confirmation and as a critique of nationalist politics.

Even though Chennells (1993), Chiwome (1994), Vambe (2005) and Primorac (2006) discuss Veit-Wild's generational categorisation of black Zimbabwean novelists on the basis of grounding in different literary-critical theories, they all concur that Veit-Wild's generational categorisation of black Zimbabwean novelists is incapable of accounting for the fissures that obtain in terms of vision and consciousness among the novelists in each of the generations. However, unlike Chiwome, Chennells (1993), Chiwome (1994) and Vambe (2005), Primorac (2005: 16) goes beyond the mere registration of the shortcomings attendant upon Veit-Wild's generational compartmentalisation of black Zimbabwean writers. Thus, she procceds to "bring to bear on the study of Zimbabwean fiction…a set of categories of an entirely different order and origin…informed by the concept of literary *function*, as formulated by Jan Mukarovsky and applied historically by the Croatian critic Aleksander Flaker". Her reliance on Mukarovsky's and Flaker's conception of the novel in terms of *function* enables her to place all black Zimbabwean English novels of the colonial era in one

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category, in contrast to Veit-Wild's three-tier generational typology:

> [While] novels by authors of the second generation share two broad similarities [in that] they all create fictional worlds which expose, to varying extents, some of the social and economic mechanisms on which the functioning of a colonial society is based, without subjecting them to prolonged authorial commentary…[and] as post-independence Zimbabwean critics have noted (and often disapproved of), there is in many of them a notable bleakness of outlook and lack of optimism about the future…What connects all the pre-independence novels in English is an absence of direct thematisation of the military aspects of Zimbabwe's guerilla war and those waging it (Primorac, 2006: 19).

Primorac's onslaught on Veit-Wild's critical discourse on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' does not begin and end with the latter's generational compartmentalisation of black Zimbabwean writers. She also belabours the links that exist between Veit-Wild and so-called mimetic and Marxist-Leninist black Zimbabwean critics:

> Flora Veit-Wild's influential *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers* also makes reference to fictional 'distortion' related to thematic selection. In the chapter on Chenjerai Hove's *Bones*, she comes close to aligning herself with Zhuwarara's position when she writes: '[Hove] *does not acknowledge* the changes in society, the disruptions and the contradictions in people's lives as reflected in their language, in the modern urban slang or new forms of oral culture.' (Although Veit-Wild dissociates herself from the 'Marxist-Leninist school of criticism' exemplified in Zimbabwe by Emmanuel Ngara, she here echoes its position on 'typicality.' Anthony Chennells has written of her attitude towards Hove: 'Where has one heard that before? In the Soviet theory, of course') (Primorac, 2006: 40)

Primorac's discomfiture with the critical works of fellow white critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is even more pronounced in her discussion of *Emerging Perspectives on Dambudzo Marechera* (Veit-Wild & Chennells: 1999), and for once, Chennells comes under siege in Primorac's metacritical work:

> If only for its sheer bulk (it contains eighteen critical essays, and five additional texts), the volume represented a breakthrough: such concentrated, detailed and critical attention had not been paid to a Zimbabwean writer before. But the mimetic critical tendency remains discernible in *Emerging Perspectives*...In a discussion of *Black Sunlight*, for example, Anthony Chennells writes: 'The authority to which realism lays claim derives not from the real, but from the realist's definition of the real.' For Veit-Wild '[a]n abnormal reality demands an abnormal form and language.' For David Pattison, the discontinuities in Marechera's literary form reflect (he uses the word repeatedly in his essay) the writer's biography and his state of mental health. Daniela Volk is the most explicit: after stating that

'[t]he stories of Dambudzo Marechera show an admirable obsession with reality's complexity,' she uses, with reference to *Black Sunlight*, the word mimesis itself: 'The narrative which rejects nineteenth-century realism for example is an effective mimesis of the contradiction and open-endedness of life.'...Although these texts are in ideological opposition to those by Marechera's Marxist and Afrocentric ('nationalist') critics, there is a sense in which they merely stand the debate on its head. The two ideologically opposed Marechera 'camps' remain in partial methodological overlap as long as they agree to adopt privileged versions of 'historical reality' as the starting point of literary evaluation (Primorac, 2006: 42).

Primorac's consternation with Veit-Wild's and Chennells' work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' speaks directly to the myriad of challenges attendant upon the tendency to discuss 'white critical thought' in homogeneous terms. Thus, what emerges from Primorac's metacritical engagement with the work of her fellow white critics is the complexity of ways in which white critics also engage in contests and counter-contests for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. This is further borne out by the manner in which Veit-Wild, for instance, challenges McLoughlin's (1987: 5) contention that "[t]he anomaly remains…that no lasting achievement in fiction came out of African Parade [which] failed to mobilise a new generation of writers as *Drum* did in South Africa." In explaining the stunted growth of black Zimbabwean literature in English, McLoughlin (1987: 6) has it that "short stories in *African Parade* turn more and more to romance and melodrama as the years pass…[and] the anomaly remains…that magazines and papers with a more open political mind than government or its supporting editors – *Daily News* (1956), *Central African Examiner* (1957), *African Star* (1960) did very little to promote imaginative writing [such that] in the turbulent political climate of the times, the banning of the NDP in 1961, of ZAPU in 1962, the emergence of ZANU, the collapse of Federation, UDI, short fiction reads like a trivial distraction from what occupied readers' minds." In keeping with the preoccupation to achieve primacy in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' and in much the same manner as Primorac above, Veit-Wild (1992: 70) claims the last word in the tussle for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' between her and McLoughlin:

While McLoughlin's observations about the nature of black fiction at that stage are accurate, his criticism of this trend arises from mistaken expectations and assumptions. It seems historically inappropriate to compare the situation in Southern Rhodesia in the 1950s and 1960s with that in South Africa at the same time. *Drum* writing had developed against the

background of a much larger political and literary black history, and out of a situation of aggravated oppression after the official introduction of apartheid in South Africa in 1948 – 49, which stimulated rapid political writing. In Southern Rhodesia…black politicians and journalists became radicalised when the failure of the Federal experiment became evident around 1960.

While Veit-Wild considers McLoughlin's views on the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' erroneous, she embraces *Versions of Zimbabwe: New Approaches to Literature and Culture* (Primorac & Muponde: 2005) as a landmark contribution in the development of critical discourses on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Thus, she writes approvingly of Primorac's and Muponde's text despite Primorac's classification of *Emerging Perspectives on Dambudzo Marechera* (1999) as steeped in the mimetic critical tendency in the discussion of Zimbabwean literature:

> With *Versions of Zimbabwe: New Approaches to Literature and Culture*, the criticism of Zimbabwean literature has come of age. Compared to the grand output of literary works from Zimbabwe over the last 30 years, there has been a marked death of literary criticism. Those works that existed divided authors either by race or by language. *Versions* transcends such division and undertakes a critique of the different strands of Zimbabwean literature as parts of collective national discourse…The collection…makes a most compelling reading (Veit-Wild, 2006: 1).

While credit is due to Veit-Wild for emphasising the transgression of language and race boundaries in Primorac's and Muponde's *Versions of Zimbabwe: New Approaches to Literature and Culture* (2005), she over-reaches herself in her submission that this is symbolic of the coming of age of critical thought on Zimbabwean literature. Critics of different cultural and intellectual backgrounds employ different yardsticks in determining the coming of age of critical discourse on any given literary episteme. Afrocentric critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' for instance, rate the importance of different critical discourses on the basis of the ways in which they amplify the agency of African people. The side by side analysis of the different versions of Zimbabwean literature for which Veit-Wild endorses *Versions of Zimbabwe: New Approaches to Literature and Culture* (Primorac & Muponde: 2005) is not, by and of itself, an accomplishment if the literature is mute on the precarious global condition of African people.

2.5 **Continental black critics and 'white critical thought' on African literature**

In continental African scholarship, the initial wave of literary creativity and the critical discussions that accompanied it would be largely committed to the need to explain Africa to the world with a view to contesting and, possibly, submerging European colonialist definitions of data relating to Africa in African literature and its criticism. The vanguard in this wave of African thought on African literature and its criticism is to a great extent constituted by West African novelists and critics. The essence of the literature and its criticism consists largely in the commitment to the rehabilitation of African history and culture from largely uncomplimentary European critical discourses in which Africa is posited as the epitome of backwardness in all areas of human endeavour. Thus, novels such as Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and the African criticism that would accompany them would find themselves caught up in the confines of what Amuta (1989: 23) has called "defensive intellection" and its commitment to the then exacting need for Africa to explain herself to the world. While Amuta (1989) opines that the quest to explain Africa to the world that one finds in these novels and the African critical discourses that accompanied them plays into the hands of Afrophobic critics of the African experience in culture and civilisation building, the novels and the affirmative critical scholarship that accompanied them were justified, given the cultural hemorrhage occasioned in Africa by the European colonialist onslaught. In this study, the significance of these works and the African critical scholarship that accompanied them is to be found in the fact that they constitute the first major wave of African literary creativity and literary-critical thought.

Some of the significant critical works to come in the aftermath of the initial wave of African creative effort at African self-definition as represented by Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) are authored by Obiechina (1971), Irele (1971), wa Thiong'o (1981, 1993), Izevbaye (1975), Achebe (1975, 1988), Chinweizu *et al* (1985) and p'Bitek (1986). These scholars' works have provided definitive African-centred critical benchmarks in the discussion of African literature. In addition they have also inaugurated a metacritical tradition of thought on African literature and its criticism. Some of the landmark publications in this wave of literary-critical and metacritical scholarship on African literature include Izevbaye's (1975) "The State of Criticism in African Literature." In this particular metacritical piece of work on African literature and its criticism, Izevbaye makes forays into the critical discourses associated with white critics of African

literature. Among the white critical treatises on African literature that Izevbaye looks at are, among others, Gerald Moore's *Seven African Writers* (1962) which he classifies as a piece of work that "carried the assurance of one drawing his confidence from an accepted metropolitan tradition" (Izevbaye, 1975: 1) and Charles Larson's "The Emergence of African Fiction" (1971) which he blasts for regurgitating "the old half-truths about Africa" (Izvebaye, 1975: 4) in addition to "treat[ing] stereotypes as if they were facts" (Izevbaye, 1975: 4).

The context in which Izevbaye discusses these and other white-authored critical works on African literature such as Ulli Bierer's *An Introduction to African Literature* (1964), Margaret Laurence's *Long Drums and Canons* (1968), Bruce King's *Introduction to Nigerian Literature* (1971), Adrian Roscoe's *Mother is Gold* (1971), Eustace Palmer's *An Introduction to the African Novel* (1972) and Eldred Jones' *The Writing of Wole Soyinka* (1973) is framed by the consciousness that "the call for African critical 'concepts', 'standards' or 'criteria' is not a rejection of established modes of literary study like structuralism, neo-Aristotelianism and the like, but a rejection of certain entrenched modes of thinking which perpetuate the stock attitudes to Africa" (Izevbaye, 1975: 3). In his metacritical work on 'white critical thought' on 'the African novel', Izevbaye (1975: 6) notes that "[while] the most effective thing in Larson's book is the way it brings out very clearly the emerging patterns in African fiction, the work remains disturbing for the way it encourages the reader to see the fiction in terms of standard and non-standard, with an occasional variation in between" (Izevbaye, 1975: 6). The same metacritical aesthetic is also observable in his metacritical discussion of Roscoe's *Mother is Gold* (1971) whose author he applauds for "assimilation of material from the [African] cultural background" (Izevbaye, 1975: 7) while at the same time taking him to task for "generalis[ing] about the state of literature in the vernacular and its effect on the quality of the works of writers who draw inspiration from it" (Izevbaye, 1975: 7). Even more notable is that Izevbaye goes beyond the meta-analytical discussion of the white scholars of African literature in their individuality to compare and contrast their critical orientation towards the African literary tradition:

> In Eldred Jones's *The Writing of Wole Soyinka* we come to a method which seeks an objective technique without totally eliminating feeling and ordinary response, and which is accessible to various levels of the audience. Jones relies on attention to image patterns and shifts of tense in a way which occasionally recalls the style of the New Critics. In this

respect the study differs from the sociological criticism of Gerald Moore's parallel study, *Wole Soyinka*. An even more clearly marked difference is Jones's complete reliance on the power of intuition and analysis to tease meaning from the words on the page without any reference to author's intention. Unlike Moore, whose chief purpose is to relate a literary work to its cultural and intellectual sources as well as the life of the writer, Jones would rather trust the tale and not the teller, as Lawrence once recommended (Izevbaye, 1975: 8).

Izevbaye's comparison of the various critics' approaches, orientation and persuasions facilitates the understanding of 'white critical thought' on 'the African novel' in terms of its complexity. This is critical in subverting gravitation towards easy and often misleading conclusions on African literature and its criticism. As is increasingly becoming clear, cultural realities are marked by contradictions and fissures that render it untenable to think, write and speak about aspects of a given phenomena in an essentialising manner. But the attempt to strike a balance between the positive and the uncomplimentary aspects of 'white critical thought' on African literature in Izevbaye's metacritical work contrasts sharply with the radical trajectory of metacritical discourse on European contributions to the analysis of African literature that is easy to associate with the works of other African critics such as Obiechina (1971), Achebe (1975, 1988) and Chinweizu e*t al* (1985). The broad outlines of the consciousness of this group would be mapped out by Obiechina in his meta-analysis of Martin Tucker's critical standpoint to the effect that the concern with contemporary issues misrepresents African novels in English as political, sociological and propagandist pamphlets. In a strident tone that would consistently recur in the critical and metacritical discourses of his contemporaries such as Achebe (1975) and Chinweizu *et al* (1985), Obiechina (1971: 32) does not mask his poverty of comfort with Tucker's views:

What this type of criticism shows is a lack of proper awareness of the real compulsions which are determining and conditioning creative writing in West Africa. It is obvious that the West African writer, for the time being at any rate, cannot write without strong cultural commitment and propaganda motive if he is to contribute to the rehabilitation of the traditional culture and correct its previous misrepresentations…This kind of criticism is resented as an attempt to impose a false pattern on the West African novel.

Obiechina (1971: 33) classifies Tucker's critical views on the African novel in English as "typical of the way in which some English readers react to the new African writing in English." He reasons that such English critical reaction to the African novel in English is largely

engendered by "th[e] strong didacticism of modern West African writing [which] sometimes intrigues and often irritates the English reader who, because literary didacticism has ceased to be a strong element in his literary tradition since Dr Johnson and the neo-classicists, does not take kindly to its recurrence in contemporary literature" (Obiechina, 1971: 33). In his collection of essays written between 1965 and 1987, Achebe (1988: 46) follows the trajectory defined by Obiechina, making reference to "a certain specious criticism which flourishes in African literature today and which derives from the same basic attitude and assumption as colonialism…and so merits the name 'colonialist.'" As an African novelist, Achebe (1988) relies heavily on his experiences at the hands of European literary critics in unpacking such criticism. He singles out white critics of African literature such as Tracy, Andreski, Larson, Hope, Allen, Jones and Roscoe as some of the leading proponents of this brand of criticism, arguing that their works are grounded in the thinking that "the African writer [is] a somewhat unfinished European who, with patient guidance will grow up one day and write like every other European, but meanwhile must be humble, must learn all he can and while at it give due credit to his [white] teachers in the form of either direct praise or, even better since praise sometimes goes bad and becomes embarrassing, manifest self-contempt" (Achebe, 1988: 46). Achebe's remarks on 'colonialist criticism' are steeped in the radical Afrocentric approach that applies emphasis on "unmasking the face of the oppressor and calling him by his proper name" (Achebe, in Chametzky, 1988: 1).

In much the same manner as Achebe, Amuta (1989: 19) also notes that in colonialist criticism, "critical comments on, and evaluations of African literary works are characterized by a certain patronizing condescension" and the tendency is to "view works of African literature from a certain evolutionary perspective with the underlying notion that African literary genius is evolving towards a state of completion and perfection whose ultimate point of reference is "the great tradition" of some Western European literary culture" (Amuta, 1989: 19). The assumption in colonialist criticism is that Europe is centre and teacher and Africa is periphery and pupil and that as centre and teacher, Europe creates while, as periphery and pupil, Africa consumes. What is clear from Achebe's and Amuta's metacriticism of European critical discourses on the African novel is that it is grounded in the 'us against them' perception of reality that also stood at the heart of African liberation struggles of the 1960s and 1970s. While this dichotomy is cardinal in

the discussion of issues to do with European hegemony and African resistance in literature and its criticism, it also obliterates the complexity of literary and literary-critical transactions between Africa and Europe. The 'us against them' dichotomy on which the consciousness of continental African critics of the European economy of critical discourse thrives presents European critics of African literature as condescending invaders whose critical discourses on African literature are connected to the European political and economic domination of Africa. Such emphasis casts African thought on European presence in the criticism of African literature as oppositional. Thus, African critics of 'white critical thought' on the African experience in African literature and its criticism deepen the confrontation between Africa and Europe through the adoption of an entrenched metacritical position that is not divorced from the European version of critical thought on the African novel in terms of trenchancy. In that manner, they affirm and perpetuate the binary divisions initiated by European critics of African literature which cast Europe and Africa, respectively, as normative and other, center and periphery and as irreconcilable antagonists. The separation between Africa and Europe in African metacritical discourses is clear in Achebe's (1988: 59) submission that:

The plain fact is that we are not Americans. Americans have their vision; we have ours. We do not claim that ours is superior; we only ask to keep it. For, as my forefathers said, the firewood which a people have is adequate for the kind of cooking they do.

While African defensive intellection of this nature is critical in exposing European hegemony in African literature and its criticism, it is handicapped by the fact that it develops as a reaction to the arguments raised by Europeans about Africa. As a reaction, this brand of African-centred discourse lacks the 'authority' to determine the terms of engagement and the capacity to delimit the contours of the critical terrain within which the contestations for 'space' and 'voice' in the criticism of African literature should unfold. Thus, the defensive nature of African metacritical discourses on European critical thought on the African novel cede to European critics the 'authority' to initiate debate, terminate it and determine the terms on the basis of which the debate should develop. However, African critical apprehension towards European critical discourse on African literature needs to be understood within the context of the European critic's "claim to a deeper knowledge and a more reliable appraisal of Africa than the educated African writer has shown himself capable of" (Achebe, 1988: 48) as well as his tendency to place undue

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emphasis on the European cultural conception of reality as universally binding in a world that teems with a multiplicity of cultural perspectives towards phenomena. Achebe (1988: 51) addresses this issue at length:

> In the nature of things the work of a Western writer is automatically informed by universality. It is only others who must strain to achieve it. So-and-so's work is universal; he has truly arrived! As though universality were some distant bend in the road which you may take if you travel out far enough in the direction of Europe or America, if you put adequate distance between yourself and your home. I should like to see the word 'universal' banned altogether from discussions of African literature until such a time as people cease to use it as a synonym for the narrow, self-serving parochialism of Europe, until their horizon extends to include all the world.

Achebe's lack of comfort with universalism as championed by European critics of African literature derives from the realization that it entails renouncing one's worldview (Achebe, 1988: 65), or, at least, checking one's vision with others before articulating it (Achebe, 1988: 65). He considers such a prescription "dangerous and totally unacceptable, for once you agree to 'clear' your vision with other people you are truly in trouble" (Achebe, 1988: 65). He is convinced that the resolution of this cultural impasse between Africa and Europe is possible if European critics of African literature realise, first and foremost, that "Africa is not only a geographical expression…[but] a view of the world and of the whole cosmos perceived from a particular position" (Achebe, 1988: 63) and therefore entitled to the right to interpret phenomena pertaining to it on the basis of values and approaches tied to its experiences. Thus, Achebe (1988: 63) considers it important that "the European critic of African literature must cultivate the habit of humility appropriate to his limited experience of the African world." His orientation towards the projection of the European cultural worldview as universal has immediate implications in the metacriticism of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in which writers such as Marechera, Vera, and Dangarembga are celebrated because of their supposedly universalist outlook.

The radical approach to African literature and its criticism that is definitive of West African literary-critical and metacritical scholarship is to be found also in both the imaginative and critical works of East African authors such as wa Thiong'o (1981, 1993) and p'Bitek (1986). In their works, the two critics place emphasis on the importance of African-originated critical

approaches to African literature. In wa Thiong'o's case, the importance of endemic resources as opposed to European-originated alternatives is clear in his persuasion to the effect that the ultimate destiny of African literature and its criticism is in its manifestation in African languages. The emphasis that wa Thiong'o applies on the importance of endemic linguistic resources in the development of African literature extends to its criticism. This emphasis assumes epic proportions in p'Bitek's (1986: 23) submission that "[i]t is only the participants in a culture who can pass judgement on it…[and] evaluate how effective the song or dance is, how the decoration, the architecture, the plan of the village contributed to the feast of life, how these have made life meaningful." What clear from wa Thiong'o's and p'Bitek's discussion of Europe in African literature and its criticism is the perception of European influences in African literature as pernicious and incapable of facilitating the rational discussion of African literature in ways that would empower and develop African people in their role and place as the creators and consumers of African literature.

The militant tone in Obiechina's, (1971), Achebe's (1975, 1988), Ngugi's (1981, 1993) and p'Bitek's (1996) work on European criticism of African literature is also luminescent in Chinweizu *et al*'s *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature: African Fiction and Poetry and their Critics* (1985). In this particular text, the three critics make no pretensions about their objective to expose what they see as the arrogance of European critics of African literature. Of particular interest to them is the literary critical discourse associated with European scholars such as Povey, Roscoe, Moore, Jones and Larson. Larson's, Jones' and Roscoe's works are also discussed in Achebe's *Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays* (1988). In the same manner as Achebe before them and Amuta after them, Chinweizu *et al* (1985: 8) identify European critical discourse on African literature as colonialist:

> Eurocentric criticism of African fiction stems from colonialist attitudes whereby these critics see the African as an apprentice European whose literary production has no other canons to adhere to but those of whichever part of the Western tradition the critics happen to subscribe to. These critics do not concede the autonomy of African literature. They do not grant it the elementary right to have its own rules and standards, but insist rather on viewing it as an overseas department of European literature.

Chinweizu *et al* (1985) note that the European critic's argument for approaching African

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literature as an addendum of European literature is that it utilises the novelistic genre as conceived and developed in European literary culture and is also largely written in European languages. The three critics find it insincere that European critics should fail to "draw a distinction between European national literatures and non-European literatures in European languages; between English as a language used in literature by many outside the British nation, and English letters as a body of works of the British nation" (Chinweizu *et al*, 1985: 9). It is their contention that "by ignoring or glossing over this crucial distinction…Eurocentric critics are able to perform the imperialistic trick of justifying the application of British literary standards to African works written in English" (Chinweizu *et al*, 1985: 9). The politics of patronage born of the lopsided encounter between Africa and Europe in history is at the heart of these contestations. Appiah (1992: 59) classifies the radical approach to 'white critical thought' on African literature that Achebe and Chinweizu *et al* (1985) represent as "reverse discourse…[in which] the pose of repudiation actually presupposes the cultural institutions of the West and the ideological matrix in which they, in turn, are imbricated" (Appiah, 1992: 59). In developing his argument on the metacritical discourses associated with these Afrocentric critics, Appiah (1992: 56) reasons that radical African-centred arguments are affected by their reliance on the inside and outside, indigene and alien as well as Western and African binarisms. He finds these binarisms retrogressive because "it is [now] too late for us to escape each other" (Appiah, 1992: 72), arguing that the best way foward would involve "turn[ing] to our advantage the mutual interdependencies history has thrust upon us" (Appiah, 1992: 72). While Appiah is persuasive about the Afro-European entanglement as irreversible, his views become problematic when note is taken of the emphasis that he applies on the futility of African resistance initiatives in the face of European universalist triumphalism.

The contention in Chinweizu *et al* (1985) is that, in their argument that African literatures in English should be examined on the basis of European-originated critical standards, Eurocentric critics often ignore that European culture is responsible for the marginalisation of African languages and African-originated schemes of explaining literary and data. The impact of the language debacle that Eurocentric critics of African literature exploit in justifying the imposition of European critical standards in the analysis of African literature has resulted in the development of two diametrically opposed African schools of thought on African literature. The

one places emphasis on the necessity of African languages as the languages of African literature and is exemplified by wa Thiong'o in *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (1981) while the other stresses the domestication of European languages in such a manner as to make them carry the freight of the African experience in history. Achebe's (1988: 50) submission that "let no one be fooled by the fact that we may write in English for we intend to do unheard of things with it" and Thelwell's (in Chametzky, 1988:4) emphasis on the need for "English to be sure, but a subtle English molded and fitted to the poetic necessities, the cultural resonances, and sensibilities of an African language and experience" constitute the touchstone of the second approach. By virtue of its inclination to appropriate the languages of the coloniser, the second school of thought is easy to classify as Postcolonial.

Chinweizu *et al* (1985: 7) also note that the charges raised by European critics in their reading of African literature also have to do with matters of technique, theme and ideology:

> With respect to *technique*, some African novels are said to suffer from inadequate description or inadequate characterization, motivation, psychology and depth, or from alleged problems in the conception and handling of time and space. Others are faulted for being too short or for having thin plots or no plots at all. With respect to their *themes*, some novels are denounced as "situational," and the critical literature is filled with reprimanding laments that too many African novels are autobiographical or preoccupied with culture conflict or unnecessarily fascinated with the African past. With respect to ideological matters, some critics claim that there is too much didacticism or not enough of the right kind. Some cry out for what they consider a "consistent moral attitude," "topicality," anthropological or journalistic documentation, and "local colour".

The three critics find it pertinent that, in coming up with this catalogue of charges against the African literary episteme, European critics ignore three basic facts:

> (1) The African novel is a hybrid out of the African oral tradition and the imported literary forms of Europe, and it is precisely this hybrid origin which needs most to be considered when determining what technical charges could legitimately be made against African novels. (2) The African novel's primary constituency is different from that of the European or other regional novels, and it would be foolhardy to try to impose upon it expectations from other constituencies. (3) The colonial situation imposes a different set of concerns and constrains upon the African novel than upon novels of the imperialist nations.

Against the backdrop of these observations, Chinweizu *et al* (1985: 1) argue that "the cultural

task at hand is to end all foreign domination of African literature, to systematically destroy all encrustations of colonial and slave mentality, to clear the bushes and stake out foundations for a liberated African modernity." Read from a Postcolonial standpoint, their agenda of ending 'all foreign domination of African literature' would testify to their commitment to African literary and literary-critical purism. Bhabha (1994: 46) avers that such purism is akin to "claiming an origin for the Self (or Other) within a tradition of representation that conceives of identity as the satisfaction of a totalizing, plenitudinous object of vision." The *Bolekaja critics'* radical Afrocentric standpoint connects with Achebe's (1987: 50) contention to the effect that "most African writers write out of an African experience and of commitment to an African destiny…[which] does not include a future European identity for which the present is but an apprenticeship." The same emphasis is also to be observed in p'Bitek's (1986: 23) submission that:

> It is only the participants in a culture who can pass judgement on it. It is only they who can evaluate how effective the song or dance is, how the decoration, the architecture, the plan of the village contributed to the feast of life, how these have made life meaningful.

The commitment to autonomous African 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in African-centred metacritical discourses confirms the misgivings that critics grounded outside the framework of the African-centred approach have always held about African-centred theorising on African literature and its criticism as essentialist. There exists a world of difference between the fact that Africans must be the final authority on African literature and the view that 'it is only the participants in a culture who can pass judgement on it.' That white critics have published extensively on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' shows that one does not have to belong to a culture in order to critique it. But what is clear from the meta-analysis of the arguments of African critics of the European economy of critical discourse on the African novel is that African critics of African literature advance their arguments on European criticism of the African novel on the basis of the same kind of critical particularism as Eurocentric scholars. Thus, the arguments of African critics of the European economy of critical discourse on the African novel are rendered no better than the very European discourses that they attempt to contest. Both are confined in their particularity. The need to go beyond the grounds of opposition which posit Europe and Africa as irreconcilable opposites without losing sight of the specificity of the challenges,

concerns and priorities of either of them is critical in realising the contributions that Africa and Europe have made towards each other's literary and literary-critical development. Unlike Achebe (1975, 1988), Chinweizu *et al* (1985) Amuta (1987) who are bound by the reluctance to see anything worth embracing in the European criticism of the African novel, this research strikes a balance between the commendable and problematic aspects of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'.

2.6 Diasporan black critics and European discourse

The metacritical analysis of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in this research is preceded, not only by the efforts of continental African literary-critical scholars such as Obiechina (1971), Irele (1971), wa Thiong'o (1981, 1993), Izevbaye (1975), Achebe (1975), Chinweizu *et al* (1985), p'Bitek (1986), and Amuta (1989) as highlighted above but also by studies in related disciplines such as Political Economy and History by Diasporan African intellectuals. Padmore's *How Britain Rules Africa* (1936) and Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972) are groundbreaking studies in the Diasporan African attempt to understand the various ways in which Europe has related with African people, cultures and economies in history. Padmore's study, for instance, examines the political and economic strategies through which Britain has been able to institute and perpetuate political and economic hegemony in Africa. The focus on Britain in Padmore's work is a euphemism for placing the entirety of Europe under study, given that prior to her ouster by the United States in the post-1945 dispensation, Britain stood as the champion of Western economic, political and cultural interests. Padmore's study fulfills a critical need in the African-centred quest to understand the various ways in which European political, economic and cultural encirclement of Africa is effected and perpetuated.

Padmore's commitment to the critical study of Europeans and the various ways in which they have participated in the affairs of African people is also to be observed in Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972) in which the Guyanese scholar discusses European impact on African development. Rodney introduces and develops his thesis by unveiling how Africa developed before the coming of the Europeans up to the 15th century, providing concrete historical examples of African achievements in various areas of human exertion in classical

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African civilisations such as Egypt, Ethiopia, Sudan and Zimbabwe. He asserts that "after surveying the developed areas of the continent in the fifteenth century and those within Europe at the same date, the difference between the two was in no way to Africa's discredit" (Rodney, 1982: 69). This contention enables Rodney to re-direct focus on "Africa's contribution to European capitalist development [in] the pre-colonial period" (Rodney, 1982: ix), placing emphasis on "how Europe became the dominant section of a world-wide trade system and Africa's contribution to the economy and beliefs of early capitalist Europe" (Rodney, 1982: ix). He also focuses on the trade in Africans as slaves as "a basic factor in African underdevelopment, [and] the technical stagnation and distortion of the African economy in the pre-colonial period." At length, Rodney also addresses the ways in which Africa contributed to the capitalist development of Europe during the colonial period through the expatriation of resources and syphoning of profits. He interrogates "the supposed benefits of colonialism to Africa" (Rodney, 1982: x), arguing that "what the colonialists put in must be weighed against what they halted and what they destroyed in both real and potential terms" (Rodney, 1982: 242). Thus, among other observations, Rodney (1982: 224) brings to light the fact that with the advent of Europe into Africa "Africans ceased to set indigenous cultural goals and standards, and lost full command of training young members of the society."

While Padmore's and Rodney's works attempt to locate the political and economic relationships between Africa and Europe in the context against which they unfold, they are hamstrung by the authors' religious commitment to Marxist analytical implements. The commitment to Marxism denies the two scholars the opportunity to interpret Afro-European relations using critical tools developed on the basis of grounding in African culture and history. While Marxism appealed to revolutionary African intellectuals of Padmore's and Rodney's generations as a radical archaeology of capitalism, it remains an inalienable component of European critical thought, designed to help Europeans come to terms with the economic, political, social and cultural exigencies of their being and becoming. In much the same manner as any other European cultural theory, Marxism is laden with European cultural prejudices towards non-Europeans. If Padmore (1936) and Rodney (1972) had respectively set out to examine "how Britain rules Africa" and "how Europe underdeveloped Africa" on the basis of a combination of Marxist and African-centred approaches, both of them could have emerged with discourses that are readily

accessible to the majority of their African readers. As it is, their failure to accord 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' to African-centred critical approaches lends credence to the myth that African scholars are incapable of developing the critical standards on the basis of which to make sense of African experiences in history. The poverty of theory that characterises Padmore's (1936) and Rodney's (1972) works on Euro-African relations in history resonates with important perspectives for the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in which critics of various theoretical persuasions compete for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the discussion of the various aspects of the black Zimbabwean literary episteme.

Also significant to note from Padmore's (1936) and Rodney's (1972) works is the emphasis that the two scholars apply on the need to place Europe under scrutiny without subjecting Africa to the same critical rigour. In the attempt to understand contemporary Africa, it is also increasingly becoming important to appreciate how Africa herself has also contributed to her own underdevelopment. The application of emphasis on Europe in the analysis of both the historical and contemporary African quandary misrepresents Africa as an innocent victim of European aggression. This study discusses 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in such a manner as to demonstrate that both Africans and Europeans are implicated in Africa's literary and literary-critical development or lack thereof. The analysis of black Zimbabwean metacritical thought on both black and white critical discourses on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' speaks to that commitment.

While Padmore (1936) and Rodney (1972) are concerned with the political and economic implications of European imperialism in Africa, other Diasporan African scholars are more preoccupied with exploring European imperialism as an economy of cultural discourse. Ani's *Yurugu: An African-Centered Critique of European Cultural Thought and Behavior* (1994), for instance, critiques the European cultural worldview from an Afrocentric point of departure, focusing on the structuring of European cultural thought, European image of self and other, European intra-cultural behavior, behavior towards others, and universalism. Ani (1994: 1) makes her understanding of the Euro-African entanglement clear from the beginning:

Europe's political domination of Africa and much of the "non-European" world has been accompanied by a relentless cultural and psychological rape and by devastating

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exploitation...[B]eneath this deadly onslaught lies a stultifying intellectual mystification that prevents Europe's victims from thinking in a manner that would lead to authentic self-determination.

Ani's work places emphasis on African cultural liberation. She argues that "the secret that Europeans discovered early in their history is that culture carries rules for thinking, and that if you could impose your culture on your victims you could limit the creativity of their vision, destroying their ability to act with will and intent and in their own interest" (Ani, 1994: 1). Thus, she urges that the African people's struggle for control over their minds and their cultural tools of making sense of the world must begin "with a painful weaning from the very epistemological assumptions that strangle [them]" (Ani, 1994: 1). In the absence of such a struggle, Ani (1994: xxi) argues that the minds of African people will "still [be] crowded with the image of Europeans as superior beings...a condition which locks our will and freezes our spirit-force." The rallying pedestal for Afrocentric scholars in Ani's (1994: 23) work, therefore, is that it is the responsibility of African scholars "to create systematic theoretical formulations which will reveal the truths that enable [them] to liberate and utilise the energies of [their] people." Thus, Ani's work evokes the intellectual and cultural agency of African people. This renders her work subversive when viewed within the context of European long-term cultural, political, intellectual and economic interests in Africa.

In *The Painful Demise of Eurocentrism: An Afrocentric Response to Critics* (1999), Asante writes back to some of the critics of the Afrocentric conception of phenomena. He engages the work of European scholars such as Leftkowitz (1996) and Howe (1998), addressing issues arising from their attempts to obliterate African anteriority in culture and civilisation building. In much the same way as Ani's (1994), Asante's (1999: viii) concerns arise from the realisation that "Western [cultural and intellectual] triumphalism…reduces other people to the margins of history" and forces them "off of physical, cultural, political, religious and economic terms" (Asante, 1999: viii). Thus, Asante (1999: xiv) queries the thinking that African cultural experiences in history should be "examined as subsets of the European experience." He stresses the need for African scholars to appreciate the cultural and intellectual challenges attendant upon a "framework that views Africa and Africans in a junior light" (Asante, 1999: ix). The liberation of Africa from visualisation in junior light is tied up with the discussion of the discourses that

construct her thusly. Thus, by virtue of the fact that this research discusses matters of 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in 'white critical thought' on the black Zimbabwean novel', it unfolds within the context of the same basic concerns at the heart of Asante's work. Thus, the need to put the European projection of the African experience in culture and history under analysis connects this research with the critical benchmarks outlined in Asante's (1999) work.

Williams' *The Destruction of Black Civilisation: Great Issues of a Race from 4500 AD to 2000 AD* (1987) is both an historical exhumation of the achievements of African people in culture and civilisation building on the African continent from 4500 AD to 2000 AD and a critique of European contributions in the invention of Africa as a cultural and intellectual wasteland. It interrogates European attempts to minimise the contributions of African people to culture and civilization building. It identifies Europe as the active agent in 'the destruction of black civilisation', arguing that it is the responsibility of African scholars to actively participate in the reclamation and restoration of African cultural standards. The text raises critical issues relating to the tendency among African scholars to prefer analytical implements of European origination without coming to terms with the fact that the basic agenda in European scholarship on Africa is "to arrange and re-arrange the world as it pleases them, naming and classifying people, places and things as they will" (Williams, 1987: 18). Thus, Williams emphasizes the importance of endemic paradigms of thought in the quest for a more rewarding appreciation of aspects of African literature, history and culture. The stress that Williams applies on the preponderance of the European conceptual matrix resonates with immediate implications for any research that addresses questions of 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the interactive relationships of the world's cultures and civilisations, particularly African and European cultures and civilisations. The argument in Williams' and Asante's works affirms earlier submissions by Du Bois' (1996: vii) to the effect that "since the rise of the sugar empire and the resultant cotton kingdom, there has been consistent effort to omit Africa from world history, so that today it is almost universally assumed that history can be truly written without reference to Negroid peoples." Taken together, the import of the three scholars' discourses on Afro-European relations is to invite African people to understand that they locate themselves in a perilous position if they fail to find the 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' from and with which to articulate their cultural priorities and framework within which issues relating to them will be discussed. As a metacritical discussion of

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'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel', this research contributes towards the development of that pool of critical discourse that will help African people to come to a more liberating understanding of the nature of Afro-European transactions in culture and civilization building.

