ENTRENCHED IN POLITICS AND CULTURE: NEGOTIATIONS OF VIOLENCE IN SELECTED TEXTS BY DAMBUDZO MARECHERA, SHIMMER CHINODYA, VALERIE TAGWIRA AND CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE.

By

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work and I have acknowledged all the sources I have used.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the negotiation of violence by analysing how the selected texts, *The House of Hunger* by Damudzo Marechera, *Harvest of Thorns* by Shimmer Chinodya, *The Uncertainty of Hope* by Valerie Tagwira and *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie represent characters responding to different forms of violence. I have adopted postcolonial theory, psychoanalytic theory, resilience theory and relevant strands of feminism as lenses in my literary analysis investigating how the selected corpus represents negotiations of violence. The novels, novella and short stories depict colonisation, anti-colonial wars and post-independence ethnic and cultural conflicts as the causes of outbreaks of violence. The narratives also portray individual and collective characters navigating violence by either acquiescing or fighting its manifestations in specific political, cultural, and socio-economic contexts. I will analyse textual representations of violence, trauma, and resistance to demonstrate how the authors give fresh insights into how characters negotiate spaces colonial and postcolonial violence creates in their experience. The texts depict oppressed individuals and communities using different strategies to resist political and cultural forms of violence. Those strategies are negotiations of violence entrenched in colonial and postcolonial political systems and cultures. I read negotiation of violence as reflected in different ways by characters as they remember, interpret, narrate, and memorialise their experiences of violence.

KEY TERMS

self-imaging, culture, violence, African literary texts, negotiation, doubling, spectres, metonym, cosmopolitanism, memorialisation, nationalism, nation-state, patriarchy, representation, necropolitics.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my beloved wife, Loreen Rukuni. You financially kickstarted this study and provided all the support I needed through thick and thin. I confer the tribute for this work to you.

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CHAPTER ONE

Historical background, theoretical framework, and methodology

1.1 Introduction

This research aims to examine representations of negotiations of violence in the selected texts. The main objective is to determine the extent to which the selected texts represent negotiations of violence as entrenched in the political and cultural systems reflected in the novels. Consequently, this dissertation investigates the factors that cause violence of a political nature on the one hand and examines the cultural conflicts, such as ethnic adversity and patriarchal systems, that cause gender-based violence on the other hand. *The House of Hunger* and *Harvest of Thorns*, set in the pre-independence era in Zimbabwe, depict colonial forms of political violence. The main characters, such as the narrator in the *House of Hunger* and Benjamin in *Harvest of Thorns,* are revealed to negotiate violence caused by the war conflict. *The Uncertainty of Hope* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* portray female characters, Onai and Olanna, negotiating violence caused by political conflict and patriarchal systems in their Zimbabwean and Nigerian post-independence societies, respectively. I will deploy mainly postcolonial theory to read the selected corpus and other critical literary theories relevant to examine negotiations of violence represented in specific texts. These are the psychoanalytical theory for analysing *The House of Hunger*. I will consider African feminist theory, gender theory, and resilience theory as ideal paradigms to examine violence negotiations in *The Uncertainty of Hope* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The evaluation seeks to ascertain how successfully these approaches assist in offering insight into the entrenchment of negotiations of violence in political and cultural conflicts during the colonial and post-independence dispensation in Zimbabwe and Nigeria as portrayed in the novels.

1.2 Historical Background: Political and ethnic identities

This section will explore the nature of political and ethnic identities because these identities shape the conflicts in specific cultural and political spaces. I will start by defining political and ethnic identities and explain how they can contribute to colonial and postcolonial violence. The selected texts reveal identity rivals, such as the white settlers against black nationalists in *The House of Hunger* and *Harvests of Thorns* and the Igbo ethnic victims killed by the Hausa and Yoruba-led government soldiers in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The selected texts reflect these elements from rival political and ethnic groups perpetrating acts of violence. In contrast, others are depicted as victims of violence over generations from the colonial to post-independence eras in the history of Zimbabwe and Nigeria. I argue that violence influences the victims to unite and pass on the experience to their children as a form of identity. This idea is echoed in the statement "that violence shapes the identities of victims and that families transmit these effects across generations" (Lupu and Peisakhin, 2017:836).

This dissertation presents the concept of political identities and the way they contribute to violence. In this section, I provide the historical background of this research in the context of the political and ethnic identities of the Zimbabwean and Nigerian communities portrayed in the selected texts. Identities are constructed within specific historical contexts. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the author represents the ethnic conflict between mainly the Hausa in Northern Nigeria, the Yoruba in the Southwest, and the Igbo in South-eastern Nigeria. These conflicts are at the centre of negotiations of violence embodied in the Biafra War. I will argue that political and ethnic conflicts, as the origins of violence in Zimbabwe and Nigeria, come after the violence of colonisation by the British in both countries.

The first polarised and potentially antagonistic political group division in the postcolonial context is that of the settler and native understood in this study as political identities enforced by the colonial governments. *Harvest of Thorns*, *The Uncertainty of Hope* and *The House of Hunger* portray political group divisions in Zimbabwe and *Half of a Yellow Sun* portrays similar politically antagonistic divisions in Nigeria. Mamdani (2002:767) insists that "politically, indirect rule was an attempt to [stabilise] colonial rule

by moving away from [the] direct rule that created a volatile context in which the identity of both rulers and ruled was racialised, but the former as a minority and the latter as a majority". The system of indirect rule permanently divided the colonised subjects and fuelled enmity among different tribes. *Half of a Yellow Sun* represents tribal conflict more than any of the selected texts. *Harvest of Thorns* recreates negotiations of violence through the representation of the historical event of the Lancaster House Agreement that ended the war for independence in Rhodesia, paving the way for the formation of a postcolonial state that, I reiterate, inherits the sites of violence.

The selected texts recreate different possibilities of political identities whereby the violent situation depends on the policymakers in the governments' power structures, such as the military chiefs in the Nigerian central government represented in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. These texts represent different individual characters negotiating violence differently. *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Harvest of Thorns* depict nations fighting for independence. The aspirations of these groups, such as the nationalist freedom fighters in *The House of Hunger* and *Harvest of Thorns*, envisage the political emancipation of Zimbabwe by military violence at first and later choose to enter a peace settlement, thus negotiating violence and the attempted cessation of violence. *Harvest of Thorns* portrays nationalist politicians in authority choosing between either carrying on with a war of liberation, a violent method to attain independence, or negotiating a peace settlement and avoiding violent conflict.

The Igbo engage in the Biafra war to free their province from oppression by the federal government. Mzali (2011:79) defines political identities by mentioning that “political identities are drawn from the domain of culture” and, although these identities overlap, they also “need to be understood as distinct from cultural identities". That perception necessitates a close reading of the cultural identities responsible for yielding conflict between the Yoruba and Igbo tribes that escalates into genocide of the Nigeria-Biafra war in *Half of a Yellow Sun*; an outcome of a violent war linked to historical origins rooted in colonisation. Colonisation is not the only cause of ethnic conflict in the narratives of the selected texts. In *The House of Hunger*, the narrator expresses his hatred for Lobengula, a Ndebele King whom he accuses of having committed genocide against the narrator's Shona tribe, whom the Ndebele called by a derogatory name,

"Mahole" before Rhodes colonised the country. The narrator says: "One thing that bugs me about [that] man (Lobengula) is that he loved the white man. That he killed my people like cattle, the way Germans killed Jews" (p.43).

Mahmood Mamdani (2020:45) notes that "the experience of the indirect rule should alert us to the relationship between culture and politics". The relationship between political and cultural identities and the quest for political power by an ethnic group is exemplified in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, where Ujukwu leads the Igbo to campaign for the political independence of the Igbo tribe culminating in the Biafra state being formed. Mahmood Mamdani (2020:74) argues further that "at the same time, to historicise political identity by linking it to political power is to acknowledge that all political identities are historically transitory, and all require a form of the state to be reproduced". This observation describes the recreation of Biafra represented in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, where the Igbo ethnic group undergoes a historical transition from being a Nigerian Eastern province to an independent state of Biafra at war. However, these historical developments that result in communities' desire to create independent states by violent means, as typified in the narratives of the selected texts, emanate from polarised political and cultural group identities.

1.3 Rationale for selected texts

The rationale for choosing the novels investigated as primary texts in this dissertation is that they offer powerful representations of political and cultural violence. The *House of Hunger* and *Harvest of Thorns* are set during the colonial period in Zimbabwe, and they are significant to this research because their titles, plots, characterisation, and storylines depict political contexts in which violence occurs. The two texts represent mainly political forms of violence but reflect limited representations of cultural violence. The limited scope of cultural violence in their storylines necessitated complementing them with *The Uncertainty of Hope* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* which offer a range of cultural contexts of violence such as patriarchal and gendered forms of violence. *Half of a Yellow Sun* represents the political violence of the Biafra War, and it also depicts ethnic violence in Nigeria that exposes negotiations of violence embedded in cultural spaces. I have included *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the only Nigerian text, along with three

texts set in Zimbabwean, because both countries were colonised by the British. The texts depict Zimbabwe and Nigeria as postcolonial states sharing similar conditions and experiences of colonial violence. *Half of a Yellow Sun* also adds value to this analysis because of its rich representations of ethnic violence. It offers further opportunities to explore cultural violence depicted in the Biafra ethnic civil war. The ethnic war motif opens the study to include cultural violence that is absent or limited in *The Uncertainty of Hope, Harvest of Thorns* and *The House of Hunger*. Even though only one text set in Nigeria is included, it contains sufficiently rich and thematically relevant representations to warrant placing it in analytical conversation with the three texts that are set in Zimbabwe.

1.4 Theoretical and conceptual framework

Postcolonial theory

According to early scholarship on postcolonial theory, controversy underlies theorists' attempts to define the term "postcolonial". Slemon (1996:100) submits that “one of the most vexed areas of debate within the field of postcolonial theory [has] to do with the term ‘postcolonial’ itself”. Young (2001:12) describes postcolonial critique as a theoretical framework that “is concerned with the history of colonialism only to the extent that history has determined the configurations and power structures of the present". This study deploys mainly postcolonial theory to analyse the instances of negotiation of violence the selected texts represent through its multiple conceptual frameworks.

Moore (2016:40) contends that such a conception of “post (-) colonial” can be viewed as “naïve, inadequate, or utopian” because the consequences of colonisation on a postcolonial state affect the political, economic, and cultural development of that state in many ways that cannot be limited only to the present. Instead, the consequences of colonisation should be conceptualised considering the extent to which the narratives reflect the enduring legacy of colonisation throughout succeeding historical epochs. That approach sheds light on how configurations of power structures of governments in the past influence current representations of different forms of violence as reflected in the narratives of the selected texts. Slemon (1996:101) maintains “that colonialism

stems from imperialism as a concept that is itself predicated within large theories of global politics and which changes radically according to the specifics of those larger theories". Young (2001:26) corroborates that colonialism comes from imperialism by describing colonialism as part of a political system of government that "operates as a policy of State, driven by the ostentatious projects of power within and beyond national boundaries". All these contesting perspectives on the meaning of postcolonial theory can enrich the reading of the narratives in the selected novels. That is the case because their narratives embody stories that reflect sites of violence. Representations of negotiations of violence primarily derive from recreations of political and cultural spaces determined and influenced by historical and political settings of the colonial and postcolonial epochs.

Despite the controversy surrounding the definition of "postcolonial", the reading of representations of violence in the selected texts will be informed by postcolonial theory. Representations of negotiations of violence are etched in the political and cultural dynamics resulting from colonialism, imperialism, and neo-colonialism, which uphold administrative systems responsible for the formation and function of power structures by violence. I will focus on demonstrating how the narratives of the selected texts reflect colonial governments that set up administrative structures that function by violence. I will trace violence beginning from the colonial conquest the white settlers enact through a violent military defeat of the natives. The novels reflect that they coerced the conquered natives to comply with the dictates of colonial administration systems in Nigeria and Rhodesia.

This study considers Franz Fanon's concept of liberation to investigate negotiations of violence in the selected texts through a mainly postcolonial theoretical framework. Fanon views liberation of a colonial state as only possible by dismantling the colonial government and replacing it with that of the colonised subjects (Fanon, 1963). Stuart Hall (1993:51) corroborates this idea of liberation and argues that liberation can be attained if the "colonial structures of inequality are replaced by evicting foreign rule, and more importantly, the narratives that legitimise the power of the colonialists". Ben Okri (2014:68) reinforces the same position and contends that “stories are the secret reservoirs of values: change the stories individuals and nations live by and tell

themselves, and you change the individuals and nations". This approach posits a notion of decolonisation achievable through discarding the colonial narratives and assuming new narratives of liberation. The conflicts reflected in the selected texts arise from wars of conquest during colonisation, struggles for liberation and the political and cultural violence in postcolonial African states exemplified by the Zimbabwean and Nigerian cases depicted in *The House of Hunger*, *Harvest of Thorns,* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The literary representation of the Lancaster House peace talks in *Harvest of Thorns* reveals that negotiations of violence are entrenched in politics because the peace talks give a political solution to end the violent war for liberation. In conclusion, postcolonial theory is appropriate for this dissertation because of its insightful critical strategies and "its close textual analysis, and its search for answers to key questions about culture, representation, and identity" (Burney, 2012:46). In conclusion, I will deploy postcolonial and African feminist theories in my analysis. In the succeeding section, I will define the central concepts of negotiation, violence, spectres, and metonym, as these will feature prominently in the following analyses.

Feminism

All manifestations of violence are gendered, and the selected texts represent numerous instances where characters' experiences of violence are shaped as much by their gender as by their ethnic identities. For this reason, I will also use African feminist theoretical tools to read the texts. Jo Freeman (1973:47) indicates that in the 1970s, feminism in the United States was "a [women's] movement for liberation from male domination". Among the various theories and branches of feminism that sprouted after that, this study notes Sherley Anne Williams' description of feminism as a "radical rethinking of and revisioning of the conceptual grounds of literary study that have been based almost entirely on male literary" experience (Williams, 1986:308). Chimamanda's and Valerie's brand of feminism in *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *The Uncertainty of Hope* is situated in the Zimbabwean and Nigerian post-independence epochs. African feminism and postcolonial theoretical frameworks all foreground African women's experiences from a gendered perspective. Lopez-Zafra and Garcia-Retamero (2012:174) describe gender theory as "an analytical tool" that serves to expose "the causes of feminine subordination and the factors that perpetuate it".

Gender theory, as an analytical tool, espouses women's liberation from patriarchal oppression based on gender and asserting women's rights.

The Uncertainty of Hope and *Half of a Yellow Sun* explore representations of feminist notions of challenging male-dominated literary studies. This study also considers Belinda Bozzoli's (2004) work among feminist scholars because her contribution provides the South African setting that is representative of the African context to which *The Uncertainty of Hope* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* belong. Bozzoli (2004:325) asserts "that women are doubly oppressed at home and a gendered labour marketplace that favour men over women". This observation is vindicated in some representations of gendered violations of women's rights in *The Uncertainty of Hope* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* that can be read through decolonial feminism theoretical lenses to expose depictions of the subalternation of women.

Decolonial feminism gives insight into the origins of violence in the colonial and postcolonial settings where the concepts of gender and race formed. Maria Lugones (2010) argues that women's voices are suppressed because of colonial and postcolonial oppression that keeps women marginalised and occupying inferior societal positions. This research describes representations of forms of violence in the selected texts targeting women showing how the “colonial state was built as a power structure operated by men based on continuing force, [the] brutality [that] was built into colonial societies" (Connell, 2014:550). Decolonial feminism, according to Lugones (2010:746), can be understood better through the explanation of coloniality as "what lies at the intersection of gender/class/race as central constructs of the capitalist world system of power". Boris Bertolt (2018:2), theorising the modern colonial gender system in Africa, corroborates that coloniality refers to “a set of paradigms of domination and regulation of the life of the [colonised] during the construction of European Hegemony [throughout] the world [beginning from] the fifteenth century”.

Proponents of decolonial feminism seek to dismantle those paradigms of domination and regulation perceived to oppress women. Lugones calls forth decolonial feminism to dislodge “racialised capitalist gender oppression” and further declares: “I call the

possibility of overcoming the coloniality of gender, decolonial feminism" (2010:742). According to Arvin (2013:34), decolonial feminism compares with "native feminism" propagated to decolonise and liberate gender-oppressed women in countries "such as Australia, New Zealand and America". In these countries, western settlers colonised indigenous populations. They imposed gendered forms of oppression, and "Native Feminist theories could produce liberatory scholarship and activism for indigenous women, non-indigenous women, and, ultimately, all peoples" (Arvin, 2013:34).

Conceptual Framework

Negotiation

This study aims to deploy notions of violence, negotiation, patriarchy, and resistance as conceptual tools from postcolonial theoretical frameworks to inform my analysis of how political and cultural systems reflected in the selected texts undergird negotiations of violence. This dissertation presents negotiation as a concept that can be viewed from different perspectives, as represented in the selected texts. Firstly, the texts depict wars fought during colonisation and after colonisation. This study examines negotiation options to end violence caused by political, social, cultural, and economic conflicts. Secondly, this interpretation of negotiation shows these conflicts beyond a single narrative, meaning that the texts represent characters' narration of violence caused by conflicts emanating from unresolved political, social, cultural, and economic contestation.

While negotiation is often considered to "weaken resistance and initiate conflict resolution" (Mzali, 2011:88), I also argue that negotiation implies intervention approaches to resolve social, political, and cultural conflict. Mzali (2011:88) argues that negotiation is "a writing and reading" technique that, through literary appraisal, "aggressively re-articulates events in the storylines of the selected texts, interrogating discourses and themes articulated in the narratives". Negotiation, consequently, is a conceptual tool I will use to unpack representations of violence in these texts.

Violence

Vittorio Bufacchi (2007:143) says violence is an "act [that] occurs when the integrity or unity of a subject (person or animal) is being intentionally or unintentionally violated because of an action or an omission". Bufacchi (2007:144) further submits that the violation can be inflicted either at a “physical or psychological level through [either] physical or psychological means”. Wyckoff (2013) describes legitimate and illegitimate types of violence, giving examples of killings during war or in self-defence, opening a philosophical debate about the concept of violence. This dissertation does not problematise the word "violence" beyond "its philosophical conceptions" submitted by Derrida's philosophical concept of spectres. This meaning derives from "an approach that might be drawn from the etymology of the word *violence* which may be traced to the Latin word *violare*, [which means] ‘to force’, ‘to ‘injure’, ‘to dishonour’, or ‘to violate’"" (Wolin, 200:42). This definition of violence appears to encompass nuances of violence reflected in the selected texts. The philosophical implications in defining negotiations of violence shall only include Derrida's philosophical considerations in formulating the concept of spectres of violence in the next section.

This study circumvents "war violence [that] questions the boundary between legal and illegal killings; the continuum of intentionality" (Walby, 2017:27) and, instead, identifies instances of violence the primary texts reveal as the political and cultural spaces where negotiations of violence are entrenched. These different forms of violence are war violence reflected in *The House of Hunger*, *Harvest of Thorns* and *Half of a Yellow Sun.* Ethnic violence is most notable in *Half of a Yellow Sun,* where the author makes representations of the Biafra war fought by the Igbo ethnic group seeking to establish an independent state of Biafra. Gender-based violence is portrayed in *The Uncertainty of Hope*, and spectral violence is depicted in *Harvest of Thorns.*

The selected texts represent violence as the infliction of harm onto one person's body by another person or people, causing either death or scars and resulting in the experience of trauma to those who experience or witness the execution of violent acts. However, another form of violence depicted in the texts is psychological, whereby someone can verbally or emotionally abuse a person. Mzali (2011:95) notes that violence “challenges temporality since it exceeds its occurrence and outlives the violent event through the scar or trace it leaves behind”. The scar “functions not only

as a sign of its past presence but also as a threat of its potential repetition" to victims of violence (Mzali, 2011:95).