Ephraim's *The Pathology of Eurocentrism: The Burdens and Responsibilities of Being Black* (2003) commits itself to "tearing away the veil that for so long ha[s] hidden the mansion of illusions wherein Europeans still dwell" (Ephraim, 2003: xvi). In the unfolding of his investigation, Ephraim (2003: 23) argues that "the mansion of illusions wherein Europeans dwell" confuses many African and European scholars into thinking that all of the world's cultural roads lead to Europe. The hallmark of Ephraim's work is that if African people do not claim their right to define their experiences and the challenges and prospects of their existence, they automatically "grant [Europeans] the right to limit the reality, and hence the aspirations of black life...to challenge, at any time and any place, black people's "pretension" to humanity" (Ephraim, 2003: 18). In much the same manner as Ani (1994), Ephraim finds it paradoxical that Africans should seek inspiration from European culture, given that "the historical record supporting the view that white people have been rapacious and barbaric…is copious and frightening [and] its final chapter is far from having been written" (Ephraim, 2003: 17). Ephraim's work therefore is an abrasive critique of what he describes as the European inclination to thrive on ressentiment, misanthropy, and dissemblance. Thus, the metacritical discussion of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in this research is best seen as part of a wider scholarly project in which African scholars contribute towards the exposition of the ways in which European discourses have either enriched or impoverished the African experience in culture and civilisation building.

2.7 **Conclusion**

'White critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' arises in a complex intellectual context in which it competes for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' with other discourses such as 'black critical thought' on the same literary episteme. This chapter demonstrated that, as bodies of critical thought on 'the black Zimbabwean novel', both 'white critical thought' and 'black

critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' have, to varying degrees, attracted metacritical attention from both black and white critics. This observation is important for this research in that even though it prioritises the examination of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel', a more rewarding understanding of the former is only possible if critics are aware of the linkages and divergences that exist in the various bodies of critical thought on the literature. Thus, this chapter examined the metacritical ideas generated by both black and white critics on 'black critical thought' and 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' and established that there exists multiple points of convergence and divergence in the ways in which black and white critics appreciate the criticism that has accompanied the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel.'

The analysis also demonstrated that even though the criticism of criticism is a relatively new phenomenon in Zimbabwean literary-critical studies, both black and white critics have contributed significant metacritical ideas on literary-critical discourse on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. However, what is clearer is that there is yet to develop an avalanche of metacritical studies deliberately committed to the study of the different trajectories of critical thought on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. This is clear from the fact that the better part of the metacritical ideas on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' are to be extracted from critical works that set out to study the literary texts and not their criticism. Thus, even though a literary critic such as Primorac, for example, has a lot to say on the critical ideas of other critics on 'the black Zimbabwean novel', her metacritical ideas emerge in a context where her priority is in the investigation of aspects of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' and not its criticism. The same holds for Chiwome (1994, 1996), Veit-Wild (1992, 1999), Chennells (1993, 1999) and Muwati (2009). Haasbroek (1974), Gondo (1998), Furusa (2002), Gwekwerere (2004) and Vambe (2005) are exceptional in that their individual works are committed to the criticism of the criticism that has grown around 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Thus, metacritical discourses on the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' remain scanty although there is in existence a huge corpus of critical works from both black and white critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' to sustain a metacritical research of this nature. This research discusses 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' with a view to addressing the anomaly where critical discourses go without metacritical discussion.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.0 **Introduction**

'White critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' constitutes a body of critical discourse in which issues of cultural domination and resistance that frame relations between Africa and Europe are reflected and explored. Thus, the metacritical discussion of 'white critical thought' within the purview of the ways in which it negotiates for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is an undertaking in which power relations between Africa and Europe are theorised in an intellectual matrix in which Africa participates as home to 'the black Zimbabwean novel' while Europe functions as home to 'white critical thought'. In this study, the participation of Africa and Europe as respective sources to 'the black Zimbabwean novel' and 'white critical thought' evokes the Afro-European entanglement in history and the various modes of relationships, ranging from coercion to cooperation, through which historical and contemporary Afro-European transcations are actualised. This research experiments with Afrocentric and Postcolonial critical rubrics in the context of the realisation that these are the two major theoretical approaches that compete for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the development of perspectives of significance in the analysis of the European packaging of literary discourses pertaining to Africa. As an expression of European consciousness of Africa at the level of literature and its criticism, 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' stands susceptible to investigation on the basis of Afrocentricity and Postcoloniality because of the various ways in which it addresses issues to do with cultural authenticity, hybridity, multiculturalism, universalism and others that are also the subject of theorisation in both Afrocentric and Postcolonial discourse.

In anticipation of the deployment of the tenets of the above theories, this chapter explores the relationship that binds theory, history and culture and the implications that this relationship imposes in the analysis of literature and its criticism. The chapter also explains the cultural and intellectual contexts in which Afrocentricity and Postcoloniality emerge and develop as literary-critical theories, demonstrating their relevance and applicability in the meta-critical discussion of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. It also outlines the rationale behind the

selection of these theories as the appropriate critical tools for this research, explaining their strengths and weaknesses in addition to exploring the nexus and conflict of interests that obtains between them. The concurrent utilisation of Afrocentric and Postcolonial critical rubrics in this research derives from the realisation that the contest for 'space,' 'voice' and 'authority' in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' stands likely to be divested of its complexity if it is examined from a unilateral critical standpoint. Achebe (1988: 44) equates the criticism of literature and the criticism of criticism to watching a masquerade whose energy and vitality cannot be embraced if the critic/metacritic adopts a fixed standpoint. Given that "theory, any theory, gains its sustenance from that which it offers" (Gordon, 1997: 4), the openness to more than one critical perspective in this research creates possibilities for the different theories to compete for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the meta-discussion of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'.

3.1 **Theory, culture and history: underpinning assumptions**

Any field of enquiry thrives or languishes depending on the theory or set of theories that it makes use of (Asante, 1992: 99). By their very nature, theories of literature and criticism, like cultures, are "system[s] of interrelated values, active enough to condition perception, judgment, communication and behaviour" (Mazrui, 2002: 3) and are directly implicated in the creation of "patterns for interpreting reality" (Nobles, 1985: 103). Thus, theories possess the capacity to either limit or broaden a researcher's critical vision. They influence the kind of questions that researchers may ask (Nobles, 1985: 104) and are inseparable from the conclusions that may be drawn in the discussion of any given topic. As Asante (1998: 27) argues, "the scientist's knowledge is restricted by the language he or she accepts…[because] only certain kinds of information can be acquired if we employ certain kinds of theoretical rules." In the context of this study, three theoretical issues assume importance. First is the fact that "a [given] literature develops or stagnates, flourishes or withers, strengthens or weakens according to the theories that set the tone for its creative and critical methods and provide concepts and criteria that mark its direction for development" (Furusa, 2002: 17). Thus, the discussion of the concerns in a literary work of art is regulated by the critical tools at the disposal of the critic. Second, every literary-critical theory constitutes a cultural perspective on data. Thus, the acceptance of a particular

literary-critical theory amounts to accepting "a philosophy of life" (p'Bitek, 1986: 12) and its priorities and prejudices. Thus, the selection of a given theory resonates with ramifications in the given area of cultural studies in which the chosen theory is deployed. Third is the fact that since specific literary-critical theories are products of specific worldviews, their efficacy is susceptible to compromisation as they cross boundaries from one culture to the next, given the fact that "[k]nowledge and [cultural] technology best serve the [...] environment out of which they arise" (Chiwome *et al*, 2000: vi). Thus, when literary-critical theories of exogenous origin are summoned to explain, for instance, concepts deemed reactionary in the culture from which they originate but progressive in another culture, a fundamental analytical disjunction is experienced. The crisis is exacerbated if endemic literary-critical theories have been marginalised. The recourse to Afrocentric and Postcolonial theories in this study speaks to the necessity for balance between endemic and exogenous approaches in the discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' and its criticism.

Considering that "literary theories come out of the study of specific literatures...[and] are a product of the study of how literature is produced, who produces it, the circumstances under which it is produced, for whom it is produced and why it is produced" (Furusa, 2002: 16), it is counter-productive to separate the development of given literary-critical theories from the cultural experiences of a given people in history. A people's cultural experiences in history do not only shape their attitude towards themselves and other cultural beings with whom they interact in various departments of life: they also have an impact on the order of priorities in the culture concerned. Ideally, the order of priorities in a given culture constitute the backdrop against which literary-criticism and other kinds of criticism unfold. Therefore, the disregard of an endemic hierarchy of values and order of priorities is detrimental to healthy inter-cultural dialogue. However, theories of literature and criticism do not emerge only "out of the study of specific literatures" as Furusa (2002: 16) contends. They also develop from the study of the political, economic, social and cultural experiences of a given people in history. From such studies, theorists are able to identify patterns of thought in various areas of human endeavour which are then elaborated into principles that can be used to explain patterns of creative thought, artistic representation of issues and the resolution of conflicts in a given literary episteme. Thus, there exists a close link between critical theories as cultural tools of knowledge construction on

the one hand, and the experiences of a given people in various departments of life on the other. The choice of a literary-critical theory in literary-critical and metacritical studies is, therefore, akin to "support[ing] the weight of a civilization" (Fanon, 1967a: 17), given that it unfolds in a terrain fraught with intellectual contestations for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority.'

While it should be the norm that every literary corpus should be read on the basis of theories with which it shares the same cultural and historical backdrop, endemic theories are in most cases handicapped by their hesitancy to self-interrogate. On the other hand, non-endemic theories of literature are also weighed down by the reality of their emergence in a cultural context that is different from the literary tradition that they aspire to explain. The vulnerability of either set of theories to different sets of challenges means that neither of them is capable of furnishing a comprehensive picture of phenomena without the complementation of the other. The susceptibility of both sets of theories to different sets of challenges necessitates the selection of the best critical tenets that both have to offer against the backdrop of the realisation that "no single set of ideas holds all the answers" (Mojale, 2011: 142) in the quest for knowledge. The inability to see beyond endemic critical standards is the *sine qua non* of intellectual in-breeding. It culminates in stunted growth (Chiwome: 1996). Thus, this study makes use of Afrocentric and Postcolonial critical rubrics with a view to achieving meta-analytical balance, given that both theories are susceptible to various kinds of limitations whose implications can be contained if recourse is made to an eclectic critical approach.

3.2 **The Afrocentric perspective**

In this research, Afrocentricity is employed against the backdrop of its commitment to "the centrality of African-originated ideas and values in any analysis involving African culture and behavior" (Okafor, in Robertson, 2010: 11). As a literary-critical theory, Afrocentricity is not only "a way of viewing reality that analyses phenomena using the interest[s] of African people as reference point" (Ani, 1994: 24); it is also "a quality of thought that is rooted in the cultural image and human interest[s] of African people" (Karenga, 1993: 7). Afrocentricity recognises the centrality of Africa (Asante, 1998) as "an axiological reference point of departure for the purpose of gathering, ordering and interpreting information about Africa" (Keto, 1989: 12) in

fields of human exertion as diverse as politics, economics, mathematics, geography and environmental management, medicine, architecture, marriage, information management, conflict resolution, mining, agriculture, sport, tourism and recreation, child engineering, religion, literature and literary criticism. The insistence on Africa as indispensable 'reference point of departure' in Afrocentric thought derives from the understanding that "the quality of location is essential to any analysis that involves African culture [and literature]" (Asante, 2007: 2). In this research, the attempt to unravel the ways in which white critics, for instance, contest or affirm the hegemony of European culture against which they are emerging as literary-critical scholars, is in itself an interrogation of issues to do with location. Thus, as perspective, approach and orientation, location is inseparable from the kind of research arguments that are raised and conclusions that are made. The discussion of African literature without reference to the Afrocentric approach facilitates arrival at conclusions that are out of sync with the lived experiences of the African people. Afrocentricity evinces that if African literature, as Achebe (1988: 96) argues "is man's constant effort to create for himself a different order of reality from that which is given to him; an aspiration to provide himself with a second handle on existence through his imagination", the emphasis on literary-critical standards developed in non-African cultural contexts undermines the cultivation of critical discourses that complement the efforts of the African artist in his struggle for a better world for his people. Asante (1991: 171) is much clearer:

> Afrocentricity is a frame of reference wherein phenomena are viewed from the perspective of the African person. The Afrocentric approach seeks in every situation the appropriate centrality of the African person. In education, this means that teachers provide the students the opportunity to study the world and its history from an African world view...By seeing themselves as the subject rather than the objects of education - be the discipline biology, medicine, literature, or social studies - African [...] students come to see themselves not merely as seekers of knowledge but as participants in it.

The installation of Africa as 'centre' and 'point of departure' in the Afrocentric perspective enables Africans to "view themselves as centered and central in their own […] story…as agents, actors, and participants rather than as marginals on the periphery" (Asante, 2007: 16). To the extent that it emphasises African intellectual agency in the analysis of African literature and the critical discourses that have grown around it, Afrocentricity becomes "a rigorous intellectual challenge to hegemonic ways of viewing, understanding and explaining social and human

realities" (Toure, in Muwati *et al*, 2012: 186) as depicted in African literature and its criticism. As an idea and a perspective, Afrocentricity achieves nuanced refinement "out of the battle waged [by African people] to maintain their dignity" (Baldwin, 1995: 39) in the face of existential challenges engendered by their enslavement and colonisation in history. It is not the reverse of Eurocentrism but "a commitment to centering the study of African phenomena and events in the particular cultural voice of the composite African people" (Asante, in Conyers Jr; 1997: 76).

Afrocentricity applies emphasises on "the groundedness of observation and behaviour in [African] historical experiences, structures, concepts, paradigms, theories and methods" (Asante, in Turner; 2002: 718) against the backdrop of the "usually unconscious [African] adoption of the Western worldview and perspective and their attendant conceptual frameworks" (Mazama, 2001: 388). Thus, the installation of Africa as the indispensable point of departure in the analysis of all phenomena relating to the African experience in history is the major concern of the Afrocentric school of thought. The emphasis of the Afrocentric perspective in literary-critical discourse enables African history and culture to inform all debates on African literature. This makes it possible for African scholars to achieve agency in the development of approaches that are germane to the interests of African people. Asante (in Hudson-Weems, 2007: 35) argues that it is important for African scholars to assume subject position in the discussion of African literature and its criticism because without it, "[they] remain objects without agency, intellectual beggars without a place to stand." The emphasis on the agency of African people in history enables Afrocentricity to dispense with the myth that posits Europe as teacher/centre/subject and Africa as pupil/periphery/object in Eurocentric cultural discourse.

The priorities of Afrocentricity are conceived and developed with a view to challenging European cultural hegemony that began in the 15th century when "Europeans […] colonised information about the world [and] ... developed monopoly control over concepts and images" (Clarke, in Ani, 1994: xvi). The cultural vilification of African people would stampede them into dependency on the European conceptual framework which confuses the thinking of African people because it was not originally developed with them as equal partners but as slaves. The works of leading European philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle to whom European thinkers

look up for inspiration define Africans and all non-European majority peoples of the world as objects of history.

The rise of Afrocentric critical thought is tied to the realisation that Eurocentric scholarship as it relates to African literature and its criticism "serve[s] the bureaucratic function[...] of "locking" Africans into a conceptual cocoon that at first glance appears harmless" (Asante, in Hudson Weems, 2007: 36). As an idea and a discourse, Eurocentrism misrepresents the European cultural matrix as universally indispensable, projecting Europe as the centre of the world and Africa as marginal. Late 19th century European pseudo-scientific theories of cultural diffusion in which allegedly superior cultural values were thought to trickle down from regions of supposedly high cultural development to so-called regions of cultural impoverishment would help reinforce myths of this nature. The European colonisation of Africa would also derive legitimacy from the same belief in the universal indispensability of the European cultural paradigm. The grounding of Europeans in such cultural values would enable them, in the age of slavery and colonialism, to think of themselves as magnanimous cultural big brothers and big sisters coming to the assistance of African people who were thought to be culturally and intellectually underdeveloped. The resultant cultural debacle would vitiate the self-worth of African people while simultaneously ascribing undue credit to Europeans as the sole creators of all worthwhile cultural values. Asante (1998: 23) explains that the impact of such European cultural hegemony is in the fact that it "propound[s] an exclusive view of reality […], creat[ing] a fundamental human crisis … [in which] cultures [are] arrayed against each other or even against themselves."

Twenty-first century Africa is yet to recover from the European misrepresentation of African cultural phenomena. The situation is compounded by the fact that Europeans "have switched on their amplifiers to convey their [cultural] message to the rest of the world [b]ut they have switched off their hearing aid and turned a deaf ear to the global call for social [and cultural] justice" (Mazrui, in Laremont and Kalouche, 2002: 35). The tragedy, as Mazrui (in Laremont and Kalouche, 2002: 52) further notes, "is that of expanded communication and diminishing dialogue." Thus, as a critical theory, Afrocentricity speaks to the development of "the consciousness for a people who existed on the edges of education, art, science, economics, communication, and technology as defined by Eurocentrists" (Asante, 2007: 32). It finds its

grounding "in the intellectual and activist precursors who first suggested culture as a critical corrective to a displaced agency among Africans [who]...had been deliberately de-culturalized and made to accept the conqueror's codes of conduct and modes of behavior" (Asante, in Hudson-Weems, 2007: 30). It emerged from "synthesizing the best of Alexander Crummell, Martin Delany, Edward Wilmot Blyden, Marcus Garvey, Paul Robeson, Anna Julia Cooper, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Larry Neal, Carter G. Woodson, Willie Abraham, Frantz Fanon, Malcolm X, Cheik Anta Diop, and later W. E. B. Du Bois...[to] project an innovation in criticism and interpretation" (Asante, in Hudson-Weems, 2007: 30). The key scholarly figures in the development of Afrocentricity include Achebe (1975, 1988), Asante (1980, 1989, 1998, 1999, 2007), wa Thiong'o (1981, 1993, 1997), Ani (1981, 1994), Chinweizu (1985, 1987), p'Bitek (1986), Williams (1987), Keto (1989, 1995), Karenga (1993, 2008), Carruthers (1999) and Mazama (2003), among others. Before them, however, "African-American scholars trained in political science, history, and sociology such as Leoranad Jeffries, Tony Martin, Vivian Gordon, Kwame Nantambu, Barbara Wheeler, James Turner, and Charshee McIntyre, greatly influenced by the works of Yosef Ben-Jochannan and John Henrik Clarke, had already begun the process of seeking a non-European way to conceptualise the African experience prior to the development of the Afrocentric theory" (Asante, in Hudson-Weems, 2007: 29). Thus, the roots of Afrocentricity are "deeply buried in the struggles of [...] African-American intellectuals against the aristocratic historiography that shaped [the] [W]estern conception of the African/Black historical experience from the dawn of enslavement" (Adeleke, 2001: 22).

3.2.1 The Afrocentric perspective in the meta-analysis of 'white critical thought'

As African intellectuals went up the academic ladder, they came face to face with the fact that the study of phenomena relating to Africa was never informed by African-originated critical theories (Aldridge, in Hudson-Weems, 2004: viii). The dominant approaches were largely Eurocentric and biased against the agency of African people. To the extent that they seldom acknowledged African contributions to culture and civilisation building, but readily defended slavery and colonialism as necessary if African people were to be inducted into culture and civilisation as defined by Europeans, the dominant approaches to the study of phenomena relating to Africa would constitute a cultural and intellectual quandary with mortifying

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implications on the African people's appreciation of themselves. The ideas of Hegel (1956: 93) would assume centre-stage in the development of Eurocentric discourses on the African experience in history:

> At this point we leave Africa, not to mention it again. For it is not a historical part of the world; it has no movement to exhibit. Historical movements in it - that is, in the Northern part - belong to the Asiatic or European world...What we understand by Africa is the unhistorical, undeveloped spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature, and which had to be presented here only as on the threshold of the world's history.

Like Hegel, Montesquieu (1949: 238) would doubt the humanity of African people, arguing that "it is impossible to suppose these creatures [Africans] to be men, because, allowing them to be men, a suspicion would follow that we ourselves are not Christians" while Hume (1987: 214) would emphasise the so-called indelible inferiority of African people:

> The blacks, whether originally a distinct race or made distinct by time and circumstances are naturally inferior to the whites in the endowments of both the body and the mind...You may obtain anything of the Negroes by offering them strong drink; and may easily prevail with them to sell not only their children, but their wives and mistresses for a cask of brandy.

Thus, the picture that African scholars would be confronted with prior to the intellectualisation of the Afrocentric idea projected African people as "passive and depersonalised objects of history rather than subjects capable of assuming command of their destiny" (Harries, 1994: xiii). The misrepresentation of African people would constitute part of the 'equation' of value that would be 'balanced' through the celebration of Europeans as the only inventors, creators and movers in the historical process, epitomising refinement, culture and civilisation. Europe would emerge in such discourses as teacher and Africa as pupil. Thus, the significance of Afrocentricity in the study of African literature derives from the fact that "knowledge about Africans inside and outside Africa has been greatly distorted by reliance on frameworks of analysis, interpretation and perspectives premised on a European centre, a European perspective and European preferences" (Keto, 1995: viii). The distortion of knowledge on data relating to Africa in the Eurocentric paradigm is inspired by the sordid history of Europeans in their transactions with Africans. Frobenius' (1936:56) singles out the European trade in Africans as slaves as the most important factor in the quest to understand European commitment to the distortion of data relating to Africa:

> The slave trade was never an affair which meant a perfectly easy conscience, and it exacted a justification; hence one made of the Negro a half-animal, an article of merchandise ... The idea of the 'barbarous Negro' is a European invention which has consequently prevailed in Europe.

The European distortion of knowledge about phenomena relating to Africa does not only arise against the backdrop of the fact that European supremacist ideas lose significance in the absence of others who can be projected as inferior; it has also resulted in the construction of knowledge about Africa that is not in tandem with the socio-political and cultural interests of African people. 'The black Zimbabwean novel' and its criticism have not escaped the ramifications of this cultural and intellectual discomfiture. Given such a scenario, the significance of the Afrocentric approach is in the emphasis that it places on the importance of critical perspectives created by African scholars in the attempt to explain their literature and the criticism that has attended upon its growth. Thus, Afrocentricity facilitates a radical break with values that celebrate the cultural agency of one segment of humanity at the expense of the rest. This makes it a progressive intellectual approach, given that it urges the necessity "to see into and beyond appearances; to free [oneself] from the sticky grasp of 'received opinions,' whether academic or otherwise" (Cabral, 1980: xi). Thus, the significance of the Afrocentric paradigm in the discussion of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is in the fact that "it prompts change in the course of our practical activity by changing the ground, the basic assumptions of our thinking about [African literature]" and its criticism. This is critical in the quest to reclaim African intellectual agency, given that the critical tools that Afrocentricity evokes are developed from the point of grounding in African culture and history.

3.2.2 The pitfalls of the Afrocentric perspective

As a critical perspective, Afrocentricity urges the different cultures of the world to "bring their gifts to the great festival of the world's cultural harvest [in order that] mankind will be all the richer for the variety and distinctiveness of the offerings" (Achebe, 1987: 60). Thus, it lacks discomfiture with multiculturalism and the accordance of 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' to diverse ways of seeing and managing phenomena. However, to the extent that Afrocentricity specifically concerns itself with the cultures, histories, values, identities and experiences of

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African people, it easily renders itself vulnerable to classification as absolutist. Achebe's (1988: 50) insistence, for instance, that "every literature must seek the things that belong unto its peace, must, in other words, speak of a particular place, evolve out of the necessities of its history, past and current, and the aspirations and destiny of its people" easily lends weight to discourses that categorise Afrocentricity as absolutist. Absolutist theories and discourses urge the discussion of data in homogenising terms, placing emphasis on neat categorisations. This is problematic in a global multicultural context in which the traffic of values, ideas and discourses between cultures and histories, albeit lopsided and unacknowledged most of the times, is the essence of civilisation building. Given the emphasis that it applies on the histories, values, identities and experiences of African people to the exclusion of others, the Afrocentric idea has come in for heavy criticism from Postmodernist scholars such as Gilroy (1994: 1) who attacks Afrocentrists for "trying to create and harness a sense of sameness that does not exist prior to [its] attempts to manufacture it." But even more explicit is Lemelle (in Lemelle and Kelly, 1994: 335) who indicts Afrocentrists for "essentializing an entire people and constructing a non-existent Africa." Taken together, Gilroy's and Lemelle's shared standpoint is that Afrocentricity is reductionist and therefore incapable of availing cutting-edge analytical implements in the study of dynamic aspects of culture such as literature and literary criticism. These critics find it easy to raise these issues about Afrocentricity because of the theory's insistence on the particularity of the African experience in African literature and history.

Asante (1998: 76) minimises charges of the above nature by appealing to the fact that "[w]hen we speak of Africans, we are usually talking of a multitude of attitudes, peoples, and cosmologies, and in this circumstance, to speak of an African mind is to speak cautiously, lest we succumb to a false essentialism." However, what is of immediate significance for critics of the Afrocentric idea as cited above is Asante's (1998: 76) insistence that "[n]evertheless, we speak broadly of traditional African society – perhaps, even African culture." Theoretical formulations of this nature provide critics of Afrocentricity with the weak points on the basis of which to classify the theory as a "dogmatic and essentially irrational ideology" (Howe, 1998: 7) incapable of scientific provenance. In Okafor's (2010: 11) definition of Afrocentricity as "a simple idea that African ideals and values must be centrally situated in any analysis involving African culture and behavior" or Ani's (1994: 24) view that Afrocentricity is "a way of viewing

reality that analyses phenomena using the interests of African people as a reference point", no effort is made to discuss concepts such as 'African ideals and values', 'African culture and behavior', or 'the interests of African people'. Thus, Afrocentricity is found wanting in respect of inadequate theorisation of some of its definitive rubrics. Also hazy in Afrocentric theorising are the ways in which the so-called interests of African people can be distinguished from those of African political kleptomaniacs who always depict their individual interests as the interests of African people. Such poverty of clarity in "the Afrocentric idea" (Asante, 1998) renders it open to political abuse. This provides competing discourses with the much-needed leverage from which to discredit the theory.

Also worth noting in the operationalisation of Afrocentricity in this research is its abhorrence of exogenous analysis. A case in point in this regard is Achebe's (1988: 49) standpoint that:

> The European critic of African literature must cultivate the habit of humility appropriate to his limited experience of the African world and purged of the superiority and arrogance which history so insidiously makes him heir to.

By insisting on the exclusive primacy of the endemic appreciation of African literature, Afrocentricity credits Africans with superior knowledge about the literature in question. Theorising of this nature is oblivious of the mis-education visited upon African people as a result of their enslavement and colonisation in history. The impact of the African experience in slavery and colonialism has been the divestiture of African people of authentic knowledge about their culture and their history. This divestiture makes it untenable for African scholars to claim all 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the criticism of African literature. Kahari's criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in Shona in which he presents Africa as a cultural and intellectual wasteland lacking the appropriate tools to employ in the analysis of African literature is a case in point. African-centred theoretical formulations exemplified by Achebe (1988) claim African predominance in the criticism of African literature in a manner that gives the impression that African culture has remained untouched by exogenous forces. More crucially, the insistence on endemic criticism projects phenomena relating to Africa as conceptually fragile and incapable of standing up to exogenous critical excoriation.

In a global cultural context in which cultures are always engaging each other, it is counter-productive for a culture to insist that it must be subjected to criticism only endemically. Cultural development is a process that benefits from both endemic and exogenous submissions and counter-submissions. In his preface to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, Sartre (in Fanon, 1967: 12) urges Europeans to engage Fanon's work in order for them to develop better self-consciousness, given that the book discusses Europe at length but is not intended for Europeans. Thus, it is critical for Afrocentrists to be able to "view themselves through the eyes of others, [in order to] […] expand […] their perspective of themselves to a multicentric level" (Keto, in Martin and West, 1998: 185). African-centred cultural growth and intellectual development is imperiled if Afrocentric scholars detest contestation from without. This study does not challenge the proliferation of non-Afrocentric discourses on 'the black Zimbabwean novel': it argues that such discourses should be subjected to constant surveillance in order that African scholars and consumers of African literature may develop better appreciation of the various ways in which scholars of African literature contest for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in its criticism. Every given body of thought must prove its worth by standing up to such endemic or exogenous critical excoriation as may be visited upon it.

The Afrocentric insistence that the African experience in literature and its criticism must be approached from the point of view of the experiences of African people in history as well as their group interests creates a fundamental contradiction when Afrocentrists set out to study non-African cultures, histories and literatures as is the case in this research. In the unfolding of such studies, Afrocentrists seldom make use of the standards and critical criteria suggested by the non-African cultures, histories and literatures that they set out to study, a requirement which they expect non-Afrocentric scholars to fulfill when they study African culture, history and literature. African-centred critical texts such as Chinweizu *et al*'s *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature: African Fiction and Poetry and Their Critics* (1985), Ani's *Yurugu: An African-Centered Critique of European Cultural Thought and Behavior* (1994), Asante's *The Painful Demise of Eurocentrism: An Afrocentric Response to Critics* (1999) and Ephraim's *The Painful Demise of Eurocentrism: The Burdens and Responsibilities of Being Black* (2003) are directly implicated in this contradiction which becomes even more glaring with Asante's (1998:1) contention that "[t]he inability to "see" from several angles is perhaps the one common weakness

in provincial scholarship. In addition to the foregoing is the fact that while Afrocentricity does not set out to replace European hegemony with a hegemony of its own, it is handicapped by its dependence on the logic of counter-identification which posits it as a reaction entering a field of intellectual engagement whose boundaries have already been marked by its predecessors. Thus, Appiah (1992: 59) has it that:

> The terms of resistance are already given, and [its] contestation is entrapped within the Western cultural conjuncture [it] affects to dispute…Railing against the cultural hegemony of the West, the [Afrocentrists] are of its party without knowing it…In their ideological inscription, the [Afrocentrists] remain in a position of counter-identification…which is to continue to participate in an institutional configuration [that] one officially decries.

As a reaction, therefore, Afrocentricity is divested of that head-start possessed by discourses such as Eurocentrism that it contests. Since they precede it, the discourses with which Afrocentricity competes for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' are able to constantly re-define the rules of engagement and shift goal posts in ways that perpetually keep Afrocentricity in an intellectual cocoon. The result is that Afrocentricity ends up "inadvertently support[ing] what it seeks to oppose…remain[ing] locked within the mode of thought [it] seek[s] to deny" (Ashcroft *et al*, 2002: 168). This is clear, for instance, in Mutswairo's *Feso* (1956) which, in an attempt "to prove the superiority of the past culture of Africans ends up elaborating an 'alternate' genealogy of blackness…entrap[ing] the language of resistance in reverse discourse" (Vambe, 2004: 27). By locking itself in combat with Eurocentrism, Afrocentricity legitimates Eurocentrism as the point of reference. Thus far, Afrocentricity affirms Eurocentrism as the centre while projecting itself as peripheral. The combined effect of the Afrocentric aversion to exogenous analysis and its dependence on the logic of counter-determination is that Afrocentricity is easily undermined as "an insular, introverted [theory that]…tells us more about the West than about Africa" (Martin and West, 1999:7). Nevertheless, Afrocentricity furnishes cultural theorists with an alternative set of critical criteria that enlarges the range of analytical choices in an intellectual matrix in which the Eurocentric conception of reality has enjoyed exclusive proprietorship in determining the meaning of the human experience in African literature and its criticism. The combination of Afrocentric and Postcolonial critical tenets in this research helps liberate the meta-analysis of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' from the possibility of reproducing

dogma instead of deconstructing it.

3.3 **The Postcolonial perspective**

The realisation that any given theory on its own is incapable of providing critics in any given area of enquiry with an infallible set of ideas for explaining data makes it critical for this research to combine Afrocentric and Postcolonial critical tenets in the metacritical discussion of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. This is in keeping with the contention that studies in African literature "should promote epistemic pluralism by being open to other experiences, because if [they] remain […] inward-looking, [they] might end up being 'ghettorised' and 'exoticised' (Teffo, 2011: 29). Throughout history, cultures that have thrived have been highly eclectic. African culture is no exception in this regard. The African quest for European education in a context in which confidence in African culture also continued to thrive is a case in point. Thus, while Afrocentricity is critical in this study, given that the discourse under analysis discusses 'the black Zimbabwean novel' as an aspect of African/Zimbabwean culture, the Postcolonial perspective provides an alternative perspective from which to discuss 'white critical thought'. The simultaneous recourse to Afrocentric and Postcolonial tenets in this research speaks to the fact that while endemic critical values should be paramount in the analysis of aspects of any given culture, they need cross-validation by non-endemic critical criteria.

As a literary-critical theory, Postcoloniality interrogates "single or unitary ways of seeing" (Jackson, 1981: 36) and explaining phenomena. It emerges against the backdrop of "the inability of European theory to deal adequately with the complexities and varied cultural provenance" (Ashcroft *et al*, 2002: 11) of the cultures and writings of previously colonised people, given that "European theories themselves emerge from particular cultural traditions which are hidden by false notions of the universal" (Ashcroft *et al*, 2002: 11) and are, therefore, incapable of appreciating the plurality of worldviews and cultures engendered by the legacy of Europe's imperialist history (Lindblad, in Rutherford, 1992). Thus, against the backdrop of the mystification of Eurocentrism as the only and indispensable paradigm, Postcoloniality provides an alternative perspective in the discussion of the literatures and cultures of the previously colonised peoples of the world. Like Afrocentricity, Postcoloniality challenges the hegemonic

aspects of the Eurocentric conceptual matrix and its claims to proprietorship over all forms of 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the discussion of the literature and culture of the previously colonised world. The fact that "Africa finds its place as but one among many…spaces for cultural imaginings and identity formation" (Martin and West, 1999: 28) within the Postcolonial ambit resonates with significance in this research, given the entanglement of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in the politics of hegemony and resistance that obtain between Africa and Europe.

Unlike Afrocentric and Eurocentric paradigms which stress neatness of separation between Europe and the rest of the world, Postcoloniality speaks to "the inescapability and legitimate value of mutation, hybridity and intermixture" (Gilroy, 1993: 223) of identities and the need to "go beyond the usual categories of social alienation such as master/slave, free/bonded, ruler/ruled, however important and widespread these may be in post-colonial cultures" (Ashcroft *et al*, 2002: 9). Thus, Postcolonial discourse approaches cultures and identities in terms of their unfinishedness. This is accompanied by the interrogation of discourses that view the human experience in absolutist and/or essentialist terms. The hallmark of Postcolonial critical discourse is the transgression of the given grounds of separation:

> The language of critique is effective not because it keeps forever separate the terms of the master and the slave, the mercantilist and the Marxist, but to the extent to which it overcomes the given grounds of opposition and opens up a space of translation: a place of hybridity…This is a sign that history is happening (Bhabha, 1994: 25).

Elsewhere, hooks (1989: 15) notes that "Postcoloniality can be experienced, enjoyed even, because one transgresses, moves out of one's place [and] [f]or many of us, that movement requires the pushing of oppressive boundaries set by race, sex and class domination." Thus, Postcoloniality "intervene[s] in those ideological discourses of modernity that attempt to give a hegemonic 'normality' to the uneven development and the differential, often disadvantaged, histories of nations, races, communities, peoples" (Bhabha, 1994: 171). It accentuates the importance of interstitial identities which, in and by themselves, are demonstrative of the fact that "[i]t is not possible to return to or to rediscover an absolute…cultural purity, nor is it possible to create national or regional formations entirely independent of their historical

implication in the European colonial enterprise" (Ashcroft *et al*, 2002: 221). This refrain is laid down with both African and European cultures and identities in mind, although it has been operationalised in Postcolonial critical thought with more reference to Africa than Europe.

Postcoloniality entails the destabilisation of identities and notions of self that are usually assumed to be stable and/or immutable. It seeks the dissolution of tension implied by the binary oppositions between centre and periphery, self and other, and master and slave that "underwrote and justified the imperial project" (Tiffin, 1992: 428). By besieging such binary oppositions, Postcoloniality demonstrates its anti-hegemonic predisposition. It emphasises in-betweenness, hybridity, syncretism, fluidity and carnival. Its aspiration is "[t]o abolish all distinctions between center and periphery as well as all other binarisms that are allegedly a legacy of colonial(ist) ways of thinking and to reveal societies [and cultures] in their complex heterogeneity and contingency" (Dirlik, in Mongia, 1996: 294). Thus, in contrast to rootedness or centredness in a given culture, as is the case in Afrocentric thought, Postcoloniality emphasises the fact that:

> The truest eye may now belong to the migrant's double vision…The shifting margins of cultural displacement…confound any profound or 'authentic' sense of a 'national' culture or 'organic' intellectual (Bhabha, 1994: 5).

Where Afrocentricity would, for instance, explain the global African cultural condition in terms of "the West and the rest of us" (Chinweizu, 1978), Postcoloniality "introduces the play of contradictions and contingency" (Vambe, 2004: 2) to foreground the viewpoint that "[t]he reflexive cultures and consciousness of the European settlers and those of the Africans they enslaved, the Indians they slaughtered, and the Asians they indentured were not, even in situations of the most extreme brutality, sealed off hermetically from each other" (Gilroy, 1993: 2). The availability of the cultures of the colonisers and the colonised to each other means that they were able to interact and acquire new meanings and symbols from each other that to speak of them in terms of their purity is to miss the complex traffic of ideas and values that transpired between them. The reduction of African languages to writing by European missionaries and colonial governments in the aftermath of the partitioning of Africa bears witness to such complex traffic between the colonisers' and the colonised's cultures. The 'promotion' of African literature in African languages and the saddling of the literature with the consciousness of the coloniser

(Chiwome, 1996) further demonstrate that black Zimbabwean literary culture in the colonial period, for instance, did not develop outside the context of the impact of European colonialist culture. Thus, even when the black Zimbabwean novelists appropriated indigenous languages and adapted indigenous art forms, the consciousness they peddled could not be entirely African because of the domineering presence of European colonialist values. The packaging of African literature in the languages of the colonial powers as Africans acquired colonial education and the infusion of such African literatures in European languages with a subversive consciousness constitute the other side of the availability of African and European cultures to each other. The participation of white critics in the discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' speaks to the same basic contention that cultures do not develop in isolation from each other. Postcoloniality exploits such Afro-European cultural entanglement to advance the view that "the very idea of a pure, 'ethnically cleansed'…identity can only be achieved through the death, literal and figurative, of the complex interweavings of history, and the culturally contingent borderlines of modern nationhood" (Bhabha, 1994: 5).

3.3.1 **The Postcolonial perspective in the meta-analysis of 'white critical thought'**

Both the analysis of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' and the criticism of the critical discourses that accompany it unfold within the context of "issues of cultural diversity, ethnic, racial and cultural difference and power relations within them" (Ashcroft *et al*, 2002: 201). This is clear in the fact that as products of European culture, white critics are active participants in the analysis of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' and their critical discourses, in much the same manner as the literature they examine, are directly significant in the appreciation of ethnic, racial and cultural power relations as portrayed in African literature. The criticism of issues of cultural diversity, ethnic, racial and cultural difference within which the analysis of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' unfolds is possible in the context of a theory that places emphasis on the fluidity, syncretism and hybridity of African identities. Deriving from the benefits associated with looking in at least two directions at once, Postcolonial tenets such as syncretism and hybridity, for instance, "provide a subtler and more nuanced view of…relationships than the usual 'us' and 'them' distinctions" (Ashcroft *et al*, 2002: 206) that are easy to associate with Afrocentricity. In contrast to the underpinnings of "the Afrocentric idea" (Asante, 1998), "cultural syncretism is desirable because

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it raises the question of African identity in the light of…influences from other cultures exterior to the Zimbabwean experience" (Vambe, 2004: 85). Thus, the emphasis on Postcolonial critical tenets in this research points to the complexity of the cultural context in which both 'the black Zimbabwean novel' and 'white critical thought' are emerging. The complexity of that cultural context underlines the necessity of critical discourses capable of weaving in and out of both African and European literary-critical theories without trenchantly identifying with either of them. The Postcolonial perspective is significant in this research in that it "strives for a more complex view of…relations than can be provided in most views of racial difference" (Ashcroft *et al*, 2006: 206). The 'complex view of relations' that Postcoloniality urges facilitates the realisation that not every idea embodied in 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is detrimental to the development of the literature. Thus, the significance of Postcolonial critical discourse in the attempt to unearth the intricacies of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is in its ability to "interrogate European [and African] discourse[s] and discursive strategies from its position within and between two worlds; to investigate the means by which Europe imposed and maintained its codes in its domination of so much of the rest of the world (Ashcroft *et al*, 2002: 221).

The metacritical discussion of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in this research is not just "a relationship of resistance or collaboration but…a relationship fraught by the very fact of the [definers] and [the defined] having to share the same living space" (Mbembe, 1992: 4). The in-between location of Postcolonial analytical perspectives facilitates the interrogation of the culture of both the former coloniser and his former colonial subjects as embodied, within the context of this research, in 'white critical thought' and 'the black Zimbabwean novel' respectively. Given that the Postcolonial is "a body of works that offers intermediate concepts, lodged between the global and the local" (Gilroy, 1993: 6), Postcolonial in-betweenness and/or hybridity affords the student of Euro-African cultural transactions the requisite space from which to engage and dismantle hegemonic tendencies in either world. This is particularly significant in this research in that while the Afrocentric capacity to engage the hegemonic inclinations of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is unquestionable, the arguments that it fosters require cross-validation from the point of grounding in a different theoretical perspective.

The interstitial nature of Postcolonial critical tenets implies openness to the possibility of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' advancing the interests of both European hegemony and African resistance. That 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' stands capable of advancing the interests of black resistance to European hegemony is historically validated by the fact that during the colonial period, for instance, "some African-led Independent Churches fused Christian imagery with Shona myths and legends to express resistance against both Christianity and colonial education…[such that] although initially the Bible appeared as a form of control, it allowed Africans or the colonized to judge th[e] same colonizer against the standards set by [his] Bible" (Vambe, 2004: 22). The same complexity of the cultural traffic of consciousness between Africans and Europeans is also exemplified by European Africanist historians such as Ranger [*Revolt in Southern Rhodesia, 1896-7: A Study in African Resistance* (1967) and *Peasant Consciousness and Guerilla War in Zimbabwe* (1985)], Davidson [*No Fist is Big Enough to Hide the Sky: The Liberation of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde: Aspects of an African Revolution* (1984)] and Lan [*Guns and Rain: Guerillas and Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe* (1985)] whose works celebrate African struggles for freedom from European colonial settlerism. The hybridity of consciousness that Postcoloniality celebrates is critical in liberating criticism from "conceptions of history that stress linear development…[the] centrality of the Natopolitan world, and [the] peripherality of the non-Western regions of the world" (Saidi, in Rutherford, 1992: 15). In this study, Postcoloniality provides possibilities for back and forth movement between 'the black Zimbabwean novel' and the versions of 'white critical thought' that have grown around it. This is possible because of the theory's capacity to straddle multiple cultures.

3.3.2 **The pitfalls of the Postcolonial perspective**

Postcolonial critical thought is uncomfortable with the persistence of binarisms which separate centre from periphery, slave from master, self from other and "the West from the rest of us" (Chinweizu, 1978). The explosion of such splits and dichotomies is considered critical in Postcolonial thought because it enables transcendence of the perception of transactions between Europe and her former colonial subjects in monolithic terms, thus demonstrating that "history is

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happening" (Bhabha, 1994: 25). However, in emphasising the need to transcend these binarisms, Postcolonial critical thought is oblivious of the fact that it is also counter-productive to completely dispense with such binary oppositions. The contemporary nature of cultural, political, economic and intellectual relations between Africa and Europe, for instance, shows that Europe continues to depend on such dichotomies in its transactions with Africa and the rest of the previously colonised world. Thus, as Ashcroft *et al* (2002: 174) have since noted, "in rejecting the binary structure of…discourses, we may also lose sight of the political, social, and ideological force of, [for instance], racism in [contemporary] society." The Postcolonial commitment to the explosion of splits and dichotomies between master and slave, centre and periphery and "the West and the rest of us" (Chinweizu, 1988) and the accompanying emphasis on the hybridity, syncretism and fluidity of identities can be read to imply the "preference for black writers [and scholars] who can express, or be interpreted as expressing, the great white hope of universal values and standards" (Martin and West, 1999: 30). The challenge with such 'universal values and standards' is that they participate in the invention of Europeans as the originators of all the worthwhile values and standards that the world has ever known. This viewpoint is not only incapable of standing up to searching scrutiny; it has also been thoroughly discredited.

In addition to the above, the emphasis that Postcoloniality places on the indispensability of syncretism and hybridity is usually not accompanied by the realisation that "[a] celebration of syncretism and hybridity *per se* if not articulated in conjunction with questions of hegemony and neo-colonial power relations runs the risk of appearing to sanctify the *fait accompli* of…[the various forms of] violence" (Shohat, 1992: 109) that continue to be visited upon the formerly colonised world. The selective remembrance and sometimes downright amnesia of one's history and culture in the hybridisation of the world's diverse cultures are some of the forms of cultural violence that accompany the celebration of Postcolonial critical thought outside the framework of questions of hegemony and neo-colonialism. Thus, the question that remains unanswered in the Postcolonial conflation of the values and identities of "the West and the rest of us" (Chinweizu: 1978) is: does the leap from culture-specific to fluid values and identities completely nullify the specificity of the challenges, concerns and priorities of the cultures of both the former coloniser and his former colonial subjects? Also, to the extent that Postcoloniality

applies stress on the reality of "the continuity of preoccupations from the colonial period to the post-independence period [and] draws attention to the degree to which independence in itself did not eradicate the influence of the colonising powers" (Ashcroft *et al*, 2002: 195), the theory "lays itself open to the charge that [it] refuses to acknowledge that the [previously] colonised can ever entirely free themselves from colonial influences" (Ashcroft *et al*, 2002: 195). The view that the previously colonised peoples of the world are incapable of completely freeing themselves from colonial influences imposes heavy ramifications on the agency of former colonial subjects. Linked closely to this is the Postcolonial inclination to begin the discussion of relations between "the West and the rest of us" (Chinweizu: 1978) in terms that portray the European experience in culture and civilisation building as unassailable:

> In as much as the most ardent of Africa's cultural nationalists participate in naturalizing – universalizing – the value-laden categories of "literature" and "culture", the triumph of universalism has, in the face of a silent *nolo contendere*, already taken place. The Western emperor has ordered the natives to exchange their robes for trousers: their act of defiance is to insist on tailoring them from homespun material. Given their arguments, plainly, the cultural nationalists do not go far enough; they are blind to the fact that their nativist demands inhabit a Western architecture (Appiah, 1992: 60).

Like many other Postcolonial critics, Appiah accords triumphalist agency to the European scheme of things. The Postcolonial conception of the Western cultural matrix in terms of triumphalist indispensability constructs the resistance initiatives of the 'victims' of Western triumphalism as doomed from the start. What this points to is the impossibility of imagining alternative possibilities of being that are not grounded in the European framework of thought. Thus, there is a sense in which the Postcolonial affirms the very hegemony that it sets out to dismantle. Recourse to Afrocentricity and the emphasis it applies on the radical interrogation of European critical ideas ensures the possibility of a more nuanced appreciation of the participation of 'white critical thought' in the development of European cultural hegemony in Africa.

3.4 Afrocentricity and Postcoloniality: nexus and conflict of emphases

In this study, recourse to Afrocentric and Postcolonial critical tenets is spurred by the fact that both theories emerge and develop as responses to the cultural, intellectual, political and economic dominance of the European scheme of things. The two theories are committed to the

crafting of alternative ways of appreciating the development of relations between the previously colonised world and the West. While Afrocentricity places value on the appreciation of such relations from the point of grounding in African-originated critical rubrics which define and locate Africa as centre and point of departure, Postcoloniality places emphasis on the hybridity of consciousnesses and identities, thus, speaking to in-betweenness and the possibility of back and forth movement between the European conception of reality and the multifarious worldviews of the previously colonised world. Although the two theories' points of departure give the impression that they stand in variance, they are bound by their commitment "towards [the] questioning of forms and modes [of hegemonic thought and discourse]…unmasking the assumptions upon which…canonical constructions are founded, moving first to make their…bases visible and then to destabilize them" (Ashcroft *et al*, 2002: 173). Thus, both Afrocentricity and Postcoloniality are directly concerned with engaging supposedly established canons of discourse such as Eurocentrism, with a view to exposing their contributions towards the impoverishment of human thought and consciousness. Postcolonial criticism, for instance, seeks "to offer ways of dismantling [imperialism]'s signifying system and exposing its operation in the silencing and oppressing of the [imperial] subject" (Ashcroft *et al*, 2002: 175) while Afrocentricity stresses the need "to stop viewing European/American culture as the center of the social universe" (Asante, 1998: 4). Thus, both Afrocentricity and Postcoloniality are resistance theories that seek to unsettle hegemonic discourses and paradigms. Taken together, their anti-hegemonic leanings render them critical in the metacriticism of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel', given the fact as a regime of critical discourse, 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is susceptible to implication in the entrenchment of European cultural and intellectual hegemony.

The separation that obtains between Afrocentricity and Postcoloniality derives from the fact that while Afrocentricity emphasises groundedness in the culture and the experiences of African people in history in the analysis of data relating to Africa, Postcoloniality problematises concepts such as 'African history', 'African identity' and 'African culture' which Afrocentricity locates at the centre. It defines such concepts as indicative of the grounding of Afrocentricity in an absolutist framework, and advances the view that the shortcomings of Afrocentricity can be mitigated by the application of emphasis on the fluidity of the identities of both the erstwhile

imperial powers and their former colonial subjects. In this research, the reliance on a combination of Afrocentric and Postcolonial critical tenets ensures that 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is examined in such a manner as would speak to the complexity of the cultural and historical backdrop against which the discourse emerges. The complexity of the cultural and historical context in which 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' develops will escape metacritics in the event that one critical theory is allowed all the 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' to furnish all the rubrics in the analysis of the discourse in question.

3.5 **Conclusion**

This chapter advanced the contention that theories of literature and criticism emerging from the same culture and history as the literary tradition under analysis are indispensable in the discussion of the given literary tradition. However, this contention is counter-balanced in this research by the emphasis that endemic theories are generally incapable of standing outside themselves and self-critique. Thus, it becomes important to make recourse to theories of exogenous origin that suggest different approaches to the analysis of the issues at hand. This chapter explored Afrocentric and Postcolonial critical rubrics in which this research is grounded. It outlined the historical contexts in which the two theories emerge, examined the tenets that render them significant in the analysis of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel', and unpacked the pitfalls that make their application in this research problematic. This chapter also examined the nexus and conflict of emphases between the Afrocentric and Postcolonial critical perspectives in anticipation of the various ways in which the two theories will cross-examine and cross-validate each other in the meta-analysis of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in this study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the aspects that render qualitative research methods relevant in the meta-analysis of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in this study. The discussion unfolds within the broader context of the co-participation of quantitative research approaches whose tenets will also be referred to in the bid to explain why the qualitative approach is the approach of choice in this enquiry. Thus, the chapter draws attention to the significance of qualitative research methods such as document analysis, in-depth open-ended interviews and questionnaires. It advances the contention that the qualitative research approach is suitable for a research of this nature because it "cultivates the most powerful of all human capacities: the capacity to learn" (Patton, 2002: 1). In outlining the properties of the qualitative research approaches to be used, reference is also made to the metacritical nature of the research. This is important in the attempt to correlate the nature of the research to the instruments employed in order that the research and the instruments may interlock and create a vantage point from which to critically examine the various aspects of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'.

4.1 The metacritical nature of the research

As stated in the first section of the first chapter of this study, this research is a metacritical enquiry into the critical discourses developed by white critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. In this study, metacriticism is understood as a version of critical disputation in which critics in a given area of enquiry engage the concepts, assumptions, theories, methods and viewpoints definitive of a given body of critical discourse. According to Vambe (2005: 90), metacriticism entails "the criticism of criticism" in which literary-critical discourses "will contest other [discourses] and in the process…problematise not only their own [standpoints] but also, and significantly, the very processes by which [discourses] constitute themselves in the form of narratives" (Vambe, 2006: 54). It involves the systematic description, analysis and evaluation of the terminology, logic, methods, and foundations at the centre of any given body of critical

discourse. Thus, the meta-discussion of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in this research is not simply a reaction to, but an exposition of the breath and depth of the said body of thought. Given the fact that "concepts of criticism are essentially contested concepts" (Raval, 1981: 184), the prerogative of all metacritical discourses is "to improve the naming of parts and the using of tools towards helping better criticism emerge" (Gaylard, 1976: 78). The contested nature of concepts bears witness to their incompleteness, vulnerability to continuous re-framing and inability to solidify into bodies of immutable truths.

Part of the persuasions and prejudices that regulate social, cultural, political, economic and intellectual rhythm are embodied in the critical ideas that literary critics generate from their reading of given regimes of literary texts. Thus, the metacriticism of critical ideas that are generated from the appreciation of given bodies of literary texts becomes a phenomenon that enlarges the arena for the construction of a universe of knowledge beneficial to literary creators, literary critics and literary consumers, for, as Asante (1998: 12) has it, "to critique a given reality is to create, among other things, another reality." Furthermore, the possibility of literary and cultural critics succumbing to "the illusion of [critical] completeness" (Vambe, 2005: 90) renders metacriticism inescapable, given its capacity to "modify and challenge…existing interpretation[s]" (Vambe, 2005: 90). Thus, in addition to explaining the intricacies of a given body of critical thought on a given subject, metacriticism enables the development of "better interpretations, fuller understandings, and more effective articulations of the meaning of [critical] goals and [cultural and intellectual] interactions" (Asante, 1998: 45). In that regard, "it is not possible to dispense with meta-commentary" (Vambe, 2005: 90) because it "provides opportunities for enlarging [critical and cultural] understanding" (Asante, 1998: 48). Thus, metacriticism speaks to the need to interrogate all bodies of critical thought on any given literary regime. The liberation of cultural symbols, definitions and motifs is unimaginable outside the context of metacriticism and the emphasis that it places on the transcendence of supposedly established ideas. The aptitude for critical transcendence means that the metacritical approach possesses the capacity to foster the kind of intellectual engagement that will open new vistas in the discussion of contests and counter-contests for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'.

The rationale for the metacritical discussion of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in this study is furnished by Euro-African politics of cultural and intellectual hegemony on the one hand and resistance and liberation on the other. In the unfolding of the Euro-African debacle, literary criticism, in much the same manner as literature itself, is directly implicated in the mapping of the specifics of cultural and intellectual hegemony and the configuration of the contours of resistance. Thus, 'white critical thought', 'black critical thought' and other versions of critical thought on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' emerge and develop in a cultural and intellectual context in which the contest for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the effort to define the meaning of Euro-African entanglement in 'the black Zimbabwean novel' speaks directly to issues of power and marginality. Given that 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is an account of the complex ways in which white critics appreciate the imaginative depiction of the Zimbabwean experience in 'the black Zimbabwean novel', its meta-analysis in this study unravels the ways in which it contributes to either the resolution or aggravation of cultural relations between Europe and Africa. The study also addresses the ways in which 'white critical thought' clarifies or befogs various aspects of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'.

4.2 Qualitative research methods: over-arching remarks

In this research, use is made of qualitative research methods in which "emphasis is on description and explanation more than on measurement and prediction" (Fitch, 1994: 32) as is the case in quantitative research methods. The conception of qualitative research in this study is that it is "primarily an inductive process of organizing data into categories and identifying patterns (relationships) among categories" (McMillan and Schumacher, 1993: 479), describing situations, experiences and meanings before developing more general theories and explanations. The dependency on the inductive process of organising and interpreting data in qualitative research enables the creation of a holistic, largely narrative description of data, which is difficult to achieve with quantitative research methods that start with a hypothesis to be tested, often drawing heavily on existing theoretical knowledge to conceptualise phenomena. Thus, as is the case in the meta-analysis of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in this research, the touchstone of qualitative research methods is the quest for patterns, commonalities

and divergences in the data under analysis.

As used in this study, qualitative research methods apply emphasis on "three kinds of data collection: (1) in-depth open-ended interviews; (2) direct observation; and (3) written documents" (Patton, 2002: 4). This research thrives on the discussion of white-authored literary-critical texts on 'the black Zimbabwean novel', in addition to recourse to in-depth open-ended interviews and questionnaires. Thus, while the critical text on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' stands out in this research as the major primary source of data, the issues raised from its meta-analysis are subject to both corroboration and contestation on the basis of the views to be gathered from in-depth open-ended interviews and questionnaires. As Patton (2002: 4) observes, "interviews [and questionnaires] yield direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge…[while] document analysis includes studying excerpts, quotations and entire passages from…publications and reports, personal diaries and open-ended written responses to questionnaires and surveys." Document analysis assumes centre-stage in this study ahead of in-depth open-ended interviews and questionnaires because the latter set of research methods "lend themselves well to be used in combination with other methods" (Robin, 1993: 227), in much the same way that "a field experiment using structured direct observation could often usefully incorporate a post-intervention questionnaire or less formal interview to help incorporate the subject's perspective into the findings" (Robin, 1993: 227). Thus, it is envisaged that if the metacritical analysis of 'white critical thought' is complemented by data gathered from questionnaires and interviews with white critics and other stakeholders in the literary critical fraternity, it will be possible to emerge with a reasoned account on the ways in which 'white critical thought' negotiates 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'.

What makes qualitative research methods suitable for an enquiry of this nature is that, while "in quantitative research, rigour is reflected in narrowness, conciseness and objectivity and leads to rigid adherence to research designs and statistical analyses, rigour in qualitative research is associated with openness, scrupulous adherence to a philosophical perspective, thoroughness in collecting data, and consideration of all data in the development of a theory" (Frankel & Devers, 2000: 251). This is in addition to the fact that "because inductive reasoning is emphasized, what

researchers learn in the earlier stages of the research substantially affects subsequent stages of the research process" (Frankel & Devers, 2000: 251). Thus, the qualitative research approach is dynamic and often non-linear to the extent that data collection and analysis can proceed simultaneously. The implication of qualitative research flexibility is that, in the light of early findings, subsequent data collection and analysis procedures may be modified to enable the gathering of more specific information and the exploration of new and unanticipated areas of interest. And, unlike quantitative research methods which "require the use of standardized measures so that the varying perspectives and experiences…can fit into a limited number of predetermined response categories" (Patton, 2002: 14), qualitative approaches "facilitate [the] study of issues in depth and detail…[to] produce a wealth of detailed information" (Patton, 2002: 14) which describe and "take us, as readers, into the time and place of the observation" (Patton, 2002: 46). Thus, in this research, qualitative research methods enable the in-depth exploration of issues attendant upon 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' with a view to emerging with a metacritical account that defines 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in terms of its complexity.

This research seeks the *facts* and *attitudes* that define 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. For the purposes of corroborating the contestations of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel,' this research also seeks the *facts* and *attitudes* held by black Zimbabwean novelists and critics. In discussing white critical thought in the context of the views of black Zimbabwean authors about their works and the arguments of other critical stakeholders on 'the black Zimbabwean novel', note is taken of challenges to do with the representativeness of qualitative research data, given that qualitative methods largely draw attention to much fewer cases with a view to "increas[ing] the depth of understanding of the cases and situations" (Patton, 2002: 14). Unlike in quantitative research methods where "it [i]s possible to measure the reactions of a great many people to a limited set of questions, thus facilitating comparison and statistical aggregation of data…[to] give[…] a broad, generalizable set of findings presented succinctly and parsimoniously" (Patton, 2002: 14), qualitative research instruments are handicapped by the fact that "representativeness [is often] assumed when it is suspect [and] [t]here are tendencies for over-reliance on accessible informants, accessible events and plausible explanations" (Robin, 1993: 402). Thus, while quantitative research approaches

allow for a broader study involving a greater number of subjects and limited variables to enhance objectivity and accuracy and the generalizability of results, qualitative research methods as employed in this research are hamstrung by limited coverage. In this study, for instance, focus is on seven white critics whose works are posited as representative of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. This challenge is ameliorated by the fact that the selected critics are the most extensively published white critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'.

Closely associated with the challenge of representativeness is also the issue of bias in qualitative research. Robin, (1993: 383) argues that with qualitative research, "the trustworthiness of the data is always a worry." This challenge has to do with data gathered from interviews and questionnaires where information may either be withheld or fabricated. A research of this nature, steeped as it is in issues of 'space', 'voice' and 'authority', is prone to pitfalls of this calibre, particularly given that qualitative data cannot be analysed mathematically like quantitative data. Thus, qualitative research methods can only yield a guide to general trends and observations, not results. The subjectivity of qualitative research presents challenges in the quest to establish the reliability and viability of research outcomes. However, bias associated with qualitative research is ameliorated in this study through source comparison. For instance, "if two sources give the same messages, then, to some extent, they cross-validate each other [and] if there is a discrepancy, its investigation may help in explaining the phenomenon of interest" (Robin, 1993: 383). Other forms of bias in qualitative research have to do, not with the informants but the researcher. Of particular interest here is the issue of "holistic bias" which entails that "everything [ought] to fit into the picture" (Robin, 1993: 404). This kind of bias constitutes the basis on which Vambe (2005), for instance, criticises Chiwome for focusing only on those novels that drive his argument that the colonial system is the major factor in the underdevelopment of the Shona novel. The genesis of such partiality is to be found in the fact that qualitative methods rely on what Robin (1993: 402) has called "the human instrument," which, according to Miles and Huberman (1984: 230) "is a one-person research machine; defining the problem, doing the sampling, designing the instruments, collecting the information, reducing the information, analyzing it, interpreting it, writing it up."

4.3 **Document analysis**

Given the various challenges associated with in-depth open-ended interviews and questionnaires, this study relies heavily on the meta-analysis of the critical works published by white critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Thus, the primary sources of data in this research comprise the critical works authored by white critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Of specific interest in this regard are the critical works of Krog (1966, 1972, 1974, 1978, 1979), McLoughlin (1984, 1984a, 1986, 1987), Veit-Wild (1992, 1992a, 1993, 1996, 1999, 1999a, 1999b, 2006), Chennells (1993, 1999, 1999a, 2006), Gaylard (1993, 1995, 1999), Shaw (1997, 1999) and Primorac (2001, 2002, 2005, 2005a, 2006,). In addition to the meta-analysis of the works of white critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel', this research also makes reference to the works of black Zimbabwean critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. In adopting this approach, the realisation is that the meta-analysis of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' without reference to 'black critical thought' can only result in the propagation of research conclusions that do not speak to the complexity of the terrain in which 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is emerging. That white and black critical thought on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' compete for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' makes it urgent that the analysis of either should be accompanied by due reference to the other. Black Zimbabwean critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' whose works are referred to in this research include Kahari (1975, 1980, 1990, 1990a, 1992, 1994, 1997), Zimunya (1982), Ngara (1982, 1985, 1996), Chiwome (1996, 1996), Zhuwarara (1994, 2001), Chivaura (1998, 1998a), Gambahaya (1998), Vambe (2004) and Muwati (2009). The meta-analysis of 'white critical thought' on the 'black Zimbabwean novel' also yields more insights if constant reference is made to the latter. Thus, this research shuttles back and forth between 'the black Zimbabwean novel' and the criticism it has received from both black and white critics. By virtue of the fact that it rehearses the issues discussed in both white and black critical discourses, 'the black Zimbabwean novel' constitutes an unavoidable point of departure in this study.

4.4 **Interviews and questionnaires**

According to Burgess (1984: 102), an interview is "a conversation with a purpose" in the context of "knowledge excavation" (Mason, 2003: 226) and construction. Robin (1993: 189) argues that

interviews are suitable in finding out "what people think, how they feel about given issues and what they believe in." In addition to document analysis, this research makes use of in-depth open-ended interviews and questionnaires to investigate the white critical quest for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. The emphasis on in-depth open-ended interview questions in this study derives from the realisation that unlike closed questions which "force the interviewee to choose from two or more fixed alternatives" (Robin, 1993: 233), in-depth open-ended interview questions "provide no restrictions on the content or manner of the reply other than on the subject area" (Robin, 1993: 233). As Cohen and Manion (1989: 313) also observe, open-ended questions are flexible in that:

> They allow the interviewer to probe so that he may go into more depth if he chooses, or clear up any misunderstandings…They encourage cooperation and rapport and they allow the interviewer to make a truer assessment of what the respondent really believes. Open-ended [questions] can result in unexpected or unanticipated answers which may suggest hitherto unthought-of relationships or hypotheses.

The major advantage of using self-completed questionnaires is that they are "very efficient in terms of researcher time and effort" (Robin, 1993: 243). In this enquiry, white critics whose critical works on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' are the subject of investigation will respond to a different set of questions as compared to black Zimbabwean critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' as well as black Zimbabwean novelists. Thus, while the primary research data in this investigation comes from the metacritical analysis of the critical works of white critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel', it is cross-validated by the responses of the white critics to questions and issues raised in face-to-face interviews and questionnaires. The data gathered from the responses of black Zimbabwean critics to interview questions and questionnaires is useful for comparative purposes. Face-to-face interviews and questionnaires used in this research are designed in such a way as to enable the understanding of the intellectual background of both the critics under study and the other interviewees in Zimbabwean literary and literary-critical studies. The prerogative, in this regard, is to locate 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in a context that facilitates the identification of the points where certain critical trends emerge, develop, intersect and recoil from each other. However, this does not rule out the fact that with questionnaires, "it is virtually impossible to determine whether the respondent is giving

serious attention to the questions, or regarding the exercise as a tedious chore to be completed in a perfunctory manner" (Robin, 1993: 236). Thus, data obtained from questionnaires can be superficial and misleading.

The challenges associated with the questionnaire as a research instrument are ameliorated in this study by the use of face-to-face interviews. Robin (1993: 237) argues that "because of the fact of person-to-person interaction in the interview [and] involvement…the quality of data is likely to be enhanced vis-à-vis the impersonal questionnaire." Be that as it may, both "interview and questionnaire responses are notorious for discrepancies between what people say that they have done, or will do, and what they actually did or will do" (Robin, 1993: 191). The same concern is raised by Agnew and Pike (1982: 129) who have it that "on a questionnaire, we only have to move the pencil a few inches to shift our scores from being a bigot to being a humanitarian." In this research, in-depth analysis of the critical books and articles authored by white critics on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' mitigates the limitations of the above research instruments.

4.5 **Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the various research instruments employed in the examination of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in this study. The discussion established the strengths and weaknesses of the preffered research methods with a view to establishing their appropriateness in the meta-analysis of the discourse in question. The chapter makes clear the fact that while the preffered reseach methods in this study are fraught with various challenges, their weaknesses are counter-balanced by their capacity to cross-validate each other. The chapter also spelt out the importance of metacriticism in keeping cultural and intellectual hegemony in check. It applied emphasis on the fact that the containment of cultural and intellectual hegemony is the *sine qua non* of the creation of a multicultural world order in which the world's diverse cultural worldviews are accorded equal opportunity to delimit 'space', discover 'voice' and assert 'authority' in the discussion of global cultural experiences. The chapter made clear the fact that the metacritical character of the research necessitates research instruments that include questionnaires and interviews with both white and black critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' as well as the meta-analysis of their critical works on the the literature in question.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

5.0 **Introduction**

This chapter is the culmination of discussions in the preceding chapters in which the development of critical discourse on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is explored. It narrows down the focus of this study to three selected aspects of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel', that is, literary-critical theoretical preferences in 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel', the classification of black Zimbabwean authors in 'white critical thought' and the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in 'white critical thought'. The discussion of these aspects of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' unfurls in this study with a view to establishing the ways in which white critics either affirm or negate the standards of their culture in their criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. The discussion also aspires to identify the ways in which the various critical discourses converge and diverge in their handling of aspects of 'the black Zimbabwean novel.' The meta-analysis of the ways in which 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' either affirms or questions the prerogatives of European culture is pursued against the backdrop of the realisation that the development of all versions of thought on any given subject is a matter of 'space'. In this study, 'space' speaks to the cultural and historical 'ordering' of aspiration and inspiration in scholarship. It is tied to the dictatorship that cultures and histories exercise over scholarly vision and thought. Thus, the research engages 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' with due cognisance of the possibilities and limitations imposed upon it by the imperatives of the culture within which it is developing.

The chapter also unveils the consistencies and disparities at the heart of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. The understanding is that there exists no literary-critical discourse that is monolithic in its approaches, arguments and conclusions. Even in a context where the critics are products of the same culture and history, their individual aspirations for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' ensure that while their submissions on the various aspects under study may have multiple intersections, the disparities in their critical discourses requires stressing in order that the complexity of their work may be laid bare. The case of 'black critical

thought' in which the critical discourses of scholars such as Kahari (1972, 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1994, 1997), Ngara (1982, 1984, 1985), Zimunya (1982), Matshakayile-Ndlovu (1994) Zhuwarara (1994, 2001), Chiwome (1994, 1996, 1996a), Chivaura (1998, 1998a), Gambahaya (1998) and Furusa (2002) are marked by both convergence and divergence of vision is instructive in the meta-analysis of the consistencies and disparities in 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. The identification and exploration of such consistencies and disparities in 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is possible in this research against the backdrop of recourse to Postcolonial emphasis on the difficulties associated with neat categorisations of data.

Related to the foregoing is the fact that in this study, 'white critical thought' is discussed in the context of its relationships and transactions with other versions of critical thought on 'the black Zimbabwean novel', given that as a literary-critical discourse, 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' emerges in a literary-critical context in which it shares and competes for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' with other versions of critical thought on the same literary episteme. Thus, while this study is not primarily a comparative meta-analysis of 'white critical thought' and other versions of critical opinion on 'the black Zimbabwean novel', reference to the ways in which 'white critical thought' relates and transacts with other literary-critical discourses on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is critical in bringing out the hodgepodge of ways in which critical discourses on a given literary episteme impact upon each other to subvert the neatness of classification suggested by the critics' racial identity. Mutual harmony and discord between 'white critical thought' and other versions of critical thought on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' suggest that in connecting with or recoiling from each other, critical discourses on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' fashion out dialogues and conversations of their own. The harmony and discord that mark relationships between and among critical discourses on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' speak directly to the touchstone of this research; that 'white critical thought' is best understood in the context of the submissions and counter-submissions that the various critical discourses make in the quest for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the criticism of the literary canon in question.

5.1 Literary-critical theoretical preferences in 'white critical thought'

The definitive reality of Afro-European relations at the level of culture consists in their immersion in the logic of opposition in which hegemonic submissions and counter-hegemonic discourses collude to cast Africa and Europe as irredeemably embroiled in perpetual conflict. The conflict that constitutes the essence of these relations is basically a conflict of approaches towards data. In the unfolding of this conflict, European scholars, travellers, explorers, colonisers and fortune seekers "wrote what they wanted [about Africa], interpreted as they pleased, and made their explanations of African history and culture the received ones" (Asante, 1999: 28). The impetus behind this conflict has been, for Europe, the achievement of supremacy through the misrepresentation of Africa as exotic and, for the latter, the retention of what remained of her dignity in the wake of the European imperialist onslaught. The process of misrepresenting Africa as exotic enjoined the propagation of myths to the effect that Africa is a cultural and intellectual blank slate in which no blueprints are to be found for any kind of upward development in any area of human endeavour. Thus, European imperialist discourses of "exploration", "discovery" and "upliftment" would draw on, and reinforce the idea that Africa is the *sine qua non* of emptiness and stasis and, therefore, desirous of European intervention in order to be inducted into culture and civilisation. In the same discourses, Europe would be cast as the epitome of cultural endowment and, therefore, the direct antithesis of Africa.

The management and deployment of discourse in such European grand narratives would evince that European colonisation of Africa was not limited to the mere occupation of physical territory but also the domination of the African knowledge economy. The process entailed editing Africa out of the picture in order that 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the discussion of the African experience would belong exclusively to Europe. In the development of the European economy of cultural discourse on Africa, African literature and its criticism would assume centre-stage as platforms from which both African and European cultural thought would be processed and channeled to facilitate the entrenchment of European cultural hegemony in Africa. The development and appreciation of African literature would, thus, unfold in a cultural milieu in which 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' for both Africa and Europe would be mediated at the level of cultural discourse. African literature and its criticism would constitute part of the cultural discourses that would be implicated in the management of relations between Africa and Europe.

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In this study, the meta-analysis of literary-critical theoretical preferences in 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' unfurls within the context of the uses to which discourse economies are put in the development of transactions between and among cultures. As the discussion will demonstrate, the criticism of literature is one area in which the significance of cultures, worldviews and civilisations is either affirmed or contested, given the fact that every literary corpus speaks of a particular place, a particular culture, a particular history and, therefore, a particular worldview (Achebe: 1988). The literary-critical theories that critics utilise in the processing of literary data invite metacritical exegesis because they all possess the capacity to exert influence on what critics are inclined to see in works of art and how they interpret it. Theories provide critics with an orientation towards literary data. Their overall impact consists in the channeling of the attitudes of readers along a certain envisaged trajectory that may be beneficial or detrimental to the growth, significance and visibility of the literature in question. In the discussion below, the meta-analysis of literary-critical theoretical preferences in 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' below draws attention to the packaging of Eurocentric and Afrocentric literary-critical theories in 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' with a view to problematising literary criticism as an undertaking of significance in the advancement or nullification of specific cultural interests.

5.1.1 Eurocentric literary-critical theories in 'white critical thought'

The most significant observation that students of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' will not fail to make has to do with the grounding of most of the white critics of the black Zimbabwean literary episteme in Eurocentric literary-critical theories. In this study, Eurocentric theories of literature are understood as theories of literature and criticism of European intellectual origination. These theories develop from European culture and history from which they source their inspiration and priorities. This makes them emblematic of the European way of seeing and appreciating reality. The orientation towards data that is promoted by such theories is therefore culturally particular to Europe although it stands capable of being embraced by other cultures. The theories are prone to classification as Eurocentric on the basis of their commitment to the advancement of the agenda of European culture and history. That

agenda consists in the achievement of hegemonic global preponderance for the European conception of reality. The *modus operandi* in the achievement of this agenda involves the marginalisation of all other approaches that subscribe for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the analysis of data. Thus, the most significant variable in the classification of a literary-critical theory or group of theories of literature and criticism as Eurocentric is not just in the reality of its European origination but also in its philosophical commitment to the projection of the European cultural matrix as the only source of all of the world's worthwhile values. Eurocentric theories of literature, therefore, achieve their identity against the backdrop of their allegiance to the European undertaking to transform the entire universe into one gigantic 'space' for the expression and celebration of the European conception of reality.

In this research, the understanding of Eurocentric theories of literature and their place in the discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in 'white critical thought' is informed by Asante's (1999: vii) submission that Eurocentrism is "the result of an ideologically driven desire to…express a type of Western triumphalism that reduces other people to the margins of history" and is committed to the generation of "a cacophony of voices…arrayed against the best interests of international cooperation and mutuality" (Asante, 1999: vii). Thus, as the composite source of inspiration for the theories deployed by white critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel', Eurocentrism encourages the handling of relations between European culture and the rest of the world's cultures in terms of the hegemonic predominance of European values as global interests. This renders it incapable of according 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' to alternative perspectives towards data, hence the emphasis in Afrocentric thought that Eurocentrism "is hopefully on the demise because it is intellectually vapid, scientifically unsupportable, and ethically unsound" (Asante, 1999: viii).