Spectres

The description of negotiations of violence in the selected texts incorporates philosophical and historical perspectives. Postcolonial theory and other philosophical concepts will assist in illumining the instances of negotiation of violence the novels portray. These are Derrida's theory and concepts on spectrality and Pheng Cheah's (1999) on ghosts. According to Derrida (1971), spectrality is the return of the dead to the world of the living. The freedom fighters depicted in these two novels mentioned above invoke the spirit mediums to assist them in participating in the war of liberation. Nehanda was a woman spirit medium that had fought in the first Chimurenga wars of resistance against colonisation and had been executed by the Rhodesian colonialists. In the narratives of the war represented in *Harvest of Thorns* and *The House of Hunger,* Nehanda's spirit is being called upon by the freedom fighters to guide and assist them in the second Chimurenga war to finish the battles she had already started.

As Derrida (1971:39) argues, spectrality refers to “an experience the living has of a ghost that comes back in their midst and influences their present and future lives”. If the dead come back into the lives of the living, as the spirit of Nehanda does in *Harvest of Thorns* and The *House of Hunger*, that raises the question of whether the contemporary life the people live is true to itself. One can question whether the truth is fixed, or whether shifts arise as the focus changes from the past, present, and future realms. The truth becomes elusive because Nehanda is both dead and alive. Nehanda is indeed dead because the colonialists killed her. It is also true that Nehanda has not died, through the notion of spectrality, as she continues to haunt her enemies.

Spectrality defines material and spiritual contradictions "and bridges the gap between the past and present" (Mouffe, 2000:29). In *Harvest of Thorns*, for example, the ordinary people and freedom fighters, through their belief in the power of Nehanda's spirit, experience the material support it gives by inspiring them to fight and making their enemies powerless. Mouffe (2000) acknowledges the difficulties this claim raises centred on administrating justice and accountability. These arise within the ambit of

memorialisation in the narration of violence, where accountability and justice are potential sites of hegemony, negotiation, and future re-incarnations of violence. More precisely, responsibility explored further in chapter five of *Half of a Yellow Sun* incorporates questions about memory, accountability, power, and justice. Power structures are identified as responsible for the outbreaks of violence. The administration of those power structures by violent means constitutes the political contexts from where negotiations of violence originate. Mouffe (2000:30) argues that “both past and present structures of power, memory, and justice” are the nerve centres of violence. These nerve centres of violence "require remodelling via negotiated ripostes to accountability for outbreaks of violence and conveyance of justice in the Nigerian social, economic and political systems" (Mouffe, 2000:29) that are portrayed in *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

According to Christopher Wayne (2018:108), the concept of negotiation incorporates ideas about "[the] nation, national violence, memory, accountability, and justice from philosophical, political, and cultural fields of study”. In chapter three, as already mentioned, I will explore Nehanda's role in *Harvest of Thorns* using the concept of spectrality. That conceptual tool appropriately describes how her spiritual character fuels violence by inspiring the freedom fighters to kill the white colonialists in revenge for the blood they spilt during the colonial conquest where Nehanda was executed after being captured.

Metonymy and metaphor

The role of metonymy in constructing images of violence in the narratives of the selected texts is crucial, and to understand that more comprehensively, it is pertinent to view its representation. I will consider the role played by both metonymy and metaphor because both vehicles of representation are closely related and perform contrasting functions in depictions of violence. This study analyses their use in the narratives of the selected novels. Metaphor and metonymy are two literary devices that often work together to produce meaning in a text. Annie Gagiano (2006:253), in describing how the writing in Nuruddin Farah’s *Links* and Yvonne Vera’s *Stone Virgins* is replete with metaphors, "call [it] metaphorically extravagant writing". The same can

be said to describe the use of metaphors and metonyms in *The House of Hunger*, *Harvest of Thorns*, *The Uncertainty of Hope* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

This study offers a close examination of the metonymic and metaphorical dimensions of the selected texts. Describing the effect novels that use metaphor have on readers, Abdourahman Waberi (1998:775) writes that "the reader is endlessly impressed by a perpetual [metaphorization] of everything that stems from abstraction". *Harvest of Thorns*, *The House of Hunger* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*, as titles, have both metaphorical and metonymic meanings about the themes explored in the narratives that I will explain later. Waberi (1998:775) adds that this metaphorization "functions as a means of knowledge and a narrative form". The same is discernible in the recurring themes of dictatorship, war, violence, and the nation, as reflected in the selected texts. That trend leads "to a critical focus on metaphors" mostly used by writers "with a particular colonial and postcolonial valence" (Waberi, 1998:775).

Metonymy works as a figure of speech in all the titles of the selected texts. Representations of violence, as I contend, are portrayed in incidents that occur when government power structures deploy the army and police to perpetrate acts of extreme violence. That is reflected in the selected texts happening in both the Zimbabwean and Nigerian colonial and postcolonial contexts in which the narratives make metonym and metaphor vehicles of representation and negotiation of violence. These narratives, therefore, "negotiate another mode of representation of incidents that is not sensational and avoids access to graphic details of the violent act" (Cheong, 2018:147). This reading strategy enables a contextual interpretation of both the conflict and actions of violence in different ways that broaden instead of narrowing the range of analysis.

1.5 Methodology

This research chooses qualitative research methodology because it is relevant to the different themes this dissertation defines and it assists to expose negotiations of violence reflected in the selected texts. The nature of this research informs the choice of this methodology that investigates how the novels represent oppressive political

systems that expose some social groups and individuals to violence. All the selected novels reveal oppressive and violent political systems. The researcher reads and analyses how negotiations of violence are embedded in the politics and culture of oppressed societies and the marginalised and traumatised characters. Silenced individuals are portrayed in *The House of Hunger*, *Harvest of Thorns*, *The Uncertainty of Hope* and *Half of a Yellow sun*, where different forms of violence are depicted. That entails reading the selected novels as primary sources and journal articles, textbooks, and other publications as secondary sources that widen the scope of knowledge in the field of this study.

Data collection will be done by doing an intensive and extensive reading of the above sources. This research in collecting this textual evidence tests the hypothesis that *The House of Hunger, Harvest of Thorns*, *The Uncertainty of Hope* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* characterise negotiations of violence etched in political and cultural contexts. Lastly, built on the findings of this research process, the researcher will draw interpretations. Those interpretations will consider the strengths and limitations of the hypothesis that the selected texts reflect negotiations of violence etched in the political and cultural experience of the societies and individuals portrayed in the selected texts. Finally, the researcher will give recommendations for further investigations.

1.6 Research questions

The following key questions guide the research process.

1. In what ways do the selected texts offer representations of negotiations of violence?
2. What literary techniques do authors use to open discourses of politically marginalised voices exposed to violent political and cultural spaces, and to what extent do these techniques embody the notion of negotiation of violence?
3. What ways do the authors use to expose the negotiations of violence by women characters to highlight their emancipation from patriarchal and politically driven forms of oppression?

1.7 Research hypothesis

The research hypothesis is that *The House of Hunger*, *Harvest of Thorns*, *The Uncertainty of Hope* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* represent negotiations of violence embedded in political and cultural spaces. This hypothesis draws from the fact that all the selected texts share representations of violence caused by political wars, ethnic conflicts, and gender-based violence in the Zimbabwean and Nigerian postcolonial states. The causes of violence originate from political and cultural contexts. Negotiations of violence as depicted in the selected texts, therefore, are entrenched in politics and culture.

CHAPTER TWO: *THE HOUSE OF HUNGER*

Self-imaging African hero: Individual negotiations of violence

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I focus on *The House of Hunger* by Dambudzo Marechera, which exposes the various factors that cause political and cultural forms of violence. Marechera constructs characters to depict violence, such as the police and soldiers who terrorise the local communities to uphold a minority white settler political system. The storyline portrays government power structures that function by violence to oppress and marginalise a majority black citizenry in the colonial Rhodesian context

within which the text is set. The text depicts the Rhodesian white minority colonial government oppressing colonised black citizens as part of the colonial system. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2018:163) describes the colonial system of oppression of black people as rooted in "the construction of race itself as a biological and social reality [which] was used by Western Europeans to justify slavery and later to justify colonialism". The colonial historical background of the novella is essential to consider in analysing the representations of negotiations of violence. All forms of violence depicted in *The House of Hunger* mainly originate from the colonial government's use of military and police forces to control the state. The colonial violence agents used in conquering South Africa and Zimbabwe have recently been put in the spotlight. According to Beinart (2022:581), “the Rhodes Must Fall protests at the University of Oxford in 2015 [and 2016]” called for Cecil John Rhodes’ statue to be removed from Oriel College. I find that event relevant to this study following Beinart's (2022:581) remarks that two critical elements to debate on that event are that "Rhodes supported and contributed to racial segregation in the Cape Colony" and that he played a role that "characterise[d] the violence in the conquest of Zimbabwe in the 1890’s”.

Tom Menger (2022:187) corroborates that the British warfare in Southern Africa during the violent conquest of Rhodesia in the nineteenth century featured “attacks on caves [with] smoke being supplemented by dynamite”. This colonial historical background characterised by violent conquest foregrounds the prominence of the concept of negotiation of violence in *The House of Hunger*. This study attempts to identify how the historical and social realities influenced the author to present political, economic, and social problems experienced during the time the novella is set. I enlist this approach from an Afrocentric-critical theoretical perspective of an African novelist as having the function to "deepen and expand people’s awareness of their world...clarify their history and identity, and prompt them to action, throw light on their society’s moral problem and supply inspiring examples" (Chinweizu, 1987:258). The narrator's family living in *The House of Hunger* is plagued by domestic violence that appears to escalate from a violent political system. Building on the knowledge of the text's colonial background, depictions of the narrator's life in *The House of Hunger* constitute a mirror reflection of the author's identity, as captured in his biography (Nicholls, 2013). The

author's life in his biography and the narrator's life in the *House of Hunger* reflect the oppressed people in Rhodesia.

Consequently, the first section of this chapter, subtitled "In each other's mirror: Dambudzo Marechera's biography and *The House of Hunger*" exposes "negotiations of violence" explored in the second section of this chapter. The first and second sections focus mainly on how the narrator's identity in *The House of Hunger* mirrors the author's identity in his biography. I describe how the "self-imaging" character of the narrator navigates the different forms of political and cultural violence echoed in the *House of Hunger* and the biography. Self-imaging is a central strategy the narrator in *The House of Hunger* deploys to negotiate violence. The narrator appears to blame the origins of violence on the colonialist and nationalist political leadership in the colonial and postcolonial systems of government and envisages himself as an ideal African hero. That strategy enables the narrator to recreate himself as an African national hero. The narrator projects himself as a perfect African national hero. The latter's leadership perfectly surpasses the inept leadership stature of prominent African Nationalists such as Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, whom he denounces.

Postcolonial theory remains the main theoretical prism through which I explore all the selected texts. It is imperative also to deploy a psychoanalytical theoretical framework to read *The House of Hunger* as its narrative is fragmented, mentally orientated and thrives on the stream-of-consciousness mode of writing. Colonial political violence is reflected through the fragmented narrative anchored in the narrator's mental state that captures and is captured in the images of his family that disintegrates, leading to his loss of freedom and individual identity. I will argue that *The House Hunger*'s depictions of colonial oppression "valorise violence as a bodily configuration of destruction on the mental, economic, social and political psyche of the people in time and space" (Ogunyemi, 2020:446) as part of the writer's goal to expose the dire effects of colonial violence through fictional representations.

2.2 In each other's mirror: Marechera's biography and *The House of Hunger*

The House of Hunger depicts the narrator being subjected to violent political, social, and economic conditions. The text depicts the narrator's identity bearing similarities with that of the author, as reflected in his biography. Nicholls (2013:34) submits that the narrator in *The House of Hunger* has similarities with a character called Edmund (Marechera, 1978:61), "who is physically small and enjoys Russian literature has features in common with [those of] the adult Marechera, who was slight of stature and appreciated Russian authors". Another character called Stephen is depicted bullying Edmund. Stephen believes that literature written by Africans is peculiar and "firmly [believes] that there was something peculiarly African in anything written by an African" (p.63). Nicholls further states that "Stephen is an avid reader of the Heinemann African Writers Series" and he adds that Stephen "has features in common with those of the teenage Marechera, whose reading was intimately linked with this series" (Nicholls, 2013:34). Flora Veit-Wild (2003) argues that Edmund's character traits in *The House of Hunger* are the same as those of the author. She writes about him in a biography where she notes Marechera's view that writing should not constrain the African writer to represent an African image, "like Edmund, the older Marechera frequently promoted the idea that the writer should not be constrained by 'the African image'" (Veit-Wild, 2003:45).

This study argues that the narrator in *The House of Hunger* negotiates violence by writing himself into different personalities represented in the characters that share the world of *The House of Hunger* with the narrator. Since I have submitted that negotiation of violence can be interpreted as a "reading and writing" (Mzali, 2011:89) technique in defining the concept, the narrator's self-imaging is vital to focus on in this section and subsequent sections. Marechera's biography provides a mirror reflection of the narrator and other characters in *The House of Hunger*. In a way, the "life" and the "work", as Nicholls (2013:62) puts it, are "co-implicated in one another, in reciprocally reinforcing ways". The biography written about Marechera defines the fiction he writes, and the fiction also defines Marechera's biography to such an extent that the two texts throw light on each other "as related texts, and indeed as mutually defining fictions" (Nicholls, 2013:62). This approach is relevant to this study because it foregrounds a psychoanalytical model of reading *The House of Hunger*, assisting in analysing the

fragmented narrative that depicts the fragmented mental state of the narrator. The narrator's fragmented state of mind and the fragmented narrative reflect the violence of the colonial system entrenched in the political context of the Rhodesian settler-colonial history from where *The House of Hunger* emerged.

Marechera uses fiction to expose the violence that characterises the socio-cultural realities of the society in which the novella is set. A reflection on the author's life is crucial to understanding the text and how Marechera "harness[es] fiction to intervene in the violent socio-cultural realities" (Murray, 2009:1) of his country. *The House of Hunger* depicts violence and reflects how the material conditions influence the author's writing experience, as reflected in his work. This reading conjures Murray's observation about a writer's work that it represents "traumatic events [that] cause an overflow of the cognitive system [that] is not comprehensively experienced by the victims at the time it occurs but can only be fully 'known' when it is conceived by the empathetic listener or reader" (Murray, 2009:1). This view is echoed by Tavengwa Gwekwerere (2018:806) who corroborates that "[t]he Black Zimbabwean novel emerged as part of the African imaginative response to colonialism". As a result of that consideration, I suggest a psychoanalytic theoretical framework for reading Dambudzo Marechera's fiction and biography.

The author's nonconformist attitude to all forms of social conventions informs the narrative strategies of his fiction. It helps to relate *The House of Hunger* with Marechera's biography only insofar as the reading of the two texts in tandem assists in understanding how they represent negotiations of violence entrenched in political and cultural spaces. Flora Veit-Wild's (1999) biography documents that Dambudzo Marechera was expelled from the two universities he attended, which were the University of Rhodesia and Nyasaland and the University of Oxford, because of his rebellious and nonconformist character. The narrative style of *The House of Hunger* is complicated by the mixture of tenses, indistinct identities of narrative voices, and the absence of chronological sequence in the storylines unfolding. Despite these narrative complications, the theme of negotiations of political and cultural violence unifies the text as it runs throughout the novella and all the short stories. The text's unity is evident when one considers that the characters and the narrator are recreations of the narrator.

As I have already mentioned, the narrator is a recreation of the author through self-imaging. I shall define and analyse this in greater detail in the subsequent section.

The autobiographical tone in this opening sentence of *The House of Hunger,* as signalled by the extract “I got my things and left” (p.1), gives the reader the impression that the story's events unfold in a linear and chronological sequence. However, the text does not have any of those writing characteristics. According to Laurice Taitz (1999:26), *The House of Hunger* “gives a fragmented narrative full of [a]cts of violence that produce discontinuities”. The violence characterising the author’s life experiences is symbolised by the brutality revealed by his “missing front teeth that leads him to stuttering, stammering and slurring as metaphors of loss of speech” (Taitz, 1999:26). The recreations of characters plagued by political violence in the novella and the short stories was "Marechera's intentionally canny reaction to the available political and cultural narratives and to the larger politics of colonialism within which he found himself, whether in Africa or Europe" (Nicholls, 2013:18).

Depictions of negotiations of violence in *The House of Hunger* are centred more on the individual characters than on the collective and national context, as reflected in *Harvest of Thorns* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* which depict the violence of civil war conflict in Zimbabwean and Nigerian settings, respectively. The body is portrayed as violated in many incidents involving mainly the narrator in *The House of Hunger*. One such incident is when the narrator is invited to give a political speech to vagrants. One vagrant who had stayed aloof beats the narrator when he fails to deliver the speech using expert political rhetoric. In the face of his assailant, the narrator sees “no natural landmark but one twisted mark of violent intention” (Marechera, 1978:26). The text depicts the military, police, and Special Branch forces in Rhodesia as the political power structures using violence to control the oppressed black citizens. The violence caused by the racialised, and oppressive political system forces the people in the townships to live in poverty. The narrator in *The House of Hunger* describes these realities as:

> The room had taken over my mind. My hunger had become the room. It was a prison. It was the womb. It was a Whites-only sign on a lavatory. The pain of it flared into a flame, flickering like a match, but the match died out, and history was the blackened twig of it (Marechera, 1978:26).

The narrator's words point to his pain's physical and psychological nature. The narrator's body takes the form of *The House of Hunger*, a prison. The narrator's view of *The House of Hunger* as a prison that corresponds with his body suggests that his sense of self-worth is at odds with the dehumanised condition colonialism has caused to his body. The narrator reveals that he abhors the black African identity the colonial system carved for black Africans in Rhodesia through racial segregation engraved in the sign at the toilet. The reference the narrator makes to racial segregation, “It was a Whites-only sign on a lavatory” (p.26), confirms his dislike for the identity the colonial system confers on the colonised subjects. The violence on the narrator's body is painful physically and figuratively “history was the blackened twig of it" (p.26).

This statement by the narrator is charged with racial undertones suggested by how his identity as a black man is insinuated by a reference to “blackened” history. The narrator's image of bodily pain described as a flickering flame from a match implies the effects of violence of a colonial experience on the individual subject who represents all the oppressed black Africans in Rhodesia. The narrator's oppression and loss of identity justify his negotiation of violence by seeking an authentic African identity. I will discuss this in the following section, where I focus on self-imaging. The violence in *The House of Hunger* has robbed the family members of human values such as love, care, and sympathy for each other. When the narrator speaks about his late father, his words are devoid of sympathy or love. He refers to him as "the old man" and not as "father" (p.3). The narrator seems not to have had love from his father to return, and that could be the reason why he does not show any sympathy for him in the manner he talks about his death. He describes his father's death with indifference as "the old man died in that nasty train accident" (p.3).

The narrator's unsympathetic feelings about his father's death are shocking. However, when one reads on, the cause of the cold feelings about his father's death is revealed by learning how the father knocked out the narrator's two front teeth using his clenched fist when he was a little boy (p.45). The narrator's father dies after being crushed by a train. This accident reflects machines as a site of violence: “The old man died beneath the wheels of the twentieth century. There was nothing left but stains, blood stains and fragments of flesh, when the whole length of it was through with eating him" (p.45).

The narrator uses the words and phrases, such as “stains”, "blood stains", and "fragments of flesh", (p.46) to create images of violence and death. The image of the father's death being crushed to a stain beneath the train wheels contrasts with the narrator's second account of his father's death. In the second account, the description is different as he refers to someone "whose skull had a jagged crack running down from the centre of the forehead to the tip of the lower jaw; the skull had been crudely welded back into shape, so much so it looked as though it would fall apart any moment” (p.136). The narrator’s description of his father’s death mirrors an account of Marechera’s father’s death documented in the biography as having been run over by a car. Reading *The House of Hunger* and the biography reveals that the two texts mirror each other. However, there are glaring contradictions in the facts about the same events, such as the narrator's account of his father's death. Alle Lansu (2001), in 1986, interviewed Marechera about his father's death. He said that his body was riddled with bullets after he was mistaken for a guerrilla fighter by the Rhodesian security forces when he looked at him in the mortuary (Levin, 1997:103). These contradictions about the truth of the facts concerning the same event are described by Levin (1997:108) as Marechera’s representation of “truth as contained in his writing [that] is not stable, but constantly changing and constantly subjected to different interpretations”. Levin’s remark confirms the viewpoint that *The House of Hunger* depicts negotiations of violence through its narration from the narrator’s different perspectives.

When one reads Marechera's biography, documented events show that events about his life are fictionalised. The writing strategy Marechera uses to fictionalise events about his real-life experiences confirms that the author negotiates violence by writing about it. I will illustrate how the narrator in *The House of Hunger* is alienated from his family, society, and himself. The political violence and racial segregation have uprooted the narrator from his original self, and his cultural identity as an African subject has been lost. The narrator escapes from the violence of his living conditions and finds refuge in writing which he uses to recreate images of himself in search of an idealised African identity. In the section that follows, I will explore how the narrator negotiates the dehumanising effects of violence caused by colonial power structures.

2.3 Negotiating the dehumanising effects of violence.

The House of Hunger depicts negotiations of violence in the context of a political conflict between the colonial government and the colonised Indigenous Africans. The representations of violence are based on the narrator's experience of its effects on him and his family. The colonial government is responsible for the narrator's deplorable living conditions. His life is characterised by extreme poverty at home and police brutality during political demonstrations (Marechera, 1978:58). The colonial state security agents beat protestors with truncheons and set Alsatian dogs on university students demonstrating in the streets. The narrative has images of horrific violence, rape, torture, blood, stains, “filth, and disease [and these images] proliferate precisely because of the physicality to which they point” (Chennells, 1999:23). Chennells adds that the body is "the concrete expression of all the abstractions by which the powerful, those in command of the discourse, the controller of the languages and life, oppress the powerless, the voiceless" (Chennells, 1999:23). The text depicts political and cultural contexts of violence hounding the narrator's life, and he negotiates the dehumanising impacts of violence on his personality and the personalities of other characters. The narrator uses metaphors, symbolism, imagery, and metonym as literary techniques that successfully project the themes of violence, oppression, and his pursuit of recovering an authentic African identity through self-imaging.

Taitz (1999) argues that Marechera was aware that violence originated from the colonial system of government. Consequently, he represented violence through a fragmented narrative style exposing the “fissures” and “cracks in the narratives of colonialism” (Taitz,1999:23). Taitz adds that the “conquest and control of the colonised foregrounds the idea that colonialism entailed acts of narrative construction which sought to define and imprison African identity” (Taitz,1999:23). Marechera's fragmented narrative style suggests the author's response to conditions of oppression which he negotiates through exposing its destructive impact on his imprisoned conscience. The fragmented narrative style Marechera uses defies the traditional Shona form of Shona storytelling that follows chronology. The narrative style Marechera uses typifies the fragmented human condition of the narrator and all the characters in *The House of Hunger*. This narrative style foregrounds negotiations of

violence in the sense that the oppressed subjects ought to be conscious of their dehumanised conditions to overcome the task of cultural retrieval they must undertake.

The House of Hunger postulates defiance of the colonial system as a means of negotiating violence. The structure of the text negates all the main aspects of the conventional narrative style in the same way Marechera intersects and confronts colonial violence by advocating for resistance against all forms of colonial oppression of black Africans. According to Taitz (1999:24), the author achieves this confrontation of colonial oppression by "focusing on the violence of colonialism and the resultant fracturing of Zimbabwean society and identity, which the narrator in *The House of Hunger* manifests itself in a condition of alienation and double consciousness". The narrator develops a "double consciousness" (Taitz,1999:24) as a mechanism to negotiate violence as he resolves to resist all forms of oppression caused by the colonial system. The colonial security system is portrayed as responsible for creating corrupt, violent, and brutal personalities such as Peter. He abuses his girlfriend because the colonial system has shaped him into a monster. The colonial system suggests this creation of violent colonised subjects when the narrator describes how his behaviour has changed since his release from prison. Peter had been jailed for accepting a police spy's bribe, and when he is released from jail, he keeps ranting about "bloody whites" (p.3) and spoils for fights that are not there.

Political violence is represented in descriptions of strikes and mass arrests by the police when university students demonstrate in the streets, crying out for freedom. We learn that "[t]here were arrests *en masse* at the university, and when workers came out on strike, there were more arrests" (p.3). The narrator describes the shocking event of two guerrilla fighters who "were executed one morning and their bodies [were] displayed to a group of school children" (p.3). Although colonial education has been beneficial to the colonised subjects in some ways, in the narrator's instance, the colonial education system is presented as useless. The narrator's mother complains that she does not see the importance of sending him to school because his education does not help with their upkeep. On hearing her, Peter butts in, asking his mother to "tell that to Ian Smith, all you did was starve yourself to send him to school, while Smith made sure that the kind of education, he got was exactly the kind that made him like

this” (p.9). In *The House of Hunger*, “a school, like the church, the asylum, the hospital, the prison, the police camp and the university” (p.15) are represented as institutions where the colonised subject is coerced to submit to control by the colonial system. I argue that some of these institutions are sites of control, such as those institutions of learning that provide education that benefits colonial forms of control. The prisons, military and police institutions are sites of political and cultural violence because they enforce political conformity and acceptable behavioural and cultural standards prescribed through a colonial legal system.

The narrator uses sarcasm to represent the effects of colonial violence on the colonised subjects. Imprisonment has transformed Peter into the violent and militant exponent of freedom through his imprisonment. The narrator describes how he expresses his disgust for colonisation by farting. He says Peter "farted long and loudly and spat in [his] general direction and muttered something about capitalists and imperialists" (p.58). Peter would add, "and the bloody whites," for that was, for Peter, "the trinity that held *The House of Hunger* in its stinking grip". He also refers to the colonial grip as the "foul breach of our history" (p.58). The reason why Peter constantly mutters "capitalists" and "imperialists" is not that he clearly understands those terms. It is because Peter consigns them to a "trinity" whereby after pronouncing the terms "imperialists" and "capitalists", they should be followed by another term, "gut rot" (p.58) to complete the trinity describing the effects of colonial violence on the colonised subjects. He registers revulsion for that "trinity" by dispensing loud farts, after which he spits.

Marechera's literary technique of deploying sarcasm in exploring the dehumanising effects of colonial violence on the colonised is discernible when he reduces the value of nationalist heroes to a realm of the absurd. Stephen shouts Kwame Nkrumah's name after Stephen farts in a boys’ dormitory at school. This incident resonates with Peter’s fart at the mention of imperialists and capitalists mentioned above. Although the narrator deplores colonialism, his alternative discourse is not nationalism. The narrator's distaste for nationalism is confirmed by his distrust of nationalists who are in exile. The narrator castigates nationalists by saying: “There is a lot of these bastards hanging around in London waiting to become cabinet ministers. The only cabinet they

will be is a coffin" (p.59). The narrator states that he writes to escape the vision of a catastrophic future. The narrator's pessimistic vision of independence in Zimbabwe is expressed when he says, "I'm a pessimist, but I still add two and two and walk to seven, smiling" (p.59).

The narrator has distressing experiences of politicians coming after him. He complains that they disturb him while he writes his poetry "[a]nd when you stop by that wall, to figure out the next poem, some character empties a chamberpot of slogans right on top of your head" (p.59). These words confirm that the narrator dismisses nationalist politicians for derailing liberation struggles across the continent. The narrator's dislike for nationalism is suggested by the incident in which Edmund shouts Kwame Nkrumah's name after Stephen's fart, thus reducing his previously acclaimed heroic stature to an object of comedy and ridicule. The nationalists who purport to fight for the people's just cause betray the nation. This betrayal of the nation by the nationalists is highlighted by the narrator's warning that "[t]here will be big men always digging pit latrines for you and your children to fall in" (p.59). The nationalist war politicians are the big men to which the narrator refers. Vambe (2008:228) decries post-independence politicians' resort to oppressive and violent political systems after "these struggles that these leaders led while fighting colonialism in the name of people's emancipation". Although *The House of Hunger* was written before Independence in Rhodesia, the narrator already prognosticates a cycle of political violence. The cycle depicted in the text starts with the oppressive colonial systems whose violent power structures the nationalist post-independence state would inherit and use to inflict violence on the so-called liberated citizens.

In *The House of Hunger*, "there are many people out there who are hungry and homeless and others who go about in birthday suits of their rags" (p.59). The narrator sounds resigned to his country's fate. He cannot change the grim picture of the country where nationalists fail to redeem the nation from oppression and violence. The narrator's despair that drives him to say, "I just fuck and screw myself in a quiet green place and load my balls onto my shoulders for the big trip beyond the grave" (p.59), which reflects the hopelessness of his situation. The narrator adds that "there is dust and fleas and bloody whites and roaches, and dogs trained to bite black people in the

arse" and, besides that, there is "white shit in our leaders, and white shit in our dreams and white shit in our history" (p.59).

The House of Hunger depicts violence in grim images that subvert language conventions by using offensive and foul words that shock the reader. This language startles and awakens the reader to the proportions of violence that characterise the lives of the house's occupants of hunger, where the human condition is portrayed as "dirt and shit and urine and blood and smashed brains". The narrator adds that there "is nothing to make someone particularly happy that one was a human being and not a horse, or a lion or a jackal, or come to think of it a snake" (p.58) to show how the colonised subjects are dehumanised. The colonial system has affected the colonised subjects in different ways, including their dehumanised condition symbolised by the narrator's images of animals and snakes to describe the colonised black Africans. I argue that the narrator suggests colonised subjects must acknowledge their dehumanised condition to negotiate violence and retrieve their lost human condition. The narrator also negotiates the dehumanising effects of the political violence caused by the colonialists and nationalists by escaping into writing.

2.4 Violence entrenched in the function of state apparatuses.

The colonial system of government portrayed in *The House of Hunger* controls the Rhodesian state using ideological state apparatuses represented by the police and military forces. Louis Althusser (2006:87) describes these apparatuses as functioning by violence: "[t]he State Apparatus [which] contains the government, the administration, the army, the police, the courts and the prisons to constitute Repressive State Apparatuses that function by violence." *The House of Hunger* recreates these ideological state apparatuses and roots them in the historical context of the Rhodesian colonial era as fictional representations. Violence, as already mentioned, results from the conflict between the colonial government and the nationalist freedom fighters. The novella depicts concrete historical conditions of the colonial state of Rhodesia at war against the nationalists fighting for freedom. Marechera reconstructs the dynamics of colonial violence in his text that Viet-Wild (1999:34) aptly describes as the colonial rule that "keeps the native trapped in the tight links of the chains of colonialism".

Nationalists also justify violence as a desirable means to achieve a just end to their independence. Character representations of the narrator's elder brother, Peter, reflect the idea that the oppressed subjects should use violence to confront acts of violence directed at them. Peter stirs admiration from his peers for rebelling against the government because among the colonised, aggression “is almost admired as it passes for resistance [and] violence serves as an expression of strength and resilience under colonial domination" (Taitz,1999:34).

The colonial regime and the freedom fighters are both responsible for the outbreak of violence because the country is embroiled in a civil war. The perpetrators of violence, the coloniser and the colonised nationalists, fight because they want to attain political, economic, and social hegemony. The colonisers find it essential to defend the colonial state and use ideological state apparatuses to uphold the colonial rule. The origins of violence can be traced to the concepts of ideology and power. *The House of Hunger* portrays the ruling colonial government disseminating their ideologies through ideological state apparatuses. The police and soldiers patrol the streets day and night to control the colonial state. The Law-and-Order Maintenance Act is enacted to prosecute participants in anti-government protests, and such legislation promotes the colonisers' ideology. The narrator's brother, Peter, is a political activist who engages in street demonstrations against police brutality and embodies the spirit of an insurrection of the black people against the settler government in Rhodesia.

Violence, as Chennells (1999:34), puts it, "serves to create or (re)create the notion of community, for both the coloniser and the colonised, insofar as the community's cohesion is cemented by the threat and spectacle (the display of the threat) of violence." The colonised black people are united by the need to fight for freedom. They view war violence as a necessary tool they must use to attain freedom. In the same way regarding violence, the colonisers also view repression of the liberation movement as necessary to uphold their dominance over colonial subjects. As a result, the text of *The House of Hunger* is replete with images of violence. Edmund, the guerrilla freedom fighter whose photograph is posted in the newspaper after his capture, represents a heroic achievement of paying the last price for freedom with his life. However, my reading of the text emphasises that the outbreaks of violence that characterise the

living conditions of the colonised subjects are a result of the political objectives of both the colonial government and the political choices of the nationalist freedom fighters. Both parties have the potential, at any moment, to choose to engage in a violent war or to negotiate violence differently.

The House of Hunger delineates the theme of violence in all spheres of the narrator's life, including when he is at school, where bullying is represented. Bullying in schools is regarded as the students' cultural practices or norms. The narrator describes how Edmund, before he joins the liberation struggle when they are together at a boarding school, takes it upon himself to fight a bully, Stephen, who always beats other students. The other boys who watch the fight shout at Edmund to stop fighting because the bully is much bigger than him. Edmund keeps fighting despite being so severely injured that his face is bloody and disfigured from swelling. Besides foreshadowing Edmund's participation in the war of liberation, where he would gain a heroic status, this scene reinforces the theme of violence represented not only as mainly perpetrated on the body as the target of violent laceration but also as symbolic of ideological conflicts. Ideological conflicts happen within nationalism. There is also conflict between nationalism and colonialism, resulting in violence.

Veit-Wild (1999:38) suggests that the fight between Edmund and Stephen is "an allegory of different political conflicts that were fought during the war against the Rhodesian government". The conflicts symbolised by this fight were those between the Zimbabwe National Union (ZANU) and Zimbabwe People's Union (ZAPU), the two main nationalist formations that were at war against Ian Smith's regime. The fight could also symbolise the conflict between the nationalists and the Rhodesian colonial government. The latter contention is supported by Foster (1992:59), who explores Marechera’s use of allegory and notes that in *The House of Hunger*, “Marechera has constructed a metaphor for both intra- and inter-racial political and cultural relations in Rhodesia”. Marechera’s construction of a bully character in the school, Foster (1992:59) reiterates, “does not only dramatize white intolerance of social change but by having a school's self-proclaimed champion of an authentic Black identity [that embodies] a violent white dictatorship”. Foster (1992:59) concludes that “Marechera demonstrates the tyranny implicit in all expressions of cultural centrality.” This

observation is plausible because Marechera denigrates and decries the “tyranny” and “cultural centrality” which, I suggest, he associates with nationalism using the same allegory of the Stephen-Edmund fight.

The description of Edmund's brutalised face stirs repugnance at the excessive use of violence by the bully, a sentiment in keeping with human nature that, under peaceful circumstances, people shun violence. However, during a war, there is a need to sacrifice life for political expediency. Violence at school, for the narrator, is a microcosmic representation of the broader picture of violence the nation experiences. Drew Shaw (1999:35) describes the images of violence in *The House of Hunger* by noting that “image[s] of violence [that] become a motif in the context where a society is born out of a violent encounter with colonialism.” *The House of Hunger* depicts images of bodies subjected to violent mutilation reflected in "blood stains", “scars", and “stitches" (p.47). The narrator cheekily describes himself as having been caught up in the aftermath of colonial violence. He says, "[H]ere we are all sticky with the stinking stains of history" (p.47). The imagery drawn from the medical profession suggests that the colonised people endure violence in the same way as a person suffers from a disease.

Gerald Gaylard (1993:35) observes that the violence of the coloniser “is channelled towards the family, the community, and ultimately the nation.” The sites of violence in *The House of Hunger* occur at distinct levels. At the first level, there are representations of violence whereby the colonial structures of power inflict violence on the colonised Black population at a national level. At the second level, the text suggests contexts of violence that nationalists inflict on the nation when they come to power and use state apparatuses to control the post-independence state through violence. The way Harry bullies Stephen depicts how the power structures of the colonial government inflict violence on the colonised subjects. The third level of violence is where one person subjects another to physical and psychological forms of violence. *The House of Hunger* represents this form of violence in Edmund's bullying by Harry and Peter's brutality when assaulting his girlfriend.

The contexts of these interpersonal forms of violence are quite different from those of police brutality portrayed in scenes where security agents beat up and kill political activists in the streets or at war. This distinction traces some forms of violence to another space that is neither political nor cultural. It shows that not all forms of violence are traced to colonial political power structures or cultural dynamics, especially in representations of violence depicted in *The House of Hunger*. For example, the violence of machines that come with technological development portrayed as killing the narrator's father would not be immediately and directly attributable to political or cultural systems.

The House of Hunger demonstrates how the psychological impact of violence influences the narrator's representation of violence, which determines the form and structure of the novella. The narrator's rebellious disposition and the quest for freedom in his daily life's political, economic, and cultural spaces set him on a collision course with the colonial system. The colonial system is violent, and the narrator is bound to negotiate violence by seeking intellectual freedom. Intellectual freedom drives him to find the meaning of his existence in self-expression, evident in his writing. The author chooses the fragmented narrative technique because it fittingly mirrors the disintegration caused by violence in the family and society to which the writer belongs.

As I have already mentioned, the narrator writes to escape from the pervasive violence he experiences in the “house of hunger” that symbolises his family and country. He realises the futility of education acquired in an oppressive colonial system that thwarts his aspirations and those of his generation built on its values. Kevin Foster (1992:59) reinforces this argument by saying that "[t]he end of formal education is the point at which their options disappear rather than multiply.” The narrator avidly reads books during his secondary school education. When he is in the sixth form, he says that "[a]t this time, I was extremely thirsty for self-knowledge and curiously enough believed I could find that in political consciousness", which explains his source of inspiration to write. In the description, “there was not an oasis of thought which we [did not lick] dry; apart from those which had been banned, whose licking led to arrests and suchlike flea-scratchings” (p.63), the narrator exposes the police as the source of violence. If education should bring opportunities for the narrator and the youth to improve their

lives, and if that option is not available because of the political unrest, they must fight oppression to regain freedom. If that is the case, the narrator suggests that the only way to negotiate colonial violence is by fighting the oppressive system in the war of liberation depicted in *Harvest of Thorns*. A military confrontation of violence with violence is also a form of negotiation of political violence. *Half of a Yellow Sun* typifies that context of negotiations of violence through violent confrontation representing the civil war waged by the Biafrans, who are of Igbo ethnic origin, fighting against the Nigerian central government dominated by the Yoruba and Hausa ethnic groups.

The narrator's search for his identity and self-knowledge, which he believes can be found in the "political consciousness" mentioned above, confirms that the representations of violence are etched in politics. Politics is represented as a source of violence. Politics is described as an oasis of thought "whose licking led to arrests and suchlike flea-scratchings" (p.63) the narrator experiences. The physical forms of violence, such as beatings, shootings and cases of rape described by the narrator, destroy family relationships. This violence affects the state of the narrator's intellect. He says that “the house of hunger was where the acids of gut rot had eaten into the base metal” (p.63) of his brain. He protests that violence in the house of hunger has metaphorically become the material of which his mind is made, and he says, "I do not like the way the roof is rattling" (p.24). The violence of the colonial system has affected the narrator physically and mentally. The narrator negotiates both physical and psychological violence that emanates from politics and culture since colonisation has stripped the colonised subject of their indigenous cultural identity. That loss of cultural identity because of the violence of colonisation drives the narrator in search of his lost identity. That opens a strand of negotiation of violence whereby Marechera seeks the authentic African identity through self-imaging.