In his bid to delimit the broad outlines of the context in which 'black critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is emerging and developing, Furusa (2002: 3) explains white critical volition to derive critical inspiration from Eurocentric literary-critical discourses in terms of the fact that Europeans, unlike Africans, "have always presented their own creative and critical methods as universal, modern and global and therefore universally relevant to all the literatures of the world" (Furusa, 2002: 3). The European conception of self in supremacist terms that

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Furusa alludes to in his discussion of the white critical volition to source literary-critical inspiration from Eurocentric theories of literature and criticism enables Europeans to visualise all of the world's literatures as explainable from the Eurocentric standpoint. The cultural and intellectual enigma that accompanies this approach is in its inability to acknowledge the significance of African-originated critical values and standards in the development of literary-critical discourses on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. This enigma is to be understood within the context of the imperatives of the so-called 'mission to civilise' as they are spelt out in evolutionist and diffusionist discourses in which Africa is understood as synonymous with the poverty of accomplishment. The general European inability to concede the significance of non-European schemes of explaining aspects of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' participates in the white critical expropriation of all the available forms of 'space', 'voice' and authority' in the analysis of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. The thinking that Eurocentric literary-critical theories are the only relevant theories in the analysis of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' serves to undermine the necessity of dialogue between the literature in question and the literary-critical theories emerging from the same culture with it.

The contention that 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' derives inspiration from Eurocentric literary-critical theories is corroborated by evidence from the meta-analysis of the critical discourse in question. Reading through their critical works, it emerges that all the white critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' discussed in this study demonstrate entrenched grounding in the tenets of Eurocentric theories of literature and criticism. Their critical discourses pay homage to, and derive inspiration from European literary theorists and scholars such as Roland Barthes, Jan Mukarovsky, Mikhail Bakhtin, Jacques Derrida, Michael Foucault, Antonio Gramsci, and Meike Bal, among countless others. The preponderance of the critical benchmarks set by these theorists and scholars invites the conclusion that 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is basically Eurocentric in terms of orientation and commitment. In analysing their critical discourses, it is not possible to miss the approval with which white critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' quote from the theoretical texts of these scholars. Their comfort with Eurocentric theories of literature contrasts sharply with their aversion towards theories of literature of Afrocentric persuasion. The emphasis that white critics such as Veit-Wild (1992: 4) place on so-called "new theories…which go beyond the limitations

of the classical mimetic methods on the one hand and rigorous Marxist and 'Afrocentric' positions on the other" is a case in point. The conception of Eurocentric theories of literature in terms of 'newness' and the packaging of Afrocentric literary-critical theories as riddled with limitations in Veit-Wild's (1992) work bears witness to white critical discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in terms that accord exclusive value and significance to European theories of literature and criticism. This culminates in the presentation of European and African theories of literature and criticism in terms of their separateness. In separating these literary-critical schools of thought, Veit-Wild carves the discursive niche within which to accord 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' to Eurocentric literary-critical theories. Her conception of Eurocentric and Afrocentric theories of literature and criticism in polarised terms stands in tandem with the European insistence on the dialectic of difference and the possibilities of European hegemonic supremacy that it offers.

While Veit-Wild emphasises the limitations of Afrocentric theories of literature in the analysis of 'the black Zimbabwean novel', she does not make a concomitant attempt to show the limitations of European theories of literature. This oversight on her part results in a scenario in which Veit-Wild creates the myth of European literary-critical theoretical perfection. However, all theories are far from being perfect analytical implements. The most that theoreies can do is to furnish scholars with perspectives on data. Given that a perspective is only a way of seeing or an angle of vision, it is incapable of facilitating flawless argumentation on data. The presentation of Eurocentric theories of literature and criticism as flawless is in keeping with European consciousness of self in which Europeans are cast as exclusive proprietors over reason, science, culture, civilisation and intelligence. The contention that Eurocentric theories of literature are more significant is in itself an indictment of the competence of African scholars in the development of critical approaches to the study of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. It creates an intellectual and cultural fiasco in which European critical rubrics find themselves exercising proprietorship over 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the discussion of both African and European literature. Veit-Wild's conception of Eurocentric theories of literature and criticism in terms of superiority over Afrocentric critical approaches identifies her as a key player in the propagation of European hegemony in literary-critical studies on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Her emphasis on the limitations of Afrocentric theories of literature and criticism tilts the scales

of value in favour of Eurocentric theories of literature in the development of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. The result is that Europe is invented as unavoidable centre and point of reference. This is an emphasis that scuttles the possibility of healthy cultural and intellectual dialogue between Africa and Europe and is exemplary of what Achebe (1988: 21) has called "[i]mpediments to dialogue" between the two protagonists. The view that Eurocentric theories of literature and criticism are indispensable in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' as advanced by Veit-Wild in her contention that such theories help transcend the limitations of African-originated critical rubrics is reminiscent of early-day critical approaches to African oral literature that would describe Africa in evolutionist terms.

In her projection of Eurocentric critical rubrics as superior to Afrocentric approaches, Veit-Wild misses the opportunity to achieve unique blending of critical discourses that would be critical in the effort to emerge with an enriched and enriching discourse on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Her undoing is in the acceptance of the myth that Africa has nothing to contribute in the development of critical discourse on African literature. This myth does not only derive from the European conception of Africa as other; it also "runs with frighteningly predictable consistency through European thought" (Ani, 1994: 33). Thus, the polarised presentation of Eurocentric and Afrocentric theories of literature in Veit-Wild's critical work is managed in such a manner as to create the impression that Eurocentric theoretical implements are superior to every other group of theories that may subscribe for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. In that regard, Veit-Wild's critical argumentation on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is in keeping with the dictates of European cultural thought in which Europe is presented as the centre of the universe. Such cultural self-garlanding is not in sync with the imperatives of cultural cross-fertilisation which, apparently, has over the centuries been the touchstone of global cultural growth. The descriptive superlatives that Veit-Wild marshals in her discussion of Eurocentric theories of literature create an aura of superiority for the theories in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel':

> Recent perspectives combine elements of structuralist, post-structuralist and formalist approaches (such as those of Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida and Mikhail Bakhtin) and insights of the New Left (for example Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault), forms of criticism which emerged in the context of and in response to new literary forms in post-

modernist writing. While all such theories assume an intrinsic and intricate interrelationship and interaction between linguistic and social system, they attempt to set criteria for literary analysis which transcend former categorical and prescriptive ideological positions…Such approaches offer fresh, more detailed and varied methods to analyze the new literatures because they are less rigid, less classificatory than previous ones. By emphasising the discontinuities and disruptions in a literary text, its open-endedness, its participation in a dialogical process, they provide flexible analytic frameworks appropriate to the nature of post-colonial and post-modernist texts; they pay tribute to the historicity of such texts, their dynamic and "diachronic" nature and serve to demistify underlying presuppositions (Veit-Wild, 1992: 4).

In Veit-Wild's critical work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel', the persuasion is that Eurocentric theories of literature and criticism are capable of facilitating everything that Afrocentric theories of literature are thought to be unable to promote. In promulgating that point of view, she credits Eurocentric theories of literature and criticism with indispensability and infallibility in the discussion of aspects of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. However, in emphasising the freshness of Eurocentric theories of literature and criticism as they "emerged in response to new literary forms in post-modernist writing", Veit-Wild (1992: 4) does not say anything about the theories grounding in European medieval rhetoric. Osundare (2002:40) clarifies that there is nothing 'fresh' at the base of these theories:

> In a rarely eclectic case of archaeology and necromancy, deconstructionists have exhumed the sagacious bones of Plato, Nietzsche, Schlegel, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Heidegger, Marx, Sartre, Bakhtin, etc. For critical and analytical terminologies (and methods) they have dug deep into the catacombs of classical and medieval rhetoric for such terms as: tropes, topos, metaphor, metonymy, hypostasis, aporia, polysemy, etc., which they have dusted up and sent on 'new' post-structuralist errands. There is thus a significant 'bending over backwards' in post-structuralism, a rummage through the jungle of primeval epochs. How really self-assuredly new, then, are these terminologies, these methods, even in their new significations and functions?…Most times the old-new wine of post-structuralist analytical idioms feel quite ill at ease in the old wine-skin of their theory…The newer things appear to be, the older they really are.

The aura of indispensability and infallibility that Veit-Wild creates for Eurocentric theories of literature in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' does not attend to alternative ways of studying the literature. Thus, the point of departure in her work is that "the way Europe has structured its own thought is exactly as it should be for the rest of the world" (Asante, 2007: 26). Veit-Wild's emphasis on European critical criteria as indispensable in the discussion of 'the

black Zimbabwean novel' is taken up by Primorac (2006: 10) in *The Place of Tears: The Novel and Politics in Modern Zimbabwe*. In that book, Primorac "rel[ies] to a large extent on a set of critical tools formulated within the context of former Yugoslavia." She pursues the trajectory charted by Veit-Wild (1992) who insists on critical ideas generated by European scholars such as Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, Mikhail Bakhtin and others in the study of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Primorac's insistence on the use of Yugoslav-originated critical implements in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' lends credence to the constant refrain in Afrocentric scholarship that European scholarship thrives on the conception of the Western scheme of reality as universal. Viewed from that angle, Primorac's reluctance to acknowledge the significance of African-originated critical rubrics in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' becomes an attempt at 'space' clearance in anticipation of the operationalisation of European 'authority' in the discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. This makes it difficult for 'the black Zimbabwean novel' to suggest the theories on the basis of which it must be read. Thus, the centralisation of European critical theories in Primorac's critical work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' equates to what Asante (1998: 10) has termed 'the aggressive seizure of intellectual space, [which], like the seizure of land, amounts to occupying someone else's territory and claiming it as one's own." Primorac's insistence on Eurocentric critical theories in the discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' obliterates the fact that the analysis of a literary canon on the basis of theories with which it emerges from the same culture and history helps minimise possibilities where aspects of the literature are misinterpreted and distorted because in such a situation, the literature and its criticism have the shared 'space' from which to interrogate and validate each other.

In her deployment of European literary-critical rubrics in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel', Primorac derives inspiration from Eurocentric critical theorists such as Gajo Peles, Mikhail Bakhtin, Aleksander Flaker, Jacques Derrida, Meike Bal, Edward Saidi and Elleke Boehmer. She does not find any shortcomings in the literary-critical theories developed by these scholars from whom she quotes copiously. Thus, she approaches the critical discourses of her models as perfect and infallible. Given the view that all discourses exist in a state of liminality and are therefore incapable of laying claim to perfection, Primorac's views become untenable. The preponderance of Eurocentric literary-critical blueprints in Primorac's critical discourse on

'the black Zimbabwean novel' implies that either African theories of literature do not exist or they are defective if they exist. While the first proposition constructs Africa as an intellectual blank slate, it interlocks with the second to reinforce the myth about African intellectual infirmity. The nullification of Africa as an intellectual blank slate thrives on the belief in the existence of supposedly backward societies that are sometimes euphemistically referred to as 'developing' or 'emerging societies' in Eurocentric scholarship.

The fact that Primorac looks at black Zimbabwean critical discourses in terms of what may be classified as their impoverishment is clear in her rationale for using what she calls Zagreb theories of literature and criticism. This is clear in her contention that "the work of [Zagreb critics such as] Gajo Peles – unlike that of any Zimbabwean critic, to my knowledge – makes available some of the theoretical tools needed" (Primorac, 2006: 47) for reading 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. In justifying recourse to the literary-critical approaches associated with Bakhtin, Primorac (2006: 15) argues that the Bakhtinian concept of the novel, for instance, is appropriate in her discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' because "it links literary history, ideology and genre, something that […] still remains to be done in the context of Zimbabwean literature." In making these submissions, Primorac glosses over the fact that the poverty of the critical aptitude to link literary history, ideology and genre in African critical approaches to 'the black Zimbabwean novel' does not, in and by itself, furnish sufficient grounds for critical recourse to Bakhtin. The justification for the deployment of any given approach is to be found in the benefits that the given approach begets for the literature in question, its creators and its consumers. A critic who imposes a set of critical criteria on a given body of works without due consideration of what that set of criteria achieves for the literature ends up engaging in literary criticism for the benefit of theories of literature and criticism (Furusa, 2002). Theories of literature and criticism are implements of making sense of literary works. By according them undue significance over the literature in question, critics render themselves prone to domintion by the tools they are supposed to use in making sense of literary works. Apparently, this is the hallmark of European civilisation in which inventions exercise dominion over humanity.

In her quest for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel', Primorac (2006: 12) derives inspiration from Croatian scholars of the 1970s and 1980s

who "formulated theories and methodologies of reading which resisted the pressures of Marxist reflection theory and 'immanent' (formalist) approaches to literature, and operated, instead, with a materialist form of structuralism, heavily indebted to Bakhtinian thought." She further notes that she finds "a modified form of this approach useful in the Zimbabwean context because it enable[s] one to refute the claims of Zimbabwean mimetic critics while remaining on their own (materialist) ground" (Primorac, 2006: 12). Primorac finds no contradiction in her imposition of theories of literature and criticism developed in Eastern Europe, and marginalisation of African theories in her analysis of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. She classifies the latter group of theories as mimetic. The immersion of her work in the trichotomy of 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' is clear in her prerogative to refute the claims of Zimbabwean mimetic critics while remaining on their own (materialist) ground. Thus, Primorac reasons that because the novel as a genre is European in origin, its non-European manifestations should be available to analysis on the basis of European theories of literature and criticism.

Primorac's reliance on Eurocentric literary-critical rubrics enables her to advance the contention that "while it is easily described as polyphonic, Marechera's prose also fits Flaker's description of aesthetically-dominated texts whose formal complexity impedes easy communication" (Primorac, 2006: 24). The same basic conclusion is reiterated in the contention that Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns* "is also a *Bildungsroman*…a story of both personal and national emergence…[and] is closer than Dangarembga's to the European type of the *Bildungsroman*…[because it] narrates the entire process of its protagonist's personal becoming" (Primorac, 2006: 130). Primorac does not just project Eurocentric literary-theoretical approaches as indispensable in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel.' She also deploys the theories with a view to compartmentalising black Zimbabwean novels according to the various extents to which they satisfy the theories' specifications as laid down by European literary-critical theorists. Thus, Primorac's critical work exudes the impression that the mission of 'white critical thought' consists in the search for the ways in which 'the black Zimbabwean novel' conforms to Eurocentric critical rubrics.

White critical reliance on Eurocentric theories of literature is also notable for the contestations that obtain between and among white critics in their discussion of the extents to which black

Zimbabwean novelists satisfy the specifications of Eurocentric critical rubrics. While Veit-Wild (1992: 325) is persuaded that Chinodya's Benjamin in *Harvest of Thorns* (1995) "does not resemble the hero of the classic Bildungsroman who, working his way up in society, comes to a clearer understanding of himself and the world, (as Tambudzai does in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*)", Primorac (2006: 130) enjoins that it is, infact, Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns* (1995) that "is closer than Dangarembga's [*Nervous Conditions*] to the European type of the *Bildungsroman*…[because it] narrates the entire process of its protagonist's personal becoming." These disparities speak directly to the contradictory nature of 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' and are indicative of the immersion of white critics in intra-group contestations for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. The use of Eurocentric critical rubrics to measure black Zimbabwean authorial accomplishment is especially clear in Primorac's (2006:159) discussion of Vera's *Under the Tongue:*

> Although it is a story of survival against all odds, there is a sense in which Zhizha's story is *not* the story of a becoming. By this, I mean that it is not a story of the protagonist's maturing, 'growing up,' education or any other kind of mental development leading to identity change…Vera has yet to write a *Bildungsroman*.

Primorac (2006: 27) also argues that "Samkange's *The Mourned One* belongs to a genre Bakhtin calls the biographical novel [which] narrates the typical aspects of any life course: birth, childhood, school years, marriage, the fate that life brings, works and deeds, death and so forth." Her verdict on Nyamfukudza's *The Non-Believers Journey* is that "it is tempting to relate Nyamfukudza's novel to Bakhtin's definition of the *Bildungsroman*: but although Nyamfukudza's narrative follows its hero – the 'non-believer', Sam Mapfeka, who, in 1974, travels from an urban township to a war-torn rural area to attend a family funeral – to the very brink of Bakhtinian personal emergence, this, in fact, does not happen" (Primorac, 2006: 28). By benchmarking her discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' on Eurocentric critical rubrics, the impression that Primorac creates is that the preoccupation in her work is to identify the ways in which 'the black Zimbabwean novel' can be posited as an addendum of European literature. In her work, the pervasive impression is that 'the black Zimbabwean novel' has not developed sufficiently enough to facilitate the generation of indigenous critical theories of literature and

criticism. This impression is strategic in the advancement of the contention that the European literary experience is justified to furnish the standards on the basis of which 'the black Zimbabwean novel' should be discussed. Afrocentrically considered, however, the deployment of critical approaches associated with Bakhtin, Peles and Flaker in Primorac's work helps expand the critical reach of the Zagreb version of Eurocentric theories of literature and criticism. This is clear in the fact that while every attempt is made in Primorac's work to prove the suitability of Zagreb theories of literature in the discussion of aspects of 'the black Zimbabwean novel', this is accompanied by the dismissal of all African-centred critical approaches as 'mimetic' and 'reductionist' and therefore incapable of promoting rational literary-critical discourse on the literature. Primorac's summation of the 'underdevelopment' of the novels that she studies in *The Place of Tears: The Novel and Politics in Modern Zimbabwe* occurs in the context of her perception of Eurocentric literary-critical theories as the basis for reading 'the black Zimbabwean novel':

> Taken collectively, the twelve novels analysed by this book tell the story of the impossibility, in Zimbabwe, of telling a story of such a double emergence: *no* young person in *any* of the novels is shown emerging 'along with the world.' The novels that attempt to tell such stories (*Nervous Conditions* and *Harvest of Thorns*) establish truncated versions of the genre. Others (*Echoing Silences* and *The Stone Virgins*) read like bitter distortions of it. Yet others (by Hove and again Vera) represent static characters in static worlds, or (*Zenzele*) point at narratives of emergence as *absent* (Primorac, 2006: 176).

In Primorac's critical work, 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is to be classified as developed depending on the extent to which it embraces and satisfies Eurocentric critical rubrics. This expectation does not consider the context in which most of the authors write. In an interview, Shimmer Chinodya notes that while he is extensively read and conversant with most of the European theories of literature and criticism, it is seldom the case that one writes with a view to satisfying the specifications of a particular literary-critical theory. In most of the cases, the objective in most of the works of black Zimbabwean novelists is to rehearse the experiences of black Zimbabwean people in history. For Zimbabwean consumers of that literature, a work of art, as Itai Muwati notes in an interview with the researcher, "is good or bad depending on the extent to which it contributes towards the appreciation of the experiences of African people." Thus, in contrast to Primorac's commitment to rigid generic specifications, emphasis in the study

of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' may have to be applied on the ways in which it renders the experiences of African people more intelligible. In that regard, 'the black Zimbabwean novel' becomes a repository of the experiences of African people. Such experiences would then constitute what p' Bitek (1986: 13) has called "ammunition for one big battle, the battle to decide where we here in Africa are going and what kind of society [and future] we are building."

Emphasis on the satisfaction of this or that aspect of Eurocentric critical rubrics as is the case in Primorac's critical work serves to scuttle the significance of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in the African attempt to self-name and self-define. The generation of more knowledge of self is more important in the black Zimbabwean literary experience than the ways in which the literature satisfies European critical standards. Thus, white critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' have yet to come to terms with the fact that while the novel may be of European origins, the uses to which it is put as it is embraced by the different cultures of the world cannot be in tandem with the uses to which Europeans put it. The expectation that the novel in a non-European context should be analysed on the basis of Eurocentric benchmarks disregards not only the journey that the genre has traversed and the transformation that it has undergone in its peregrinations but also the capacity of receiving cultures to suggest the theories on the basis of which their literatures are to be read.

Reliance on Eurocentric literary-critical implements in 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is not limited to Veit-Wild (1992) and Primorac (2006). The Bakhtinian concept of carnival, for instance, is a concept that is also emphasised by other white critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel.' Gaylard (1999: 85) embraces this concept against the backdrop of the contention that it is "not only inclusive of difference and otherness but occurs outside of conventional time and space." As a critical rubric, carnival entails the collapse of identities and the tendency at dispensing with established ways of seeing and doing things. It bears witness to the penchant to invite into existence what may be considered unorthodox. While it embodies possibilities for both innovation and anarchy, European critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' such as Veit-Wild (1992, 2006) and Gaylard (1999) limit themselves to carnival as innovation. In terms of the readiness with which he applies emphasis on carnival as innovation in the discussion of aspects of 'the black Zimbabwean novel', Gaylard's concerns link quite easily with Veit-

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Wild's critical work in which the yoking together of often incongruent concepts in a work of art is celebrated as a manifestation of artistic versatility. Carnival is at the heart of the Menippean novel which, according to Gaylard (1999: 80) is a novelistic genre whose significance in African literature is to be found in the fact that it "attempt[s] to expand the traditionally Africanist or nativist boundaries of the African novel" against the backdrop of the realisation that "the whole world is now what Marcuse called a global village…which a Menippean type approach could address" (Gaylard, 1999: 80).

In Gaylard's critical work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' the preference of Eurocentric critical theories occurs in a framework that separates the theories as intellectually ennobling while projecting African-originated critical rubrics as bereft of the capacity to facilitate rational discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. While it is in order for European literary critics to seek models and inspiration from European culture and history, it is important that they consider the significance of critical values emerging from the same culture and history in their analysis of non-European literature. White critical reluctance to acknowledge the importance of endemic literary-critical approaches explains the ease with which Afrocentric critics are prone to categorise 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' as hegemonic. The emphasis on the exclusive importance of Eurocentric theories of literature in 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' falls short of the realisation that "[t]he world is like a mask dancing [and] if you want to see it well, you do not stand in one place" (Achebe, 1986: 46).

The emphasis on the indispensability of Eurocentric critical criteria in the analysis of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' participates in the misrepresentation of the literary episteme as devoid of endemic critical canons on the basis of which it can be analysed. 'White critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' does not attach importance to the fact that the very existence of a literary canon speaks to the existence, implied or manifest, of theories on the basis of which it can be evaluated. It needs emphasising that the imaginative process does not unfold in a context devoid of theoretical underpinnings. In the very process of creating a work of art, an artist celebrates or castigates, encourages or discourages and mobilises or disbands human consciousness against the backdrop of grounding in a particular frame of values and ideals. Thus, the creative process is as theoretical as it is imaginative. The conception of the African cultural

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and intellectual landscape in terms of emptiness does not, however, begin with Veit-Wild, Primorac and Gaylard in their critical discourses on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. That Africa is seen as insignificant in the development of culture and civilisation in European thought is gatherable from various versions of European scholarship. Beecher (in Cooper, 1988: 228) exemplifies one such version of European scholarship:

> Were Africa and the Africans to sink tomorrow, how much poorer would the world be? A little less gold and ivory, a little less coffee, a considerable ripple, perhaps, where the Atlantic and the Indian Oceans would come together – that is all; not a poem, not an invention, not a piece of art would be missed from the world (Beecher, in Cooper, 1988: 228).

The myth that Europe is the only and indispensable source of all of the progressive ideas that the world needs is infact the touchstone of European cultural and intellectual thought. In a very fundamental sense, Veit-Wild, Primorac and Gaylard reinforce the hegemonic interests of the culture and history against which they are emerging by emphasizing 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' for European critical criteria in the discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Their aversion towards Afrocentric literary-critical theories in their works on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' demonstrates the immersion of their critical scholarship in the agenda of European cultural hegemony.

5.1.2 Afrocentric literary-critical theories in 'white critical thought'

The installation of 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' as the tropes against which 'white critical thought' is examined in this study bears witness to the fact that the discourse is emerging in a context in which it interacts and negotiates with, tolerates and even dismisses the arguments in other bodies of critical thought on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. As is clear in Postcolonial critical discourse, the contemporary global cultural reality is such that identities, cultures, histories and worldviews have to negotiate positions other than their own. In negotiating such positions, they do not only encroach into 'space' that does not belong to them; they also seek resonance for their 'voice' as well as reinforcement of their 'authority' in the narration of the human experience. The transactions that different cultures engage in as they seek 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' over definitions, nomenclature and symbols constitute the essence of cultural

politics. The imaginative creation and critical appreciation of literature is an important platform on which cultural politics unfold, with different critical discourses jostling for significance for themselves and the cultures from which they originate. In the unfolding of cultural politics at the level of literary criticism, the accordance or denial of 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' to different groups of critical theories means that the cultures against which the theories are emerging are rendered either significant or inconsequential in the development of critical discourses. Thus, a critic's choice of a particular group of critical theories is a culturally political choice. This is especially the case in the discussion of African literature in its capacity as a platform on which the encounter between Africa and Europe is imaginatively rehearsed and critiqued.

In the development of 'white critical thought' on the 'the black Zimbabwean novel', the vehemence with which white critics argue the case for Eurocentric theories of literature is accompanied by the negation of Afrocentric literary-critical theories. The negation is manifest in the packaging of Afrocentric theories of literature as mimetic, reductionist and therefore incapable of facilitating the scientific study of the literature. While the fact that Afrocentric literary-critical theories are emerging from the same culture and history as 'the black Zimbabwean novel' provides opportunities for the literature and the theories to speak to each other, their projection as mimetic and reductionist in 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' misrepresents them as detrimental to the development of the literature. This viewpoint is empasised without due regard of the fact that the best motivations to cultural growth are endemic. In an interview, Vimbai Chivaura, a black Zimbabwean critic of Zimbabwean/African Literature in the Department of English at the University of Zimbabwe notes that "external motivations to cultural growth are basically manipulative because they are geared towards the fulfillment of the imperatives of the cultures from which they originate." In the same interview, Chivaura further notes that "we are yet to come across examples where exogenous contributions to any given culture's growth and development have been purely philanthropic." In the case of the Afro-European transactional matrix in which 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is emerging and developing, the historical record shows that the benefits that Africa has reaped from her encounter with Europe have largely been incidental (Rodney: 1972). Thus, the colonisation of Africa would be accompanied by the suppression of her knowledge economy even as the colonial system postured as committed to the

cultural needs of the continent. The portrayal of the African continent as 'the dark continent' peopled by savages and barbarians expunges the myth that European cultural presence in Africa is inspired by the agenda to satisfy the cultural needs of the continent.

Every literary tradition is a way of looking at, and making sense of the world. The way(s) in which any given people look at the world and make sense of it constitute(s) their culture. Thus, a given people's literature is inseparable from their culture. The critical appreciation of any given literary canon is, of necessity, the criticism of the culture from which the literature is emerging. To study 'the black Zimbabwean novel', therefore, is to study the whole body of efforts made by Zimbabwean people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and praise the action through which they have created and kept themselves in existence (Fanon, 1967: 188). The study of others and their cultures is in itself an act of imposition. In most of the cases, it unfolds from the critic's point of rootedness in his/her culture. The process entails harnessing perspectives in a given body of values and bringing them to bear on another body of values. The coming into contact of two cultures results in them competing for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the attempt to make sense of the diverse aspects of the human experience. In the case of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' and its criticism, the rise of 'white critical thought' against the backdrop of the European enslavement and colonisation of Africa creates an agonistic framework which projects the entire process in terms of conflict. The pugilism is clear in Primorac's critical work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' which unfolds against the backdrop of her postgraduate academic experiences at the University of Zimbabwe:

> As a postgraduate student at the University of Zimbabwe in the late 1980s and early 1990s, I was the recipient of a strangely male-centred, streamlined and polarised version of Africa's literary history. The MA course I took on 'African Literature and Ideological Thought' was informed by a combination of Afrocentric and Marxist ideas: on the reading list, there were both the founders of Pan-African nationalism (some of whom advocated the return 'home' of the African diaspora), and Lenin's treatise on imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism. When it came to literary texts, the course represented a succession of literary texts as a gradual (although not straightforward) progression towards a pre-set goal: a 'correct' representation of the essence of 'African reality,' which was tied to the anti-colonial struggle and the ideals of national and cultural liberation. Writers' achievement was measured in terms of their texts' perceived proximity to this goal; that is to say, the relative 'correctness' of their style and 'vision.' For example: the socialist orientation and 'realist' stylistic accessibility of Kenya's Ngugi wa Thiong'o were praised as 'authentic,' while the

quasi-modernist stylistic opacity and mysticism of the Nigerian Wole Soyinka was condemned as un-African, despite (paradoxically) the use Soyinka made of Yoruba myths and beliefs (Primorac, 2006: 7).

Primorac challenges Afrocentric literary-critical theoretical claims for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. In doing so, she comes up with a registry of assertions that depict Afrocentric literary-critical approaches to 'the black Zimbabwean novel' as detrimental in the development of critical disputation on the literature. She looks at Afrocentric literary-critical theories as strange, rigid and separatist, particularly in the manner in which they were applied by her professors as a postgraduate student at the University of Zimbabwe in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In her assertions on Afrocentric literary-critical theories on 'the black Zimbabwean novel', Primorac minimises the impact that European domination of Africa in history has had on the thinking of African scholars and the kind of theories they create in their criticism of African literature. The reluctance to appreciate the impact of European domination on the critical consciousness of African scholars renders it difficult for Primorac to understand why Afrocentric literary-critical theories emphasise the need for excoriating analyses of African literature. Given the fact that 'the black Zimbabwean novel' emerged as part of the African imaginative response to colonialism, reference to Pan-African nationalist consciousness in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' by black Zimbabwean critics becomes part of an Afrocentric attempt to read it within the confines of the framework within which it is emerging.

The rigorous standards in Afrocentric literary-critical theories of literature and criticism are easy to appreciate against the backdrop of the African need to transcend the various forms of oppression occasioned by the lopsided nature of Euro-African relations. In the struggle to extricate African people from oppression by both internal and external forces, Chinweizu (1978, 1985, 1987), singled out as the outstanding pontiff of African-centred literary-critical discourses on the continent, looks at African literature in its various manifestations as commited to the need to "deepen and expand its people's awareness of their world…clarify their history and identity, and thus prompt them to correct action, to throw light on [their] society's moral problems and supply inspiring examples" (Chinweizu, 1987: 258). This catalogue of Afrocentric expectations on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is inseparable from the African existential exigencies spawned

by the historical and contemporary experiences of African people as slaves and colonial subjects. Thus, the Afrocentric stress on the necessity of "a literature of combat" (Fanon, 1967: 178) that Primorac is uncomfortable with is best understood in the context of the need for Africa to regain her freedom and dignity in the wake of centuries of domination by Europe.

Primorac's discussion of Afrocentric theories of literature as detrimental in the discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is oblivious of the fact that Afrocentric theories of literature are critical in the promotion of cultural and intellectual democracy. Her trepidation in the face of Afrocentric theories of literature and criticism in the discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is linked to the thinking that these theories are intent on displacing Eurocentric critical theories in the study of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. This is an aspect that runs with constant predictability in European thought on Africa. The running battles that European scholars such as Lefkowitz (1996) and Howe (1998) fight with Afrocentric scholars on the origins of civilisation and the racial identity of ancient Egypt and its impact on ancient Greek and Roman civilisation is a case in point. However, Afrocentric theories of literature and criticism do not seek the replacement of Eurocentric critical rubrics in the discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. They seek the containment of the version of Eurocentrism "that reduces [African] people [and their cultures and histories] to the margins of history" (Asante, 1999: viii). On the other hand, Eurocentric literary-critical approaches to 'the black Zimbabwean novel' as applied by white critics such as Primorac easily betray the fact that they are grounded in "a framework [of values] that views Africa and Africans in junior light" (Asante, 1999: ix).

The denial of 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' to Afrocentric theories of literature and criticism in 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' subverts the emphasis that Postcolonial thought applies on the need for critics to be open to other ways of explaining phenomena suggested by cultures, worldviews and histories other than their own. Apparently, critics such as Primorac make recourse to the critical ideas of European scholars such as Bakhtin in whose works the yoking together of perspectives from different cultures is stressed. Thus, there exists a fundamental disjunction between Primorac's chosen critical approaches and the direction that her discourse on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' pursues. Afrocentric theories of literature and criticism are unavoidable in the quest to understand the motivations, achievements and

shortcomings of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' because both the literature and the theories speak to the African experience in history. Primorac's discomfiture with Afrocentric theories of literature in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' stands in keeping with the European conception of the whole world as one vast platform on which the European matrix of thought should exercise hegemonic dominion. It is reminiscent of the European consciousness of the so-called 'age of discovery' when European explorers took it upon themselves to name and classify all the cultures and civilisations they encountered with a view to controlling them.

In making her submissions on the place of Afrocentric theories of literature and criticism in the discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel', Primorac suspends consciousness of the fact that all self-respecting people create the theories on the basis of which to explain their experiences as embodied in their literature. The onslaught that she mounts on the Pan-African grounding of Afrocentric speaks to the general aversion of European scholars to radicalised African thought. Emphasis on the philosophy of the founders of Pan-African nationalism in Afrocentric literary-critical theories is an act of homage that demonstrates the theories are not emerging in a context devoid of blueprints. By referring back to the vision of the founders of Pan-African nationalism, Afrocentric literary-critical theories succeed in emphasising the continuity of interests that link Afrocentric scholarship across time and space. The Pan-African grounding of Afrocentric theories of literature in the discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is indicative of the importance of memory in critical discourse. In Afrocentric literary-critical theories, the loss of memory that Primorac urges is synonymous with disconnection to the challenges of the present and the prospects of the future. The identification and pursuit of any set of priorities is untenable against the backdrop of an obliterated memory. Thus, wa Thiong'o (1997: 198) thinks of the past as the source of inspiration, the present as the arena for perspiration and the future as the projected crystallisation of a people's collective aspirations. White critical poverty of comfort with the Afrocentric literary-critical emphasis on the philosophy of the founders of Pan-African nationalism can be understood as part of the European aversion to discourses that challenge European claims to 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in critical scholarship. The marginalisation of Afrocentric theories of literature in 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' belittles Africa as a cultural side-show to Europe, "marginal to history, […] detached from place and purpose" (Asante, 1999: 96). Primorac's (2006: 7) assertion that Afrocentric critical criteria

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constitute a critical aesthetic inspired by rural orature and a pristine African cultural past helps advance the interests of European cultural hegemony more than it clarifies the various aspects of 'the black Zimbabwean novel':

> In terms of methodologies of reading, the course was further informed by Ngugi's own thoughts on 'decolonising the mind,' and by an earlier debate on the direction of African literature spearheaded by the Nigerian critic Chinweizu. Chinweizu and his co-authors wanted African writers to develop an aesthetics inspired by rural 'orature' (oral literature), and to refrain from 'Western,' modernist-inspired stylistic experimentation practiced by Soyinka and others…They assumed that cultural purity could be recovered in postcolonial Africa through firmly fixing and separating 'African' from 'non-African identities and cultural traits. Chinweizu's ideas were (with the added dimension of gender), at the root of accusations that I had witnessed being leveled at Vera. In his response to Chinweizu written in the mid-1970s, Soyinka had preceded Vera in pointing out the reductionist and ill-founded aspects of such critical practices.

The discussion of Afrocentric literary-critical theories of literature as grounded in rural orature and traditionalist aesthetics in 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' creates the impression that Afrocentric literary-critical theories aim at the recovery of African cultural purity "through firmly fixing and separating 'African' from 'non-African identities and cultural traits (Primorac, 2006: 7). This line of thinking in 'white critical discourse' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is based on the view that Afrocentrists believe in "an essential blackness in [all] black people" (Walker, 2001: 23). This view is instrumental in the mis-identification of Afrocentric literary-critical theories in the study of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' as separatist, purist, and essentialist. The characterisation of Afrocentric literary-critical theories as desirous of effecting the separation of African from non-African identities depicts these theories as introverted and therefore incapable of negotiating alternative positions other than their own. This makes the theories conceptually separatist. However, the emphasis in Afrocentric theories of literature is not on the separation of African and non-African identities but the subversion of Eurocentric hegemony in the gathering and discussion of data relating to Africa.

What emerges from Primorac's discussion of the placement of emphasis on so-called rural orature in Afrocentric theories of literature in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is the perception of such orature as part of a collection of relics without significance in the quest to explain the various aspects of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. The manner in which Primorac

writes about African orature is to be understood within the overarching framework of European consciousness in which the dearth of written records in Africa is thought to be indicative of backwardness. While Primorac's classification of African orature as indicative of backwardness has no basis in both science and logic, Afrocentric emphasis on 'centering' (Asante: 2007) and the need to "return to the source" (Cabral, 1981) projects the same body of thought as "an invitation to action and a basis for hope" (Fanon, 1967: 178). The consciousness expressed in these formulations is symbolically captured in Iyasere's (1975: 107) view that "[t]he modern African writer is to his indigenous oral traditions as a snail is to its shell [for] even in a foreign habitat, a snail never leaves its shell behind."

The discomfiture with Afrocentric theories of literature and criticism that Primorac exemplifies is to be discerned in her packaging of the theories as 'reductionist', and the critical discourse they promote as 'accusations' and 'ill-founded'. These labels subvert the scholarly appeal of the theories by projecting them as outbursts devoid of rational substance. The contention that Afrocentric literary-critical theories as outlined by Chinweizu *et al* (1985) are inspired by what Primorac classifies as rural orature and are averse to modernist-inspired stylistic experimentation is made without due consideration of the fact that Afrocentrists look at African orature as a dynamic cultural resource in the struggles that African people have waged throughout the ages in order to survive. It is in the unfolding of these struggles for survival that African orature also draws its lifeblood. As a dynamic cultural resource, African orature thrives under continuity and adaptation. Thus, what is underplayed in Primorac's discussion of the place of orature in the development of Afrocentric theories of literature and criticism are "the poetics of synthesis" (Obiechina, 1992: 220) in which the theories draw "from an oral tradition that is still very much alive" (Obiechina, 1992: 220).