2.5 African hero identity and self-imaging

Kevin Foster (1992:59) argues that the narrator in *The House of Hunger* rejects the colonial discourse that postulates that “the African Identity is monolithic, that Africa is a homogeneous entity, and that Africans are not capable of being subjects of their history”. The nationalist discourse is the alternative in *The House of Hunger,* but the

narrator rejects it. The narrator denigrates African nationalism, challenging the colonial discourse of racial discrimination. By rejecting African nationalism, the narrator disregards the value of the equality of African states that African nationalism proposes to achieve by creating a united front of all African states fighting against colonialism. Foster (1992:59) concurs that the narrator's rejection of both the colonial discourse and African nationalism sets him in search of an "authentic black hero", "icons of individual and collective self-identity," and "bitterly laments their absence from contemporary Zimbabwe".

The narrator searches for the ideal African hero in the constructions of the different characters. One of these characters is Edmund, who is the liberation war hero. He could probably be an ideal example of an African hero because he is shot during the war and pays the last price for freedom with his life. Other heroes mentioned in the narrative include Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere, African nationalists and the first presidents of independent Ghana and Tanzania, respectively. All these heroes do not match the narrator's idea of an ideal hero imbued with an African identity. I suggest that the narrator searches for the ideal African hero through self-imaging because he has failed to find that hero from colonial and nationalist discourses. By recreating his identity continuously, there arises the notion of an African identity that lies in stability. That is why the narrator reconstructs multiple-faceted characters to find a stable model of a hero. These are "Edmund and Stephen, whose idea he finds tenable" (Foster, 1992:59) and points at himself as the true African hero. However, "ironically, recreations of those characters underscore the instability of his idea of a hero" (Foster, 1992:59).

The House of Hunger is written in an autobiographical first-person narrative voice that raises the question of the narrator's political identity. The narrator endows his characters, Edmund, and Peter, with some features of his character, such as rebelliousness in Peter and heroic qualities in Edmund. In one incident, the narrator takes to a podium to address vagrants about nationalist political rhetoric but fails to deliver the speech and gets brutalised by the vagrants. In the earlier section of this study, I mentioned that the body is represented as the target for the violence inflicted by the vagrants the narrator refers to as boys. The narrator says, "I knew all the boys

there except one who sat apart, looking very gloomy and frowning darkly at my rhetorical effort" (p.63), showing that the vagrants are part of the society to which he belongs. This incident points at the narrator's political identity and voice that negotiates violence in the narrative and is associated with nationalism the narrator detests.

The narrator's identity is revealed as a failed African nationalist at this stage when he addresses the vagrants but has something in him that empowers him with rhetoric to harangue his audience. He realises that language is a site of political power as he wants to use it to prime their minds into political activism in which violence is entrenched. He wants to politicise the audience of “vagrants by giving them examples of heroism on the part of our nationalist guerrillas" (Foster, 1992:59), that resembles that of nationalist heroes. When the narrator speaks, the “flood of political rhetoric escaped like a cloud of steam out of a crater of my mouth" (p.57), suggesting that political rhetoric is destructive. As the narrator struggles to deliver his speech, the other vagrant, who remains secluded from the group, assaults him violently. The vagrants he has been addressing come to his rescue by attacking the “assailant so violently that he is lost in a mass of boot-kicking, fist-flying and head-butting" (p.63), which suggests that the nation has the power to fight the nationalists. This event suggests that the narrator’s punishment is for trying to be a nationalist, which confirms his rejection of the nationalist African hero's identity. The narrator views his delivery of the nationalist rhetoric to vagrants as a "crime" for which he is punished (p.63) when he is beaten by the vagrant that had remained aloof. The presentation of the quiet vagrant who sits apart and later assaults the narrator suggests that Marechera intentionally scrutinises and discards nationalism as an ideology that embodies the ideal image of an African political identity.

In *The House of Hunger*, the most vivid descriptions of violence are captured in five films. Other descriptions of violence are captured in the presentation of Edmund's picture in the Rhodesian newspaper when he is captured during the war. The Rhodesian media intends to scare the people from joining the freedom fighters, but the display's effect on the same people stirs heroic admiration rather than fear. The media's picture takes away the violence's context, which is entirely different from the effect of literary representation. Mzali (2011:146) submits that in representation, "[the]

media’s images shift from one spectacle of violence to the next while displacing the *context* of its occurrence”, thereby implying a “hegemonic interpretation of the conflict”. In *The House of Hunger*, Edmund's picture's representation avoids the graphic and spectacular presentation of an act of violence, which would have been the description of the shooting act. This form of representation avoids a spectacle of violence. That avoidance allows negotiation of violence using Edmund's picture rather than a description of the shooting. The description of Edmund's shooting would have presented the spectacle of violence of war between the guerrillas and the Rhodesian Army. The novella gives space to attached views on the situation in Rhodesia, where locations of violence are etched in the political conflict between the Rhodesian army and the freedom fighters.

The House of Hunger is rich in allegorical representations, symbolism, and depictions of ideas in images. Stephen's character, for example, embodies the customs and traditions of the indigenous colonised black people in Rhodesia and is a bully representing nationalism. As mentioned in several contexts in preceding sections of this study, nationalism oppresses the citizens in the same way the indigenous people were subjected to oppressive conditions by the colonial political system. Marechera's representation of a typical bully at an African colonial school suggests violence entrenched in all spheres of the colonised subjects' lives, including learning institutions. The narrator thinks the Stephen-Edmund fight "even outclassed UDI" (p.112). UDI is the abbreviation for the historic Unilateral Declaration of Independence. Ian Smith's colonial government in Rhodesia made it in 1965 to sever ties with Britain, stopping its administration from Britain as a British colony. At that time, the British government was concessionary and willing to grant the nationalists a negotiating platform as they had done in Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and Nyasaland (Malawi), they granted independence. That was a shift in policy viewed as a point of departure in marking the Rhodesian government as moving towards a sterner position against nationalist revolutionary parties clamouring for independence.

The Edmund-Stephen fight represents negotiations of violence entrenched in politics, with the reference the text makes to Ian Smith's political and historic Unilateral Declaration of Independence of the Rhodesian state from the British colonial empire's

control structures. The infusion of that historical event into the narrative in the context of that fight enhances its relevance to the representations of violence in liberation politics of southern African states that were under British colonisation. The fight between Stephen and Edmund reflects a struggle between two opposed notions of identity. On the one hand, Edmund is a nationalist politician who "refuses to have anything to do with armchair politics" (p.60) and wants to be a writer. On the other hand, Stephen represents African nationalism, symbolised by a bully who uses violence in politics to suppress and control dissenting voices.

“The Writer’s Grain” is one of the short stories that come after the novella in *The House of Hunger*. This short story features the concept of doubling, which is a technique of self-imaging the narrator uses through writing. This literary technique is also presented in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, where twin characters, Kainene and Olanna, represent the re-emergence of Biafra implied to take place after Biafra is defeated. Kainene's unexplained disappearance suggests the re-emergence of Biafra at the end of the novel. This event symbolises the return of the other twin, interpreted as the re-emergence of Biafra. There is also doubling novel writing in *Half of a Yellow Sun* as Richard, a British journalist and Ogwu, an Igbo activist, both write novels about the war in Biafra. In the opening of the short story titled "The Writer's Grain", the narrator who describes the events happening has no name, just as the narrator in the novella, *The House of Hunger*, is also not named.

The unnamed narrator in "The Writer's Grain" squiggles sketches on a blank page, and the squiggles continuously multiply until he sees them as "these dark spots [that] swoop into his face and shoot out with the very matter of [his] brains" (p.100) marking the birth of his doppelganger. After that, "he sees his face staring coldly back at him” (p.100). When the narrator touches the apparition, he says that he feels the apparition pulling "the skin of [his] face out. It revealed me to myself" (p.100). The apparition he sees transforms into his double, whom he sees following him everywhere until he names him and describes him as the doppelganger.

Brendon Nicholls (2013) suggests that the doppelganger emerges to hound the narrator. The double's representations in the text rise to prominence, overshadow the

narrator and usurp him. The scribbled sketches that the unnamed narrator makes at first refer to the narrator's works of art that he writes. As soon as they are detached from the subject they originate from, the narrator's sketches start to exist independently. This independent existence of the sketches is suggested by the description of their self-animating characteristics in the excerpt below.

> The circles and the squares shot upward like a little explosion and slammed into the ceiling, leaving a sooty imprint on it, and then fell slowly back to the ground like a fine black soot. Moreover, they were my thoughts, too, those refined black grains. They were my life (p.101).

The images of sooty dirt used to describe the narrator's thoughts echo the events that unfold in another story titled "Burning in the Rain". In this story, there is also a nameless hero who wakes up one morning surprised to be Father Christmas wearing clothes that “drip soot” (p.86) and lack the grandeur of Father Christmas’ apparel. Jane Bryce (1991:32) suggests that "the soot is symbolic of the writer's self". In "The Writer's Grain", the narrator drinks himself into a stupor and ends up seeing his double, from whom he runs away to warn his estranged wife of the danger posed by his double as an impostor. The narrator's wife takes the form of her daughter, Clara, who always spits (p.103) and is involved “in an affair with a student with the peculiar name Marechera" (p.102). After a while, the narrator decides to team up with a mongrel and goes to his flat, where he discovers his wife having sex with the evil doppelganger (p.113). These events described in this story show that there are no moral values in the society that the violence of the colonial system has dehumanised.

Some of the events represented in “The Writer’s Grain” are partially replicated in another short story, “Thought-tracks in the Snow,” which is the penultimate short story in *The House of Hunger*. This short story is about the narrator's alienated wife, who cheats on him “with a Nigerian [university] student the narrator has been tutoring” (p.145). The adulterous affair reminds the narrator of how his mother had cheated on his father in the novella, and their argument about the scandal angers the student, who mercilessly beats the narrator’s wife. The beating offsets the narrator’s memory of an incident where he is attacked by Rhodesian police’s “Alsatian dogs” during a political protest (p.145). The recollection of that violent incident of the encounter with police Alsatian dogs enfeebles and hinders him from intervening to rescue his wife. The narrator's past encounter with the police dogs, a form of political violence, offsets a

traumatic experience triggered by domestic violence in the context of culture. This description reveals how this short story represents how violence originating from politics spills into the personal relationship of the affected subjects, symbolised by the narrator. In this way, the memorialisation of violence and trauma is confirmed.

The image in the narrator's mind being bitten by a rabid dog after the university student assaults his wife conjures a flashback of the images of Alsatian dogs biting the narrator during the university students' demonstrations against the oppressive Rhodesian government represented in the novella. The narrator writes that his "flashback after being bitten [by Alsatian dogs] during a White right-wing demonstration in which he participates in the company of a white girl, Patricia" (p.74). The short story about the shaggy dogs and Alsatian dogs replicates the images of mongrels that appear in "The Writer's Grain". In another short story titled "Shaggy Dog Story" the narrator retells experiences shortly before the bar closes (p.124). Interwoven narratives characterise these short stories. They also exhibit congested detail but share setting, narrative style and relationships between characters that hint to the space of these stories having progressed logically from the world of *The House of Hunger*. The narrative and thematic unity of the novella and the collection of short stories after the novella is achieved through the narrator's obsession with self-imaging and his fight against losing his political and cultural identity. Self-imaging is the narrator's coping strategy to negotiate the violence entrenched in the political and cultural subtleties represented by the white minority government in Rhodesia and the African nationalist movements across the continent.

Mwesigire (2018:107) contends that "Marechera's endless self-fictionalisations and the doublings or doppelgangers" which are "found in his fiction, evidence a desire to play every part going, a narcissistic desire to be all of the [stories] somehow." *The House of Hunger* reflects that desire, with the narrator negotiating violence through his creation and reconstruction of himself through self-imaging that foregrounds Marechera's narcissistic relationship with writing. Marechera uses the power of narrative and literary representation to expose violence entrenched in political and cultural contexts by recreating characters that physically and mentally explore both physical and psychological forms of violence. The narrator in *The House of Hunger*

searches for an ideal African identity because his original identity has been destroyed by the violent colonial political and cultural system of oppression. The narrator does not find the authentic identity in the house of hunger. Instead, he finds the hero whose identity he is searching for in himself through self-imaging. That self-imaging the narrator engages through writing suggests that his identity is fluid and can only be described in the various contexts of its constant redefinition. Chennells (1999:58) argues that through self-imaging, the narrator "becomes the black hero for whom he searches embodied in some aspects of Edmund's character".

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has investigated the representations of violence primarily as reflected in the struggles the narrator engages with due to the conditions of oppression caused by colonisation. In *The House of Hunger*, the emphasis is on how the individual negotiates violence by re-inventing a fluid self-image depicted through writing. In *The House of Hunger*, the narrator views writing as a vehicle of literary representation that imprints a more authentic individual African identity rather than the conceptions of African nationalist heroes he denounces, as illustrated with an example of the erstwhile celebrated Nkrumah he castigates. The postcolonial state created after the war of liberation remains attached to the Western capitalist economies. The chapter that follows, in critiquing *Harvest of Thorns*, progresses from focusing mainly on the struggle by an individual character, the narrator in *The House of Hunger*, to a struggle of the whole nation of Zimbabweans fighting against the colonial government in the war of liberation.

CHAPTER THREE: *HARVEST OF THORNS*

Liberation war politics and culture: negotiations of war violence

3.1 Introduction

Representations of violence caused by the colonial encounter in *The House of Hunger* analysed in the preceding chapter result in the fragmentation of both the colonised nation and the individuals represented by the narrator. The narrator embodies the fragmentation in his doubling, a recurrent and dominant theme in the short stories after the novella. The narrative in *The House of Hunger* provides the basis for the argument that different forms of violence, within the colonial context of Africa in general and Zimbabwe as reflected in the text, originate in the violent colonial subjugation of the indigenous inhabitants. Chapter three explores the historical background of the war for liberation in Zimbabwe, which is the overarching event underpinning the narrative in *Harvest of Thorns.*

This chapter builds on the previous chapter by focusing on the reflections *Harvest of Thorns* makes on some historical aspects of the war of liberation in Zimbabwe, considering how the themes of political conflict and resistance reveal negotiations of violence. Negotiations to end war violence represent both positive and negative outcomes. The text's portrayal of the positive outcome of negotiations of violence is represented by forming a peaceful, independent state. The negative result of the

negotiations of violence represented in the text is the failure of the nationalist government to deliver the objectives of independence, hence, the state's betrayal of the postcolonial nation. This chapter considers how the concepts of nationalism, cosmopolitanism, and spectral violence can be mobilised to define and describe textual representations of the negotiation of violence.

I will offer a literary analysis, contending that an interdisciplinary strategy, mainly the historicist approach, contributes to unravelling strategies that fiction deploys to negotiate a space in modifying history and reimagining alternative conceptions of the postcolonial nation and state (Flippini, 2017). I will use the intertextual analysis approach to examine how representations of spectral violence in *Harvest of Thorns* constitute negotiations of violence by comparing variations of depictions of violence in the storylines of the selected texts. The analyses and cross-examinations of these fictional representations of different forms of violence clarify the subject of negotiations of violence at the outer margins of critical-literary studies.

3.2 Role of Nehanda in the liberation war: genealogy of violence.

Besides the freedom fighters being the main characters in *Harvest of Thorns*, Nehanda, a spirit medium the colonial agents kill during the Shona uprising against colonisation, plays a vital role in the liberation struggle. Nehanda provides spiritual guidance in the struggle for liberation as her bones are believed to have been resurrected and embodied in the freedom fighters. The spirit character of Nehanda is central in tracing the genealogy of violence in *Harvest of Thorns,* especially in demonstrating how representations of her figure are mythologised. She is accorded a supernatural role to guide and inspire the freedom fighters in battles against the Rhodesian soldiers. The spirit medium, the person through whom Nehanda's spirit speaks and gives guidance, is called svikiro. In one incident, when the svikiro visits the freedom fighters who had arrived in the village to guide them, the narrator describes the foreknowledge the Svikoro has of the freedom fighters' arrival and their need for spiritual guidance with prophetic insight: "Their arrival had been revealed to her" (p.246).

The suggested supernatural connection is confirmed during the divination with the assembled freedom fighters, as "[w]hen the group assembled, the Svikiro, who had finished putting on her headpiece and black cloth, began to burp and hiss, tossing her head from side to side" (p.246). As religion is part of a people's culture, the religious aspect of Nehanda's intervention brings cultural elements into the war of liberation represented in *Harvest of Thorns*. Negotiations of violence are also entrenched in the culture. In this chapter, I have allocated two subsequent sections to explore how Shimmer Chinodya's novel recreates Nehanda's mythical personality. In her supernatural and omnipotent nature, Nehanda inspires the freedom fighters to execute her uncompromising resolution to kill all the white enemies in the liberation struggle this study explores as non-negotiable violence.

This study refers to non-negotiable violence as a reading of acts the perpetrators have resolved to commit and about which they cannot decide to refrain. For example, in some incidents, Nehanda's spirit inspires the guerrilla fighters to kill the enemies, denying space for negotiation. The names of the freedom fighters carry meanings that express the uncompromising resolution to kill. Pasi NemaSellout is a freedom fighter's name that translates into "Down with sell-outs", and "pasi" in Shona metaphorically refers to death and the grave. Baas Die is the other freedom fighter's name with the same elements of a resolution to kill the enemy. "Baas" is the corruption of the word 'boss', which the black African workers used to address their white masters for whom they worked during colonisation. The name, therefore, signals the command to kill the colonial masters. In carrying out that command, these freedom fighters kill Mr J.M.P. Mellecker, the white farmer and Mai Tawanda, the sell-out, without giving them any chance to negotiate a rescinding of their death penalties (p.209). When headman Sachikonye pleads with Baas Die to spare Mai Tawanda the death penalty and give her another chance, Baas Die answers, "There are no second chances in this war" (p.214).

When acts of non-negotiable violence and bloody killings occur at the height of the war in *Harvest of Thorns*, the prospect of a negotiated peace settlement to end the war is unthinkable and unforeseen. The most striking example is the battle on the hills where one of the freedom fighters, Sub Musango, is seen by Baas Die after being

shot, "fold[ed] up and plunge[d] headlong onto a rock" and, in the next moment, "Pasi slammed a fresh magazine into his gun and swept off a camouflaged soldier half-way up the hill" (p.210). Sub Musango and the camouflaged soldier die in the battle on the hills. The battle becomes famous through narration. Narration subjects the truth to negotiation by imagining the battle in the minds of those who hear about it. Those who witness violent spectacles choose to share or refuse to share their experience. There arises the question of whether a traumatic experience can be shared. If trauma can be shared, that sharing process happens through a narration of violence. I will define that narrative technique and explain it in the light of a similar scenario represented in *Half of a Yellow Sun,* described below.

The narration of the event of the battle on the hill makes interesting parallels with representations of narration of negotiable and non-negotiable violence reflected in *Half of a Yellow Sun* where Olanna, an Igbo from the eastern Nigerian province, is caught up in ethnic cleansing massacres of Igbos by Hausa and Yoruba tribes in the north. She survives the massacres after being rescued by Abdulmalik. At first, she refuses to narrate the events of the killings to her relative in the east, an act this study reads as non-negotiable violence because it is not communicated as negotiable through narration. However, she later narrates the events and eventually allows Ugwu, another Biafra War activist for cessation, to document her story in a novel he is writing. When she refuses to relate the traumatic events, the question can be raised if it is possible to share the individual trauma experiences with those to whom it is told. If that is possible, that necessitates the possibility of a collective traumatic experience. The collective traumatic experience is evident in the narration of the battle on the hill in Sachikonye village, where those who witness the battle share the story with those that did not see it by narration.

Negotiation of violence occurs through the people's reimagining of a violent spectacle when it is narrated to them. Similarly, when Olanna eventually tells her people in eastern Nigeria about the killings she witnesses in the north, the imagination of her audience negotiates the traumatic experience of violence by reimagining those spectacles of violence. That reimagining of a violent spectacle that engenders negotiation of violence through narrating a traumatic experience, illustrated in the

narrative of Olanna's experience in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, parallels the narration of the battle of Sachikonye Hills in *Harvest of Thorns*. The people who negotiate violence through narration are those to whom the heroic fights the guerrillas stand against the Rhodesian army are narrated. The battle at the Sachikonye Hills is narrated by those who had seen and experienced it. Negotiation of violence through narration, therefore, is evident in both texts.