While Primorac rusticates Afrocentric literary-critical perspectives as backward-looking and incapable of scientific dialogue with the changing African experience that 'the black Zimbabwean novel' addresses, it is quite paradoxical that the most successful of black Zimbabwean novels are those that derive their novelistic imagery and metaphors from African orature. Mutswairo's *Feso* (1956) is a case in point. In continental African literature, Achebe's and wa Thiong'o's international appeal is linked to their confidence in African orature as an

avatar of the values that are unavoidable in the attempt to identify African people. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), for instance, has a total of nine embedded oral narratives comprising myths, folktales and pseudo-history. As Obiechina (1992: 205) argues, each of these embedded oral narratives "brings something to the total meaning of the novel, some insight to clarify the action, to sharpen characterisation, to elaborate themes and enrich the setting and environment of action [but] [m]ost importantly…to define the epistemological order in the novel." The same observations can also be made in the discussion of Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) in which "there are at least three embedded [oral narratives]…all framed in the context of a critique of post-colonial Ghana, its politics and its ruling class…to reinforce the parabolic texture of the novel and to give it thematic direction and sharpen its moral force" (Obiechina, 1992: 222).

The tendency to associate Afrocentric literary-critical theories with the desire to go back to the past is, thus, the most voguish of the charges that scholars of Eurocentric persuasion level against the Afrocentric perspective and its significance in the discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. The impact of this particular charge is to disabuse the Afrocentric perspective of its groundedness in rational enquiry. This is a charge that is easy for white critics of Afrocentric literary-critical theoretical perspectives to make because of their emergence against the backdrop of a culture that appreciates progress in terms of putting as much distance as possible between the present and the past. The European predilection to think of progress in terms of distance between the present and the past is especially discernible in Primorac's (2006:125) contention that "[i]n Mungoshi's work, aspects of pre-colonial African culture have the potential to intrude violently into the lives of contemporary men and women at any moment." She misrepresents these so-called 'aspects of pre-colonail African culture' as remnants of a largely obliterated culture. In *Teachers, Preachers and Non-Believers: A Social History of Zimbabwean Literature,* Veit-Wild (1992: 6) evokes the past tense to project African culture as time-bound:

> Like other African countries, Zimbabwe has a rich tradition of orature which *was* an integral part of Shona and Ndebele culture. It served to transmit history, beliefs and the whole corpus of social habits from one generation to the other.

Charges of the above calibre are to be expected within the context of the critic's penchant to raise

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"insignificant or trivial issues to obscure the main points in a discourse" (Asante, 2007: 5). Primorac's depiction of Afrocentric critical discourses as grounded in rural orature discredits the rural socioscape as a site of intellectual deprivation, separating it from the urban and so-called modern. This helps put in place the binarisms that subvert the mutual contingency of spaces and the values generated within them. Primorac's castigation of Afrocentric theories of literature negates the importance of African psychological decolonisation in the aftermath of centuries of European conceptual domination in Africa. As a cardinal trope in Afrocentric literary-critical theories, decolonisation entails the reclamation of the minds of African people. It accentuates the need for African people to discard the slave mentality occasioned by slavery and colonialism. As Chinweizu (1987: 6) evinces, the decolonisation of the minds of African people is an exercise in African self-reclamation:

> The central objective in decolonising the African mind is to overthrow the authority which alien traditions exercise over the African. This demands the dismantling of [European] supremacist beliefs and the structures which uphold them in every area of African life…Decolonisation does not mean the ignorance of foreign traditions; it simply means denial of their authority and withdrawal of allegiance to them.

Without decolonization, all the possible victories that African people may be able to score will be easily given away. Colonised minds are incapable of thinking independently. The fact that the mind is the principal arena on which liberation commences means that without decolonisation, Africans will remain the slaves that imperialism intends them to be. The readiness with which African scholars venerate models developed by Europeans is indicative of the enslavement of the minds of African people. Chinweizu (1987: 5) identifies the dangers that accompany the colonised African's celebration of hegemonic cultures and civilisations:

> [The] veneration of alien cultures leaves the African…susceptible to European domination. It makes him eager for approval and acclaim by Arab and European imperialists. He wants to write and read literature approved by these imperialists…He wants to accept the identity which these imperialists fashion for him…He wants to hear only the version of his history these imperialists peddle. He is eager to join the commonwealths which these imperialists sponsor…Yet these are only thinly disguised continuations today of the old…British, French and Russian empires.

The alarm that Primorac registers with the idea of African mental decolonisation in Afrocentric

literary-critical theories is explained by Fanon (1967: 27) in his submission that "[while] [t]he need for this change exists in its crude state, impetuous and compelling, in the consciousness and in the lives of the men and women who are colonized…the possibility of this change is equally experienced in the form of a terrifying future in the consciousness of another 'species' of men and women; the colonizers." In Primorac's case, discomfiture with Afrocentric literary-critical theories in the discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is best understood as an expression of the general aggravation that European scholars experience when they come into contact with critical discourses that expose Europe as an impediment in the quest for genuine African liberation. The emphasis on African pyschological decolonisation in Afrocentric literary-critical theories arises against the backdrop of the realisation that European domination of Africa is intact, not only because of European political and economic might, but also because "Europe's political domination of Africa and much of the "non-European" world has been accompanied by a relentless cultural and psychological rape…[which creates] a stultifying intellectual mystification that prevents Europe's victims from thinking in a manner that would lead to authentic self-definition" (Ani, 1994: 1).

The emphasis on African decolonisation in Afrocentric literary-critical theories on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' portrays the literature in question as part of the arsenal with which to create a new African dispensation in African freedom. The advent of such a dispensation means the demise of European hegemony in the criticism of African literature. The demise of European hegemony enables Africa and Europe to learn from each other without having to conform to inferior/superior or pupil/teacher categorisations. Thus, decolonisation enables the understanding of non-African cultures and civilisations as "part of the harvest of human experience" (Chinweizu, 1987: 7) that can be invoked in African development projects "provided they are consistent with African cultural independence" (Chinweizu, 1987: 7). Decolonisation is a space-clearing undertaking that enables the effective functioning of the minds of formerly colonised African people. It attracts vitriolic criticism from white critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' because it subverts European literary-critical hegemony in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. While Afrocentric literary-critical emphasis on the decolonisation of the minds of African people is necessitated by the realisation that "[t]he minds of African people are still crowded with the image of Europeans as superior beings" (Ani, 1994: xxi), its castigation in

'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' minimises what African people can do for themselves in the struggle to regain mastery over their destiny. wa Thiong'o (1981: 3) thinks of the arsenal arrayed against the interests of African people in terms of a cultural bomb:

> The biggest weapon wielded and actually daily unleashed by imperialism against the[e] collective defiance [of African people to European hegemony] is the cultural bomb. The effect of a cultural bomb is to annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. It makes them see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement and it makes them want to distance themselves from that wasteland…It even plants serious doubts about the moral rightness of struggle. Possibilities of triumph or victory are seen as remote, ridiculous dreams. The intended results are despair, despondency and a collective death-wish.

In the development of Afrocentric literary-critical discourses, decolonisation constitutes a call to intellectual belligerency. It embellishes African literary-critical discourse with a radical dimension that bespeaks African commitment to the definition of European discourse in terms of its commitment to the expropriation of all the available 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. The democratisation of literary-critical discourses on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' allows the development of what Asante (in Hudson-Weems, 2007: 35) has termed "pluralism without hierarchy." The entire project clears 'space' for hitherto suppressed consciousnesses to assume significance as part of what wa Thiong'o (1993: vii) has called "a common global culture" in which all cultural flowers have the right and the opportunity to bloom. Thus, even when Primorac's discomfiture with the decolonisation agenda in Afrocentric literary-critical theories is considered from a Postcolonial perspective and the emphasis that it applies on the availability of all cultures and histories to each other, it is found wanting in that it emerges in the context of the critic's desire to hold on to entrenched Eurocentric approaches in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'.

Primorac's discomfiture with Afrocentric literary-critical theories in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' does not emerge in a vacuum. It is anticipated in Gaylard's (1999:99) contention that "[t]he younger generation of African artists does not want to bind itself to folklore and tales, because it is precisely this imposed restriction to the exotic, and in the end, to the primitive that entails an acceptance of Western hegemony." What is undermined in Veit-

Wild's (1992), Gaylard's (1999) and Primorac's (2006) critical works on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is that every society reserves the right to induct its members into its culture, history and civilisation in a manner that it deems desirable as long as such a project does not belittle other people and their cultures and civilisations (Asante: 2007). In the development of Afrocentric literary-critical theories, the emphasis is not so much on the retrieval of pristine African culture but the acceptance of African cultural values as instructive in the development of the ideas on the basis of which to interpret African literature in ways that would help liberate and empower African people.

Gaylard, like Primorac, writes condescendingly of African folklore as exotic and primitive. His discourse is reminiscent of erstwhile European anthropological 'scholarship' in which Africa is cast as the home of the absurd. The imperative in such 'scholarship', as in Gaylard's, is to invent differences between Africa and Europe in favour of the latter. Gaylard's packaging of African folklore in uncomplimentary terms infects African students and critics of African literature with a brand of "intellectual meningitis" (Chinweizu, 1978: 22) that expresses itself as African aversion towards self. Such aversion becomes cardinal in compelling students and critics of African literature to look up, for inspiration, to the very detractors of their culture and the consciousness that it inspires. Thus, what Gaylard is engaged in is the conscription of the minds of African students and critics of African literature into serving the interests of cultures that have historically benefited from the African crisis of consciousness which can only be ameliorated through "an intellectual bath in which [the victims] need one another's help to scrub those nooks of [their] minds which [they] cannot scour by [them]selves" (Chinweizu, 1987: 9). The uncomplimentary depiction of African folklore in Gaylard's critical work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' can only culminate in the production of African minds arrayed against Africa's best interests. It occurs in the context of the European realisation that cultural genocide is indispensable in the undertaking to make slaves out of any given group of people.

African folklore/orature achieves relevance in the development of Afrocentric literary-critical theories against the backdrop of its pertinency in the quest for a better understanding of the challenges that African people face. As Mutasa and Muwati (2009: 159) argue, African orature/folklore is best understood as "a form of indigenous intellectual resources that African

people use to get the best out of life." It embodies the experiences and teachings of African ancients and is, therefore, directly relevant in contemporary African attempts at self-definition. In the development of African literature, the historical epochs from which such African values as African authors may desire to make use of in their imaginative works are to be sourced is of no consequence in determining their significance. What needs stressing is that as part of "the philosophy of life of [African] people – their controlling consciousness which…captures their lived experiences" (Mutasa and Muwati, 2009: 160), Afican orature/folklore "is not past, traditional and fixated [although] it has its roots in the past" (Mutasa and Muwati, 2009: 160). The fact that the most successful black Zimbabwean novelists make use of blueprints from African culture vindicate this fact. Mabasa's *Mapenzi* (1999), for example, is an outstanding black Zimbabwean novel in which the author "uses the Shona people's oral art forms in a manner that is ideologically and pedagogically empowering" (Mutasa and Muwati, 2008: 157). Through recourse to folklore/orature, Mabasa is able, in the novel, to "overcome[…] both self-censorship and real or imagined state censorship" (Mutasa and Muwati, 2009: 157).

The uses to which Mabasa puts Shona orature/folklore demonstrate that it is a dynamic vehicle for communicationg sensitive truths without appearing to be doing so. It carries the authority of the past in the effort to win the present. It validates the ancestors as creators of timeless philosophies of life from which African people will avoid drawing inspiration to their own disadvantage. When it is encooporated into 'the black Zimbabwean novel', orature/folklore does not precipitate novelistic under-development as Gaylard would argue. Instead, it diversifies writers' narrative options while at the same time endorsing the staying power of the African knowledge economy whose demise is the goal that imperialism must realise in order to impose permanent slavery on Africa. Gaylard's position of orature/folklore in Afrocentic theories of literature and criticism on is, therefore, to be understood within the context of the European struggle to divest Africa of a cultural anchor from which to resist imperialism.

While Mabasa deploys orature in a variety of ways that project it as "the incontestable reservoir of the values, sensibilities, aesthetics, and achievements of traditional African thought and imagination…[and] the ultimate guidepost and point of departure for a modern liberated African literature" (Chinweizu *et al*, 1985: 2), its vulnerability, like any other medium of thought, to

imaginative manipulation needs noting. Black Zimbabwean novelists who have contributed to the entrenchment of colonialism, for instance, have had to rely on African folkloric discourse. The castigation of Africans whom colonialism considered shiftless such as Matigimu, and the reference to the spirit of Chaminuka as supportive of African passivity in the face of colonialism in Chidzero's *Nzvengamutsvairo* (1958) are enduring examples of the black Zimbabwean novelist's manipulating African folklore/orature with a view to legitimating imperialism. More examples abound in Chakaipa's Shona novels in which the African oral story-telling tradition is adapted to project African people as masters of a barbaric destiny. The conflicting uses to which African folklore/orature is put in 'the black Zimbabwean novel' necessitate that Afrocentric literary-critical theories should refer back to the folklore/orature so that it becomes possible to identify those instances in which it is deployed to the detriment of African people.

The so-called 'younger generation of African artists' who do not desire, as Gaylard argues, to be bound to folklore/orature, make conscious and extensive use of it. Marechera is one such black Zimbabwean novelist whom Gaylard identifies as averse to African folklore/orature. However, in *The House of Hunger* (1978), Marechera derives part of his imagery from African folklore/orature. Although this does not make Marechera an Afrocentric novelist as Primorac would contend with reference to Soyinka, it shows that the assertion that these writers are anxious to completely detach from African folklore/orature cannot stand up to searching scrutiny. The story entitled "The Resilience of Human Roots" (Marechera, 1978: 128) in which a young man rebels against his father and travels to the end of the earth where he finds freedom only to return home to be met by the same father who declares authoritatively that "[a]ll this time you thought you were actually away from me, you have been right here in my palm" is derived from Shona/African folklore/orature. The story also makes reference to man-fish and humans who metamorphose into various kinds of animals. All these are part of the narrative paraphernalia of African folklore/orature. In the last three pages of *The House of Hunger* (Marechera, 1978: 79 - 82) the omniscient narrator's father tells stories derived from the African oral story-telling tradition. Thus, if Marechera is indeed a leading literary figure in Gaylard's younger generation of black Zimbabwean novelists who do not desire to be tied to African folklore/orature, it becomes contradictory for Gaylard to insist that the author's generation is averse to African folklore/orature.

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Marechera is not the only black Zimbabwean author in Gaylard's so-called younger generation of black Zimbabwean writers who makes recourse to African orature/folklore. Mungoshi is another supposedly younger generation black Zimbabwean author who draws substantially from African orature/folklore in his novels, particularly the internationally-acclaimed *Waiting for the Rain* (1975) in which the Old Man and Old Mandisa stand for the staying power of African cultural values. As occupants of the chair of African history and culture in the novel, they serve as the vehicles through which Mungoshi's viewpoints are channeled in the novel. The Old Man inducts Garabha into the myths surrounding the origins of the Mandengu family. He is also the custodian of what Vambe (2004: 55) has called "drum culture" which is "a form of spiritual scaffolding that provides reassurance about the undying testament of the 'traditional' African culture in the face of the [colonialist] onslaught" (Vambe, 2004: 55). In addition to the Old Man and Old Mandisa is Matandangoma, the medicine-woman who digs into African orature/folklore to emerge with the Magaba folktale in a last-minute attempt to save Lucifer from self-destruction. Thus, while Vambe (2005: 63) argues persuasively for the contradictory authority of African orature/folklore and the ambivalence of authorial vision in *Waiting for the Rain* (1975), Mungoshi's standpoint is clear in the Old Man's elation when "he realizes that the song and tune [that Lucifer has made] are not any of the old war chants…[but] something that the boy has made up himself…with the unerring ear of the old musicians" (Mungoshi, 1975: 165).

In addition to Marechera and Mungoshi also is Ndhlala who, in *Jikinya* (1979) adopts and adapts a Shona folktale to weave a narrative of resistance to British colonial settlerism. Vambe (2004: 35) writes approvingly of the original tale in Shona orature:

> In the original Jikinya story, the girl frees herself from captivity by way of singing a song to the wild animals. The ingenuity of the girl transforms her into a fighter…The Jikinya tale of the Shona oral tradition ends on an optimistic note. It asserts faith on the human capacity to triumph over social odds. It also reaffirms a communalistic ethic by re-integrating Jikinya back into the freedom assured by village life. The story maintains the mythopoetic structure of Shona cautionary tales in which heroism is accorded to weak and oppressed members of the community who are fighting social tyranny.

While Vambe expresses reservations with Ndhlala's adaption of the folktale in a manner that

"results in the author manufacturing the naive myth of African generosity" (Vambe, 2004: 37), which he identifies as "complicit with colonial discourse in depicting Africans as a unique human species endowed with certain qualities […] which other races are not 'naturally' endowed with" (Vambe, 2004: 37), he nevertheless attributes Ndhlala's accomplishments in *Jikinya* (1979) to his recourse to African orature:

> The novel, just like the folktale on which it is based, possesses and constantly activates an internal self deconstructive strategy that ensures that no single meaning of the text ever settles or establishes itself as the dominant one…In the Jikinya folktale, rejection of fixed lines, borders and boundaries introduces the double-voiced nature of the novel so that while inviting to the former colonizer to recognize the negative impact of his policies on Africans, the novel also speaks against the same coloniser, rejecting his values as anti-life (Vambe, 2004: 39).

Thus, black Zimbabwean writers of the so-called younger generation are quite cognisant of the significance of African orature/folklore in the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. The insistence in 'white critical thought' that these writers are not comfortable with African orature/folklore in their works is contrived to displace the authority of African orature/folklore in both the literature and its criticism. The white critical contestation of the authority of African orature/folklore in 'the black Zimbabwean novel' and its criticism falls squarely within the framework of historical and contemporary European struggles for the control of the minds of African people. This is a struggle that is intended to be accomplished through, among other strategies, the depiction of African culture as the epitome of backwardness. In an interview, Tommy Matshakayile-Ndlovu, a Senior Lecturer in the Department of African Languages and Literature at the University of Zimbabwe notes that "the European motive in castigating of aspects of African culture such as orature/folklore is that European political and economic domination in Africa has to be accompanied by the displacement of African culture." The criticism of literature is largely ideological and cultural, and 'white critical thought' comes laden with all the trappings of immersion in the European cultural imperative to dwarf African culture with a view to achieving hegemonic dominance over 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'.

The projection of Afrocentric theories of literature and criticism as intent on effecting a complete

return to a romanticised culture that Amuta (1987: 21) describes in terms of "raffia, calabash and masquerade" is also discernible in the presentation of the same culture as emerging from "a mythical golden age of organic subject (comm)unity" (Gaylard, 1999: 75). The emphasis that Gaylard places on the undesirability of such a culture and the historical epoch in which it emerges creates the impression that the folklore/orature associated with it helps underdevelop 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Thus, he argues that "[o]ne of the alternatives to this Afrocentric ideal was embodied in the Zimbabwean writer Dambudzo Marechera's idiosyncratic concept and practice of Menippeanism" (Gaylard, 1999: 65). Gaylard, like Primorac, thinks of Afrocentric literary-critical theories in terms of their assumed inability to facilitate the rational discussion of aspects of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Thus, both Gaylard and Primorac look back to colonialist discourses in which Africa is described as the open arena for the application of every imaginable European cultural standard. In Chennells' discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel', recourse to Postcolonial critical thought is also made against the backdrop of the assumption that Afrocentric theories of literature are incapable of facilitating rational dialogue with the experiences engendered by colonialism:

> Postcolonialism confronts the consequences of an imperial century, recognizing that history cannot be willed away. Imperialism murdered, destroyed, exploited and sometimes built but it invariably transformed. Not only is there no pristine pre-imperialist past waiting to be recovered, all of us who live in imperialism's wake possess identities which derive from multiple sources. Postcolonialism addresses the lives consequent upon imperialism's disruption recognizing that they must assume multiple forms: that they are necessarily unstable (Chennells, 1999: 44).

The suggestion that "there [is] no pristine pre-imperialist past waiting to be discovered" (Chennells, 1999: 44) is made with apparent reference to Afrocentricity and the emphasis it applies on African cultural memory. The stress on multiple sources of identities for "all of us who live in imperialism's wake" (Chennells, 1999: 44) is not only an emphasis on *routes* as opposed to *roots* and *fluidity* as opposed to *centering*; it is also an offensive on the Afrocentric conception of African memory as critical in making sense of the present. While his fellow critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' such as Primorac and Gaylard are open in their castigation of Afrocentric critical consciousness, Chennells is subtle. His views on Afrocentric theories in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' thrive on euphemism. Thus, he blasts Afrocentric

theories in the study of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' and gives credit to colonialism without appearing to do so. His dependency on subtlety enables him to caricature Afrocentric literary-critical theories and lend a human face to colonialism in ways that are not likely to raise the indignation of scholars who argue for the importance of "memory", "roots" and "centering" in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'.

5.1.3 **Evaluation**

White critical reluctance to refer to African critical theories except when they are to be dismissed and the inclination to quote approvingly from European critical theorists combine to create the impression that white critics are committed to ensuring primacy for Eurocentric critical theories in the analysis of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. The displacement of Afrocentric critical rubrics in 'white critical thought'on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' means that African scholars have to make sense of African experiences as embodied in African literature from the point of grounding in the values of the culture responsible for the challenges that African literature addresses. As the originators of the values that African critics of African literature will use in the wake of the displacement of African-originated critical criteria, European scholars retain the 'space', 'authority' and 'authority' on the basis of which to rate African performance in the use of borrowed implements. This is critical in the European intellectual desire to perpertuate the pupil/teacher dialectic that has historically helped to validate European scholarship as globally significant. The perpetuation of this dialectic nullifies African intellectual agency. On the whole, the insistence on Eurocentric critical criteria in 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' projects Africa as an intellectual void. It facilitates the reading of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in ways that accentuate only the kind of discourses that European scholars are comfortable with. It propels European cultural and intellectual prerogatives without due cognisance of the place, role and significance of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in the African quest for freedom, restitution, justice and equality. The nuances of the African story of resistance, self-determination and life-affirming agency in the face of odds are played down when Eurocentric critical criteria are emphasised at the expense of Afrocentric theories emerging from the same history and culture with 'the black Zimbabwean novel'.

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5.2 The classification of black Zimbabwean authors in 'white critical thought'

The classification of black Zimbabwean authors in 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwen novel' unfolds within the context of the critics' overarching agenda to identify patterns in the development of the literature. Veit-Wild's 'generational typology' and Primorac's 'function/generic paradigm' constitute the two major paradigms propounded by white critics in their classification of black Zimbabwean authors. This discussion assesses these classificatory paradigms within the purview of the realisation that all forms of classification seek to establish system, order and/or pattern in order to find the path to the core of the subject of investigation. In the effort to establish system, order and/or pattern, white critics amplify issues they consider important while underplaying those they consider enigmatic in their drive towards 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. The discussion below outlines both the ennobling and problematic aspects of the above classificatory paradigms with a view to identifying the ways in which white classificatory approaches to 'the black Zimbabwean novel' can be read as part of the general Eurocentric infrastructure of knowledge developed with a view to to advancing European cultural interests.

5.2.1 The 'generational typology'

The 'generational typology' in the classification of black Zimbabwean authors is a framework advanced by Veit-Wild in *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers: A Social History of Zimbabwean Literature* (1992) and *Survey of Zimbabwean Writers: Educational and Literary Careers* (1992a), her earliest books on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. As a classificatory approach to 'the black Zimbabwean novel', the 'generational typology' emerges in the same intellectual dispensation with Kahari's (1994) "Old World/New World" typology in which the contention is that "Old World" Shona novels address themes associated with life in a world of naivety and sentimentality while "New World" novels deal with issues that have to do with the human condition in an industrial and sophisticated context engendered by the European colonialist takeover in Africa. Kahari's categorisation of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in Shona is classifiable as Eurocentric on the basis of the fact that it applauds the European colonialist incursion into Africa as indicative of the advent of rationality, science and sophistication. Veit-Wild (1992a: 11) divides black Zimbabwean authors into three basic generations, arguing that:

The term generation is here applied to a group defined through a common background of social, political and educational experience which may find a specific expression in the literary works of this group. Generation 1 (Gen. 1) was mainly shaped through upbringing and basic education before and during World War 2, when it was very hard for Africans in Rhodesia to obtain any education. When they started their writing careers in the 1950s, they were pioneers in this field, as hardly any writing by Africans existed so far. For many, their writing was closely linked to the emerging ideas of African nationalism which they suppoted actively. Generation 2 was moulded through their upbringing and education after World War 2, in the years of rapid growth, industrialization and social change in Rhodesia, a situation in which a much large number of Africans grasped at education as a unique chance for social advancement…This generation's literary careers began in the 1970s under circumstances of cultural isolation and political repression of intellectuals and writers. The youngest writers in the study (Gen 3) were children and adolescents during the [Zimbabwean] war of liberation. This early experience of war has been a major preoccupation in their writing which most of them only started after independence in 1980. At the same time, as they are not veterans of the nationalist cause, they are open-minded and critical towards society and politics in post-indpendence Zimbabwe.

For Veit-Wild, the first generation of black Zimbabwean is a generation of 'teachers', 'preachers' and 'pioneers' (Veit-Wild: 1992). In this category, Veit-Wild places novelists such as Sithole (1956), Mutswairo (1956, 1959), Chidzero (1957), Ndoda (1958), Chakaipa (1958, 1961, 1961a, 1963, 1967), Marangwanda (1959), Chidyausiku (1960, 1962, 1970), Sigogo (1962, 1967, 1971, 1982, 1982a, 1984), Samkange (1966, 1976, 1978), Chiguvare (1968) and Hamutynei (1975, 1981), among others. She argues that this generation is bound by the shared belief that the solution to the colonial quandary in which the authors and their people found themselves enmeshed was to be found in the establishment of a multi-racial society. She contends that the novels of black Zimbabwean authors in this category reflect this standpoint. In the second generation of black Zimbabwean authors, Veit-Wild identifies authors such as Mungoshi (1970, 1975, 1975a, 1983), Tsodzo (1972, 1993), Simango (1974), Moyo (1975, 1977), Katiyo (1976, 1978), Makhalisa (1977) Marechera (1978, 1980, 1984, 1992), Kaugare (1978, 1984), Matsikiti (1978, 1980, 1982, 1990), Ndhlala (1978, 1984), Khiyaza (1978, 1978a, 1978b), Nyamfukudza (1979), Hodzongi (1981), Bvindi (1981), Chinodya (1982, 1984, 1991, 2000), Kanengoni (1985, 1987, 1993, 1997), Hove (1988, 1992, 1996), and others. She calls this generation "the lost generation" (Veit-Wild, 1992: 149) or "the non-believers" (1992) who found themselves torn between "protest and despair" (Veit-Wild, 1992: 149). She also argues that the definitive characteristic of this generation is despondency in the face of life-threatening

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conditions of existence.

In her third generation of black Zimbabwean authors, Veit-Wild identifies novelists such as Musengezi (1984), Dangarembga (1988), Choto (1990), and Vera (1993, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2002), arguing that because they are not veterans of the 1970s Zimbabwean war of liberation, the members of this generation "are open-minded and critical towards society and politics in post-independence Zimbabwe" (Veit-Wild, 1992: 12). What is apparent in the 'generational typology' is that while the first generation believed in social transformation through education and the acquisition of European values, the second generation is basically a generation of cynics while the third generation is liberal and therefore closer to the second in terms of detachment from the African nationalism. Veit-Wild's (1992: 7) rationale for the classification of black Zimbabwean novelists according to 'generations' is that:

> It is a phenomenon of Zimbabwean literature that literary works published concurrently present extremely different outlooks. Thus, Ndabaningi Sithole's *The Polygamist* (1972) has little in common with Charles Mungoshi's *Coming of the Dry Season* (1972) or his novel *Waiting for the Rain* (1975); just as Stanlake Samkange's historical novel *Year of the Uprising* belongs to a completely different world from, for example, Dambudzo Marechera's *The House of Hunger*, although both were published in 1978. … [I]t is not the publication date of a work and the immediate political background that is decisive but the life experience of the writer. Hence, a literary text is considered here in connection with a specific generation of writers.

The three-tier generational scheme is evoked and applied in *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers: A Social History of Zimbabwean Literature* which "classifies writers by historical generations to facilitate an explanation of the disparity between certain distinct tendencies in Zimbabwean writing" (Veit-Wild, 1992: 6). The basic contention in Veit-Wild's 'generational typology' is that authors in a particular generation exude the same novelistic worldview because they are products of the same historical dispensation. For Veit-Wild, the emergence of a given group of black Zimbabwean authors from the same historical dispensation means that their life experiences are basically the same. She applies emphasis on the importance of the political, economic, cultural and social status quo in shaping the consciousness of authors. Thus, she argues that black Zimbabwean authors are 'formed' and 'shaped' by the social, cultural, economic and political context in which they find themselves writing. This is a position that is

also shared by Chiwome (1996) in his discussion of the various forces that engendered the emrgence of an underdeveloped Shona novel. Chiwome argues that Shona literature is underdeveloped because it emerges in a context that is not conducive to artistic development. Like Veit-Wild, Chiwome misrepresents Zimbabwean novelists as helplessly caught up in a web of social, cultural, economic and political relationships that they cannot manipulate or escape. The two critics advance the deterministic impression that authors in a particular generation write the way they do because the contexts in which they write stipulates how they should write.

The shared persuasion between Veit-Wild (1992) and Chiwome (1996) undermines the capacity of literature to scuttle the 'order' imposed by the circumstances in which it emerges. While the prevailing circumstances have a bearing in determining authorial vision, handling of themes and resolution of conflicts, the touchstone of art is in its reliance on "the fictive imagination" (Walter-Spencers: 1998). The categorisation of black Zimbabwean authors into generations and the accompanying contention that each generation writes the way it does because of the life histories of the authors is instrumental in legitimating artistic laziness to exercise the imagination beyond the limitations imposed by the status quo. Veit-Wild's installation of the backgrounds against which black Zimbabwean authors are emerging results in the exoneration of black Zimbabwen novelistic incompetence in the rehearsal of the lived experiences of black Zimbabwean people. Explaining trends in 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in terms of authorial background as Veit-Wild does creates the impression that black Zimbabwean authors have not been able to move beyond the limits imposed upon them by their histories. The insinuation that life-history is indispensable in the development of black Zimbabwean authorial vision is clear in Veit-Wild's (1992: 7) narration of the qualities of the novels of the first and second generations:

> Historical novels by the older, first generation of writers such as Samkange and Lawrence Vambe condemned the prolongation of white rule after the failure of multiracial endeavours that these writers supported during Federation…Fiction and poetry of alienation, despair and anger were the very different and characteristic literary expression of a younger generation of writers such as Mungoshi, Marechera and Stanley Nyamfukudza whose frustrations and lost hopes in the bleak years of UDI evolved into a general skepticism, a pessimistic approach towards society in general and disillusionment about African politics.

For Veit-Wild, there are clear-cut differences in the consciousness and concerns of the three

generations of black Zimbabwean authors. She reasons that these differences render it impossible to think of the three generations as linked. This is especially the case in her discussion of the characteristics of the first and second generations:

> While writing had been very much a public affair for the pioneers of Zimbabwean literature – driven as they were by the impulse to promote African nationalism, to educate, to teach, to preserve culture and traditions through their writings – the next generation developed and cherished the personal, private, individual voice (Veit-Wild, 1992: 152).

While the classification of black Zimbabwean authors into generations makes it easier to identify the patterns that characterise 'the black Zimbabwean novel', Veit-Wild's 'generational typology' is not only too simplistic but also laden with contradictions. For instance, while Veit-Wild contends that it is the fact of belonging to a particular generation that is critical in the drive to understand a given author's vision, she does not theorise why the vision of authors in the same generation can also be discordant. Authors such as Mutswairo and Chidzero belong to the first generation of black Zimbabwean novelists according to Veit-Wild's 'generational typology' but their respective novels, *Feso* (1956) and *Nzvengamutsvairo* (1958), project contrasting versions of vision. While Mutswairo's *Feso* (1956) is an allegorical onslaught on colonialism, Chidzero's *Nzvengamutsvairo* (1958) legitimises black subordination and white priviledge. In Mutswairo's *Feso* (1956), the protagonist personifies the spirit of freedom that brings about positive societal transformation. He sets out to a far away land in search of a bride for his bachelor chief, overcoming numerous hurdles and coming back home triumphant. The quest for a bride for his chief unfolds concurrently with his clan's quest for freedom from the tyrannical Pfumojena, a rival chief who sets out to destroy the protagonist's clan after the latter elopes with his daughter for Chief Nyan'ombe. The novel celebrates human agency and commitment to transcendence.

On the other hand, Chidzero's *Nzvengamutsvairo* (1958) reads more like an apology for colonialism and the politics of white supremacy and black inferiority. Chidzero chastises Africans who abhor conscription as providers of wage labour for the colonial establishment. The rustic and garrulous Matigimu and the unrefined Tikana are thrust at the centre of Chidzero's novel to represent all those Africans who do not desire to be less than equal partners in the making of the supposedly multiracial Rhodesian society of the 1950s. They contrast markedly

with the smart and and progressive Samere who has received European education for Africans and is comfortable serving as an underling in the Rhodesian colonialist establishment of the time. The fact that in the novel, Samere's vision carries the day shows that Chidzero's sympathies do not lie with the forces of African emancipation as is the case with Mutswairo. By placing Mutswairo and Chidzero in the same generation, Veit-Wild whips the authors and their works into conforming with her typology instead of using them to theorise the contradictions attendant upon the typology.

The same can be said about Chakaipa's Shona novels and the nationalist question. If Chakaipa's novels are considered from the standpoint that "the early writers belonged to the first elite of educated Africans in Rhodesia, a formative group in the rise of nationalism" (Veit-Wild, 1992: 7) who were "driven…by the impulse to promote African nationalism" (Veit-Wild, 1992: 152), it becomes problematic to justify Chakaipa's membership in Veit-Wild's first generation of black Zimbabwean authors. Except for *Pfumo Reropa* (1961) which may, with a lot of challenges, pass off as an indictment of dictatorship, Chakaipa's novels do not show any commitment to the development of African nationalism in the 1960s. If anything, Chakaipa's novels contribute towards the entrenchment of British colonial rule through the depiction of Europeans as exemplars of progressive values and Africans as their antitheses. In *Rudo Ibofu* (1961), Chakaipa castigates African cultural values and celebrates renegades who contest the authority of African culture instead of embracing it as a composite site of values of significance in the struggle to dislodge colonial hegemony. In *Garandichauya* (1963) and *Dzasukwa-mwana-asina-hembe* (1967), Chakaipa portrays poverty among African people as self-inflicted and European colonialists as benefactors of Africans. His 'teaching' and 'preaching' is not in the interest of African nationalism as Veit-Wild (1992) argues in her conception of the 'generational typology'.

By virtue of his vision in *Kutonhodzwa kwaChauruka* (1976), Chiguvare has no legitimacy being part of a generation that Veit-Wild identifies as a generation of pioneer nationalist black Zimbabwean novelists. Instead of promoting resistance to colonialist forces that threatedned African dignity and freedom during the time he writes, Chiguvare's novel is a narration of the African experience in history as steeped in savagery and barbarism. Thus, if Veit-Wild's first generation authors are to be identified in terms of their commitment to African nationalism,

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Chiguvare is found wanting, given that evidence abounds in his novel that he is averse to the idea of African history and culture as crucial building blocks in the African nationalist quest for autonomy. The vision in Chiguvare's novel contradicts Veit-Wild's (1992: 17) submissions on the identity of first generation black Zimbabwean novelists:

> The early writers belonged to the first elite of educated Africans in Rhodesia, a formative group in the rise of nationalism. For them, writing was not so much a private affair as one with a social and political function. In many cases, writers became politicians or politicians were also writers. Their writing was often semi-fictional and a number of them were journalists. Like other early African intellectuals, they were representatives of social advancement and modernization, striving for a multiracial society as the basis for equality and progress.

While Veit-Wild is on the mark in her submission that for the first generation of black Zimbabwean authors, "writing was not so much a private affair as one with a social and political function [and] in many cases, writers became politicians or politicians were also writers" (Veit-Wild, 1992: 17), the challenge is in her homogenising submission that the authors in this generation "were representatives of social advancement and modernization, striving for a multiracial society as the basis for equality and progress" (Veit-Wild, 1992: 17). The vision of the authors in Veit-Wild's first generation points in two basic directions with regards to the issue of multiracialism and equality. First is the subgroup comprising of radical nationalist authors such as Mutswairo and Sithole whose respective novels, *Feso* (1956) and *Umvukela wamaNdebele* (1956) cannot be classified as expressive of commitment to the creation of a multiracial society. These novels are steeped in radical African nationalist consciousness which "evokes…the searing bullets and bloodstained knives which emanate from it" (Fanon, 1967: 28). They have very little to do with the creation of 'a multi-racial society as the basis for equality and progress' as Veit-Wild (1992: 12) would argue. On the other hand, Chidzero seems, in *Nzvengamutsvairo* (1958) to be committed to the creation of 'a multiracial society as the basis for equality and progress'. However, he does not, infact, rise to the occasion. The multiracial society that Chidzero envisions in *Nzvengamutsvairo* (1958) is not a society based on equality as Veit-Wild (1992) argues in her contouring of the novelistic identity of the authors in this generation. It is a society based on a version of racial partnership that perpetuates white superiority at the expense of black dignity.

The classificatory contradictions at the heart of Veit-Wild's first generation of black Zimbabwean authors spill over into her discourse on the second generation. As she makes clear, the second generation of black Zimbabwean authors is a generation that produced novels of alienation and despair "whose frustrations and lost hopes in the bleak years of UDI evolved into a general skepticism, a pessimistic approach towards society in general and disillusionment about African politics" (Veit-Wild, 1992: 7). Titles of works in this category such as Mungoshi's *Coming of the Dry Season* (1972) and *Waiting for the Rain* (1975), Marechera's *The House of Hunger* (1978) as well as Nyamfukudza's *The Non-Believers' Journey* (1979) lend credence to Veit-Wild's characterisation of this generation as a generation of pessimists and cultural orphans. However, as Itai Muwati notes in an interview "the construction and characterisation of this generation as a generation of cynics does not do justice to Tsodzo's dissection of colonialism and its neurosis-engendering impact on the African psyche in his 1972 novel, *Pafunge*." The identity of the generation is also not concommittant with the Afrotriumphalist orientation that pervades Katiyo's *A Son of the Soil* (1976) and *Going to Heaven* (1979), the emphasis on anchoring in African culture and values in Moyo's *Ziva Kwawakabva* (1977), Ndhlala's *Jikinya* (1979) and Tsodzo's *Mudhuri Murefurefu* (1993) and the nationalist orientation in Kanengoni's *Vicious Circle* (1985), *Effortless Tears* (1993) and *When the Rainbird Cries* (1996).