I will distinguish between negotiable and non-negotiable forms of violence. Non-negotiable violence includes the representations *Harvest of Thorns* makes of the guerrilla fighters' irresistible desire to kill enemies in a battle. Non-negotiable violence is also represented differently in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, where Olanna refuses to tell her relatives about the carnage she has witnessed in the north. These two perspectives of conceiving negotiations of violence show that these instances manifest in specific contexts of an individual's experience. When the experience of trauma and violence is shared through narration, the collective experience of trauma is subjected to multiple narrative perspectives that forestall the possibility of closure in terms of a definite or singular narrative representation of the truth (Mzali, 2011).

The multiple narrative perspectives are an approach to narrating trauma, evident in the story of the battle on the hills peddled from different viewpoints among members of the Sachikonye village. The narrator says, "Now many stories" were told about the battle on the hills. The narrator's words confirm that truth is subjected to re-imagining of the traumatic event as he says, "[m]any stories, some true, some not true, some highly coloured by the terror and imagination of the people who heard about [it]" (p.212), what happened from those who saw it. The narrator's perspective contrasts with that of the villagers on the one hand and with that of the freedom fighters on the other hand. In the narrative about the battle, the narrator recalls its raging climax as "The hill thundered in blind mushrooms of smoke and fire" (p.212). The narrator describes the image of smoke differently through Pasi NemaSellout's impression when he watches the action of a fellow freedom fighter, Mabhunu Muchapera. Pasi NemaSellout uses different metaphors to describe the smoke of the same battle and Mabhunu Muchapera's action, that he "hung in a thin corridor of air between thick black walls of smoke" (p.211), which is different from the narrator's description of the same

action. Pasi NemaSellout adds that he saw his legs "bunched together and arms stretched out against the hill, like a long-jumper frozen in the middle of a leap" (p.211). Here we encounter an example of how the narration of violence defies a single narrative perspective of the same spectacle. However, all these narrative perspectives contribute to the multiple narrative characteristics of a negotiated narration of violence.

After the war, Benjamin bemoans betrayal of the ideals of the war of liberation, through the negotiation of the Lancaster Peace Agreement to end the war in Rhodesia without restoring wealth to the freedom fighters and the poor people. He laments that they "came back to find the whites could still shout at them because they still [had] the money and we ex-combatants [must] scrounge for jobs" just "like everyone" (p.272). I will highlight how Benjamin's description of the betrayal of some freedom fighters signifies the nation's betrayal. That is represented by the adverse results of negotiations to end the war violence. *Harvest of Thorns* opens with the portrayal of the protagonist, Benjamin Tichafa, protesting that he has fought in the war of liberation and has returned to be rewarded with nothing. The disadvantaged position of the nationalists towards the end of *Harvest of Thorns* foregrounds the subservience of the new Zimbabwean nation's commercial benefits to the diktats of the dominant cosmopolitan monetary imperatives Grotenhuis, (2016). The newly independent nation has not achieved the promises of independence, better jobs and better living conditions. That a black government takes over state power, but the citizens remain poor, marginalised, and denied access to national resources shows that there is a difference between the state and the nation which is the subject I interrogate in the following section.

3.3 State versus the nation: negotiations of violence and cosmopolitanism

According to Grotenhuis (2016:26), the terms "nation" and “state" do not have a single and generally accepted definition. The meaning of these terms remains contested by different strands of scholarship. In this chapter, I will define the “state" and the "nation" in different contexts relevant to examining negotiations of violence in *Harvest of Thorns* and the selected texts. As mentioned above, "state" refers to the government and "nation" refers to the citizens. The state refers to the government controlled by

nationalist politicians, and the nation consists of the citizens. The nationalists are portrayed as negotiating for a state that does not have control over its economy that is left attached to international capitalism. Consequently, I will include some concepts of cosmopolitanism related to international capitalism and explain how some aspects of cosmopolitanism help analyse the outcome of the Lancaster House negotiations. *Harvest of Thorns* represents those negotiations of the violent war of liberation of the state and nation of Zimbabwe.

The term "cosmopolitan" is associated with both positive and negative connotations. The positive connotations are described as "openness, mobility, modernity, and the cosmopolitan individual can be thought of as a modern world citizen who can move easily between languages and cultures" (Sunderland, 2022:69). The negative aspect of the cosmopolitan, Sunderland (2022:69) adds, is conceived as "rootless, dabbling, parasitic, without commitment to any community or place, lacking loyalty to their country". Cosmopolitanism is often mistaken for globalisation, but these concepts are not synonyms. Kwame Anthony Appiah (2017:56) suggests that cosmopolitanism is not only about how individual nations relate to other nations but also puts forward the idea of the "rooted" cosmopolitan, “who can pledge allegiance to their country but remain committed to universal values". *Harvest of Thorns* portrays nationalist aspirations thwarted by capitalists through negotiations of violence after independence, and the state's economy remains owned by multinational companies. Bhabha's definition acknowledges cosmopolitanism that negotiates "between cultures, a work of adaptation most often undertaken by the oppressed" (Sunderland, 2022:69). In this chapter, I will refer to cosmopolitanism defined as a discourse explaining how transnational companies control economies of newly established postcolonial states.

This study incorporates the concept of critical cosmopolitanism as a theoretical and reading approach to critique the selected texts. The critical cosmopolitan approach is distinguished from the broad Eurocentric notions of cosmopolitanism that articulate globalisation as the primary mechanism to which individuals, communities and the nation-state should be attached politically, socially, and economically and postulate a single world culture. Critical cosmopolitanism, instead, "proposes a post-universalistic cosmopolitan order that envisages different kinds of modernity in individual nations

that stimulate social transformation processes that do not postulate a singular world political, social, and cultural order" (Delanty, 2008:123). Critical cosmopolitanism is relevant to this study owing to the representations the narratives of all the selected texts make of the failure of nationalist liberation movements and their postcolonial states to deliver economic independence to the Zimbabwean and Nigerian nations.

During negotiations of the peace process reflected in *Harvest of Thorns*, the Rhodesian and western capitalist representatives negotiate the settlement in favour of the terms that attach the post-independent state of Zimbabwe to the interests of international capital rather than to forms of critical cosmopolitanism that consider stimulating economic and social transformation processes that are not attached to the global capitalist economies. *The House of Hunger*, *Harvest of Thorns*, The *Uncertainty of Hope* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* typify postcolonial Zimbabwean and Nigerian neo-colonial economic dispensations where the two states, represented by the ruling governments, are portrayed as deliberately complying with Western capitalist interests. Zimbabwean and Nigerian governments attach the two countries' economies to western cosmopolitan interests at the expense of the economic welfare of the two respective nations, represented by their economically marginalised citizens in the neo-colonially exploited postcolonial nations. The narrative of all the selected texts in general and *Harvest of Thorns* expose that conflict between the states' ruling governments and the citizens, I contend, is one of the significant causes of violence.

This study examines the concepts of the state and the nation because negotiations of violence in the narratives impact the state and the nation in varying ways. Efforts nationalists make to determine the nation are influenced by cosmopolitan objectives projected by the colonial regimes during the negotiations for peaceful transitions from colonial governments to postcolonial states. Cheah (2006:18) argues that "what is distinctively new about the revival of cosmopolitanism in the 1990s is the attempt to ground the normative critique of nationalism in analyses of contemporary [globalisation] and its effects". Consequently, negotiations of violence portrayed in *Harvest of Thorns* embody the failure of the nationalists' war of liberation to deliver its objectives to bring freedom to the Zimbabwean nation. To use Benjamin's words, when he comes back from the war expecting change and not seeing it, "The worst thing is

to come back and find nothing has changed…I see the same old house, the same old street, and the same old faces, struggling to survive" (p.72). The narrative, therefore, represents the Rhodesian colonial state's economic interests vested in a capitalist system the Rhodesians and Britain succeeded in perpetuating during the negotiations. These capitalist interests promote cosmopolitanism and coincide with the interests of the white minority population in the former colony.

The narrative reflects these antagonistic ideological systems, of the imperialists vying for a neo-colonial state and that of the nationalists that envisage a Zimbabwean socialist nation, contesting to define the state and nation. Their clash causes different forms of violence reflected in various contexts in the narration of the war motif in which the representations of violence occur. The historical origins of political violence in *Harvest of Thorns*, as in *The House of Hunger* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*, originate from the violence of military conquest to which the indigenous Zimbabwean and Nigerian people were subjected by the colonialists where representations of violence abound. The nationalist war of liberation reflected in the narrative of *Harvest of Thorns*, a political reaction of military resistance to colonisation, indicts colonisation as the prime cause of violence. Undoubtedly, the nationalists engage in military violence to attain political objectives and regain cultural, social, and economic freedom.

Terence Ranger (1967), in his book, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia 1896-7*, writes that first insurrections against colonial settlers in 1896-7 happened on a united Shona and Ndebele front against the British colonialists. Kapya John Kaoma (2016:56) notes that Nehanda, together with other Chimurenga leaders such as Chaminuka, Kaguvi and Chief Mapondera, inspired:

> The first nationalist rebellion or Chimurenga, [the] 'supra-tribal' uprising, portrayed by Ranger [was] the result of spiritual commonality and religious leadership, mythologised in later years by, amongst others, Samangan in his novel, *Year of the Uprising*, which offers a historical and mythical tradition of resistance propagated by the nationalists and guerrilla fighters waging the war of liberation (1965-1980), depicted in *Harvest of Thorns*.

Kaoma (2016:24) further argues that "in social movement terms, these individuals were movement intellectuals, who provided the prophetic imagination, and the ideological framework for social revolt". This historical background gives insight into

the representations of political violence in *Harvest of Thorns*. The protagonist in the novel, Benjamin, is a Zimbabwean liberation war guerrilla survivor. The omniscient narrator's life experiences are mainly represented through what he sees and his thoughts soon after returning from the war. He had benefitted nothing from the war regarding his social and economic well-being, as reflected in his mind when he looks around at the places where he attaches his childhood memories before leaving for the war. The narrator says about Benjamin:

> He thought certain areas could completely heal, while some festered on like stubborn wounds and others, like the suburbs on the hill, chose to remain untouched by war. He looked at the faces of sparkling glass, pinewood, and stone, at the marble driveways and blue swimming pools and gleaming cars in half-closed garages, at flawless lawns tended by black garden boys in khaki and black maids still pushing white babies in prams after the war and only months after independence (p.7).

The word "heal" evokes images of wounds inflicted by war's violence, which affects different people differently. In some areas, the colonial afflictions have been wholly healed while others are "festering on". Benjamin's speech quoted above expresses the betrayal and disillusionment. Other economic and social problems Zimbabweans experienced are entirely untouched by the intended healing effect of the negotiated peace settlement the nationalists engaged with the colonial government at Lancaster in Britain. *Harvest of Thorns* portrays the betrayal of the nation by the nationalist revolutionary politicians who fail to deliver the objectives of the war of liberation through negotiations of violence.

3.4 Betrayal of the revolutionary war through negotiations of violence

The title, *Harvest of Thorns*, allegorically compares the failure of the war of liberation to bring economic fruits of freedom to the people of Zimbabwe to the failure of a farmer to reap a good harvest. After the war, the independent government formed by the nationalists failed to provide material benefits, such as land, jobs, and economic freedom for most of the Zimbabweans for whose liberation the war had been waged. The "harvest of thorns" or failure of the war to bring freedom is symbolised by Benjamin's thoughts about the aborted ideals of the war of liberation decided during the negotiations for peace. Benjamin reflects on the war and the failed ideological aspirations of the nationalists' project to dislodge colonial rule and replace it with an

independent Zimbabwean state. The word "harvest", according to Rosemary Moyana, "obviously evokes some vivid images of a bumper yield," which presuppose "hard labour" (1996:47), which is the equivalent of the war effort represented by the title of the text. Moyana emphasises that "it makes [people] anticipate an excellent reward; a lavish feast after the hard work put into the farming stage [and] a thorn, on the other hand, is harmful to imagine or even hint at the fact that somebody could harvest wretchedness" (Moyana, 1996:47) that Benjamin and the people who participated in the war harvested. The symbolic implications of the title, *Harvest of Thorns*, highlight the relevance of literature in expressing, through literary representations, the failed causes of the war of liberation in Zimbabwe.

When Benjamin returns from the war, he reunites with his sister, Esther, who had also eloped from their tyrannical father, who was running the family on overzealous Christian principles. She lives with Dickson outside a customary marriage union between Dickson and her parents. When Benjamin gets drunk in Dickson's company at a local beerhall, he confesses his disillusionment with the outcome of the war of liberation and laments that the "truth of it is that those of us who went out to fight will carry the scars for the rest of our lives. We were heroes during the heat of the war, but now we have been left to lick our wounds" (p.272). In the preceding chapter, I have already examined how violence caused by nationalists and colonialists fighting against each other prompts a fragmented vision of the natator's national and personal identity in *The House of Hunger*. Within the same conversation, Dickson continues to ask Benjamin why ex-combatants do not talk about the war and refers to a case of his cousin who had been in the war for five years and came back to become a captain in the integrated army. When he came back, he would not say a word about his experiences in the war and would not be drawn to talk about it at all. Benjamin's answer to Dickson's query succinctly summarises the broken social vision ex-combatants had harboured as projected for them by the nationalist politicians. This shattered social vision resonates with the narrator's outright dismissal of the nationalist project in *The House of Hunger.* The narrator vilely derides nationalist politicians for disturbing him in his poetry writing business with "a chamberpot of slogans" (p.59). This vision of a hopeless nationalist political endeavour to liberate Rhodesia the narrator in *The House of Hunger* echoes the one Benjamin holds in *Harvest of Thorns*. Benjamin, whose

nome deguerro is Pasi NemaSellout, reveals the same sentiments about the lack of war benefits to the ex-combatants in independent Zimbabwe when he says, "there is nothing to talk about really. When you try "to piece together the broken fragments of your life, it hurts to think back" (p.272).

Harvest of Thorns recreates the post-independence era as a space where negotiations of violence have left disillusioned ex-combatants and the rest of the masses whose lives have not been improved by the country's attainment of independence. Negotiation of violence has both negative and positive ramifications; positive in that the ending of war violence brings peace to the nation and harmful in that the negotiations usher in a new era of neo-colonial exploitation. The Chimurenga war was so gruesome that Charles Mungoshi wrote about it in a collection of poems titled “Some Kinds of Wounds” to highlight that the violence it caused inflicted physiological harm to the black and white people caught up in it. Britain and Canada brokered the peace deal between the nationalist politicians and the colonial settler regime. The freedom fighters used violence to attain independence, but, in the end, the nationalists negotiated with the colonial government. Benjamin tells Dickson that one of the conditions for negotiating peace was that all the freedom fighters were supposed to be locked up in Assembly Points, where he did not want to stay because he distrusted the whole negotiation process. He says he did not like how 'those British and Canadian troops [were] politely bossing us about and those Rhodesians waiting in the wings to shoot us…Dickson, a guerrilla, is only a hero while the war rages" (p.274).

The negotiations take place because the warring parties decide that they should stop the war carnage. The excerpt above shows that Benjamin withdrew from the provisions of the negotiations because the belligerent parties were not treated on equal terms. The Rhodesian soldiers were not confined in Assembly Points as "they were walking freely", while the guerrilla freedom fighters were "herded into points like prisoners of war" (p.274). Benjamin absconds from the assembly points, which is why he does not have "demobilisation" papers that ex-combatants need to be integrated into the independent state's public service labour force. Ironically, Britain and Canada, capitalist states that share the same ideology with the Rhodesians as opposed to communist Russian and Chinese states that supported the Zimbabwean nationalists

in the war, are the countries that determine Benjamin's fate, although he is a freedom fighter. Benjamin leaves school to join the war. After the war, he fails to get demobilisation papers and works at a construction site where a white man fires him on hearing that he is an ex-combatant. Benjamin relates that incident to Dickson, whom he tells that when he went to war, he and all the freedom fighters had thought that their guns could change things overnight but were shocked to come "back to find" that the "whites still shout at them because they still have the money and the ex-combatants have to scrounge for jobs like everyone else" (p.272).

Harvest of Thorns depicts representations of violence that stem primarily from the guerrillas' ruthless executions of enemy targets and civilian sell-outs. The freedom fighters and the peasants who participate in the war effort in different ways believe that the spirit of Nehanda, the spirit medium I have already introduced in the introductory section of this study, comes back to haunt the colonialists. They believe the spirit fights against those who support the white settlers as they are enemies to the freedom fighters waging war to liberate the country from colonialism. At the beginning of this dissertation, I submitted that I should engage an interdisciplinary approach. That approach includes disciplines such as history, psychology, and philosophy, co-opting a wide range of theoretical frameworks and concepts, such as colonial theory, postcolonial theory, and the concepts of metonymy and nationalism. I will also incorporate the concepts of cosmopolitanism and spectral violence to analyse the notion of negotiation of violence. The perception of spectral violence is appropriate to reconfigure how the spirit character of Nehanda contributes to spiralling spates of violence in *Harvest of Thorns*.

3.5 Spectral violence

I will trace the meaning of “spectres” from Marx's (1876) conception of spectres as spirits of the deceased that come back to haunt the living with violence, as Nehanda does. In *The House of Hunger* and *Harvest of Thorns*, the spirit of Nehanda is described as haunting the living in a way that cannot be wished away, or "conjured away", mastered, or "exoticised" but as a spirit that people should come to terms with for its omnipresent and omniscient power over them (Mlambo, 2011:210). The ghost's

return is inevitable, and its power is invincible. In *Harvest of Thorns,* these qualities of the ghost, Nehanda, are grounded in its allusion to a specific violent instance. Nehanda's spirit seeks revenge for having been hanged by the white colonialists. The violent expropriation of land is illustrated in the depictions of the war for liberation in *Harvest of Thorns.* The spirit unleashes violence that represses the victims' narratives, as perceived offenders are not given a platform to defend themselves once they are accused of transgression. In *Harvest of Thorns*, Mellecker, the white farmer killed by the guerrillas at his home and Mai Tawanda, who is killed because she is a sell-out, both have their narratives suppressed as they are not given platforms to defend their positions. As a result, they are unable to mitigate their execution. The spirit of Nehanda's coming back to life, as represented in the narrative of *Harvest of Thorns*, constitutes the concept of the haunting of the living by the ghost; this study illustrates by closely examining the illuminating theory on spectral violence as espoused by Derrida.

Derrida (1994), in *Spectres of Marx*, emphasises how Marx's notion of spectres perseveres in contrast to a "new world disorder" determined to refute them. This reading "of the spectre as the one who has disappeared [but] appears still to be there" (Derrida, 1994:97) describes how Nehanda's spirit comes back after she was executed over a century ago. Haunting, consequently, also becomes a fulcrum for *Harvest of Thorns'* negotiation of alternative histories of the liberation struggle and the approaches the narrative assumes to unravel representations of violence. In describing the phenomenon of how the spirit of the dead returns to life by taking possession of living human beings so that it exacts restitution from its enemies, Derrida (1994:126) states that "a return [of the spirit] to the body" constitutes a certain "paradoxical corporeality". Corporeality denotes to "bodily" or "earthly" being while paradoxical means "contradictory", "inconsistent", or "illogical". The term "paradoxical corporeality", therefore, suggests how the return of Nehanda's spirit into bodily forms of spirit mediums, renders the discourse on spectres irretrievably immersed in the philosophical subject of materialism that is not my intention in this study to delve into in detail.

However, in the context of *Harvest of Thorns'* representations of spectral violence, I construe "paradoxical corporeality" to indicate fundamental conceptual contractions at two levels. At the first level, the paradox lies in that it is inconceivable to contemplate a spiritual being that operates in a bodily form, as in the configuration of the spirit of Nehanda taking possession of the freedom fighters. The experience of a dead person coming to life at the second level is impossible. Nonetheless, it can be inferred that Derrida's (1994) conception of spectres I deploy here implies a return of the ghost, which is Nehanda's spirit, that is not coming at random or aimlessly but one that has specific targets of white colonialists that have inflicted harm or injustice on her and on whom it would be seeking to take revenge.