By and large, Veit-Wild's 'generational typology' in the classification of black Zimbabwan authors is fraught with contradictions engendered by the critic's grounding in the reductionist viewpoint that writers born in a particular historical epoch must exemplify a homogenous consciousness born of the impact of the experiences occasioned by the historical conditions of life in which they are raised and socialised. As second generation authors in Veit-Wild's 'generational typology', Tsodzo, Katiyo, Moyo and Ndhlala are more linked to first generation authors such as Mutswairo and Sithole. In *Pafunge* (1972), Tsodzo engages the dehumanisation that Africans experienced as colonial subjects, delving into the degraded existence of colonised Africans in a way that invites the reader to identify with the African characters that are held hostage by colonial economic, political and cultural forces in the novel. The novel inducts readers into the abject living conditions of characters such as Joe Rug, Petros Masango, Phainos Kamunda and others in the African Township of Mutapa in colonial Gwelo. It brings to light the

malnutrition, unemployment, homelessness, squalor and vulnerability that Africans had to contend with in Rhodesia. The seemingly insurmountable odds that they battle drive most of them into crime, prostitution, and alcoholism. To the extent that Tsodzo manages, in a satiric-comic style, to bring to light these African existential challenges in the colonial period, he merits classification as an African nationalist author in the same category with Mutswairo and Sithole whom Veit-Wild categorises as founding nationalist authors. Veit-Wild disregards Tsodzo's African nationalist leanings and categorises him as a second-generation author despite the fact that this is a generation that derides Pan-African commitment to African freedom.

In *Ziva Kwawakabva* (1977) and *Mudhuri Murefurefu* (1993), Moyo and Tsodzo apply emphasis on African culture as a composite source of the values that Africans need in the quest for sanity, balance and development. In both novels, educated African characters denigrate African culture only to re-connect with it when they are faced with overwhelming challenges that their instruction and fluency in European education cannot provide answers to. In African nationalist consciousness, recourse to African culture is a prerequisite in the re-framing of the mindsets of African people in the aftermath of their wrecking in the European classroom. The possibilities of re-connection and re-memberment that these authors suggest and canonise stand in contradistinction to the angst, cynicism and despondency that Marechera, Mungoshi and Nyamfukudza, as Veit-Wild's examplars of second generation authorial vision, stand for in the 'generational typology'. In addition to these is the case of Kanengoni, another black Zimbabwean novelist whose corpus includes titles such as *Vicious Circle* (1985), *When the Rainbird Cries* (1987), *Effortless Tears* (1993) and *Echoing Silences* (1997). All these novels thematise various aspects of the Zimbabwean Liberation Struugle of the 1970s in which Kanengoni participated as a freedom fighter. In terms of Veit-Wild's 'generational typology', Kanengoni falls into the second generation of authors whose distinctive identity is, for Veit-Wild, constructed around pessimism, nihilism and anti-nationalism. While Kanengoni's vision in *Echoing Silences* (1997) seems to lend easy provenance to the thinking that he is, like Mungoshi, Marechera and Nyamfukudza, a non-believer, and therefore justified to be classified as a second-generation black Zimbabwean novelist, a more searching analysis of his works reveals that Kanengoni is more linked to Veit-Wild's first generation black Zimbabwean authors such as Mutswairo, Sithole and Samkange than to Marechera, Mungoshi and Nyamfukudza whose

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novels are largely nihilistic and anti-nationalist. In all his novels, Kanengoni portrays the Zimbabwean Liberation War in its complexity, bringing out the fissures, violence, vulnerability, and desperation that accompanied the guerillas and the African masses participation in it. His imaginative handling of the Zimbabwean Liberation War differs markedly with the celebratory tendencies characteristic of other novelists on the war such as Chipamaunga (1983, 1989), Makari (1985), Nyawaranda (1985) and Mutasa (1990), among others. In an interview, Kanengoni has it that in his novels, he seeks to "demystify the war, demonstrate why the guerillas, for instance, fought among themselves and how they were also prone to manipulation by the masses of the people in their efforts to settle local scores."

While the nationalist orientation of first generation authors such as Mutswairo, Sithole and Samkange can be classified as mobilisational nationalism, Kanengoni's brand of nationalism borders on the radical appreciation of the ardous process through which Zimbabwe was freed. His radical nationalist stance speaks directly to the capacity of nationalism to self-critique. In addition to this is his heavy reliance on orature/folklore in his narration of the various aspects of the Zimbabwean Liberation War. The title of his second publication, *When the Rainbird Cries* (1987), for example, is derived from a Shona folktale that narrates envy and greed in human relationships. In the novel, the folktale does not only help in the portrayal of the European colonialist dispossession of African people of their land; it also punctuates the agonising vagaries of life engendered by the Zimbabwean Liberation War.

The deployment of African orature/folklore in Kanengoni's war novels speaks to his confidence in African cultural resources as significant in the mapping of the African experience in history. By lending 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' to African cultural media in the portrayal of aspects of the Zimbabwean Liberation War, Kanengoni's commitment to African culture places him in that subset of first generation black Zimbabwean authors such as Mutswairo, Sithole and Samkange who look at African culture as a strategic resource embodying the blueprints that African people can use in the struggle to negotiate the present and win the future. Veit-Wild's 'generational typology' in which Kanengoni is classified as a second generation black Zimbabwean author alongside Mungoshi, Marechera and Nyamfukudza does not do justice to Kanengoni's emphasis on the inevitable triumph of the African nationalist struggle to transcend

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the debasement occasioned by colonialism. Recourse to African cultural values in Kanengoni's portrayal of aspects of the Zimbabwean Liberation War demonstrates his commitment to the survival and perpetuation of his culture. Such commitment separates Kanengoni from Veit-Wild's (1992, 1992a) specification that second generation black Zimbabwean authors are cultural orphans and non-believers in the possibile triumph of African nationalism.

The above challenges are also to be encountered in the discussion of the identity of other black Zimbabwean authors. Katiyo, for instance, identifies with Zimbabwean historical landmarks such as The First Chimurenga of the 1890s. His novel, *A Son of the Soil* (1976), exemplifies Afrotriumphalist agency. This is clear in the fact that it "ends with the first gun fight between colonial soldiers and African guerillas, which coincides with the first cries of Alexio's baby" (Muponde, 2005: 120). Katiyo's novel is a nationalist piece of work that employs, for its title, part of the nomenclature that accompanied the rise of African nationalism in colonial Rhodesia. Zimbabwean freedom fighters constructed their identity on the basis of nativity. In their struggle, identifying with the land as is the case in Katiyo's novel meant identifying with the overall nationalist objective of freeing the same land from colonial domination. Thus, Katiyo's sympathies lie with African nationalist forces. His placement in the same class with authors such as Marechera, Mungoshi and Nyamfukudza who, in their novels, emphasise 'hunger' and 'drought' from which there is no reprieve, exposes the limitations of Veit-Wild's 'generational typology'.

In much the same manner as Katiyo and Kanengoni, Ndhlala harks back to Shona orature for creative inspiration. As Vambe (2004: 34) notes, Ndhlala's *Jikinya* (1979) "uses a folktale mode to frame the conflicts between the Africans and colonial forces and is based on the Jikinya legend derived from Shona oral tradition." Vambe (2004: 39) classifies *Jikinya* (1979) as "a foundational text on African nationalism in Zimbabwe", thus differing significantly with Veit-Wild who associates the rise of African nationalism in Zimbabwe only with first generation authors such as Samkange, Sithole and Mutswairo. The optimism with which Katiyo's *A Son of the Soil* (1976) concludes and the utilisation of African orature as a strategic resource in Ndhlala's *Jikinya* (1979) concatenate to demonstrate the weaknesses of Veit-Wild's 'generational typology', hence the relief she enjoys in her discussion of the latter's second novel,

The Southerrn Circle (1984) which, she argues, identifies the author more easily as a second generation black Zimbabwean author than the first. The resistance that these novels pose towards Veit-Wild's 'generational typology' in the classification of black Zimbabwean authors helps to explain why she ranks them lower than the novels of Charles Mungoshi (1970, 1972, 1975, 1975a), Dambudzo Marechera (1978) and Stanley Nyamfukudza (1978), all of which do not just satisfy the requirements for belonging to this generation of black Zimbabwean authors but are key in Veit-Wild's theorisation of the collective identity of the members of the generation.

The contradictions in Veit-Wild's 'generational typology' in the classification of black Zimbabwean authors are compounded by the fact that the typology visualises the three generations in terms of what separates them from each other. In her argument that "the first prose writings in English of the next generation emerged concurrently with the historical novels of Generation 1 but without any links to them", Veit-Wild, (1992: 145) places emphasis on the dichotomisation rather than the agglutination of the novels of the different generations. The rigid compartmentalisation of the generations that Veit-Wild proposes crumbles in the face of the novels of Tsodzo (1972, 1993), Katiyo (1976), Moyo (1977), Ndhlala (1979) and Kanengoni (1985, 1993, 1996) which, as second generation novels according to Veit-Wild (1992, 1992a), also reminisce the nationalist orientation of some of the first generation authors such as Mutswairo (1956), Sithole (1956) and Samkange (1976, 1978). The 'order' that the 'generational typology' imposes enables Veit-Wild (1992:151) to credit the writings of second generation black Zimbabwean authors as definitive of 'the black Zimbabwean novel':

> It is in the second generation that black authors proliferated and Zimbabwean literature achieved a distinct profile. This profile is defined by several marked differences, oppositions to the first generation…They…gave birth to creative writing in the proper sense.

Veit-Wild's preference of the second generation of black Zimbabweaan authors ahead of the other generations finds authentification in Reeds' (1986: 260) contention to the effect that:

> None of these [first generation] writers seem to me to be novelists except through the accident that in the literary world of the English language, the novel was the only form available to them…It was not until a younger generation of black writers emerged that the true novelist's imagination appeared in Zimbabwe.

While the rigid dichotomisation of the generations of black Zimbabwean authors is convenient for critics such as Veit-Wild, it undermines the capacity of the authors and their works to claim membership across the generations. The 'generational typology' subverts the individuality of the authors and the back and forth fluidity that their novels evince. The only instance when Veit-Wild comes to terms with the limitations of her 'generational typology' is in her discussion of Hove's place and status in the second generation of black Zimbabwean authors:

> Although Hove belongs to the second generation of Zimbabwean writers, he does not reflect in his writing the experiences of his generation, the process of deracination that they underwent as children. He ignores the fundamental crisis of the 1970s to which writers like Mungoshi and Marechera have given expression. His collective voice links him back to the public voice of the first generation, the attempts of the early writers to recreate a national history, a national identity. His celebratory, solemn tone, especially in the chapter in which "The Spirits Speak", recalls Samkange's mythologisation of the mediums in *Year of the Uprising* and feels disturbing in the late 1980s (Veit-Wild, 1992: 318).

What Hove's example demonstrates is not the fact that he is exceptional when compared with other black Zimbabwean authors whom Veit-Wild places in the second generation. Instead, Hove's case demonstrates the inadequacies of Veit-Wild's 'generational typology' in accounting for the nuances in the artistic identity of black Zimbabwean authors and their novels. Hove's 'resistance' to Veit-Wild's stipulations for belonging to the second generation of black Zimbabwean authors compels the critic to classify "his celebratory, solemn tone" (Veit-Wild, 1992: 318) as "disturbing in the late 1980s" (Veit-Wild, 1992: 318). This is in addition to her discomfiture with the writer's predisposition to mythologise the spirits in the manner of Samkange in *Year of the Uprising* (1978). Thus, in her discussion of Hove's novels, Veit-Wild is uncomfortable with the novelist's canonisation of a consciousness that connects him with African nationalism which, for Veit-Wild, is a discourse and a consciousness of the 1970s and not the late 1980s in which Hove writes. The fact that she classifies Hove's nationalist orientation as a second generation black Zimbabwean novelist as "disturbing in the late 1980s" (Veit-Wild, 1992: 318) shows that Veit-Wild's criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is entangled in the European cultural and political agenda in which Europeans have to be pace-setters in the development of the ideas of significance in the discussion of the African experience in history. While Veit-Wild accommodates Hove's departure from her expectations for second

generation black Zimbabwean authors, she has no kind words for Katiyo's *A Son of the Soil* (1976):

> *A Son of the Soil* is […] is not typical and representative of the Generation 2 writings of this period; it is a less genuine and less authentic literary exploration of the experiences and feelings of this generation than the works of Mungoshi, Nyamfukudza and Marechera; it mythologises Zimbabwean history for propagandist purposes (Veit-Wild, 1992: 253).

Veit-Wild's contention that Katiyo's *A Son of the Soil* (1976) is a less genuine and less authentic literary exploration of the experiences of second generation authors arises in a context where the critic expects authors in a particular generation to write in a certain envisaged way that she considers appropriate. Her submission that Katiyo's novel mythologises Zimbabwean history for propagandist purposes is oblivious of the fact that all art, in much the same manner as the criticism that goes with it, is steeped in propaganda. Like propaganda, all art shapes human consciousness and behaviour. It is political, economic, cultural and social. Thus, the novels of Marechera, Mungoshi and Nyamfukudza are as propagandistic as Katiyo's *A Son of the Soil* (1976). The only difference between Katiyo and the other authors of his generation who are considered exemplary in Veit-Wild's critical work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is to be found in the versions of propaganda that they promote. The tenets of Veit-Wild's 'generational typology' are also shared by Shaw (1993: 31) who also celebrates the anti-nationalist orientation in the works of authors such as Marechera:

> Dambudzo Marechera belongs to an anti-nationalist movement in Zimbabwean literature. He shares common concerns with the group of writers who have been variously described as 'angry young men', 'the lost generation', and 'the non-believers'. They began their writing in the 1970s and were controversial because they challenged the premises of African nationalism at a time when it was not considered appropriate to do so. The writing of Charles Mungoshi, Stanley Nyamfukudza and Dambudzo Marechera stands in stark contrast to most other black Zvimbabwean literature written in English at the time, which was characterised by an overwhelming emphasis on race and ethnicity.

As Chivaura observes in an interview, "what is important for white critics in their classification of Marechera, Nyamfukudza and Mungoshi as exemplary is that they are more committed to the need to dismiss African nationalism than they are committed to the exposition of the challenges engendered by colonialism." While it cannot be gainsaid that the African nationalist project

needs to be critiqued, it is problematic for Veit-Wild and Shaw to fail to see the possibilities of human ennoblement that African nationalism is capable of bringing to fruition. The tendency to see African nationalism as retrogressive while celebrating black Zimbabwean authors who deride it as exemplars of the literary aesthetic that black Zimbabwean novelists should embrace is in itself a nationalist tendency that participates in the ordering of priorities and sensibilities in literary-critical studies. The ordering of priorities and sensibilities is, apparently, the essence of nationalism. Thus, what is important for Veit-Wild (1992, 1992a) and Shaw (1997) is that Mungoshi, Marechera and Nyamfukudza combine their creative energies to shift attention from the violence of colonialism to the violence of African nationalism.

On the whole, the 'generational typology' is incapable of accounting for the many fissures that separate authors in the same generation. It lacks the language with which to narrate the complexity of black Zimbabwean authorial identities. Even when the "group within a generation" (Veit-Wild, 1992: 7) option is adopted to help explain the case of authors whose vision is not in sync with that of the generation as a whole, the attempt is not made in the 'generational typology' to emphasise the maze of ways in which the authors in the different generations are connected. Zimbabwean critic, Zifikile Gambahaya explains, in an interview, that Veit-Wild avoids such an exploration because "it disturbs the order that the 'generational typology' establishes" in the study of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'.

5.2.2 The '*genre* and *function* typology'

In her assertion that "[i]n terms of literary generation, Chenjerai Hove fills the gap between Dambudzo Marechera and Brian Chikwava" Primorac (2006: 3) affirms Veit-Wild's 'generational typology' in the classification of black Zimbabwean authors. Her critical work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel', like Veit-Wild's, endeavours to go beyond paradigms in which black Zimbabwean authors are classified in terms of race and the language of literary expression as is largely the case in the critical works of black Zimbabwean critics such as Kahari (1972, 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1994), Zimunya (1982), Ngara (1982, 1984, 1985), Matshakayile-Ndlovu (1994), Chiwome (1996, 1996a), Mguni-Gambahaya (1998), Zhuwarara (2001) and Vambe (2004). The effort that Primorac makes to study 'the black Zimbabwean novel' across

race and language of expression places her work closer to Veit-Wild's although the latter falters when she omits white Zimbabwean authors in *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers: A Social History of Zimbabwean Literature* (1992) and *Survey of Zimbabwean Writers: Educational and Literary Careers* (1992a). These are critical works that set out to discuss Zimbabwean literature but are limited to 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Emerging against such a backdrop, Primorac's agenda in the classification of black Zimbabwean authors is to "superimpose across them, as it were, a set of categories of an entirely different order and origin" (Primorac, 2006: 16). While Primorac affirms Veit-Wild's 'generational typology', she goes beyond such affirmation, applying emphasis on *function* as a critical classificatory rubric:

> I make use of the manner in which the concept of function – which is not tied to either language or race – can, via the concept of stylistic formation, be used as the basis for literary periodisation, and therefore the writing of a literary history which would include texts in several languages…Function…is not something *possessed* by a fictional text and therefore 'objectively' deducible from its structure or style. It is, rather, a text's potential to be used for a specific practical purpose, by a specific set of readers under particular historical circumstances. It may, therefore, be assessed and contested…on the basis of juxtaposing a reading of dominant textual traits with knowledge of the social context and the text's actual or projected readership (Primorac, 2006: 23).

In her classification of black Zimbabwean authors on the basis of *function* and *genre* and not literary generations, Primorac (2006: 29) aspires towards "the possibility of viewing fictional formations as articulations of *simultaneously* growing areas of social activity, transcending both language/race and chronology as the only tools of literary classification." The impact of her classification of black Zimbabwean authors on the basis of *function* and *genre* is such that:

> The dual semantic structuring and *axiological* functionality of *The Mourned One* may be linked, on the one hand, to Geoffrey Ndhlala's *Jikinya* (published a year before *The Non-Believer's Journey*) and non-Anglophone texts such as Bernard Chidzero's *Nzvengamutsvairo*, as analysed by George Kahari. Nyamfukudza's text, on the other hand, shares *analytical* functionality with Mungoshi's *Waiting for the Rain*, but also with a post-independence white-authored novel like Angus Shaw's *Kandaya.* Thus…in the novelistic landscape of independent Zimbabwe, language and race become less useful as indicators of the kind of novel an author is likely to have written (Primorac, 2006: 29).

Primorac's emphasis on *function* and *genre* in the classification of black Zimbabwean authors sets the stage for the collapse of the dichotomies of language and race on the basis of which

black Zimbabwean authors have historically been studied. This enables Zimbabwean novels by authors from different racial backgrounds and in different languages to be studied side by side. This is critical in the effort to project Zimbabwean literature in terms of its resistance to limitations occasioned by the racial and linguistic identities of its authors. Emphasis on *function* also helps transcend Veit-Wild's 'generational typology' such that it becomes possible to link black Zimbabwean authors purportedly shaped by different historical backgrounds. In those respects, the stress on *function* renders Primorac's classification of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' quite revolutionary because it facilitates the transcendence of the view that the identities of Zimbabwean authors and their novels are irrevocably based on race and language. Thus, the side by side placement of novels by both black and white Zimbabwean authors is indicative of the complex ways in which Zimbabwean literature resists limitations engendered by the author's race or language(s) of literary expression. In this study, the conception of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' as a corpus that finds expression in the three main languages of the country contributes to the appreciation of the literature in holistic terms although it falters in the face of Primorac's emphasis on the explosion of categories based on race.

While the emphasis on the explosion of race and language categories is important, significant challenges arise with such emphasis. The attempt to study Zimbabwean literature outside the precincts of race and language can easily result in the submergence of the nuances of literatures in specific languages and by authors from a particular race. A critical study of Zimbabwean literature will show that the concerns of black Zimbabwean authors are largely at variance with those of their white counterparts. Although black Zimbabwean authors occasionally find themselves contributing to the celebration and entrenchment of European values, it is seldom the case to find white Zimbabwean authors who project the black experience in history as an experience of the same value as the white experience. While Chiwome (1996) has demonstrated that black Zimbabwean authors such as Chakaipa, Chidzero, Marangwanda, Zvarevashe and others have significantly contributed towards the entrenchment of a white aesthetic in 'the black Zimbabwean novel', Chennells (1982) has shown that white authors have not been able to cross the racial divide to embrace the black experience in history. Their novels are steeped in the Rhodesian mentality of white supremacy and black inferiority. Most of them celebrate the so-called spirit of adventure that the authors consider "typical of the spirited men that made this

country" (Armstrong: 1978: 12) and are commited to the defense of Christianity and civilisation as understood from an entrenched Eurocentric point of departure. The validating mythology that binds them is to be found in their presentation of Africa and Africans as the *sine qua non* of backwardness. Thus, in emphasising the transgression of race categories in the classification of black Zimbabwean authors, Primorac is oblivious of the poverty of support for her argument from the canons that constitute Zimbabwean literature. Her work speaks to a situation in which criticism has marched ahead of the literature concerned.

The classification of black Zimbabwean authors without emphasis on the languages in which their works are written as advocated by Primorac and as applied in this study is supportable if the authors share the same racial background. In the African context, the fact of belonging to a particular race plays a significant role in determining one's station in life. Thus, whether black Zimbabwean authors write in indigenous languages or English, what is important in the discussion of their works is the commitment that they demonstrate towards African liberation. It is also counter-productive to completely dispense with the language factor in the classification of black Zimbabwean authors. In colonial Africa, as wa Thiong'o (1981) and Chiwome (1996) have it, literatures in African languages were expected to disseminate the message of subservience. They were therefore heavily censored with a view to disabusing them of political relevance. Colonialist censorship laws have remained intact even in the aftermath of the attainment of independence, and authors in African languages have to be imaginatively resourceful if they are to put across the kind of consciousness that would help develop Africa. The reluctance of international publishers to work with authors in indigenous languages compounds the challenges that authors in indigenous languages face. The issues that authors in indigenous languages end up thematising are therefore the direct result of the play of a galaxy of factors. Thus, whereas white Zimbabwean authors in English commit themselves to the projection of European civilisation, history and culture in supremacist terms, there is a sense in which black Zimbabwean authors who contribute to the promulgation of the superiority of European civilisation, history and culture are doing so under duress. At the same time, black Zimbabwean authors in English have historically enjoyed access to international publishing houses. Their radical engagement with the colonial status quo and disappointment with independence even before it is attained separates them from their counterparts who write in indigenous languages.

Thus, part of the explanation of the differences in the consciousness of the authors in the two groups is to be found in the fact that the different languages that they use afford them access to different publication opportunities. Publishing in indigenous languages means publishing in an environment of censorship while publishing in English means evading censorship, particularly when one is publishing outside Africa.

In her emphasis on *genre* and *function* in the classification of black Zimbabwean authors, Primorac is inspired by the need to go beyond Veit-Wild's seemingly entrenched 'generational typology'. Thus, she proposes, for instance, that most of what Veit-Wild classifies as third generation black Zimbabwean novelists are connected, not so much by the reality of their rise to prominence after the attainment of political independence or their shared social background as "children and adolescents during the [Zimbabwean] war of liberation" as Veit-Wild, 1992a: 12) would argue, but by the fact that theirs "resemble the novels of Mungoshi, Marechera, Nyamfukudza and other pre-independence writers in English" (Primorac, 2006: 31). More importantly, Primorac (2006: 31) notes that:

> All of them are marked by the textual presence of Bakhtinian heteroglossia (albeit to different extents). The novels by Hove, Kanengoni and Vera continue the experimental (aesthetically dominated) textual formation started before independence by Dambudzo Marechera, while texts by Chinodya and Dangarembga may be designated as socio-analytical. (Maraire's *Zenzele* is something of an exception within this group: while it also has socio-analytical potential, this is tempered by the textual presence of strong axiological elements. In this, *Zenzele* resembles the pre-independence work of Wilson Katiyo.)

By bringing together authors such as Chinodya, Kanengoni, Hove, Vera, Dangarembga and Maraire regardless of the fact that the first three are second generation authors according to Veit-Wild (1992), Primorac transcends the latter's 'generational typology'. The fact that Primorac is able to bring together authors such as Chinodya, Kanengoni and Hove who published their works and achieved prominence in post-independence Zimbabwe, on the one hand, and Marechera, Mungoshi and Nyamfukudza who achieved literary prominence in colonial Rhodesia, on the other, speaks directly to the possibility of classifying black Zimbabwean authors along various lines. In the pursuit of that possibility, Vera's case is quite exemplary:

> In the history of the Zimbabwean novel, the work of Yvonne Vera occupies a strangely ambivalent position. On the one hand, it may be intertextually related to many key works of Zimbabwean Anglophone fiction. In addition to stylistically continuing the novelistic line inaugurated after independence by Chenjerai Hove…Vera's novels are also centred on women, and this connects them to the work of other Zimbabwean women writers such as Dangarembga and Maraire. Although she does not concentrate on the armed struggle, her thematic preoccupation with war-time violence provides a link with the novels of Chinodya and Kanengoni (Primorac, 2006: 145).

The recourse to *genre* and *function* ensures that Primorac succeeds, not only in linking Vera with her contemporaries such as Dangarembga and Mararire, but also with her immediate predecessors such as Hove, Chinodya and Kanengoni. But the typology does not only enable Primorac to link black Zimbabwean authors across generations; it also facilitates the linking of the authors on the basis of thematic pre-occupations. Thus, while Vera's novels are largely centred on issues that affect women, Primorac still finds it possible, on the basis of the '*genre* and *function* typology', to connect her with other black Zimbabwean authors whose novels focus on the various aspects of the Zimbabwean liberation struggle. Insofar as she is concerned, the justification for bringing these authors together has nothing to do with their belonging to this or that particular generation but their commitment to the narration of a counter-memory that challenges official and/or patriotic history in Zimbabwe:

> Because they tell stories about the disempowered, all of the novelistic chronotopes I have discussed may be read as expressions of a cultural counter-memory, buried or ignored by official state discourses…Thematically, this concern with officially forgotten pasts manifests itself in the form of repeated insistence on the importance of speech, language and narrative as embodiments of previously unarticulated memory. Text after text voices the need to *tell more*, to talk, to say what has remained unsaid, to remember (Primorac, 2006: 173).

Primorac's '*genre* and *function* typology' provides critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' with another perspective from which to identify the various aspects that connect and separate black Zimbabwean authors. Although she appears preoccupied with outdoing Veit-Wild's 'generational typology' as is clear in the proliferation of terms such as 're-configuring' and 're-categorising' in her classification of black Zimbabwean authors, Primorac's work expands the repertoire of classificatory instruments that critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' may use in their discussion of the authors who have contributed to the development of the literary canon in question. In her critical work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel', Primorac (2006: 64) identifies

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and brings together twelve black Zimbabwean novels without regard to their generational identities as proposed by Veit-Wild:

> The post-independence novels interrogate and subvert colonially-produced models of space-time by adopting two narrative strategies. Firstly, their chronotopes replicate the repositioning of colonial boundaries while at the same time re-interpreting their meaning. This is especially true of the boundary between urban and rural spaces…All of these novels deny the absolute difference in 'natural,' race-bound identities, which the Rhodesian chronotope locates in the cities and in the countryside…The second narrative strategy…consists in narrating events taking place in alternative locations, situated in-between the spatial binaries that constitute the Rhodesian chronotope. Examples of such luminal spaces are the space of apprenticeship in *Nervous Conditions*, the space-time of war in the war novels, Vera's space-time of memory and the space-time of the supernatural in Hove and Kanengoni.

Considered against the backdrop of Veit-Wild's 'generational typology', Primorac's classification of black Zimbabwean authors demonstrates the fluidity of the identities of black Zimbabwean authors and their novels. Her emphasis on black Zimbabwean authorial replication and repositioning of colonial boundaries and narration of events taking place in luminal spaces such as 'the space of apprenticeship in *Nervous Conditions'*, 'the space-time of war in the war novels', 'the space-time of memory and the space-time of the supernatural' points to the possible creation of an inventory of typologies on the basis of which to classify black Zimbabwean authors and their works. The capacity of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' to suggest the many ways in which its authors may be classified speaks to its richness as a literary tradition. However, to the extent that she emphasises black Zimbabwean authors' denial of "the absolute difference in…race-bound identities", Primorac (2006: 26) aligns her critical vision with contemporary European ideas on the insignificance of the question of race in the imaginative construction of identities. The bulk of recent European scholarship on race nullifies the significance of the concept in the discussion of human relations. On the other hand, race, for the majority of African people brings back memories of the slaveship, the slavemaster and his whip and the various forms of violence that were evoked in the undertaking to make slaves out of Africans. As part of the major rubrics that go into the making of the identities of black people, these memories are not germane with the contemporary European prerogative to dissuade the injured people of Africa from imagining their identities in ways that encourage the perception of the European as the violent other. Primorac's discomfiture with 'race-bound identities' in her classification of black

Zimbabwean authors creates the impression that her quest for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' feeds into the desire to perpetuate the interests of the European project of world domination.

5.2.3 **Evaluation**

Veit-Wild's 'generational typology' in the classification of black Zimbabwean authors is incapable of accounting for the subtle aspects of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. By understating the complexity of 'the black Zimbabwean novel', the typology creates the impression that black Zimbabwean authorial vision is predictable. As can be gathered from the foregoing, the neatness of classification suggested in the 'generational typology' is incapable of facilitating nuanced appreciation of the various ways in which the preoccupations of black Zimbabwean authors in the three generations can be linked or separated. The premise that the authors are shaped by the socio-political backdrop against which they emerge is deterministic and oblivious of the capacity of the fictive imagination to transcend given circumstances. On the other hand, Primorac's '*genre* and *function* typology' goes beyond the limitations of Veit-Wild's 'generational typology' to proffer alternative ways of classifying black Zimbabwean authors. The linking and separation of black Zimbabwean authors through an entirely different set of rubrics in Primorac's work demonstrates the responsiveness of the authors in the different generations to various classificatory rubrics. However, in both typologies, the commitment to the perpetuation of the European cultural agenda of indispensability in the discussion of African literature remains unmistakeable. The bid to cast the vision of the authors as predictable in Veit-Wild's 'generational typology' and the recourse to *function* and *genre* as defined by European scholars in the context of their discussion of their own literature in Primorac's case speak directly to white critical commitment to the perpetuation of the Eurocentric vantage point in the discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'.

5.3 **The development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in 'white critical thought'**

The question of development is a critical theme in all versions of critical discourse that engage 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Titles of critical works such as Krogg's "An Emergent Literature" (1971), "The Progress of Shona and Ndebele Literature" (1979) and "The Growth of

Vernacular Literature in Zimbabwe: With Special Reference to the Work of the Literature Bureau" (1981), Zimunya's *Those Years of Drought and Hunger: The Birth of African Fiction in English in Zimbabwe* (1982), McLoughlin's "Zimbabwean Short Stories by Black Writers: Still-Birth or Genesis" (1987), Kahari's *The Rise of the Shona Novel: A Study in Development: 1890 – 1994* (1990), Veit-Wild's *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers: A Social History of Zimbabwean Literature* (1992) and "The Elusive Truth: Literary Development in Zimbabwe Since 1980" (1993), Chiwome's "Factors that Underdeveloped Shona Literature with Particular Reference to Fiction, 1950s – 1980s (1994) and Matshakayile-Ndlovu's "The Influence of Folktales and Other Factors on the Early Narratives in Ndebele Literature" (1994) show that critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' largely discuss it in terms of the developmental trajectory that it has traversed since its emergence in the 1950s. By and large, the discussion of the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in all the versions of critical thought attendant upon it is spurred by scholarly priorities informed by the different critics' cultural and ideological leanings. In this study, the discussion of the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in 'white critical thought' is inseparable from the politics of domination and resistance that characterise relations between Africa and Europe. Thus, the discussion below explores the arguments that white critics advance in their discussion of the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel', focusing on their handling of the missionary factor in the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel', the place, role and significance of European literary models as well as the critics' rating of creative competence in the two broad clusters of black Zimbabwean novels which are broadly distinguished on the basis of fidelity to either African or European literary standards.

In examining the handling of the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in 'white critical thought', this study takes cognisance of the fact that as a concept, development is a contested idea. While Eurocentrists, for example, approach development in terms of the universal entrenchment of European values, the same concept is read in Afrocentric thought against the backdrop of the fulfillment of the trans-generational and trans-continental (Asante, 2007) African liberation quest in all areas of human exertion. In Afrocentric discourse, the imposition of the Eurocentric matrix of thought which saw to the marginalisation of African-originated definitions of phenomena cleared 'space' for the understanding of development in oppositional terms in which the Eurocentric denigration of indigenous knowledge systems is countered by the

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insistence that the version of development advanced in Eurocentric discourse is steeped in the European agenda of world domination. The global proliferation of non-African discourses and organisations that purport to attend to the upliftment of the continent bears witness to the fact that Africa is generally visualised in terms of the poverty of development. The perception of Africa in terms of stagnation invites European-induced development as the experience that Africa needs in order to scale the heights that other regions of the world are said to have scaled. In literary and literary-critical studies, the European critical orientation towards African literature is that the latter should embrace European critical standards and values in order to be considered developed. On the other hand, Afrocentric critical discourses on African literature discuss its development in terms of the ways in which it helps expedite the decolonisation of the minds of African people. The reprieve to the standoff between Afrocentric and Eurocentric theses on the development of African literature is furnished in this research by Postcolonial emphases on the contradictory ways in which cultures exert impact upon each other in and through "the complex interweavings of history" (Bhabha, 2004: 7). This section of the study discusses 'white critical thought' on the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' with a view to establishing the ways in which the discourse challenges or pepertuates the hegemony of Eurocentric critical values in the discussion of African literature.

5.3.1 **Christian missionaries and 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in 'white critical thought'**

The transition of African societies from self-governing polities into European colonies in the aftermath of the Berlin Conference (1884) at which European powers divided the African continent among themselves did not only mark the end of African self-determination; it also inaugurated a new dispensation in which European cultural values would supplant African-originated knowledge-construction and value-dissemination systems. While the European colonialist project would target African physical and material capital, the realisation of its objectives demanded the cultural and spiritual encirclement of the continent in order for economic and political domination to be effective (Ngugi: 1981). The cultural and spiritual dimension of colonialism would be represented by Christian missionaries who would work with the colonial soldier and administrator, as Ngugi (1981) and Chiwome (1996) note, without appearing to be doing so, mollifying the politically and economically injured African people into

accepting slavery and subservience as their God-ordained status in the crafting of asymmetrical societies that derived their values from European culture and history. To the extent that they projected themselves as philanthropists, Christian missionaries participated in the construction of a Janus-faced European colonialist venture that would confuse African people's orientation towards themselves. As practitioners in the arena of culture and spirituality, European Christian missionaries would play a significant role in the framing of the mindsets of their African students through the provision of Eurocentric education in which all cultural models and historical examples were seldom extracted from Africa. The perception and projection of English as "the most essential key to education and progress" (Krog, 1966: 10) is a case in point. Thus, among the stakeholders whose efforts are directly implicated in the emergence and development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' are Christian missionaries of various denominations. Their contributions to the rise of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' were largely pedagogical and ideological in the framing of the mindsets of black Zimbabwean novelists.

Although they differ in their appreciation of the impact of Christian missionary education on the thinking of African people, critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' of conflicting ideological leanings concur that Christian missionaries played a significant role in the establishment of a culture of literacy that would pave way for the rise and development of written literature in Zimbabwe. The efforts of the Christian missionaries in the rise and development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' unfurled in the context of the need to translate Biblical scriptures into indigenous Zimbabwean languages. The process involved reducing indigenous Zimbabwean languages to the Roman alphabetic mode of writing, in addition to teaching reading and writing skills to indigenous Zimbabwean people in order that they would read and preach the Christian gospel on their own. In their bid to realise immediate evangelical objectives, the Christian missionaries laid the foundations for black Zimbabwean literature through the provision of education opportunities for African pupils who would be expected to participate in the furtherance of Christian missionary interests as lay priests, catechists, clerks, messengers and teachers. Novelists such as Mutswairo, Sithole, Chakaipa, Chidzero, Sigogo, Samkange and countless others would utilise their Christian missionary education to imaginatively depict the various issues at the heart of their society. Veit-Wild (1992: 6) gives credit to the Christian missionaries for staking the foundations of 'the black Zimbabwean novel':

The foundations for written literature were laid by the missionaries who transcribed the Bible and other religious texts into the vernaculars and subsequently taught Africans to read and write themselves.

Credit is due to Veit-Wild for limiting her appreciation of the role of the missionary factor to written literature. By limiting herself thusly, Veit-Wild demonstrates that she is conscious of the manifestation of Zimbabwean literature in various other modes. The Christian missionaries she has in mind in her discussion of the emergence and development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' include "the Roman Catholic Jesuits [who] established themselves at Chishawasha in 1892; the American Board Mission at Chikore in 1893; the South African Dutch Reformed at Morgenster (Zimuto) in 1892, the British Methodist at Waddilove (Nenguo) in 1896; the Catholic Marianhill Fathers at Triashill (Nyanga) in 1896; the Anglican Community of the Resurrection at Saint Augustine's (Penhalonga, near Mutare) in 1897; and the Marianhill Fathers again at Esigodini, Plumtree, in 1930 after the Jesuits withdrew from the missions to the Ndebele which they had established fifty years before in 1881" (Kahari, 1990: 5). These Christian missionary groups came up with conflicting Shona language orthographies that would be harmonised by Doke in his *Report on the Unification of Shona Dialects* (1931).