For that reason, Derrida (1994:68) compares the return of this spectre with the return of the "ghost of Hamlet's father", a character in William Shakespeare's play, *Hamlet*, to foreground the idea that a spectre originates from an unjust deed. Accentuating a reason for the coming back of the ghost of Hamlet's father to a desire to accomplish revenge provides a noteworthy parallel to Nehanda's return to revenge for her execution by the colonial regime during the first Chimurenga Uprising reflected in *Harvest of Thorns*. The successive recurrence of the spectre in the first Chimurenga and the second Chimurenga foreshadows the recurrence of violence in the future, a trend that is evident in the history of colonialism. The postcolonial dispensation reflected in *Harvest of Thorns*, where Benjamin emerges from the war of liberation decrying the inequalities of colonialism that have not been addressed after the war, is as grim as the title suggests, a harvest of thorns. The possibility of violence in the future hangs in the balance. The potential outbreak of civil war in Zimbabwe suggested in *Harvest of Thorns* occurs later in reality and is represented in later Zimbabwean literary writings in which Vera's *Stone Virgins* is one of the most prominently critiqued. The idea of justice implies the prerequisite to acknowledge the existence of the spirit of Nehanda to whom injustice was perpetrated in the first instance, and that calls for restitution. Nehanda's spirit returns to life and assumes bodily functions in the form of freedom fighters fighting to redress past injustices. The spirit of Nehanda, therefore, assumes an obligation, as a subject, to influence the practice of politics and determine how historical events unfold, as reflected in the narrative of *Harvest of Thorns*. Nehanda's influence is evident in the novel's storyline, where her spirit is portrayed as

contributing significantly to the actions of the freedom fighters seeking justice. Haunting, therefore, denotes a connection Nehanda's spirit has with the exercise of restitution, justice, and impartiality.

Hitchcock (1999) views spectrality as an ongoing discourse in philosophy and politics. Peter Hitchcock (1999:164) consolidates the above view by emphasising "the paradoxical nature and double sidedness [of] both flesh and spirit, the ghost". This paradox is explained by "its immaterial being grounded in materiality because its conception materialises in people's lives wherein the spectre is embodied (Hitchcock, 1999:164). Hitchcock (1999:168) further debriefs spectrality to explain its notion concerning materialism and observes that: "[t]his little history of ghosts is not about the agency of the [spectre], but about materialism's accountability to and for [spectres]". Spectres occur in *Harvest of Thorns* embodied in the figure of Nehanda, and parallels can be drawn with what Ranjana Khanna (2003:15), describes of spectres that "[w]hile some spectres may be put to rest permanently through the work of a genealogy of the present, others are endemic to the structure of nation-statehood's colonial inception". However, Hitchcock's conception of spectres (1999:164) suggests that, besides the futility of rendering ghosts inactive, the issue of responsibility arises, which the "unsettled spirit" embodies.

Representations of violence in the narrative of *Harvest of Thorns* reproduce the paradox of spectres illustrated above, with Nehanda's spiritual character taking centre stage in a mythological miracle of her bones coming to life in the flesh of guerrilla fighters who mete out vengeful violence on the white colonial enemies. Although Derrida's concept of spectres is linked to the idea of ghosts that comes from the European tradition, his claim of a spectre that is materially constituted to seek redress of past injustice and accountability is closely related to the representations of haunting symbolised in Nehanda's resurrection to fight her enemies in *Harvest of Thorns*. Moody (2020:68) submits a fascinating definition of spectres, conceiving the spectre's nature as rooted in Marx's contention "that spectre is also, among other things, what one imagines, what one thinks one sees and which one projects on an imaginary screen where there is nothing to see". In another sense, the spectre occurs to the one who believes that the offended spirit of the dead person comes back to take revenge.

That is the same way *Harvest of Thorns* depicts the freedom fighters, and the people of Zimbabwe are moved by the belief that the spirit of Nehanda returns to haunt the colonialists. David Lan (1985:6) correctly identifies Nehanda's prominence among spirit mediums that inspire the war against white settlers in Zimbabwe when he argues that the spectre, as it occurs in the stories portrayed in *Harvest of Thorns*, is conjured by the freedom fighters so that it can give them direction and protection during the war of liberation. I will illustrate that with examples from the narrative *of Harvest of Thorns*. I will cite excerpts that show a bias toward rooting spectres and haunting in a postcolonial context where its representation is significant in the form of Nehanda's spirit.

The idea of spectres is rooted in politics and negotiations of violence. Ahmad (2012) shows that spectres are rooted in politics by explaining how Derrida developed the idea of spectres from Marx. Derrida postulates what he calls the "new theoreticism" (Derrida, 1996:37) that emphasises the emergence and role of spectres in contexts of political violence. Derrida coins the term 'spectropolitics" to describe them, meaning the conception of the relationship between spectres and politics. Derrida's (1996:107) concept of “spectropolitics" suits to describe the manner *Harvest of Thorns* depicts spectres. The dominant source of violence before the war in *Harvest of Thorns* had been the politics of colonialism. When the war for liberation breaks out, that war becomes the primary source of violence. Politics remains at the centre of the conflict, and the liberation struggle becomes the alternative discourse. In this sense, the idea of spectres remains at the centre of negotiations of violence because it is relevant to and affects both the freedom fighter and the white settlers in different ways. As a result, the Rhodesian colonialists' narrative suppresses the recourse nationalists take to the spirit of Nehanda as the nationalist liberation project conjures it to exact accountability from the Rhodesians. I assert that haunting is relevant because Nehanda's spirit directs the guerrilla fighters in their operations, affecting how violent negotiations in the postcolonial nation-state occur. Haunting subsists in the spirit medium's role in aggravating the outbreaks of violence on one level and the ultimate ideal of attaining freedom through violence on another level. Nehanda's spirit is represented as complicit in perpetrating both justified and unjustified interventions of violence, as illustrated in the instance where the killing of the white farmer, Mellecker, and that of

the sell-out, Mai Tawanda. As already mentioned, the two victims of war violence are not accorded trials but are condemned to no lesser punishment than execution.

Nehanda's spirit is conjured into existence by political manipulation to fuel the fighting spirit of the guerrilla freedom fighters. The representation of the aggrieved spirit also refreshes past stories of abuse and violence the ghost's body had suffered while it was still alive. As a result, *Harvest of Thorns* depicts Nehanda's ghost contributing to the escalation of war violence, constituting a text reading that contributes to a negotiated narration of a violent event. The negotiated violence represented through narration occurs in scenes and events that reflect specific contexts of haunting and spectral violence during the war. Spectral violence is defined by the relationship between the spirit medium and the freedom fighters. The narrative portrays the spirit medium, known as a Svikoro, as an elderly female in whose body a male ancestral spirit, Sekuru, comes to life during spells conceived as "possession" of the living by the spirit of the dead (p.248).

The spirit medium, Svikiro, is believed to work and advise the freedom fighters on crucial decisions they take to help them defeat their enemies. If the freedom fighters err in observance of the laws of which the spirit medium is the custodian, it punishes them through a deliberate lapse in the protective powers that exposes them to the dangers posed by their enemies. When one of the freedom fighters, Mabhunu Muchapera, has a sexual encounter with one of the villagers' daughters, the commander, Bass Die, reprimands him because the act is taboo according to the freedom fighters' code of conduct prescribed by the spirit medium. All the freedom fighters know the rules but find themselves involved with girls, as the following excerpt reveals:

> Mabhunu Muchapera shot his head up and said, "Everyone here has been involved."
> "What do you mean?" said Gidi Ishumba.
> "You and Bass Die have girlfriends in the village and…"
> "Did anybody come saying we raped them?" (p.222).

After this incident, the freedom fighters pass through a forest where the Rhodesian soldiers had sprayed poison that kills two freedom fighters, Torai Zvombo and Mabhunu Muchapera, and a Mujibha, a name given to a civilian male guide or war

collaborator. The reader's impression of Mabhunu Muchapera's death is that he has been punished for the rape he committed but which he vehemently denies, arguing that the girl had consented to the act. If death is the punishment from the spirit medium, the case could be the same for Torai Zvombo about whom Gidi Ishumba says, "I have seen Torai Zvombo and Pasi NemaSellout talking to girls too" (p.222).

Although it is plausible to conclude that the two comrades are punished for raping the girls, their case cannot be drawn to explain why the mujibha meets the same fate as that of Mabunu Muchapera; hence, the question of whether he has breached any war code of conduct to deserve punishment by death remains subject to conjecture. While leaving the mujibha's fate to conjecture, the reality stimulated by his death is that war violence indiscriminately claims the lives of both wrongdoers and the innocent people toward whom it is directed. The spirit medium is omniscient and omnipresent because it tells the freedom fighters about how they have lost their compatriots in the battle and the spray without being told about it.

The spirit medium blames the freedom fighters for lacking self-restraint with girls. Acts of misconduct and disobedience cause the unhappiness of the soil and the skies to frown on them. She explicitly tells them that "The soil is not happy, and the skies are frowning" because "[t]here are things you did in the mountains. No, this is not the way, boys and girls who carry guns on their backs must not meet" (p.247). Spirit mediums, therefore, are always portrayed as restoring justice on behalf of the people against rogue freedom fighters acting outside their role in fighting a justified war to defeat the colonial invaders. In *Harvest of Thorns*, colonial injustice is described in a parable by Comrade Baas Die. He tells the people a story about white people who come and settle on the land of an African community, starting as visitors until they displace the landowners by force. The original inhabitants of the fertile land end up occupying the infertile land on the hills, where they yield tiny harvests. When the rains came, "the villagers build granaries for the strangers and brought in the harvest from the field," and "they reaped little from their fields because the stalks of their millet were hard and thin; it was like a harvest of thorns" (p.179). It is from this story that the novel draws its title. The strangers are the white Rhodesian colonialists who have dispossessed the

Shona and Ndebele people of their land in Zimbabwe, thereby creating a political conflict that marks the outbreak of war and the unleashing of violence in the narrative.

The parable reflects on the storyline of *Harvest of Thorns*, set during a period of political conflict, revealing sites of violence inextricably tangled with politics and the unfolding of "history [that] is at the centre of politics in Zimbabwe far more than in any other southern African country" (Ranger, 2005:242). However, Svikiro's intervention provides a cultural dimension to two major politically related causes of the war, land dispossession and oppression of the Zimbabweans by the colonial government illustrated in the parable. The freedom fighters find encouragement, inspiration, and justification for shedding blood from a belief that the Svikiro deems their actions necessary. Nehanda is the historical spirit medium the freedom fighters consult whenever they encounter misfortunes in war or need to take important decisions such as outcomes of planned battles, impending enemy attacks and even verification of sell-outs' complicity or culpability before executing them. Therefore, the freedom fighters negotiate violence by seeking the intervention of the spirit mediums they believe can render their enemies helpless when they attack them.

The narrative on the negotiation of violence through the spirit mediums in Bass Die's story about the strangers who take away the people's land and livestock reveal that the Svikiro even prescribes the method the fighters must use executing the strangers who have settled on and taken their land. Gerald Gaylard (2006:65) explores a conflict in which the nationalists seek to "derive righteousness by conjuring the spirit of national resistance prevalent during the war" resonating with the war for liberation narrative centred on Nehanda in *Harvest of Thorns*. The white settlers indoctrinate the people with a new religion and political ideology that is antagonistic to that of the land's indigenous inhabitants. The settlers seek to erase every aspect of the indigenous people's political, religious, economic, cultural, and social systems and replace them with their equivalent drawn from the Western cultural, economic, and religious values. However, the Svikiro instigates violent retaliation as it instructs the people whose land has been taken to "cut the throats of the strangers' children," assuring them that if they "cut the throats of their children, they will go" (p.56).

The spirit medium's function in the Shona traditional religion is to link the people with Mwari, the Shona name for God. In a sense, Mwari is conceived as the ultimate military strategist to whom the freedom fighters pay allegiance in return for divine guidance and intervention to influence the outcome of battles in their favour through the Svikiro, Nehanda, that intercedes. Elizabeth Schmidt (1991:738) writes that the "evocative name of Nehanda, the Shona spirit medium who participated in the 1896 uprisings, bridges traditional belief and national symbolism". The people believe that Nehanda's spirit medium wields the “power to make rain and war [and] was remembered and celebrated for her [leading] spiritual role in the uprisings” (p.65), a status her reincarnated spirit Chinodya deliberately recreates in the storyline of *Harvest of Thorns*. The importance of Nehanda’s role, consequently, does not rest just on the suggestion that she directs the violence that results in the nation's birth. Instead, the narrative also equally posits that the colonial experience set the precedence for violence. The colonialists created exclusive historical narratives that favour, celebrate, and bring to prominence the white settler population and exclude the voices of the colonised black population (Alden, 2008). Religion is part of a people's culture, and in *Harvest of Thorns*, the narrative on the role of the spirit mediums represents negotiations of violence projected on cultural and religious pedestals. *Harvest of Thorns'* representations of Nehanda as a religious figure believed to have the power to miraculously deliver the white enemies to the Shona freedom fighters for execution contrasts with similar Biblical stories and beliefs. It seems to be a subversion of the biblical narratives of instances where God delivers Israel's enemies for execution before the Kings' regiments in the Book of Kings.

Representations of Nehanda's role in negotiations of violence in *Harvest of Thorns* reveal Nehanda as a national character, while in *The House of Hunger*, the narrator's representations of Nehanda's role reveal her on both the individual and national space. On the individual level, the narrator's psyche is wrestling with a bizarre repertoire of spiritually haunting experiences hinged on his perception of African heroes, of which Nehanda is one. *The House of Hunger* highlights the national context of Nehanda's spiritual significance. The narrator decries the colonial discourse's exclusion of the Shona people's history which celebrates Nehanda's legacy of martyrdom for freedom (p.78). In the same way, *Harvest of Thorns* makes representations of Nehanda centred

on her spiritual haunting of the white settlers involving her effort to liberate the whole nation. *Harvest of Thorns*' placement of the idea of Nehanda's spiritual haunting of the white settlers and intervention in the justice system at play in the prosecution of the war of liberation echoes what Achille Mbembe (2006:14) terms "necropolitics". Necropolitics, coined by Mbembe, denotes the politics of life and death depicted in the colony and postcolony, where violence is practised as a culture during the war of liberation. Mbembe (2006) argues that violence continues in the post-independence state, where the state kills those elements that voice dissent or actively participate in opposition political formations that threaten to take over political power from the nationalist regimes that replace colonial regimes.

The concept of necropolitics is relevant to this study because it incorporates and queries perceptions of colonial supremacy as authority that pursues total control "of the body to create death worlds by reducing populations to the status of living dead" (Mbembe, 2006:40) that reflects the living conditions of Zimbabwean and Nigerian societies represented in the selected texts. Mbembe (2006:14) describes it as practical strategies for maintaining power using tactics that are usually devoid of reason, as the postcolonial regime resorts to a culture of violence to maintain hegemony based on national sovereignty. Mbembe's concept of "necropolitics" helps to analyse how the notion of "intensified violence against the female body" Mbembe (2006:14) and "traumatic ghosts" in "renewed violence". These concepts reflect Nehanda's image, symbol, and role, and the character recreated in both *Harvest of Thorns* and *The House of Hunger*, which is also a female political and religious leader the colonialists execute but comes back to haunt them.

At the beginning of this chapter, I indicated that I would use an interdisciplinary approach to demonstrate that violence is etched in the political and cultural dynamics reflected in the selected texts and, as such, have also focused on literary critiques of representations of Nehanda's spectral figure in the novel. I have also considered what Mzali (2012:166) describes as a "historicist rather than an exclusively discursive approach to spectrality as a crucial aspect of a nation-state". *Harvest of Thorns* projects Nehanda's "spectre " in the fictional representations of both the colonial and postcolonial state and nation in Zimbabwe, with the postcolonial representations

limited to the period just shortly after independence. The distinction between the state and the nation is pertinent in conceiving negotiations of violence.

3.6 Non-negotiable violence

In *Harvest of Thorns*, the negotiation of violence in Baas Die's story about strangers who come to settle on the Zimbabwean people's piece of land reveals that the strangers' resolve to expropriate land is not negotiable (Chinodya, 1989:182). The strangers come down to the village, burn down their huts, destroy their gardens, extend their fields upon the area where the village had been and drive the Africans to go and live in the hills. The strangers bring more of their families and build more houses, forcing the villagers to work for them and make laws to govern them. The new rules they make are that "the villagers' livestock must be counted; the villagers can no longer "hunt without the strangers' permission" (p.182). A decree is instituted that, "No villager can cut a tree, build a house, or marry without the stranger's permission and the mountains, rivers, valleys, animals, birds, flowers, trees, and children are given new names" (p.182).

The strangers take the Svikiro, Nehanda, away and hang her, and the villagers become so afraid that they do not have a shrine anymore, so they become slaves to the strangers. "The children are taught new stories; drums are no longer allowed in the village", and religious observances of the holiness of "the chisi day, a day on which the people are not allowed to work, are banned, and villagers are forced to work" (Chinodya, 1989:182). However, Nehanda, as already noted, promises revenge on her killers and Gelder, Ken and Jane M. Jacobs (1999:188) corroborate that "postcolonial ghosts are traditionally seen to represent the return of the repressed—namely the return of the truth about [colonisation]". As mentioned earlier, when the white colonialists were hanging Nehanda, she said that her bones would rise. That anticipated resurrection is an event on which *Harvest of Thorns* makes an overarching motif through representing her heroic figure of liberation and war violence. From this perception, Nehanda's spiritual figure commands the stature of typical hero and all-conquering ghost that haunts villains. The revenge she exacts on those who wronged her, and her people is neither negotiable nor avoidable.

According to Mlambo (2011:199), the suppressed spirit comes back to seek redress and restoration, just "as the freedom fighters wage the war of liberation to regain their land, political and economic freedom". Baas Die's story about the strangers who take over the people's land is an allegorical representation of the history of colonisation intended to instil political knowledge into the minds of the people. The aim is to make them active participants in their liberation by supporting the just cause of the war to regain the fatherland that had been taken from them by force. The violence to regain their country is not negotiable at the height of the liberation war. This parabolic story is a justification of the nationalist war for liberation, a negotiation of violence that does not seek to end violence but, on the contrary, instigates the masses into participating in committing acts of violence for their liberation. Baas Die stands before them, asking for their support to kill the strangers' descendants.

The narrator explains that Baas Die's story must be paraphrased: "His story must be paraphrased, and the visitors and guests have to be labelled, the presents from the strangers exhibited... the strangers" (p.182) trickery condemned; the tyrannies must be enumerated, grievances solicited from the crowd; the protests must be paralleled with the historical events. Then still, there is the mechanics of the war to explain, the role of the villagers, the sacrifice, the vigilance, and the traitors to warn. I argue that in *Harvest of Thorns*, the spirit of Nehanda, in the context of the war of liberation, "becomes open to manipulation and becomes a carrier of violence" Mzali (2014:183), thus affirming my predominant assertion that sites of violence are etched in the political and cultural beliefs these selected texts depict. So, their reading reflects politics and religion inextricably entangled with the history from which the narratives emerge, in some contexts showing non-negotiable forms of violence, especially in the acts of its execution when victims must be killed, and in other contexts revealing how the narration of violence is negotiated.

According to Mzali (2011:83), “because of the political, spiritual and historical role played by the spirit medium in the 1896 uprisings, Nehanda soon became a national and nationalist figure as a repository of the collective spirit of resistance". Nehanda's stature as a spirit character recreated in *Harvest of Thorns* and *The House of Hunger*

distances her from the white settlers. Because Nehanda belongs to the spirit world, so she is not approachable for negotiations. Hence, I conceive the notion of her spirit as advocating for non-negotiable violence against her enemies. In the text, the enemies are the colonial government and sell-outs symbolised by the white farmer, Mellecker, and sell-out, Mai Tawanda, whose executions are not negotiated because they are not negotiable. However, *Harvest of Thorns* and *The House of Hunger* reveal different methods ghosts use with a commitment to fuel war violence. Nehanda's spirit is depicted coming back from the dead representing Derrida's (1994:68) hint that the instance of a ghost "does not lie simply in its origins" but, notably, in the question of whether it will return or not and where the ghost would go after that. Such perspectives reinforce a reading of the role of Nehanda's influence in the narration of violence that defers closure within a single perspective of interpretation. There is a possibility that even after independence, the spirit of Nehanda can still influence the outbreak of violence in another war that might erupt. The representations of violence, therefore, are entrenched in the everchanging dynamic elements of politics, culture, and religion. Negotiations of violence also become inextricably intertwined in these elements at personal, communal, and national levels in as much as the individual, the community and the nation are called upon to participate in social undertakings that involve conflict and violence, such as wars of liberation represented in different ways in the selected texts.

In *Harvest of Thorns*, the justification of violence, at one level, is depicted as being defined by two polarised archetypal personalities of either the colonialist or the freedom fighter. The freedom fighter calls the colonialist the oppressor that must be killed, and the colonialist calls the freedom fighter the terrorist that must also be killed. A villager who supports the colonialist is labelled a traitor or sell-out by the freedom fighters and must be killed without negotiation. The meaning of negotiation denotes intervention. The above-defined archetypal personalities engage in intervention to negotiate violence in their different capacities also defined in the interpretations. These interpretations depicted in the conflict in *Harvest of Thorns* are the shared ideal vision of freedom fighters on the one hand, in conflict with the views of those that fight to defend the colonial project on the other hand. One character who embodies ideals of colonialism, Harry, in *The House of Hunger*, is an informer. He negotiates violence by

cooperating with the colonial Special Branch police details to ensure his safety from police brutality. Harry gives information on activists for a fee. He passes information about student political activists to the Rhodesian Special Branch. Harry is an outstanding example to compare with Mai Tawanda, the traitor comrades Mbhunu Muchapera and Pasi NemaSellout bash to death with thick sticks in the incident referred to earlier. In killing Mai Tawanda, Baas Die decrees violence as a norm. When given the order to kill by the commander, the freedom fighter has no choice but to negotiate with the commander whether he should perpetrate the act or not. Killing the enemy or perceived enemy agent is not negotiable, and the violent act must be carried out by order. Baas Die gives the order that Mabhunu Muchapera and Pasi NemaSellout must "teach this woman a lesson" and should not "waste your bullets on her" (p.207).

Baas Die commands Mabhunu Muchapera and Pasi NemaSellout not to waste bullets on Mai Tawanda but still teach her a lesson (p.207). Mabhunu Muchapera so maniacally strikes Mai Tawanda's head so badly that Headman Sachikonye pleads with Baas Die to spare her life. Sachikonye claps his hands, crouching down and pleading for them to have mercy on her and spare her life. Baas Die does not look at him; instead, he keeps looking into the fire and declares that there is no mercy for those who sympathise with traitors and that they should rejoice. Baas Die commands all the people at the *pungwe* (secret meeting of the masses with the freedom fighters) to sing, whistle and ululate as Mabhunu Muchapera and Pasi NemaSellout beat Mai Tawanda to death. Once again, the masses have no choice and fear drives them to sing and ululate because Baas Die orders them to do so when he asks, "Is there only one woman who can ululate in this village?" and goes on to say, "you should all be rejoicing, you should all be clapping hands and ululating" (p.207). The freedom fighters force the villagers to celebrate the violence of Mai Tawanda's execution, and its celebration is not negotiable.

The narrator relates how people peddle different stories. Nehanda's spirit directs the comrades to kill Mai Tawanda after discovering that she possesses a radio transmitter she uses to communicate with the Rhodesian soldiers. “The spirit of Mbuya Nehanda came to the leader of the comrades” (p.212) in a dream and said to him, “Muzukuru, I

see a traitor in this village, a woman with long hair and green things on her ears. This woman has a son in the white man's army and is their spy" (p.212). However, "some say no; the comrades saw her flying in a helicopter with the soldiers, showing them where the base was, and they did not shoot the helicopter because they knew she was in it and wanted to punish her in front of everyone" (p.212). Some people say that the comrades caught her in the forest talking to soldiers and others say that two comrades went up to her home and pulled the chiover-over (radio transmitter) out of the grass thatch. Others say that the whole group of comrades went to her house and "dug up baskets of bombs from her granary, while some say that things exploded from her hut and some comrades were killed" (p.213). Some people went on to say that when she was carried to the pungwe where she was beaten, Mai Tawanda was already dead, while "others say that Baas Die forced her to eat every bit of the chiover-over and they started to beat her when she could not swallow the iron horn (antenna) of the chiover-over" (p.213).

Parallel to the narration of trauma by the people who witnessed the spectacle of violence in the battle on the hills in Sachikonye's village to those that had not seen it, the people who witnessed the killing of Mai Tawanda recreate the same event with the same effect of destabilising the truth. This reading of this traumatic representation of violence also authenticates my earlier submissions that multiple narrative perspectives achieve negotiation of violence through the different characters' reimagining of the same traumatic experience. In this incident of Mai Tawanda's execution, the multiple narrative techniques used to describe the same event with different versions vests the omniscient narrator with the authenticity of an accurate description of what happens. These different versions come from the people, not the narrator. These versions come long after the narrator has described how the comrades investigate Mai Tawanda because she has given Torai Zvombo, one of the comrades, poisoned food and helicopters are always on their trail, signs showing that someone in the village, a sell-out, is informing the Rhodesian army about their precise location. Baas Die resolves that they should question her and search her home and Mabunu Muchapera and Shungu Dzangu go to her home, where they discover a chiover-over. Shungu Dzangu says, "It was in the grass thatch of her hut" (p.202). Through the narrator's version, Shungu Dzangu tells us that she confesses that her son, who is in the police force,

gave her the walkie-talkie, which was in the grass thatch of her hut and for being a sell-out, her death is not negotiable.

At this point, cross-reference with *Half of a Yellow Sun* suffices. It is noteworthy in comparison with *Half of a Yellow Sun*'s narration of violence through primary characters, Odenigbo, Olanna, Ugwu, Kainene and Richard, who represent different perspectives deriving from their unique experiences of violence that affects them in their involvement in diverse capacities in the Nigeria-Biafra civil war. These characters embody many narrative alternatives of the war that constitute negotiations of violence that recurs in the postcolonial era after being experienced during the fight against the colonial regimes. The concepts of evocation and the re-embodiment of violence and trauma characterise the two novels.

Both the Zimbabwean and Nigerian nations realised by nationalist liberation movements exhibit inherent contradictions emanating from the relationship between the state and the nation. The contradictions result from the post-independence nationalist governments of the two countries negotiating and consolidating state power at the expense of, if not oblivious to, the respective nations' interests. In *Harvest of Thorns,* the nationalists negotiate power to form a government but the general population, which represents the nation, finds itself as poor as it had been before the war of liberation. The narrative in *Half of a Yellow Sun* portrays the government fuelling ethnic-based conflicts that cause the outbreak of the Nigeria-Biafra war. This case reflects the state as insensitive to the plight of the minority Igbo, a manifestation of economic, cultural, and political conflict.

The selected texts' political and cultural aspects of the societies represented are critical in defining contexts of conflict and violence. The main characters are preoccupied with political aspirations that lead them into violent war experiences to establish the states of Zimbabwe and Biafra in *Harvest of Thorns* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*, respectively. Negotiations of violence can be read and analysed within the scope of their conception entrenched in the colonial and postcolonial contexts, which provide the conflict that drives the narratives of the texts.

3.7. Conclusion

In conclusion, *Harvest of Thorns* reflects narratives that negotiate different ways and ideas of retelling the nation's history, culture and politics that represent different voices differently in the narration of violence. In chapter four, I will examine how *The Uncertainty of Hope* represents negotiations of violence. *The Uncertainty of Hope* is the first of two novels by female writers that I have included in this dissertation to investigate the representations of negotiations of violence from a feminine perspective. The other one is *Half of a Yellow Sun*, on which chapter five is based. *The Uncertainty of Hope* exposes mainly forms of violence caused by men because of patriarchy. The text presents the themes of politically motivated state-orchestrated violence directed at women protagonists, Onai, Katy, Patience and Ruva, among others. These women are represented as subjected to abuse and violence by men who are influenced by patriarchal practices, colonialism and Shona traditional beliefs entrenched in their culture.

CHAPTER FOUR: *THE UNCERTAINTY OF HOPE*

Violence entrenched in politics, state dictatorship, and patriarchy.

4.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to unravel representations of violence in Valerie Tagwira's *The Uncertainty of Hope*, arguing that literary representations of violence in this novel are etched in the political and cultural dynamics recreated through the narration of violence I read as the negotiations of violence. *The Uncertainty of Hope* represents women's political, cultural, and socio-economic concerns articulated by a female voice. Hence, Tagwira fulfils "[t]he needs to create texts that will mirror the experiences of the female subject from their perspectives [which] is thus an important feminist project" (Murray, 2011:154). I will deploy postcolonial theory, relevant strands of feminist theories, resilience theory and concepts of resistance and negotiation to explore how *The Uncertainty of Hope* represents negotiations of violence emanating mainly from politics and culture. In *The Uncertainty of Hope*, negotiations of violence are embedded in the political power structures and patriarchal practices depicted in the novel. I will consider how these depictions of negotiations of violence in this text compare with reflections of those I have identified and analysed in *The House of Hunger* and *Harvest of Thorns* in chapters one and two, respectively. I will also refer to instances of violence depicted in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, which I will focus on in chapter five, to enrich a comprehensive inter-textual examination of negotiations of violence across the corpus of the selected texts.

4.2 Women's resilience: Negotiating political and patriarchal violence

I find the appropriation of resilience theory helpful to complement the feminist discourse to critique Onai's experience of violence in *The Uncertainty of Hope.* The police and military assault her in the streets, where she sells fruits, sweets, and vegetables to get money for her children's education and food. The resilience theory is appropriate to describe representations of her experience of violence. *The*

Uncertainty of Hope depicts women struggling to survive during economic hardships. Betts, T., Hintz, E. A. and Buzzanell, P. M. (2022:223) describe resilience theory by “examining how individuals construct anticipatory resilience through narratives of disruptive life events" (Betts, Hintz and Buzanell, 2022:224). This definition of resilience theory makes it suitable to use to examine negotiations of violence represented in the text comparing Bett’s view with views of other scholars. Chitando (2019:112) describes representations of Onai’s experience of violence in *The Uncertainty of Hope* as symbolising the "status of women in Zimbabwe [that] has been compromised by the coming together of various patriarchies". That includes Shona people's beliefs that women are inferior to men. It is a "coming together of patriarchies" (Chitando, 2019:113) because the colonial economy is depicted as preferring to employ men for jobs and not women. The author's creation of a husband character, Gari, employed in the industries, demonstrates how the colonial labour system prefers to employ men before women on the labour market.

This discriminatory tendency reinforces the novel's depiction of women's struggle to assail economic and social hardships. The hardships and violence are caused by repressive state machinery inherited from the white colonial system by the black post-independence state that uses the police and military forces to control the nation violently. The resilience and feminist theories, therefore, underpin the argument that the novel reflects different forms of violence emanating from underlying forces of state politics as well as influenced by cultural belief systems. The resilience theory is mainly used in psychology (Stafford, 2020). This theory is part of the conceptual framework of my reading of negotiations of violence in *The Uncertainty of Hope*. The concepts of resistance, accountability and trauma are inseparable, considering their relevance to *Half of a Yellow Sun* that this study considers in the closing chapter of this dissertation. The main characters in the novel, Onai, John, Katy, Emily, and Faith, are more than victims of violence as they do not experience it as passive targets. They resist the political and cultural systems through different responses they offer to different forms of violence. Onai, the protagonist, is physically abused by her husband, Gari, and finds herself among Harare's impoverished and marginalised members. She battles the economic hardships caused by the Government sponsored chaotic and bloody invasions of commercial farms belonging to white farmers.

Analysing descriptions of negotiations of violence in *The Uncertainty of Hope* through resilience theory entails focusing on depictions of mainly the people's survival methods. John's and Katy's families illegally sell foreign currency. Onai and her children sell groceries in the streets in defiance of municipal by-laws, for which soldiers and police forces assault them. They fight against government agents of violence almost daily to feed their children at home and send them to school and university. I consider using the ‘‘resilience theory [because it] offers a new lens" (Gloria, 2020:42) through which the discussion of the negotiations of violence progresses. Gloria (2020:43) stresses that the resilience theory "adds to the current discourse of how resilient late-life older adults [utilise] personal agency and goal direction to sustain daily living at home proactively," which suits the description of the endeavours of women in *The Uncertainty of Hope.*

The endurance of these characters justifies the selection of this theory to narrate ways in which they negotiate violence. Resilience theory relates to the concept of resistance fundamentally since both terms presuppose antagonism, conflict, and struggle depicted "oscillating between resistance and resilience" (Niamh Gaynor, 2020:75). These ideas are crucial to the concept of negotiation because negotiation occurs where there are conflicting positions in social, cultural, economic, and political power relations. Resistance and resilience in this novel relate to the depiction of the characters' survival approach that helps them to navigate their options in negotiations of the violence. They negotiate violence that emanates from politics in the context of government institutions such as the police and military. *The Uncertainty of Hope* represents how female characters become resilient in enduring forms of violence from cultural institutions such as marriages in which women are treated brutally through patriarchal forms.

Resilience theory incorporates determination strategies one employs “to survive in the [face of adversity, the subjectivity that [springs] in a people to [transcend hardship] and [overcome] the challenges in their enormity and excesses” (Betts, Hintz and Buzanell, 2022:223). Onai, Katy, and John exhibit these qualities. This study demonstrates that by underscoring how they succeed “in feeding their families and sending their children

to school” (p.86) and university. They achieve that despite the inhibitive levels of violence, they negotiate through ingenious and adaptive social and economic manoeuvres. They engaged in illegal foreign currency trading and outlawed vending under highly harsh economic conditions worsened by violent and brutal soldiers and a corrupt police system. The corrupt police system is epitomised by inspector Nzou whose unscrupulous dealings with John I will focus on later. For Egeland, Carlson, and Sroufe (1993:523), resilience is "the capacity for successful adaptation, positive functioning or competence ...despite high-risk, chronic stress, or following prolonged or severe trauma". Resilience, therefore, emphasises the people's strengths through exploring the coping strategies that those people adopt rather than emphasising their vulnerability.

Onai negotiates violence by enduring the abusive marriage to Gari, managing through menaces fraught with life-threatening risks, such as aids and police and military killings. She ultimately becomes a positively positioned parent situated in an enabling socio-economic space after she assails the adverse economic and political environment that can no longer hinder her progress. The novel ends when she has progressed in her life and that of her children, being securely self-sustained by the proceeds of her dressmaking business profession she runs in the upmarket and low-density suburb of Borrowdale. That echoes what Fennie Mudzi, Paul Svongoro and Josephat Mutangadura (2021:104) submit that women's empowerment against patriarchy is achieved through "education and entrepreneurial skills" that make them 'self-sufficient so that they can leave abusive relationships and provide for their wellbeing".

The text portrays forms of violence emanating from the Government's arms of dictatorship, the military, and the police, as well as patriarchal forms of violence stemming from Shona cultural prescriptions that subordinate women to men in the family control power hierarchy. The narrative depicts patriarchy personified in Gari's abuse of his wife, Onai. An interesting parallel progress from the colonially induced subservience of women to men following the establishment of working conditions that disenfranchise and financially disempower women, rendering them economically dormant while promoting male-dominated labour tendencies. Oliver Nyambi (2014:42)

argues that “the prevailing economic marginalisation of women in Zimbabwe can be interpreted from various vantage points”. Nyambi (2014:43) traces “gender-based economic inequalities to the social, economic, and political formations shaped by colonialism in the late eighteenth century”.

Tagwira recreates Onai’s character, whose experiences at the hands of her husband in the family context constitute a narration of patriarchal and gender-based violence this dissertation considers as a negotiation of violence. *The Uncertainty of Hope* depicts Onai battling to feed the family alone while her husband, Gari, goes to work but does not bring his salary to support the family. Instead of buying food and clothes for Onai and their three children, Ruvarashe, Farai and Rita, Gari spends his salary with prostitutes, after which he comes home and assaults Onai. In the first scene, when Gari assaults Onai, her ordeal evokes her friends' sympathy, and the reaction one anticipates from her is to report the assault case to the police so that Gari can be held accountable for his actions.

When she goes to the hospital, instead of pressing charges of assault against her husband at the local police station, Onai lies to Emily, the young women's rights activist doctor. She lies that she has been hurt after bumping into the door while blindly groping for her way in the dark during a power cut due to Harare city council's load-shedding measures to save electricity. Onai does not want to get Gari arrested to protect her marriage. If Gari is arrested, instead of helping matters, her marriage would be irretrievably lost to a vicious cycle of domestic violence or divorce. She firmly believes that "a woman's worth is dependent on one man, her husband and in her whole extended family, no one had ever had a divorce and 'she did not want to be the first" (p.46*)*. That Onai tells the doctor her implausible story that she has fumbled and bumped into a door in the dark is Tagwira’s technique to implicate the dynamics of patriarchy as the site of violence and this approach is discernible through a reading approach I designate as negotiation of violence.

In the context of Onai’s relationship with Gari, she negotiates domestic violence by choosing to protect Gari and avoiding the option of reporting him to the police. Emily is a young doctor who is aware of the problems doctors and health care specialists

face when confronted with cases of domestic violence that married women experience, resulting in the women incurring severe bodily and psychological injuries. Emily tries to persuade Onai to report to the police and end her abuse by telling her the following:

> In casualty, we see many women brought in with assault injuries. A good number have repeated admissions with injuries just like yours. I”m disappointed that so many women appear to be in denial when we could help them (p.45).

Onai is obstinate to Emily's insistence that her friend had told her that she is married to an obnoxious husband from whose spates of domestic violence she requires professional help to be extricated, as Faith had told her. Instead of listening to the advice, Onai fortifies her lies to Emily and declares: "I am not in a violent marriage. I have a loving husband, and I do not need any help from you. Why are you telling me all this? It has nothing to do with me" (p.45).

Onai’s obstinacy mirrors the enduring nature of patriarchal beliefs. She asks herself whether it is because "of a fear of the unknown, a fear of what Gari might do to her or fear that admission suggested failure" (p.45). She ultimately ponders whether she is obstinate simply because the doctor seems so self-assured or that “it is against all her instincts to submit to a woman so young” (p.45). The young doctor’s progressive professionalism provides an alternative narrative discourse of negotiation of violence through the mediation of Onai’s patriarchal position at odds with feminist objectives to free her from domestic violence by reporting her husband to the police. Emily says to Onai, "But whoever is doing this to you should be reported to the police" (p.45). However, so etched in patriarchy is the violence Onai bears that it is sad her obstinate instincts, representative of patriarchy, ironically make her an irrational advocate for a system that damages both her physical and psychological wellbeing.

Onai is forced to conceal her abusive marriage, fearing being stigmatised for a failed marriage, and she hides her abusive marriage “from her victimised self, more than anyone” (Muchemwa, 2010:15). This fear is revealed through her conversations with Katy, Faith, and Emily after Gari assaulted her. Muchemwa (2010:15) notes that “each of the subplots focusing on these fringe characters”, such as Emily, shows that these “reveal their personal experiences, as shaped by their professions and their perceptions [of Onai's marriage to Gari, to analyse the] roots of Onai's problems and

to imagine possible [ways to help her". Emily, for instance, is depicted as a representational character that embodies the ideal of independence of women obtaining from the security women can derive from a professional job. Emily's insight into problems of gender-based violence, "as a medical doctor and an active member of the feminist [organisation called Kushinga] Women's Project, Emily goes beyond her mandate, which is to cure physiological illnesses, by seeking to combat and eliminate the "disease" of gender-based violence" (Muchemwa, 2010:15).