While credit is due to Veit-Wild for distinguishing between oral and written literature in indigenous languages and for limiting herself to the latter, the homage that she pays to the missionaries for reducing indigenous languages to writing and inducting black Zimbabweans into the science of reading and writing accords cultural and intellectual agency to Europe at the expense of Africa, thus, misrepresenting Africa as one yawning cultural and intellectual void that would only be filled through Christian missionary exertion. Veit-Wild's celebratory discussion of Christian missionary contributions to the rise and development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' creates the impression that 'the black Zimbabwean novel' would not have materialised without Christian missionary agency. Her standpoint is shared by Krog (1966: 13) who also has it that "it is the missionaries and the Rhodesia Literature Bureau who have done a great deal towards making it possible for the African writers to develop their talents." The shared thesis between Veit-Wild (1992) and Krog (1966) understates Africa's capacity at self-movement. The view that Africa is incapable of self-locomotion runs with predictable consistency in European

writings on Africa. Hegel (1956: 99), for instance, has it that Africa has neither dynamism nor movement of its own to exhibit. He categorises all forms of agency in Africa as either European or Asiatic, arguing that "[w]hat we understand by Africa is the unhistorical, undeveloped spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature." This view is also to be encountered in Trevor-Rooper's (in Asante, 1999: 42) submission that there is no African history to talk about but the history of Europeans in Africa.

The reluctance to see Africa in terms of her capacity at self-movement leads to the thinking that her salvation is to be found in European philanthropy. In an interview with the researcher, Ruby Magosvongwe, a lecturer in the Department of English at the University of Zimbabwe, notes that "what is often left unsaid in the discussion of European philanthropy in African education is that as educators of Africans, Christian missionaries socialised their African students to look at the presence of Europeans in Africa as a blessing to the continent." This is why many of the novels of black Zimbabwean authors are easy to classify as narratives in honour of the so-called mission to civilise. In their novels, black Zimbabwean authors such as Chakaipa, Zvarevashe and Chidzero, for example, depict the African experience in history as violent and barbaric. In an interview with the researcher, Itai Muwati, notes that "the authors' portrayal of African culture and history in their works is in keeping with the vision afforded them during their tenure as students of European Christian missionaries." In instances where the authors do not engage in direct praise of European civilisation, they attack African culture and depict African people as synonymous with backwardness. Chakaipa's Shona novels are a case in point. As a product of Christian missionary education, Chakaipa portrays Africa before the European colonial encroachment as emblematic of savagery and the poverty of standards and values.

Chakaipa's ally in the crusade against classical African civilisation is Zvarevashe. In novels such as *Kurauone* (1976) and *Gonawapotera* (1978), Zvarevashe portrays Africa as the land where horrible experiences are the norm. He portrays Africa in ways that give credit to Europeans for everything positive in Africa. In Chakaipa's *Karikoga Gumiremiseve* (1958), for example, peace between the Ndebele and Shona ethnic groups is attributed to the advent of colonilism. In *Garandichauya* (1963) and *Dzasukwa-mwana-asina-hembe* (1967), European colonisers are portrayed as magnanimous big brothers while in *Rudo Ibofu* (1966), the Christian church is

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presented as a refuge for all those seeking freedom from what the author portrays as the tyranny of African culture. In the same novel, Africans are caricatured as incapable of assimilating so-called civilised values. Chidzero compliments this line of persuasion in *Nzvengamutsvairo* (1956) in which African nationalist aspirations are represented by rustic characters such as Matigimu and Tikana while European colonialist values for Africans are exemplified by supposedly civilised characters such as Samere.

The confidence that black Zimbabwean novelists invest in European culture and history is a direct result of their background as students of Christian missionary evangelists whom they saw as role models and exemplars of culture and civilisation. By emphasising the role that Christian missionaries played in the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel', Veit-Wild (1992) and Krog (196) minimise missionaries' impact on the ability of African novelists to think independently and write with confidence in themselves, their people, history, culture and civilisation. Thus, their discussion of the Christian missionary factor in the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in terms that apply emphasis only on the Christian missionary introduction of literacy without exploring the uses to which the Christian missionaries taught their African students to put their ability to read and write creates the impression that there exists no link between the repugnant images of Africa in 'the black Zimbabwean novel' and the aesthetic orientation of their education as pupils of the Christian missionaries of the colonial heyday. The adaptation of African indigenous knowledge in the form of folktales, proverbs, myths, legends and epics with a view to urging civility and obeisance among Africans as is the case in Chidzero's *Nzvengamutsvairo* (1956), Hove's *Bones* (1988) and other novels with titles derived from African proverbs for didactic effects is also to be understood in the light of Christian missionary participation in the education of black Zimbabwean novelists.

The Christian missionary reduction of indigenous African languages to writing occurred within the context of the violence of colonialism. Veit-Wild's and Krog's emphasis on the Christian missionary introduction of literacy obliterates the coercion at the heart of the European colonialist project within which indigenous African languages would be reduced to writing with a view to paving the way for the birth of African literature. Ngugi (1981) draws attention to the fact that the efforts of the Christian missionaries to 'civilise' Africans were preceeded by

colonial military violence. The Christian missionaries played no mean role in pacifying the injured and humiliated African people. They acted as forerunners to the colonialist incursion and were often contemptuous of African people. Overall, they looked at European colonialism in Africa as a divine mission that had to be accomplished regardless of the injury that it visited on African people. With a few exceptions such as Mutswairo's *Feso* (1956), Sithole's *Amandebele kaMzilikazi* (1956), Tsodzo's *Pafunge* (1972), Ndhlala's *Jikinya* (1978), Katiyo's *A Son of the Soil* (1976) and Matsikiti's *Rakava Buno Risifemberi* (1995), 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is basically an affirmation and a celebration of the European colonialist project in Africa.

In large measure, the authors do not see the need to narrate the cultural, political, economic, social, structural and psychological violence at the heart of the European colonial onslaught in Africa. Their silence on the violence of colonialism feeds into the Christian missionary undertaking to mollify Africans in order to facilitate the entrenchment of the colonial system with the least possible ideological and cultural resistance. The silence runs contrary to the emphasis that Thelwell (1987: 230), for instance, applies on the importance of "what might be called the novel of national consciousness – novels of national resonance [and] serious historical exploration and purpose, of moral and political consequence; rooted in the national struggle and experience; inspirited and informed by styles, traditions, and resources of indigenous popular and literary cultures." In such novels, "the collective force and experience of the people is reflected, shaped maybe, refined a little perhaps, and given back" (Thelwell, 1987: 230). If artistic development in Afrocentric discourse is measured against the backdrop of the novelist's commitment to the narration of the factors that militate against the African's people quest for free, dignified and ennobling existence, the reluctance to imaginatively depict colonial violence against African people serves to underdevelop 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. The emphasis on Christian missionary efforts as indispensable in the introduction of literacy among Africans portrays Veit-Wild's and Krog's critical work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' as celebratory of the colonisation and enslavement of African people. The impression is pervasive in their works that without colonisation, the foundations of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' would have remained unstacked. However, colonialism is not the only way by which cultures and histories exert influence on each other. Even outside the context of colonialism and Christian missionary work, it is possible that Africa could have still developed through self-movement or the influence

of other benevolent cultures.

Veit-Wild's and Krog's accordance of agency to Christian missionaries in the emergence and development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' exemplifies the European tendency to discuss all forms of progress in Africa as singularly inspired by Europe. The tragedy in Veit-Wild's and Krog's discussion of the emergence and development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' without due openness to other cultural and intellectual possibilities is that it does not encourage critics and consumers of the literature to think outside the precincts of the given. Limiting oneself to what is given engenders paralysis of the human capacity to imagine and invent. Thus, while Veit-Wild (1992) discusses the efforts of the Christian missionaries in the emergence and development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' as indispensable, Chiwome (1996) argues that although the Christian missionaries contributed immensely to the emergence and development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel', it was their cherished goal that their students, who became the founding authors of Zimbabwean literature, should be fluent in the discourse of self-abnegation. The ideological orientation in 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in indigenous languages lends credence to Chiwome's views.

Veit-Wild's and Krog's discussion of the missionary factor in the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel contributes to "the advancement of the ideological framework of Western triumphalism" (Asante, 1998: 21). The two critics' works celebrate and perpetuate the European supremacist view of self as sole initiator and indispensable subject of history. This is a view that falters when consideration is made of the fact that all of the world's cultures are the result of the contact that they have had with each other. The accordance of exclusive agency to Christian missionaries in the analysis of the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' overlooks the fact that both the colonialist establishment and the Christian missionaries never intended the literature to help liberate African people. While Veit-Wild (1992: 79) rightly notes that first generation black Zimbabwean authors are concerned with "the re-establishment of the values of the past…[and] the effects of urbanization on African society" and that their novels are "built around the conflict of "old" versus "new", of country versus city; social and economic changes in the family and the degenerating effects of the cash economy on traditional habits" (Veit-Wild, 1992: 79), she does not link these manifestations of black Zimbabwean novelistic

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underdevelopment to the Christian missionary factor in the emergence and development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Veit-Wild (1992: 80) does not exonerate the missionaries only; she also pardons the Rhodesia Literature Bureau and blames black Zimbabwean authors for the weaknesses in their novels:

> It would be wrong to conclude that political surveillance by the government was the only major reason for the trivialization of black fiction. It was not surprising that at this early phase in the development of an indigenous literature, the majority of black writers were not yet in a position to formulate a distinct political perspective and to reflect the experiences and views of the political avante-garde.

Veit-Wild's exoneration of the Rhodesia Literature Bureau links quite easily with Krog's (1966: 13) contention that the institution "d[id] a lot to enourage and stimulate a flow of manuscripts from which publishable material has been obtained." However, while Veit-Wild (1992: 80) is cognisant of "the trivialization of black fiction", Krog (1966: 13) thinks and writes of the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in quantitative terms:

> In considering the progress and future of this literature, the yardstick of popularity and success is the number of books sold. Sales and production figures from commercial publishers and the mission institutions such as Mambo Press, Morgenster, Chishawasha Mission, Word of Life Publications, Rhodesia Mission Press, Daystar and others, show an increasing upward trend. The Literature Bureau alone has sold over a quarter of a million copies of its sponsored books since 1956, and annual sales are rising steadily.

The insistence on quantitative terms in the discussion and exoneration of the Rhodesia Literature Bureau's place in the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' persists in Krog's (1974: 2) later writings:

> Over 1, 000, 000 copies of Bureau-sponsored books have been sold to date, and sales figures in 1972 were 40, 000 copies sold. An average of 12 new titles are produced by the Bureau per year. 160 different titles have been produced since the Bureau's first books appeared in 1956. Many titles have gone to 2nd, 3rd and even 7th printing.

By blaming the novelists for the underdevelopment of 'the black Zimbabwean novel', Veit-Wild minimizes the role played by Christian missionaries in the production of a cadre of incompetent black Zimbabwean novelists. The impression is pervasive in her work that the incompetence of

black Zimbabwean authors cannot be linked to the sub-standard type of education that the Christian missionaries, operating within the framework of colonial policies in which Africans were categorised as fourth class citizens, reserved for black students who would later become the founding authors of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. The inability of the black Zimbabwean authors 'to formulate a distinct political perspective and to reflect the experiences and views of the political avant-garde' that Veit-Wild bemoans is linked to the Christian missionary educational prerogative to produce students who would slavishly serve the colonial status quo. It is also connected to the general incompetence of the Christian missionary teachers of the time. In his discussion of the interface of capitalism and slavery, Williams (1944) draws attention to the fact that European imperial powers seldom sent the best of their citizens to minister to the so-called infidels of Africa. They left this task to various kinds of social miscreants in their countries. To blame black Zimbabwean authors for creative incompetence in the aftermath of instruction by the worst that Europe had to offer is to absolve the legitimate targets of blame.

Veit-Wild's (1992: 218) contention that "the expansion of vernacular teaching led to a rapid increase in the demand for Shona and Ndebele reading material" is a celebration of the role played by the Christian missionaries in teaching the Roman alphabet to Africans. In Krog's work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in indigenous languages, the demand in Shona and Ndebele reading material is also explained in terms of Christian missionary effort in the development of African education:

> In the early 1950s, it became apparent to the Rhodesian Government that the rapid increase in literacy among Africans, due to the increased tempo of education, would present its own problems. This problem can best be summed up in three words; "Literacy without literature"…Thus, in 1953, the Rhodesia Literature Bureau was created, (since 1963, it has been part of the Department of African Education) to make available a supply of literature to fulfill this special need (Krog, 1974: 1).

The celebration of Christian missionary contributions towards the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is also manifest in further submissions to the effect that "the benefit of vernacular teaching at the school was that it nurtured cultural self-confidence in a much larger number of African pupils…and provided them with the basic tools to write in their mother tongue" (Veit-Wild, 1992: 219). However, Veit-Wild's inclination to discuss African cultural

self-confidence as a consequence of Christian missionary efforts undermines the fact that Christian missionary education actually destroyed the confidence of African people in their culture. This is borne out by the literary sensibilities of black Zimbabwean authors such as Chakaipa (1958, 1961, 1961a, 1963, 1967), Chiguvare (1968) and Zvarevashe (1976, 1978, 1983) who all commit their novels to digging up the most repugmant aspects of African culture and history. Most of the Africans who received missionary and colonial education became overzealous proselytes and crusaders against African culture. In their novels, they express a deep desire to detach themselves from their culture and identify with the values of the colonial masters and the Christian missionaries. Thus, it is quite a contradiction that Krog (1974: 3) describes Chakaipa as "the leading exponent of the Shona novel", given the latter's penchant to absolve colonialism and the violence it would visit on African people. Veit-Wild's and Krog's volition to discuss Christian missionary contributions to the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' without due consideration of the content of the education they churned out and its impact on the thinking of African students invites the conclusion that their commitment to historical verisimilitude is tilted in favour of the interests of European cultural and intellectual hegemony.

5.3.2 **European literary models and the black Zimbabwean novel in 'white critical thought'**
One of the most fundamental achievements of Africa-centred scholarship on the Eurocentric matrix of thought is the exposition of European commitment to self-celebration as superior. As is clear from Ani's (1994) discussion of European cultural thought, European commitment to self as superior involves the negation of non-Europeans and their cultures as inferior and incapable of achieving anything worthwhile without the guiding hand of Europe. The view expressed by Schweitzer (as quoted in Achebe, 1988: 11), a German missionary in East Africa during the colonial heyday, that "[t]he African is indeed my brother but my juniour brother who, with constant guidance and tutelage, will grow up one day to be like the big brother in Europe", summarises the European conception of self in relation to Africa. In terms of this conception, Europe represents culture, beauty and development and all the standards and blueprints that should be embraced in the global march towards civilisation as strictly European. In literary-critical studies in African literature, European commitment to self as superior and indispensable is manifest in the various ways in which white critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' seek to

explain literary development in terms of the novelists' adherence to European models and standards. The basis for white critical discussion of black Zimbabwean literary development against the backdrop of European benchmarks is that the novel as a genre is a European invention and the ways in which it is utilised by non-Europeans cannot be discussed without recourse to European critical values. This expectation is oblivious of the transformation that visited the novel as a genre upon being introduced into Africa. As products of a thriving oral story-telling tradition, African novelists pushed the frontiers of the novel by bringing into it various forms of African orature, narrative techniques and versions of the English language that need acknowledgement in the discussion of the development of the African novel. The proliferation of West African *pidgin* English and African folkloric discourses in Chinua Achebe's novels such as *Things Fall Apart* (1958) *Arrow of God* (1964) and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1988) is a case in point. In the African Diaspora, Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940) and *Blackboy* (1970), George Lamming's *In the Castle of my Skin* (1953) and Arna Bontemps *Black Thunder* (1992) also enjoin critics of African literature to come to terms with the transformation that the novel has undergone in its global perigrinations.

The conception and presentation of European influences as indispensable in the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is especially clear in Veit-Wild's (1992: 219) discussion of the impact that Rhodesian isolation from Europe exerted on black literary development in the wake of Ian Smith's Unilateral Declaration of Independence in 1965:

> Zimbabwean writers were largely cut off from influences and inspirations from outside [such that] a close interrelationship developed between the succeeding generations within the country [with] immediate predecessors act[ing] as instigators, teachers and literary models.

The influences and inspirations from outside that Veit-Wild has in mind are European. By bemoaning black Zimbabwean novelistic disconnection from such influences, Veit-Wild generates the impression that the search for artistic inspiration from African culture and history led to the stunted development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. Thus, she insinuates that the presence of aspects of African culture and history in 'the black Zimbabwean novel' serves to contaminate and underdevelop the literature. She reasons that this quandary can only be

ameliorated by harking back to European literary models and standards. Veit-Wild's discussion of black Zimbabwean literary development in terms of the centrality of European literary models is consummated in her packaging of Marechera as "the original and vigorous voice from Zimbabwe…[that] made use of modernist techniques reminiscent of Kafka [and] Joyce, and also departed radically from the literary concepts and conventions of most of [his] African predecessors" (Veit-Wild, 2006: 90). Her insistence on European models for 'the black Zimbabwean novel reminisces Krog's views on the same issue in the 1960s and 1970s. Writing in his capacity as the Chief Executive Officer of the Rhodesia Literature Bureau, Krog (1969: 9) handles the issue of European blueprints for 'the black Zimbabwean novel' against the backdrop of the view that black Zimbabwean novelists are emerging in a context where they do not have endemic models to look up to for inspiration:

> Where can aspiring authors learn the art of writing? This is a thorny question. So far, our authors have taught themselves by trial and error. The Rhodesia Literature Bureau gives advice and constructive criticism to the authors of all the manuscripts sent in for assessment.

The portrayal of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' as a literary canon developing "by trial and error" (Krog, 1966: 9) speaks to the critic's conception of the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in terms of the poverty of endemic creative standards for black Zimbabwean novelists. The packaging of the Rhodesia Literature Bureau as a centre for "advice and constructive criticism to the authors" (Krog, 1966: 9) harks back to the idea of the African as a pupil in dire need of instruction. This is borne out by Krog's categorisation of Chidyausiku as "another Shona writer of prominence" (Krog, 1974: 3) from whom "we shall see more and better books" (Krog, 1974: 4), given the fact that the novelist in question "has attended two overseas courses on writing…[and] has also been on an extensive tour of Europe, studying writing techniques" (Krog, 1974: 4). The emphasis on the centrality of European literary models in the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is even more explicit in Krog's (1974: 4) discussion of Bepswa's *Ndakamuda Dakara Afa* (1960):

> The style of this book is completely European, even to the extent of African characters adopting European habits such as kissing, etc. [Bepswa] has obviously been inspired by European love stories and at the same time has learnt to use the techniques of leading his reader on from suspense to suspense to the ultimate climax.

The tendency in 'white critical thought' to explain all manifestations of black Zimbabwean literary development in terms of European literary models invalidates the fact that black Zimbabwean authors are also exposed to African artistic and cultural influences. In an interview, Tommy Matshakayile-Ndlovu notes that "European critics of African literature tend to forget that African writers are first exposed to African culture before they embrace European culture." Narrative techniques such as suspense leading to climax that Krog explains as manifestations of European influence in the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' are preponderant in African folkloric art. Love and adventure stories of various kinds also abound in African folklore. The concept of emotional and romantic commitment unto death that is narrated in Bepswa's *Ndakamuda Dakara Afa* (1960) is not particular to Europe. Thus, assertions to the effect that the novel in question "is completely European" (Krog, 1974: 4) and the novelist "has obviously been inspired by European love stories" (Krog, 1974: 4) do not stand to reason when note is taken of the fact that love, commitment, death, beauty, pain, happiness and sorrow are universal values whose provenance cannot be limited to one culture. Their presentation as European values is in keeping with the prerogatives of European culture to achieve hegemonic significance in the discussion of all data relating to Africa. The submission that Sigogo "is a born writer [who]…appears to be uninfluenced by European writing and has his own uniques style" (Krog, 1974: 4) does not do much to show that white critics are alive to non-European influences in the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'.

In instances where white critics do not go all out for European literary models and standards in their discussion of the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel', the tendency is to argue that African literature should be studied within the context of the impact that European and African culture have had on each other. Shaw (in Veit-Wild and Chennells, 1997: 7) discusses this impact as unavoidable:

> The notion of a "pure" and homogenous African culture and of a "pure" African aesthetic of literature in Zimbabwe are fallacious. There has always been an interchange of African and European forms and themes in the development of Zimbabwean literature…The syncretism of literary themes and styles in pre-independence Zimbabwe was common and unavoidable. The European classical canon had a profound impact on African writing and an assimilation of "European" culture was inevitable.

The emphasis on the "interchange of African and European forms and themes in the development of Zimbabwean literature" (Shaw, in Veit-Wild & Chennells, 1999: 7) is misleading. The interchange of values, themes and ideas between cultures is a bilateral process. The Afro-European cultural experience in history is far from being a bilateral process. It is an experience in which European values and standards are packaged and presented as normative while African values are expected to adjust in order to be accommodated in the wider cultural experience defined from a Eurocentric standpoint. The emphasis on "the syncretism of literary themes and styles" (Shaw, in Veit-Wild & Chennells, 1999: 7) as "common and unavoidable" (Shaw, in Veit-Wild & Chennells, 1999: 7) is a euphemistic celebration of the triumphal impact of European standards in the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. In his discussion of European influences in Marechera's works, McLoughlin (in Veit-Wild & Chennells, 1999: 146) also emphasises the importance of European models for African literature:

> Marechera is not asserting his Africanness, not attempting to recover a culture desecrated by colonialism. He seems at ease with other cultures than his own and employs many of the poetic techniques of non-African poets such as Elliot and Pound.

What makes European models and standards for 'the black Zimbabwean novel' easy to emphasise in 'white critical thought' is the readiness with which black Zimbabwean novelists embrace such standards and models. Marechera, for instance, does not consider European influences as pernicious. His novels are inundated with Greco-Roman myths relating to Apollo, Protista, Cassandra and Amelia. He hails European novelists such as Don Quixote, Dostoevsky, Rabelias, Dean Swift, John Fowler, Gunter Grass, arguing that the world of their novels "is complex, unstable, comic, satirical, fantastic, poetical and committed to the pursuit of the truth" (Marechera, 1987: 101). In these novels, he argues, "[t]he hero can travel anywhere in this world and beyond, fantasy and symbolism are combined with low-life materialism, heaven and hell are close by and may be visited, genres are mixed, [and] stories, speeches, dramatic sketches, poetry and parody exist side by side" (Marechera, 1987: 101). Elsewhere, Marechera (1985: 32) urges African writers to "give a healthy nod to Rabelais and Dean Swift and then just smack your face with glee as Dostoevsky appears [because] that is the future of African literature." Thus, Marechera is celebrated for "his extensive knowledge of world literature" (Veit-Wild, 1992: 260)

and inclination to dismiss fellow African writers who look at African culture as the composite source of values and standards for African literature. Apparently, Marechera's reading preferences are not global but Eurocentric. It is presumptuous for Veit-Wild to assume that European literature is the *sine qua non* of world literature.

European models and standards are important to the extent that they expose non-European writers to other ways of portraying and managing cultural and historical data in literature. In 'white critical thought' on the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel', the emphasis on the exclusive importance of European literary models and standards serves to construct Europe as the global literary centre with the inalienable right to "call the shots, moderate the debate[…] (which very often sidles from dialogue to monologue), apportion[…] speaking (and hearing) rights, dictate[…] voice modulation [and] determine[…] who is to be heard or hushed" (Osundare, 2012: 35). The presentation of European theories of literature and criticism as indispensable in the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' pushes African knowledge economies to the periphery, thus rendering possibilities of African and European cultural co-existence remote.

5.3.3 The 'underdeveloped cluster'

White critical discussion of the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' on the basis of the ways in which it embraces or resists Eurocentric creative models and standards leads to the dichotomisation of the literature into two basic clusters: the *underdeveloped cluster* on the one hand and the *exemplary cluster* on the other. This separation is also arrived at on the basis of the black Zimbabwean novelists' imaginative and aesthetic sensibilities, ideological orientation, socio-historical vision and fidelity to and/or discomfiture with African cultural values and nationalist ethos. Thus, the two clusters stand opposed to each other in terms of the vision of the authors, their level of commitment to the popular struggles of their time and general disposition towards the lived experiences of African people. Black Zimbabwean novelists whose works fall into the 'underdeveloped cluster' in 'white critical thought' on the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' include Mutswairo (1956, 1959), Sithole (1956), Samkange (1966, 1976, 1978), Tsodzo (1972, 1993), Katiyo (1976, 1978) and Ndhlala (1978, 1984), among others.

White critical identification of these authors' novels as 'underdeveloped' arises from the view that in their narration of the African experience in history, the novels in this category lack imaginative rigour. Thus, the 'reactionary cluster' in the discussion of the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in 'white critical thought' is said to typify the tendency to rehearse the black Zimbabwean experience in simplistic terms. The critics minimise the importance of black Zimbabwean novels that fall into this cluster on the basis of two basic factors: 1) the volition in the novels to narrate the African past as the moment of wholeness, and 2), the authors' celebration of the heroic struggles of African people in the face of colonial domination.

In their discussion of the tendency of the novels in this cluster to narrate the past as the moment of wholeness, white critics argue that these novels epitomise imaginative underdevelopment because the vision they espouse is nostalgic. Thus, the contention in 'white critical thought' on black Zimbabwean novels that fall into this cluster is that their underdevelopment is manifest in the fact that they yearn for an age of purity and innocence, marked by stability in all areas of life, abundance of resources, peace and tranquility. The critics find fault with the novels for creating the impression that African life was better in the days of old, drawing heavily as they do from *pasichigare* myths of African existential balance with a view to bemoaning the ruin engendered by colonialism. Thus, the novels in this cluster are said to constitute a defensive imaginative discourse that challenges European culture and civilisation by attempting to prove that Africa also had great cultures and civilisations that were destroyed by slavery and colonialism. Their imaginative focus on the destruction that was wrought by colonialism invites white critical excoriation because it mobilises ideological aversion towards European culture and civilisation as synonymous with violence and the dearth of humane values. Thus, the novels that fall into this cluster are classified in 'white critical thought' on the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' as part of the paraphernalia that went into the crafting of a brand of African cultural nationalism that defines relations between Africa and Europe in oppositional terms in the unfolding of the African political and ideological struggle against colonialism:

> Early anti-colonial texts promoted a form of cultural nationalism which later became official policy in post-independence Zimbabwe. Cultural nationalism can be defined as an ideology which asserts the notion of one pure, unified, national, homogeneous culture (Shaw, 1997: 13).

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In its vulgar manifestation, cultural nationalism entails uncritical commitment to cultural purism. It entails aversion to influences from other cultures and civilisations. Vulgar cultural nationalism is inward-looking and incapable of engaging other cultures and civilisations except when they have to be castigated for their supposedly contaminating influences. It stands in diametric opposition to scientific cultural nationalism which places emphasis on one's culture and civilisation without being dismissive of influences from other cultures and civilisations in the development of a global multicultural matrix in which grounding in a particular culture and history has to be complemented by fluidity of vision, consciousness and identity. Unlike its vulgar opposite, scientific cultural nationalism stresses the importance of a given culture as a legitimate rallying pedestal from which to see and explain phenomena (Asante: 1998) while acknowledging the fact that the world is a cultural hereroglot in which the trafficking of values and ideas is the lifeline of human advancement. It is eclectic, dynamic and carnevalesque but cognisant of its authenticity as a worldview. It detests essentialism and purism, placing emphasis on the fact that both centering and fluidity are indispensable in the fruitful interaction of the world's diverse cultures. Unlike vulgar cultural nationalism which emphasises self-celebration at the expense of self-criticism, scientific cultural nationalism is comfortable with both self-celebration and self-criticism. It is therefore critical in the generation of authentic self-knowledge. White critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' are inclined to associate Veit-Wild's first generation black Zimbabwean novelists with vulgar cultural nationalism:

> First generation authors contended that a homogeneous indigenous culture was shattered by the arrival of colonialism. By re-evaluating the history of Zimbabwe in their novels, they sought to recapture a proud past and promote a unified national identity (Shaw, 1997: 36).

The rallying contention in Shaw's discussion of the aspects of the so-called underdeveloped cluster is that by depicting the African past as the moment of homogeneity and purity, the novels in question evade rational and scientific dialogue with both the past and the present. The informing consciousness in Shaw's critical work on the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is that this cluster of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is underdeveloped because it participates in the contruction of a golden age that never existed in African history. His contention is that the novelists in this category glorify the African past with a view to achieving

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the immediate political goal of legitimating the African struggle against colonial rule. Thus, Shaw looks at the novelists in this category as more commited to political expediency than historical truth. His position with regards to the search for 'a proud past' in the novels in this cluster is that this is an exercise in futility because all there is to Africa's past is a "raffia, calabash and masquerade culture" (Amuta, 1987: 23) devoid of significance in a supposedly post-modern and sophisticated world. This packaging of classical African culture misrepresents it as static and therefore incapable of furnishing those who participate in it with a clear perspective from which to see and explain phenomena. The weaknesses of the novels in the supposedly underdeveloped cluster notwithstanding, 'white critical thought' on the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is to be appreciated within the context of the contestations for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' that characterise relationships between Africa and Europe. The discussion of black Zimbabwean novels in this category as underdeveloped is an onslaught on the emphasis that the novels apply on the importance of African culture and history.

White critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' spurn the black Zimbabwean novelistic recourse to classical African culture and history because, as embodiments of the values and blueprints that African people need in their struggle to regain mastery over their destiny, African culture and history discourage the acceptance of the Eurocentric conceptual framework as modern, scientific, universal and indispensable. By categorising and discussing black Zimbabwean novels that deploy African culture and history as underdeveloped, white critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' display their commitment to the Eurocentric project of dislodging African culture and history as the sources of the values and examples that African authors should use in their imaginative narration of the standards that are critical in African self-definition and self-ownership. Thus, Veit-Wild (1992: 252) writes disapprovingly of Ndhlala's *Jikinya* (1978):

> Geoffrey Ndhlala's *Jikinya* is an idyllic depiction of the beauty and harmony of pre-colonial African life, and a symbolic fictionalisation of racial reconciliation – in short, the novel naively circumvents the problems of the day. This explains why it was the only one of those … to be published inside Rhodesia. Only in his second novel in English, *The Southern Circle* (1984), did Ndhlala vent the frustrations of his generation during the years of UDI.

Veit-Wild critiques the portrayal of pre-colonial African life in Ndhlala's *Jikinya* (1978) as idyllic. She questions Ndlala's fidelity to historical detail and classifies his vision as naive and

sentimental. Thus, her critical approach to black Zimbabwean novels in this category resembles Kahari's discussion of these novels as *romances* committed to the unjustified resuscitation of the values of a supposedly by-gone era without relevance to the present. The discussion of the portrayal of pre-colonial African life in the novels in this cluster as idyllic creates the impression that the novelists are culprits in the invention of an African culture that never existed. Arguments of this nature serve to exonerate the European colonialist project in Africa as innocent in "the destruction of black civilization" (Williams: 1987). Thus, Shaw (1997:36) expects black Zimbabwean novels that depict African culture and civilisation before the advent of colonialism to do so truthfully:

> These writers took it upon themselves to challenge negative images of black Zimbabweans. Despite their noble intentions, however, they nevertheless assisted in the construction of a false historicity and a mistaken national identity. For example, Samkange's *Year of the Uprising* (1978) and Mutswairo's *Mapondera: Soldier of Zimbabwe* (1978) are based on the events of the 'First Chimurenga' of 1896. These narratives attempt to recreate a mythical 'golden age' of unity and harmony prior to the arrival of the white settlers, and they all draw heavily on the controversial account of the uprisings by Terrence Ranger in *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia: 1896 – 1897*, which was published in 1967…Ranger's claims were later shown to be seriously inaccurate by the historians David Beach and Julian Cobbing. These historians found that the uprisings were neither simultaneous, nor centrally located coordinated, and that they had been traditionalist rather than proto-nationalist in nature.

Shaw's insistence on the truthful re-imagining of classical African culture and civilisation in 'the black Zimbabwean novel' obliterates the importance of the fictive dimension of art. The historical novelist employs history as a source of certain cherished values. He is also expected to be conversant with the history and culture of the people who constitute the subject of his art. However, the historical novelist is not a historian although his work may have a bearing on the appreciation of the history that he portrays. The truthful narration of aspects of a people's history is the responsibility of the historian. While the historian is concerned with factual detail, the world of the novelist, including the historical novelist, is the world of the fictive. The interface of fact and fiction in all forms of art entails no contradiction for Afrocentric critics. The artist holds the licence to re-draw the margins of a people's history within the framework of their need to pursue and fulfill the agenda of their tenure in the world. Thus, Achebe (1987: 125) equates the novelist to a liar:

He is the liar who can sit under his thatch and see the moon hanging in the sky outside. Without stirring from his stool he can tell you how commodities are selling in a distant market place. His chalked eye will see every blow in a battle he never fought. So fully is he owned by the telling that sometimes – especially when there is no age-mate to challenge the claim – he will turn the marks left on him by the chicken-pox and yaws he suffered in childhood into bullet scars…yes, scars from that day *our men* pounded *their men* like palm-fruit in the heavy mortar of iroko.

While white critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' are inclined to appreciate its development in terms of the extent to which it separates itself from classical African culture and civilisation, the same literary canon is as much about African classical culture and civilisation as it is about contemporary African experiences and future struggles. Black Zimbabwean novelists draw on the past to explain the present and win the future for their intended readership. The past embodies the examples, models and experiences on the basis of which to make sense of the present in anticipation of the future. The reconstruction of the past is a task that cannot be left to historians alone. The emphasis on looking back with a view to moving forward underscores the importance of memory in any given people's attempt to define and locate themselves on the map of human geography. As pundits in the world of the imaginative, novelists have the licence to re-draw the margins of the experiences of their people in history. To expect novelists to depict the past truthfully as Shaw insists is to turn them into historians.

The white critical discussion of the novels of authors such as Mutswairo (1956, 1959), Sithole (1956), Samkange (1966, 1976, 1978), Tsodzo (1972, 1993), Katiyo (1976, 1978) and Ndhlala (1978, 1984) as underdeveloped stands in contrast to the applause that the same novels receive when they are read from an Afrocentric peprspective. The concern with black liberation and self-determination in the novels in this cluster accords them an important place in Afrocentric critical thought on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. While white critics look at the nationalist commitment of the authors in this category as evidence of novelistic underdevelopment, the same commitment is read in Afrocentric critical thought as evidence that the authors are contributing positively in the African peoples' struggle for emancipation. The recourse to African history and culture, African myths, epics, legends and motifs that the novelists in this category make is significant in the black Zimbabwean novelistic contribution towards the

development of a vision that celebrates the agency of African people and locates them at the centre of their experiences in history.

5.3.4 **The 'exemplary cluster'**

In 'white critical thought' on the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel', the 'exemplary cluster' stands out as the antithesis of the 'underdeveloped cluster'. It comes through in the critical discourses in question as the embodiment of the imaginative mindset that black Zimbabwean writers should embrace in their narration of the black Zimbabwean experience. Black Zimbabwean novelists whose novels white critics find easy to place into this cluster include Sigogo (1962, 1967, 1971, 1982, 1982a, 1984), Chakaipa (1958, 1961, 1961a, 1963, 1967), Chidyausiku (1960, 1962, 1970), Bepswa (1960), Mungoshi (1970, 1975, 1975a, 1983), Marechera (1978, 1980, 1984, 1992), Nyamfukudza (1979), Chinodya (1982, 1984, 1991, 2000), Dangarembga (1988) and Vera (1993, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2002). This cluster is dominated by a combination of authors who affirm colonial domination in their works as well as Veit-Wild's second generation 'non-believers', 'cultural orphans' and 'angry young men'. Third generation authors such as Dangarembga (1988) and Vera (1993, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2002) are also part of this cluster in which first-generation authors such as Mutswairo (1956, 1958), Sithole (1956), and Samkange (1966, 1976, 1978) and some second-generation such as Tsodzo (1972, 1993), Katiyo (1976, 1978) and Kanengoni (1985, 1987, 1993, 1997) are conspicuous by their absence. Most of the authors in this cluster are linked by the fact that their novels "express a highly critical, even cynical view of the liberation struggle (Veit-Wild, 1992: 263). Their cynicism sets them apart from their counterparts in the 'underdeveloped cluster' who are exuberant about the possibilities of black liberation and self-determination that were promised by the liberation struggle.

In his discussion of literary trends in 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in indigenous Zimbabwean languages, Krog writes approvingly of the novels of Chakaipa (1958, 1961, 1961a, 1963, 1967), Chidyausiku (1960, 1962, 1970), Bepswa (1960) and Sigogo (1962, 1967, 1971, 1982, 1982a, 1984). He describes Chakaipa as "the leading exponent of Shona literature [with] five published novels to his credit" (Krog, 1974: 3) and Chidyausiku as "another Shona writer of prominence"

(Krog, 1974: 3). He also extends the same descriptive generosity towards Sigogo whom he projects as "a born writer with fantastic powers of description" (Krog, 1974: 4). His verdict on Chakaipa's *Garandichauya* (1963) is that the novel narrates "[a] gripping story written in the inimitable style of Chakaipa, a writer who has great powers of description and dramatisation" (Krog, 1974: 3). He also describes Chidyausiku's *Nyadzi Dzinokunda Rufu* (1962) as "an excellent expose of the evils of prostitution in the urban townships" (Krog, 1974: 4). He writes glowingly of Chidyausiku's *Pfungwa DzaSekuru Mafusire* (1960) as:

> An account of the advice given by a wise old man…on all aspects of good upbringing and moral behaviour…[Sekuru Mafusire's] good advice is sought by many and he is able to help the people on questions concerning marriage, agriculture, health, cleanliness, education and everyday problems (Krog, 1974: 5).

Krog's superlative description of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in indiginous languages is oblivious of the role that the literature played in affirming and legitimating colonialism in Africa. Chakaipa's novels, for instance, depict pre-colonial African experiences as synonymous with savagery and backwardness. In novels such as *Karikoga Gumiremiseve* (1958) and *Pfumo Reropa* (1961), Chakaipa identifies chaos as the centerpiece of the African experience prior to colonialism. He is certain that Africa was only saved from self-destruction by the advent of colonialism. His novels function as thanks-giving discourses that applaud colonialism as indispensable in the European undertaking to induct Africa into culture and civilisation. Thus, while Chakaipa may be a writer with "great powers of description and dramatisation" (Krog (1974: 3), the content of his novels invites the conclusion that his vision is in tandem with that of the colonialist system. In his novels that deal with the African experience during the colonial dispensation, Chakaipa absolves the colonial system for the poverty, marginalisation and vulnerability that his African characters contend with. He blames and punishes his characters without linking their choices to wider socio-economic, political and cultural factors within the purview of which they unfold. In an interview, Itai Muhwati notes that "this disjunction points to the fact that the vision in Chakaipa's novels is de-contextualised."

In much the same manner as Chakaipa's, Chidyausiku's novels are also easy to implicate in the entrenchment of colonial values. In *Pfungwa DzaSekuru Mafusire* (1960), for instance,

Chidyausiku's central character, Sekuru Mafusire, assumes the position of a wise, erudite and respected elder in the African community whose "good advice is sought by many" (Krog, 1974: 4). He is depicted in the novel as an embodiment of the values that African people need in their attempt to adjust to the changes engendered by the advent of European culture and civilisation. Chidyausiku accords him the respect and authority that comes with age and experience in African communities. However, an Afrocentric reading of the novel shows that *Pfungwa DzaSekuru Mafusire* (1960) is a narrative in African cultural extirpation. Sekuru Mafusire is accorded the respect and authority that comes with age in African communities but his vision is not in sync with the aspirations of African people for autonomous and dignified existence. He espouses values and ideas that project the acceptance of European ways of seeing and doing things as synonymous with culture and civilisation. His narrative on the various issues that he addresses marginalises African-centred schemes of explaining and managing data. Thus, Chidyausiku's *Pfungwa DzaSekuru Mafusire* (1960) constitutes "a fawning song in self-abnegation" (wa Thiong'o, 1987: 76). Krog celebrates it because it does not mount an onslaught on colonialism and its values. His criticism is in keeping with the mandate of the Rhodesia Literature Bureau to oversee the promotion of a culture of inferiority, acquiescence and servility in 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in indigenous languages. Thus, his critical work connects and interlocks with the over-arching European cultural and intellectual preoccupation to achieve 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the discussion of data relating to Africa.

In her discussion of the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel', Veit-Wild (1992: 252) argues that "the most original, compelling and innovative prose in English prior to independence was written by Mungoshi, Nyamfukudza and Marechera." In laudatory terms, Veit-Wild (1992: 252) submits that the English novels of these authors "have become the literary insignia of a whole era, synonymous with an ethos to which their titles have lent the name: 'Those Years of Drought and Hunger'" (Veit-Wild, 1992: 252). Her views are shared by Primorac (2005: 172) who does not only look at Mungoshi (1970, 1975, 1975a, 1983), Marechera (1978, 1980, 1984, 1992), Nyamfukudza (1979), Chinodya (1982, 1984, 1991, 2000), Dangarembga (1988) and Vera (1993, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2002) as "canonical Zimbabwean writers" but also argues that "[t]here is a sense in which the Zimbabwean novel came into full existence as a literary genre only with the second of th[e] literary generations [in which] the most prominent…writers were

Charles Mungoshi and Dambudzo Marechera" (Primorac, 2002: 104) who, "because between them they wrote poetry, short stories and plays (in the case of Mungoshi, in both Shona and English) and because they published both before and after independence…may be seen as the true fathers of Zimbabwean literature" (Primorac, 2002: 104).

Part of Veit-Wild's and Primorac's rationale for ascribing more value to these black Zimbabwean novelists ahead of their first generation predecessors has to do with what the two critics consider as the novelists' remarkable soberness of vision and detachment from African nationalism and its supposed tendency to explain reality in homogenising terms. Thus, in 'white critical thought', the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is judged on the basis of the extent to which the author(s) resist(s) the inclination to glorify popular African struggles and their grounding in Pan-Africanism as "a totalizing discourse [that] assumes a common origin and proposes a single telos for the infinite variety of Africa and its diaspora" (Chennells, in Veit-Wild & Chennells, 1999: 32). Mungoshi, Marechera and Nyamfukudza are considered exemplary for the ways in which they satisfy this expectation. Thus, Veit-Wild (1992: 255) writes approvingly of what Afrocentric critics of Zimbabwean literature would interpret as Nyamfukudza's anti-heroism, negativity and indifference towards the ideals that united Zimbabwean people in the late 1970s:

> Stanley Nyamfukudza, born in 1951, shares with Mungoshi a sober, unsentimental, unpretentious approach to people and life…Nyamfukudza's short novel, *The Non-Believers Journey*, written around 1977 in England, is first of all a remarkable document of a new urban literature…Unemotional yet not detached, his pen follows the day-to-day social mechanisms of the township; his narrative voice has the sober, down-to-earth tone of modern urban realism, reminiscent of American and British authors such as Ralph Ellison, Alan Sillitoe or John Braine. The squalor, violence, lack of privacy, beer halls and night-clubs with their drunkards and prostitutes – nothing is glamorised or hidden. Nyamfukudza displays a warm familiarity with what in most Zimbabwean novels, is merely the "site of vice". Observing meticulously, without any moralizing, he lays this setting bare, in all its fascinating crudeness…Nyamfukudza's unperturbed realism, focussed not on heroes but on everyday life, is intrinsically and deeply sceptical, demystifying all social and political structures…Rather than elevating "the stone throwing period" to an important heroic stage of political conscientization, Nyamfukudza exposes elements of irrational violence accompanying the political activism of that period.

Veit-Wild associates Nyamfukudza's imaginative work with soberness, urbanity, realism and

"pronounced and profound scepticism in the revolutionary struggle" (Veit-Wild, 1992: 262). These are qualities that Veit-Wild is unable to find, not only in the novels of first generation authors such as Mutswairo (1956, 1959), Sithole (1956), Samkange (1966. 1976, 1978) and others, but also in the novels of other second generation authors such as Tsodzo (1972, 1993), Katiyo (1976, 1978) and Ndhlala (1978, 1984) and their counterparts. Thus, she classifies Ndhlala's *Jikinya* (1978) as "an idyllic depiction of the beauty and harmony of pre-colonial African life" (Veit-Wild, 1992: 252) and Katiyo's *A Son of the Soil* (1976) as seriously flawed because "[u]nlike other contemporary writings…[it] does not reflect the fierce conflicts that the process of urbanization and education provoked in the adolescent African" (Veit-Wild, 1992: 254). She finds it objectionable that Katiyo's novel, for instance,

> …does not convey any of the deep disruptions in African society by which Katiyo's generation was marked…Instead – and here it is closer to Generation 1 novels such as *Year of the Uprising* and *Mapondera* – it pursues a political propagandist aim and mythologises the unity of the nationalist movement and its connection to the early uprisings (Veit-Wild, 1992: 252).

Veit-Wild rates the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' on the basis of its commitment to the negation of the African nationalist struggle for freedom from colonial domination. She decries black Zimbabwean authors who align their vision with African aspirations for freedom as propagandists. It is her contention that their novels are humstrung by gregarious commitment to a struggle for freedom that was conceived in supposedly simplistic 'blacks versus whites' terms. Veit-Wild does not appreciate the necessity, place and significance of propaganda in African liberation struggles as portrayed in African literature. Thus, she celebrates Nyamfukudza's *The Non-Believers' Journey* (1979) without ever explaining how the novel, as a narrative of hopelessness and despondency, fails to narrate and advance the interests of a people living under the violence of colonialism. Her vision is shared by Shaw (1997: 53) who praises Nyamfukudza on account of the fact that his novel:

> …demythologizes both the 'First' and 'Second' Chimurengas. It also deflates the nationalist idea of a simple black versus white conflict and asks what the true meaning of liberation is…One of Nyamfukudza's projects was to refute myths and deflate grand notions of heroism and *The Non-Believers' Journey* undoubtedly achieves this.

The deflation of grand notions of heroism is critical in the effort to achieve parity and equality in post-Independence African culture and politics. It helps contain the tide of official and/or patriotic history (Ranger, in Primorac & Muponde, 2002: 164) unleashed by post-Independence African governments to justify dictatorship and disregard of human rights. However, Shaw overlooks the fact that Nyamfukudza deflates grand notions of heroism only to place a wreckless, indifferent and hopeless character at the heart of his narrative. In *The Non-Believers Journey* (1979), Nyamfukudza celebrates angst, cynicism and vulnerability in keeping with modernist literary aesthetics in which human beings are projected as incapable of shaping their destinies. As Nyamfukudza's protagonist in the novel, Sam Mapfeka does not exude life-affirming values on the basis of which readers may be inspired to transform their existential conditions. He does not believe in African human agency and is comfortable with a kind of itinerancy that he mistakes for freedom. Thus, Nyamfukudza's novel provides the critical platform for Shaw (1997: 51) to exonerate colonialism and the violence it visited on African people:

> The family history of Sam is traced and we are given a picture of a society fragmented even at the time of the arrival of the colonizers. In *The Non-Believers Journey*, there is no golden age for Sam to look back to because, as the narrator illustrates, his family history is bleak…The numerous squabbles and divisions within the Mapfeka family cannot be attributed to the arrival of colonialism. The evils of colonialism are shown as happening alongside the internal conflicts of the Mapfekas rather than as the root cause of them. In stark contrast to Mutswairo's *Mapondera: Soldier of Zimbabwe*, therefore, Nyamfukudza's narrative departs from the notion of a simple causal link between the arrival of colonialism and the loss of 'purity'. It even questions the idea of 'purity' having ever existed.

Shaw reads 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in such a way as to understate the impact of colonialism in African degeneration. He celebrates Nyamfukudza's emphasis on African history prior to colonisation as bleak and is satisfied that in the novel, "the evils of colonialism are shown as happening alongside the internal conflicts of the Mapfekas rather than as the root cause of them" (Shaw, 1997: 51). His priority is to distribute responsibility for the African existential quandary. By emphasising African culpability in African degeneration, Shaw participates in the construction of discourses that minimise European trans-generational guilt in African dislocation. He considers Nyamfukudza's novel exemplary because it furnishes easy provenance for his views on the African experience in history. Thus far, his critical work on 'the black

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Zimbabwean novel' feeds into the broad European prerogative to churn out discourses that mollify European collective conscience in the face of charges of violence against other members of the human family.

Veit-Wild (1992) and Shaw (1997) do not only come out in full support of Nyamfukudza's commitment to hopelessness, despondency and anti-heroism as exemplary; they also concur that Marechera's corpus is the most exemplary in the black Zimbabwean novelistic pantheon, even when his work is considered in the light of that of his contemporaries. Thus, Veit-Wild (1999: 93) endearingly describes him as "the *enfant terrible* of the London exile scene…[who] had a consciously syncretic outlook", was "ahead of his time as far as African literature is concerned" (Veit-Wild & Chennells, 1999: xiii) and would also become "a cult figure […] among the younger generation in [his]…country" (Veit-Wild, 2006: 90), famed for his "radical departure from previous predominantly realist modes of African writing" (Veit-Wild, 2006: 88). The superlative discourse that Veit-Wild (1992: 259) employs in her description of Marechera and his literary work makes clear that she considers him the most exemplary black Zimbabwean novelist of all time:

> With Dambudzo Marechera (born in 1952), Zimbabwean literature reaches, on the eve of independence, an extreme counterpoint to its beginnings…In *The House of Hunger* – written in 1977 after his explusion from Oxford – he revives the anxieties of his childhood and youth…The follow-up to *The House of Hunger* was *The Black Insider*, written in London in 1978. This posthumously published novel is unique in Zimbabwean literature in exploring the predicament of the "lost generation" in exile…[Marechera's] work defies the usual categories of anti-colonial or anti-neo-colonial writing. It transcends the concrete political or social situation, taking any condition as a parable of the human predicament as a whole. While his contemporaries, Mungoshi and Nyamfukudza, write realism, the style of Marechera's fiction refutes the existence of a single, perceivable reality. Marechera's vision and experience are of fragmentation, the splintering of reality and the personality. In his art, the boundaries of time shift constantly, dialogue becomes flashback, becomes stream of consciousness in seamless transition; the lines blur between dream and reality…The subversive nature of Marecheraa's writing links him to certain trends in post-structuralist and post-colonial literature. In the terminology of post-structuralism, his writing is "deconstructionist"…counter-discursive, subversive and dynamic…in so far as it permanently questions the conditions of its own making…[and] like other post-modernist literature […] it contextualises the author and dismantles or "deconstructs" the myth of the invisible and infallible literary creator…Marechera questions and undermines the concept of one absolute and distinct reality, expressing an affinity to the carnivalesque or Menippean

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stream of writing in world literature (Veit-Wild, 1992: 259).

Veit-Wild looks at Marechera's authorial vision as carnivalesque and fluid. She places him in the category of African writers "who have ruffled up the surface of realist representation and have explored issues and styles that represent trespassing of borders" (Veit-Wild, 2006: 2). In much the same manner as Shaw (1997: ii) in his comparison of Marechera "with his contemporaries [such as] Stanley Nyamfukudza and Charles Mungoshi, who also reject the concept of a 'pure', homogeneous national culture in their writings", Veit-Wild (1992: 261) celebrates Marechera for his opennesss to European literary-critical theories such as Deconstruction and Post-modernism which stress the need to expunge "the myth of the invisible and infallible literary creator" (Veit-Wild, 1992: 261). She writes approvingly of Marechera's works as subversive of realism and "the usual categories of anti-colonial and anti-neocolonial writing" (1992: 260). She also celebrates the centrality of fragmentation and splintering of reality in Marechera's novels, stressing that "Marechera's fiction refutes the existence of a single, perceivable reality" (Veit-Wild, 1992: 260) and is more attuned "to the carnvalesque or Mennipean stream of writing in world literature" (Veit-Wild, 1992: 261). The emphasis that Veit-Wild applies on Marechera's openness to European literary theories is oblivious of "the imperialism of theory…[and] the ease and complacency with which Western theories have taken over the global literary arena…as though the other parts of the world were a *tabula rasa*" (Osundare, 2002: 43).

The stress that Veit-Wild applies on the subversive nature of Marechera's novels finds authentification in McLoughlin's (1999: 144) submission that "[t]he kernel of resistance in Marechera's [works is that] the persona refuses to deal in such binaries as black/white, Africa/Europe, colonizer/colonized […] yearn[ing] to go beyond these as limiting, if not constricting." To effect his resistance, Marechera harks back to Post-structuralist and Post-modernist literary theories. McLoughlin (1999) celebrates Marechera's appropriation of Post-structuralist and Post-modernist literary theories as exemplary and indicative of black Zimbabwean novelistic development without due cognisance of the fact that "[i]t is an irony that a theoretical theology such as poststructuralism whose principal tenet is the deconstruction of dichotomy should have its own temple erected on a similar binarism: structuralism versus post-structuralism, modernism versus post-modernism, etc" (Osundare, 2002: 40). Overally, white

critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' applaud the subversive nature of Marechera's novels without discussing how they advance the agenda of African liberation that defined the parameters of the context in which they emerge. In an interview, Musaemura Zimunya, a black Zimbabwean critic of 'the black Zimbabwean novel who lectures in the Department of English at the University of Zimbabwe states in an interview that "it matters very little for white critics that Marechera's subversive disposition does not advance the interests of the masses of African people in their fight for freedom from colonial rule: all they are concerned about is his readiness to embrace Eurocentric literary standards."

In addition to the emphasis that white critics apply on the celerity with which black Zimbabwean novelists embrace European literary theories in their imaginative narration of black Zimbabwean experiences in their novels, they also discuss the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' against the backdrop of the prizes that the novelists have won in Europe. Thus, Veit-Wild (1992: 252) singles out Marechera as the most significant author in the internationalisation of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' against the backdrop of his 1979 London Guardian Fiction Prize:

> When in 1979 Marechera won the prestigious London Guardian Fiction Prize for *The House of Hunger*, Zimbabwean literature stepped into the international limelight (Veit-Wild, 1992: 252).

White critical emphasis on the literary accolades that black Zimbabwean novelists have won outside Africa bears witness to the fact that white critics discuss the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in terms of its capacity to satisfy the literary tastes and sensibilities of a so-called international readership. Veit-Wild (1992: 268) evokes this yardstick in her discussion of Mungoshi's novels:

> Mungoshi has been a steady and prolific writer. He had ten books published between 1970 and 1989. Apart from local acclaim, his work has received enduring international recognition. His collection of short stories, *Coming of the Dry Season*, originally published by Oxford University Press in 1972, was the first publication abroad by a second generation Zimbabwean writer, followed by his novel *Waiting for the Rain*. Sixteen years later in 1988, *The Setting Sun and the Rolling World*, published by Heinemann, Oxford, containing stories from the latter collection and from *Some Kinds of Wounds* (1980), won the Commonwealth Literature Prize, Africa Section.

Veit-Wild discusses Mungoshi's and Marechera's novels as exemplary because of the acclaim the authors have won internationally. She does not venture to explore the politics that undergird European literary accolades for African writers. Osundare (2002: 34) frames and discusses African novelistic acclaim in European circles in the context of the cultural politics of "the focus-attention-recognition shibboleth…that is itself an offshoot of the center-margin dichotomy that characterizes Africa's relationship with the outside world." He clarifies the specifics of the focus-attention-recognition shibboleth:

> At work in the 'recognition' anxiety is a curious complementary consciousness. On the one hand is a mindset of the centre that grants high-priced recognition to those African works which conform to and reinforce th[e] traditional Euro-American opinion about Africa. In this regard, some Western critics actually believe that their attention, their patronage, is enough to win instant recognition for an African work, that it is their inalienable right to bestow such recognition. This attitude is enhanced and perpetuated by the belief of the margin that no work can be deemed accomplished until it has been judged so by the center. After all, all the canons, whether in creative writing or literary theory, have *always* originated from centers outside Africa. And when the canons boom, the margin scurries about like chickens, picking up fall-outs, basking in the hand-me-down vibrations of expiring idioms. Which is why in the prevailing discourse of the world today, the center inaugurates the voice, the margin scrambles for the echoes (Osundare, 2002: 36).

The fact that Veit-Wild argues that 'the black Zimbabwean novel' became internationally visible with Marechera's London Guardian Fiction Prize for *The House of Hunger* (1978) makes it clear that her idea of an international readership begins and ends with Europe. This is a culturally hegemonic understanding of 'internationalism' in which Europe is imposed as the centre of the world. The imposition occurs without due regard of the fact that the European experience in culture and civilisation building is but one example in a world that teems with countless cultures and civilisations. By defining internationalism in terms of the black Zimbabwean author's satisfaction of European literary-critical expectations, Veit-Wild contributes towards the entrenchment of European cultural hegemony. It is also notable that in her celebration of Marechera's novelistic corpus as exemplary and international, Veit-Wild pays no attention to the role that a black Zimbabwean author's novelistic corpus could possibly play in the liberation of the minds of African people in the aftermath of centuries of slavery and colonialism. She generates the impression that black Zimbabwean writers are supposed to be writing with a view to advancing the interests and expectations of European literary critics and consumers. Thus, she

revels in the contrast that obtains between Marechera and first-generation black Zimbabwean authors without exploring how the novelists in the different generations complement each other in narrating the experiences of African people. She finds it adequate in her discussion of the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' that:

> Marechera's legacy – the fragmented, open-ended, discontinuous and polyphonic nature of his work, even pre-independence…contrasts strikingly with the closed, static and monolithic stance apparent in other Zimbabwean literature (Veit-Wild, 1992: 262).

Veit-Wild (1992) celebrates fragmentation, polyphony, open-endedness and discontinuity in Marechera's novels without exploring the impact of such literary qualities in the framing of the worldview of black Zimbabwean/African readers of Marechera's works. She classifies Marechera's work as exemplary because, among other accomplishments, it also explores taboo subject matter, thus illustrating the diverse nature of the Zimbabwean experience. Veit-Wild also projects Marechera as exemplary in the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' because he dispenses with the traditional, unified, linear narrative form. She looks at Marechera as an innovative novelist and a pathbreaker in the black Zimbabwean imaginative quest to chart the direction that 'the black Zimbabwean novel' should follow. She places Mungoshi in the same category with Marehera:

> While Marechera's work is more experimental in narrative form and develops a stronger expressive thrust, Mungoshi's writing is outstanding and quite unique in Zimbabwean, and even African literature, in its sensitivity, depth and density of thought and style. Mungoshi is also unique, attaining an equal maturity and accomplishment of writing in both Shona, his mother tongue, and English (Veit-Wild, 1992: 268).

The black Zimbabwean literary aesthetic of experimentation and fragmentation inaugurated by Mungoshi (1970, 1975, 1975a, 1983), Marechera (1978, 1980, 1984, 1992) and Nyamfukudza (1979) that Veit-Wild considers exemplary in the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is perpetuated by novelists emerging into significance in the aftermath of political independence in 1980. In this group, the most significant novelists include Chinodya (1982, 1984, 1991, 2000), Dangarembga (1988), Vera (1993, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2002) and, to some extent, Hove (1988, 1992, 1996). In her discussion of the four novelists, Veit-Wild rates Chinodya, Vera and Dangarembga higher than Hove. Thus, while she looks at Hove's *Bones* (1988) as a piece of art

that "reads like a long prose-poem, lyrical and entrancing, like a fairy tale, […] mesmeris[ing] the reader with its frequent and intense repetitions, simple vocabulary, repeated questions and exclamations and the intimate second-person style" (Veit-Wild, 1992: 310), she is quick to emphasise that the language that Hove uses "encloses the reader, imposes a set of concepts and images which seem fixed and closed […] recreat[ing] a world of sayings and proverbs and registers and a sense of oneness with the land and with tradition […] celebrat[ing] a form of Africanness which does not exist any more" (Veit-Wild, 1992: 317). Thus, Veit-Wild considers Hove's novels problematic because of the author's tendency to fall back on African cultural and narrative implements. In that regard, Veit-Wild perpetuates the Eurocentric view that African cultural resources are synonymous with the poverty of development. By undermining African cultural and narrative resources, Veit-Wild's critical work on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' feeds into mainstream Eurocentric discourses in which Africa functions as 'other' and peripheral.

In contrast to the reservations that she expresses in her discussion of Hove's *Bones* (1988), Veit-Wild (1992: 321) praises Chinodya for "deliberately question[ing] the possibility of coming to a definitive statement about recent Zimbabwean history" and for "confront[ing] the reader with a multitude of fragmented voices" (Veit-Wild, 1992: 328). She also identifies and celebrates these qualities in her discussion of Marechera's novels. Also worth of praise as exemplary in the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in Veit-Wild's critical work is Dangarembga who, in *Nervous Conditions* (1988), "follows the pattern of the bildungsroman, linking the protagonist's emotional development to her social upward mobility" (Veit-Wild, 1992: 332). The lofty discourse in which Veit-Wild discusses these novelists is also invoked by Primorac (2006: 6) in her identification of Vera as "the latest literary star …whose work ha[s] from the outset [been] met with widespread critical acclaim." Like Veit-Wild, Primorac discusses Vera and other writers such as Marechera (1978, 1980, 1984, 1992) and Dangarembga (1988) as exemplary in the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' because they "have become internationally prominent, winning literary prizes and seeing their works published and translated outside Zimbabwe" (Primorac, 2006: 6). The emphasis that Primorac, like Veit-Wild, places on European literary prizes for Zimbabwean writers is not accompanied by a discussion of the role that the prizes play in confirming Europe as "[the] place where everything happens, confirmer of value, even credibility, the ultimate arbiter of literary and aesthetic taste" (Osundare, 2002: 35).

The critical views that bind Veit-Wild and Primorac and other white critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' are also shared by black Zimbabwean critics such as Muponde and Maodzwa-Taruvinga (2002: xi) who argue that besides Marechera (1978, 1980, 1984, 1992) and Nyamfukudza (1979), Vera (1993, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2002) is also a significant literary figure in the exemplary black Zimbabwean novelistic cluster:

> Vera paints powerful and unique facets of the postcolony, and presents multi-layered portraits shored up by an 'empire' of imaginative signs. The result is a deconstructed notion of the African novel, one that often challenges the more conventional views of postcolonial literature…The protagonists of her struggles are men and women negotiating the practice of everyday life, women who quietly defy the nationalistic, partriarchal master narrative of heroic acts. What survives is not necessarily the freedom seeker herself but the memories of the struggle. Vera gives voice to previously suppressed narratives and brings into focus fissures in the nationalist discourse of power…From *Nehanda* (1993) to *The Stone Virgins* (2002), Vera gives us an emerging chain of female voices, and a new spiritual and psychological cartography of female consciousness. The fact that her fiction is rooted in critical and decisive moments of Zimbabwean history reveals the value of an alternative pscho-social signage by which the herstory of the nation may be told.

While white and later-day black Zimbabwean critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' complement each other in advancing the view that Marechera's, Nyamfukudza's, Mungoshi's and Vera's novels constitute the exemplary cluster in the development of 'the blak Zimbabwean novel', black Zimbabwean critics such as Zimunya (1982), Zinyemba (1983), Chiwome (1994, 1996), Zhuwarara (1994, 2001), Chivaura (1998, 1998a) and Furusa (1998, 2002) see things differently. In their respective works on "the factors that underdeveloped Shona literature" and "the direction of innovation in the Shona novel", Chiwome (1994) and Furusa (1998) decry black Zimbabwean novelists of Shona expression such as Chakaipa (1958, 1961, 1961a, 1963, 1967), Bepswa (1960) and Chidyausiku (1960, 1962, 1970) who are celebrated in Krog's critical work, for varnishing the various forms of violence that colonialism visited on African people. Zinyemba (1983) takes Marechera (1978, 1980, 1984, 1992) and Nyamfukudza (1979) to task for choosing and installing hopelessness as the centrepiece of their novels. The boundaries of the context in which Zinyemba (1983), Chiwome (1994, 1996) and Zhuwarara (1994, 2001) and Furusa (1998, 2002) discuss the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' are framed by Zimunya (1982: 9):

The history of serious fiction in English in Zimbabwe begins, most significantly, with the historical novel. In this genre, the individual artist is preoccupied with bringing a people's past into sharp focus in order the more to mirror, interpret and comprehend the prevailing national, racial, or, for that matter, human situation. Inherent in this also is the quest for heroic human values, human faith, pride and dignity, and reassertion of identity with the living past.

The historical novel in Zimbabwe is best exemplified by Mutswairo (1956), Sithole (1956) and Samkange (1966). These works of these novelists are cited and classified in 'white critical thought' as underdeveloped in terms of artistic vision and aesthetic orientation. While white critics and later-day black Zimbabwean critics seem to admire the anti-heroic, cynical and despondent aesthetics in the works of Mungoshi (1970, 1975, 1975a, 1983), Marechera (1978, 1980, 1984, 1992) and Nyamfukudza (1979), black Zimbabwean critics such as Zimunya (1982: 9) celebrate "the quest for heroic human values, human faith, pride and dignity, and reassertion of identity with the living past" in the imaginative creation and critical appreciation of "the black Zimbabwean novel'. Zimunya's ally in the showdown for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is Zinyemba (1983: 9) who discusses Marechera (1978, 1980, 1984, 1992) and Nyamfukudza (1979) against the backdrop of the contention that "Zimbabwe needs a literature that reflects its people's heroic efforts to re-discover themselves, literature that is imbued with local colour and perspective." Zinyemba (1983) dismisses the two novelists on account of the fact that their novels are incapable of cultivating heroic and life-affirming ideas on the African experience in history.

White critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' admire the ease with which black Zimbabwean novelists such as Marechera (1978, 1980, 1984, 1992) and Nyamfukudza (1979) stand detached from the popular struggles for human dignity in their society. The critics' tendency to celebrate black Zimbabwean novelists for their detachment from the popular struggles for human dignity in their society constitutes an invitation to aspiring black Zimbabwean novelists to castigate revolutionary struggles with a view to winning applause from Africa's erstwhile enslavers and colonisers. The celebration of black Zimbabwean authors who stress anti-heroism and despondency stands critical in the advancement of the European prerogative to achieve global cultural and intellectual hegemony. It sets an agenda in which collective identities, shared destinies and life-affirming values are seen as detrimental to individual freedom. Such an agenda

does not only throw African priorities into disarray: it renders it difficult for African participants in African literature and its criticism to dispatch, channel, receive and utilise creative energy for the greater ennoblement of African people, thus availing 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' to European critical rubrics to "travel with imperial ease and confidence in Africa…talk[ing] to (or at) Africa, but tak[ing] little or nothing in reply by way of the continent's own ideas and responses" (Osundare, 2002: 3).

5.3.5 Evaluation

In their discussion of the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel', white critics argue from the point of grounding in the Eurocentric perspective towards African literature. They exonerate colonial institutions for black Zimbabwean novelistic underdevelopment, emphasising that 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is considered developed to the extent that it makes use of European literary models and benchmarks. Their insistence on European standards in the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is in sync with the European cultural agenda of negating non-European cultures and civilisations with a view to achieving 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the discussion of the various aspects that go into the making of those cultures and civilisations. The fact that the novels that white critics dismiss as 'underdeveloped' are categorisable as relevant in the African liberation movement, and those that they consider exemplary because of their discomfiture with African revolutionary agency can be read as emblematic of black Zimbabwean novelistic underdevelopment in Afrocentric critical discourse on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' demonstrates that all criticism is a matter of location (Asante: 1998).

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter discussed theoretical preferences in 'white critical thought', the classification of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in 'white critical thought' and the handling of the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in 'white critical thought'. The chapter established that 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' perpetuates the prerogatives of European culture more than it negates them. The discussion in this chapter also focused on the contradictions at the heart of 'white critical thought' and the ways in which it embraces and recoils from other versions of critical thought on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. What emerged from this

discussion is that while 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is fraught with internal contradictions that speak directly to its complexity and resistance to neat categorisation, it is largely vulnerable to implication in the perpetuation of European hegemonic cultural interests. This emerges from the emphasis that the critics apply on Eurocentric theoretical implements as normative and indispensable in the imaginative creation and critical discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. The emphasis stands in sharp contrast to their projection of Afrocentric theories as reductionist and dogmatic. Their works foreground the binarisms and dichotomies that they set out to explode.

In their classification of 'the black Zimbabwean novel', the critics fall back on typologies that derive from European literary culture and history. Thus, they categorise black Zimbabwean novelists without attending to the complex ways in which their works resist predictability and limitation to specific categories. In large measure, the critics do not accord 'the black Zimbabwean novel' the leverage to suggest classificatory typologies that are sensitive to its internal contradictions and capacity at back and forth movement that enable the appreciation of some of the novels as classics. In their discussion of the development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel', the critics discussed in this research emphasise the European factor as indispensable in the rise of the literary canon in question. They credit black Zimbabwean novelists who are amenable to European literary tastes while undermining those who subscribe to the African nationalist struggle for freedom. By and large, the critics' comfort with Eurocentric critical criteria, standards and models, their conception of the European factor as indispensable in the rise and development of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' and aversion to Afrocentric theories of literature and the African nationalist struggle for freedom interlock to lend credence to the view that although 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is fraught with contradictions of its own, and is amenable to some versions of 'black critical thought' on the literary episteme in question, it participates significantly in the perpetuation of European cultural hegemony in the age of "travelling theories [and] travelling texts" (Osundare, 2002: 3).

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.0 **Introduction**

Criticism impacts upon literature and the ways in which its exponents and consumers see themselves and their history and culture. It also participates in the entrenchment or negation of cultural hegemony in the unfolding of relations and transactions between and among the various cultures of the world. The fact that critical discourse is susceptible to implication in the entrenchment or subversion of cultural hegemony makes it pertinent that all versions of critical thought should be subject to constant meta-analytical surveillance. In this study, the meta-analysis of white critical theoretical preferences, classification of black Zimbabwean novelists and packaging of the development of in the discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' unfurled against the backdrop of the hypothesis that the existence of literature in its multifarious manifestations, in any given culture, should point to the existence of a framework of critical values on the basis of which the literature is conceived and appreciated, given that the creative process is a critico-imaginative undertaking. In that undertaking, the artist experiments with a variety of creative methods, and art-consumers, as is clear in African story-telling sessions with their spell-bound audiences around the evening fire, critique the artistic rendition as they consume it, thus, pointing to endemic critical values on the basis of which artists and art-consumers agree on what constitutes good or bad art. The ability to distinguish between good and bad art is the essence and inspiration of all forms of criticism. Any culture in which this ability exists merits entitlement to 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the discussion of phenomena relating to it. However, the various cultures of the world do not thrive in isolation from each other. In their interactions and transactions, cultures compete for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the quest to define the meaning of the human experience. This study addressed these and related issues using 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' as a potential platform for the affirmation or negation of European cultural hegemony in Africa.

6.1 **Research findings**

This study has demonstrated that in 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel', the literature is discussed without due consideration of endemic critical values that emerge from

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the same culture and history with the literary episteme in question. The critics make recourse to Eurocentric critical theories as indispensable in the discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. In their critical works, European-originated theories constitute the centerpiece of their approach to 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. The critics quote approvingly from the writings of Eurocentric scholars on the novel without due regard of the fact that in its global peregrinations, the novel as a genre has lost and gained a whole array of aspects that justify the consideration of non-European critical values in its discussion. As it is, white critics make reference to Afrocentric theories emerging from the same culture and history with 'the black Zimbabwean novel' only when it is necessary to decry such theories with a view to marginalising them. The castigation of Afrocentric theories in 'white critical thought' clears 'space' and claims 'voice' and 'authority' for Eurocentric theories of literature in the discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'.

The classification of black Zimbabwean authors on the basis of typologies that do not pay homage to the internal contradictions and generational dynamics which make it possible for novelists in the different generations to claim 'space' in more than one generation of writers also serves the same basic purpose of availing 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' to the Eurocentric paradigm in the development of critical thought on 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. The discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' in terms of colonial Christian missionary agency and the insistence on European creative standards for black Zimbabwean novelists feed into the same basic scheme of things in which discussions on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' are initiated from the standpoint that Africa has no models of significance in the analysis of her own literatures. The emphasis that Eurocentric agency, theories, standards and models are indispensable in the discussion and classification of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is not just a literary-critical emphasis: it is also an emphasis that reverberates with implications on Euro-African cultural relations. If initiatives, theories, standards, models and typologies of Afrocentric persuasion are denied 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel', a fundamental disjunction in which Africa is rendered marginal in the narration of her own story is experienced.

In addition to the foregoing, it has also emerged in this study that contestations for 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' also have an intra-

group dimension. Thus, this study has demonstrated that among themselves, white critics jostle and compete for intra-group visibility, significance and indispensability in the discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. The same obtains for black Zimbabwean critics of the same literary canon. In quite a number of cases, 'black critical thought' and 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' engage in dialogues that resist neat and unproblematic categorisation of the critics along racial lines. However, to the extent that 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' is averse to the significance of Afrocentric critical criteria and African agency in the emergence, development and criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel', it easily finds itself implicated in the perpetuation of European cultural hegemony in the unfolding of critical discourse on the African literary episteme. The insistence that European literary models and standards are indispensable for black Zimbabwean novelistic development and the critical tendency to celebrate black Zimbabwean novels that propagate helplessness, cynicism, despondency and anti-heroism as exemplary also lends credence to the contention that 'white critical thought' on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' emerges and develops in tandem with the objectives of European cultural hegemony in Africa.

6.2 Recommendations for future research

In view of the foregoing, this study makes two basic recommendations for future studies in 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. First and foremost, this study recommends that the selection of a given body of critical theories in the discussion of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' should not be oblivious of the benefits associated with utilising the critical values cherished in the history and culture from which the literature is emerging. In the unfolding of intra-cultural dialogue between literature and criticism, both partake from a shared pool of values. This does not only enable the literature and the criticism to reinforce each other and inspire endemic literary and critical growth; it also affirms the critical criteria engendered by the cultural backdrop against which a given literary canon is emerging as valid and entitled to 'space', 'voice' and 'authority' in the development of literary-critical discourse. However, this does not mean that non-endemic crititcal criteria have no place in the criticism of 'the black Zimbabwean novel'. What is important is that critics of 'the black Zimbabwean novel' should appreciate that no set of critical criteria is capable of exhaustively explaining all the aspects of the literature. Thus, critics and metacritics of 'the black

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Zimbabwean novel' are enjoined to adopt eclectic approaches in order to derive maximum critical benefits that accompany commitment to the discussion of literary-critical data from a multiplicity of perspectives.

Secondly, the study recommends that African literary-critical scholars should begin to fully appreciate the place and role of literary-critical scholarship in the entrenchment and perpetuation or contestation and subversion of cultural and intellectual hegemony. Literarure is an aspect of culture in any given society. It also imaginatively narrates the historical experiences of the given society. Thus, literary-criticism either affirms or negates the cultural values and historical experiences against the backdrop of which a given literary tradition emerges and develops. Future metacritical studies on critical discourse on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' will make a difference if they interrogate the cultural and historical background of the critics and the expectations that are imposed upon them by virtue of their identities as members of given cultures and histories. In other words, metacritics of critical discourse on 'the black Zimbabwean novel' are encouraged to interrogate any given critic's location, orientation and perspective with a view to achieving better appreciation of resultant critical submissions. Through such emphasis, and self-criticism, African critical and metacritical discourses will help Africa to "discover her own name without making other continents anonymous […] [and] find her own center without marginalizing other parts of the world" (Osundare, 2002: 38).

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