According to Mary Kolawole (2004:6), Emily's part in *The Uncertainty of Hope's* "grand feminist" scheme embodies "the professionally empowered and independent woman that Onai, during the time of her victimhood, must become to take full charge of her life and her future". Emily is, therefore, 'the source of what Mary Kolawole (2004:6) calls the "wake up and wake someone else effect [that is further described] as a manifestation of the new wave of consciousness" women should cultivate among themselves through feminist-oriented campaigns and organisations. By contrasting patriarchy, as one of the many beliefs springing from Shona cultural institutions, such as marriage in which violence is entrenched, with the modern progressive professionalism fighting violence, Tagwira's novel challenges the accuracy of sweeping statements such as that colonialism reinforces patriarchal beliefs. On the contrary, colonial education has produced professional doctors and lawyers, represented by Emily and Faith, respectively. They tackle patriarchy and advocate for women's liberation from repressive cultural institutions.

The Uncertainty of Hope sets the stage for professionals that challenge patriarchy and advocate for women's liberation. These are products of the colonial and postcolonial education systems depicted as potential sources for a solution to domestic violence. They are portrayed in contrast with the Zimbabwean Republic Police, a vestige of colonial power structures in which violence is entrenched. *The Uncertainty of Hope* negotiates a narration of violence that rebuffs overarching claims that violence is overtly etched in colonial power structures since the colonial education system provides a potential source of a solution to violence. The colonial education system has produced the scientific knowledge to combat violence and the same power structures, such as the police force, also have the potential to combat patriarchal forms

of violence. The view that not all contexts of colonialism and the postcolonial state's economy promote patriarchy and its forms of violence among the colonised families does not elide an argument that indicts its complicity in inculcating its oppressive tendencies in men's attitudes towards women in the family context. This view requires a brief historical reference to the development of male-dominated tendencies in the labour market with the advent of the capitalist economy and its modes of production.

Before colonisation, the Zimbabwean society practised subsistence farming. After colonisation, the subjugated indigenous population, especially males, was conscripted to work in farms, stores, mines, and local government structures where they were paid wages. Gari is a stereotype of this postcolonial male worker Nyambi (2014:46) describes as a product of the “shift in the native society's forms of production; from small-scale communal subsistence farming to paid labour that increased the males'' controlling stake over their female counterparts”. Gari's relentless wife-battering results from his assumed superiority complex over Onai. Wife-battering is a patriarchal tendency like the colonial masters' treatment of the natives who, historically, were subjected to different forms of violence, such as forced taxation, forced labour, floggings and imprisonment for failing to pay tax.

The colonial system dehumanises colonised subjects through subjugation. Colonial violence contrasts with Gari's malevolence toward Onai and their children. This pervasive violence Gari inflicts pon the family at home presents a cause-and-effect correlation on a national and family level. Gari extends colonial violence to his family resulting in two systems of social control that function by violence. The colonial administrative system represented in *The Uncertainty of Hope* uses political and economic power structures that reinforce patriarchal forms of domination functioning by violence. Gari assaults Onai and her friend, Katy, advises her to leave the marriage, but she refuses. Emily mentions several other women who come to the hospital injured by their husbands, and most of them opt not to have their husbands arrested.

The text poses the question of whether the violence individuals suffer can be represented as a collective experience for all women, symbolised by the feminist activists Emily and Faith. These two women even join a mass demonstration stage by

women to demand the fulfilment of their rights in the city of Harare. The police arrest them for political activism, and are rescued by Emily's brother, Tom. He pays an admission of guilt fine for them apiece. The portrayal of Emily's and Faith's militant march against the violation of women's rights shows their determination. However, how they are assaulted and arrested by the Riot Police reveals the enormity of force the police use to inflict violence on women, curtailing the women's movement in physical and legal terms. Gender-based violence depicted in the selected texts reveals that “violence is pervasive” and shows that it originates from cultural contexts described as "structural gender oppression" (Murray, 2016:15), indicating patriarchy as its prime source. The brutal suppression of the women's movement echoes the view that "rather than regarding violence against women as aberrations, societal structures of gender oppression cause violence against women” (Murray, 2016:15).

The novel depicts two marriages juxtaposed to reflect on each other. Gari's and Onai's marriage is plagued by domestic violence and contrasts with Katy's and John's marriage which resembles the ideal, rewarding, respectful and fulfilling marriage. Onai mourns her turbulent marriage to Gari and envies her friend, Katy, whom she thinks: "How lucky [Katy] was to have a husband who loved her …a husband who seemed to be faithful, and who lusted after her earnestly as if they were still newly-weds" (p.70). Gari's belief that the husband possesses his wife in the same way one possesses what one has bought because the husband has paid the bride price (*marooro)* for the wife reflects unwarranted justification of male chauvinism in the marriage contract where the male partner's perceptions of the value of marriage are informed by patriarchy.

Male chauvinism influences Gari to ill-treat Onai, assaulting her physically and emotionally without seeing anything wrong with what he does to her. Gari defines his position in the family based on his masculinity and the fact that he goes to work, although, as already noted, he does not bring the money home to feed the family. He wields just a gender-based authority as the man in the house and has nothing else to show for his self-esteemed superiority over Onai. When Onai takes charge of the responsibility to feed the family because Gari is failing to do so, that erodes the basis Gari claims for his authority. The children quickly adapt to the call to contribute to fending for themselves by helping their mother to sell vegetables at the market. They

bring income to survive, thus negotiating patriarchy and evading barriers, such as physiological forms of violence and malnutrition caused by Gari's negligence and loathsome drunken behaviour at home.

Economic hardships were rife during the post-2000 crisis in Zimbabwe, which exposed women to gender-based violence. In representations of women's struggle in *The Uncertainty of Hope*, they meet different forms of violence with equally pragmatic cultural adaptations that suit the mitigation of new risks in the changing Zimbabwean economic landscape. Katy, for example, understands that her husband, John, a truck driver who travels to other countries, may be tempted to sleep with other women. Hence, she packs condoms for him in his bag when she prepares what he needs, which the narration betrays authorial intrusion into the narrator's description of what went on in Katy's mind.

> Any other woman would have told her that her mind was unhinged, and she was sanctioning infidelity. She chose not to see it that way. These were not times when one could rely on naive assumptions and sit back complacently. One always had to be on guard. Out of her own volition, this was her way of protecting what she held close to her heart (p.245).

Cultural values are inverted as Katy concedes to the reality of the risk of her husband contracting HIV and passing it on to her and packs condoms for him to use during his extended stay away from home. The economic catastrophe in their midst pushes her husband into a situation threatening their health. Her husband gets a job demanding that he travels long distances to other countries to earn an income, yet this has its associated dangers; consequently, the situation both find themselves in requires some form of "pragmatic morality" (Kangira and Mlambo, 2015:55), or cultural transformation. The resilience theory helps to interpret Katy's pragmatic decision in the context of the negotiation of the health hazards the economic melt-down ushers. People face different challenges, and the coping strategies that this study interprets as negotiation need to be equally relevant. Just as the case is with Onai, Katy makes it in the journey of her life in *The Uncertainty of Hope*. When the novel ends, she is about to be reunited with her husband after going for an HIV test at the New Start testing unit, where she tests negative, making her healthy in the physiological, economic, emotional, and cultural spheres of her life.

4.3 Feminist negotiations of gender violence

The Uncertainty of Hope represents the two professionals playing roles of agency, whereby they expose the redemptive options Onai must take without forcing them on her. I argue that such an interventionist strategy or approach presents the victim of abuse with a chance to own the navigation or negotiation of her choice to deliver herself from violence. In the final analysis, she would have also been partly responsible for enabling her emancipation. Onai must take care of the children when there are food shortages, not only in Harare but also in the country undergoing one of the wildest eras of recession in African history. Bread, cooking oil and sugar packs, and soap boxes cost prices that range from thousands to millions of Zimbabwean dollars and raw materials for these commodities are imported from other countries.

As already noted, it is on the backdrop of this post-farm invasions economic dispensation that *The Uncertainty of Hope* is set. This is a period of strife and hardships for the poor people living in the high-density suburbs. At the supermarket, there are very long queues Onai and her three daughters have to join. Each of them must buy a different grocery item because there is a rationing of grocery sales to ensure that one person does not buy everything. In one incident at the supermarket, Onai notices that her daughter does not stop smiling when she reaches the front end of the long queue where the shop attendant stands with forbidding and slightly superior air. Inflation has hit the economy so hard that "Rita had proudly received a two-kilogramme bag of refined sugar and a loaf of bread in exchange for two-hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars" (p.112).

This family must save what they get to survive. Although there is a celebration in the house for having two kilogrammes of sugar, they know that it may be very long before they get another bag of sugar. Onai says,

> "Let's make this packet last for at least two months", and they should only put one teaspoon of sugar per cup, and no one is allowed more than one cup at a time. Of the three daughters, Onai notices that Ruva is aggressive, which makes Onai happy because, as a woman, such a quality would take her far in a society that, in Onai's opinion, was unfairly dominated by men. (p.113).

The Uncertainty of Hope paints a grim picture of Onai's and her daughters' lives to blame for their suffering on Gari, who neglects them. The reader sympathises with

Onai for her painful experience and the thought that her children have lived without sugar, bread, or tea for a very long time. They have been drinking black tea without sugar and maise-meal porridge with salt and no sugar. In my opinion, Tagwira makes Onai's enterprising daughters vigilant in their effort to help their mother and, in a way, fend for themselves, to foreground a feminist project that proposes self-sustaining women. It is not surprising that Ruva is endowed with domineering and aggressive qualities that women need to inculcate and nurture in young girls to equip them for the battle against the patriarchal-induced male domination of women in the familial and workplace space. Schechter (2018) submits that Tagiwira's novel represents women's struggles demanding that patriarchal systems should be transformed because they violate women's freedom compared to that of men.

If Gari's negligence is considered a violation of the children's rights to responsible paternity, *The Uncertainty of Hope* deliberately negotiates the narration of violence in different ways. In this case, Gari's negligence of his family's needs can be interpreted as a violation of children's rights to basic needs, for food and clothing, which constitutes a form of violence. This violation is elaborately represented through characterisation. Gari's deplorable character symbolises the appalling facets of patriarchy against which Onai struggles in the text. Lene Bull Christiansen (2013:514) adds that "Tagwira's subversion of patriarchy's absolutism and its use of systematic violence as a gender, familial and societal hegemonic tool is highlighted by the depiction of Gari as posing a health threat, not only to himself but even more so to Onai and the children". Tagwira purposefully recreates a compromised image of paternity in Gari and counterbalances his negligence with John's catering for the family's needs as the father. Onai and her children are depicted as negotiating violence in the family context. Their situation compares with depictions of the collective experience of negotiations of violence, represented by the Kushinga Women's Rights Project, to which Emily and Faith refer Onai for assistance so that she can fit into their anticipated images of liberated women in their feminist projections. This approach flows in tandem with the view that "negotiation tends to be associated with the individual as a transactional interaction process whereby individuals in an intercultural situation attempt to assert, define, modify, challenge, and support their own and others' desired self-images" (Ting-Toomey, 2005:90).

By encouraging Onai to submit to counselling and reporting Gari to the police, Emily, Katy and Faith support "their own and others' desired self-images" through negotiation of violence that is reflected mainly in patriarchy, a cultural site of violence in the novel.

December Green (1999:320) posits that radical feminists emphasise addressing issues about:

> Group interests through which patriarchy simultaneously excludes women from political and economic power while it works to destroy women's consciousness of their potential power as women. Patriarchy is produced and reproduced by acts of gender-specific violence committed within the family and rationalised as being in the group's interest.

The idea of addressing issues affecting women's interests from group's perspective is revealed in *The Uncertainty of Hope* through the depiction of Vamusara's character, Onai's mother, who insists that Onai should stay in the abusive marriage. Vamusara encourages Onai to endure Gari's abuse because she has also undergone the same ordeal and stayed with her abusive husband. Because she is a victim of patriarchal abuse, she justifies its perpetration on her daughter. Hence it is rationalised to be in the group's interest and produced and "reproduced by acts of gender-specific violence" Green (1999:320). Green (1999:320) further argues that "the family is the institution most central to patriarchy because it indoctrinates males and females through psychosocial conditioning and [socialisation] into gender [roles]". The narrative highlights the harsh effects patriarchy has on Onai's life by depicting injurious domestic violence that forces her to seek medical attention at the hospital, the threat of Aids infection and perennial harassment for insisting on using condoms during sex. Her insistence on her right over her body earns her more beatings by Gari. Hence, violence is entrenched in the cultural fabric of the Shona traditional beliefs vis-à-vis paternalistic prescriptions of male domination over their wives in the familial hierarchy.

Muthoni Wanyeki's (2004) notions on patriarchy enlighten perceptions on the role Onai plays, within the confines of her destructive relationship with Gari, to negotiate both physical and psychological violence and emerge unscathed by HIV. She emerges from that marriage transformed and asserts herself in a new role as a professional dressmaker enabling her to live an independent life. VaMusara's "notions of marriage

and a women's place in the familial power hierarchy is not only an acceptance of patriarchal oppression, [connoted] by the victimhood of both the mother and her daughter, but perhaps more importantly, an acceptance of the dangers, especially of HIV/AIDS, that Onai and her generation of women [face]" Wanyeki's (2004:95). Onai risks "the dangers of the notion of staying for the sake of the children" negotiates violence inflicted on her for taking risks. (p.7*)*. Gari turns out to be progressively unruly and sexually reckless and presents a genuine risk to her and their children's lives. However, she still endures an abusive marriage, a clear indication that *The Uncertainty of Hope* depicts gender violence etched in the cultural prescriptions manifested in patriarchal tolerance and "justification" embodied in VaMusara's advice to Onai that she should tolerate the abuse for marriage's sake.

Tendai Mangena (2017:56) describes the novel as "a feminist text that portrays female victimhood in the context of a failing postcolonial state" and gives political, and social hardships centred on a female protagonist's experience. Onai's struggle with her children shows resistance and determination. It endows her a heroine stature for succeeding in resisting Gari's ruinous insistence on having unprotected sex and coming off an Aids test negative after Gari's death. Two women are infected with HIV after sexual encounters with Gari. Onai's struggle to remain virtuous is rewarded with a successful life. In contrast, Shiela, who is promiscuous, is rewarded with death while Onai achieves self-actualisation through her struggle during the Murambasvina Operation and the hardships of patriarchal oppression. Sheila fails to resist the temptation to earn easy money through promiscuous relationships with men who have money and dies from Aids. She fails to militate and negotiate the vulnerable circumstances in which women find themselves entrapped by economic hardships that force them into prostitution. Shiela had to negotiate the hardships, take charge of herself, and practice agency to fight off promiscuity and prostitution as income-generating activities. Negotiation entails some form of resistance to promote self-interest instead of a common good that is reached as a consensus after deliberation. According to Derrida (2002:13), in negotiation, "there is always something a little dirty, [and] that gets one's hands dirty" because one must intervene and complicate oneself in a struggle from which the objective is to fight to preserve one's integrity as Onai accomplishes—not losing one's integrity, as Gloria and Sheila lose their lives.

4.4 Negotiating violence embedded in postcolonial power structures

The text reflects the main characters driving the novel's main plot, Onai, Gari and the children, grappling with the problem of food shortages. The most conspicuous secondary characters steering the narrative of the subplot, Katy and John, are engrossed in money-making deals on and off the black market. The state's machinery stands in the way of accessing essential commodities. They must resist the unwieldy socio-economic conditions it creates, hence, the need to foster stern resistance to the stifling economic environment. These characters strive to adopt different survival strategies, eventually having to resort to violence to open possibilities of eking out a living through selling in an informal sector threatened by bureaucratic trade monopoly. I interpret that as a negotiation of violence in reading the literary representations of the characters' struggle in *The Uncertainty of Hope*. The Government uses the police to demolish the market stalls where the people sell their vegetables, sweets, and other items to survive. The police are a postcolonial power structure that victimises, arrests and confiscate people's goods instead of protecting them. Maya, a rumour-mongering woman who always provides a lighter dimension to the grim narrative of the struggle of these people for survival, describes her love for running battles with the police to the crowd of market stall owners at a meeting to decide on what to do with the police that wants to close their business, "I love running battles with the police, and I will never forget the thrill of overturning a police car in the 1998 food riots! I can assure you; it was great fun. You just must make sure that you don't get killed!" (p.132).

After she says these words, the narrator says a mood of hilarity takes over. As if empowered by the idea of challenging uniformed authority, excitement spreads among them. Engaging in "a bit of violence was suddenly quite appealing and filled the restless crowd with ripples of unruly excitement that they had found a perfect outlet for their perennial anger and frustration with the police" (p.132). This incident shows that resistance is geared towards achieving a beneficial result in the end. Negotiation of violence and its success in the lives of the characters portrayed in this novel hinge on the outcome of the characters' positions after engaging in resistance to promote their self-interest. When these stall owners finally engaged in running battles with the police,

"the local government authorities decided to allocate new stalls where they would sell their wares [but are] billed to pay monthly rates to the city council" (p.138).

The description of violence is given through Mawaya, the madman who roams the streets of Mbare undertaking a Shona traditional ritual, *kutanda botso*, because there is something that he has done wrong for which, through penitence, he hopes the ancestral spirits will atone and restore him to the privileges of the mainstream society. Mawaya is drinking water at a profusely reeking public toilet when the police and the crowd clash. He hears the loud wail of the police siren, covers his face, and runs to escape the pandemonium through barricaded roads. The ground is a sea of burst, broken, and crushed fruit as the riot police details appear from the other side of the shopping centre, driving the crowd that throws stones and fruits to retaliate with police batons and tear gas canisters. Mawaya abhorred the violence of “any form and wanted to get as far as possible" (p.134). Maya finally breaks free from the spate of violence. She recalls the last time in 1998 when he narrowly escaped being run over by a car following police's indiscriminate firing of rubber bullets at rioters in the city centre.

The description of violence originates from the conflict between the police and the people of Mbare, who own market stalls. The police promote an ideological position of the Government to fight the informal trading sector that is not paying rent to the council, thereby incurring a loss of revenue to the state. By providing designated stalls where the owners pay rent to the council, the state stands to benefit. Negotiating the state's position and that of the impoverished market owners comes through violence. As this study maintains, the police, being a state organ, is a political power structure the state manipulates to further an economic cause by generating state revenue.

The people negotiate violence through resistance expressed by engaging in this violent confrontation with the police, a state power structure. The state's ideological position to generate revenue contrasts with the individual characters' self-interest in the novel narrates. Onai, John and Katy fight to achieve payment of fees for the children to attend school and university. John ends up engaging in criminal activities that compromise his initial position at the early stages of the novel, where he is seen, in my opinion, arguably as the epitome of an ideal husband. He is caring and thrives

to fulfil his family's needs, unlike Gari, who is negligent and represents the ugly face of patriarchy. John and Katy fight to keep their daughter in university and complete the construction of their house in Mabelreign, while Onai and her daughters fight to have food, school fees and books. Tom, Elizabeth's boyfriend, belongs to the upper class that has corruptly benefitted from the commercial farm invasions through political connections that patronise the country's ruling political party. The governing party promulgates political and economic policies beset by grave contradictions and rhetoric. While the state publicly denounces capitalist economic inclinations, Tom, representing the elite, privately "takes a business trip to London to export his horticultural products" (p.188). Tom's position is an example of corrupt state patronage. When the riot police beat Emily and Faith during the Kushinga Women's Project demonstration, he sarcastically reacts to their ordeal. He pays for their admission of guilt fines exuding the "I-told-you-so" (p.186) air Emily castigates as a paternalistic gesture for which she blames squarely on all men, a reaction obtained from the novel's overarching feminist standpoint.

Considering Tom's business interests, *The Uncertainty of Hope* depicts the narration of violence and negotiation within familial, societal, national, and global contexts. The text exposes negotiations of violence deriving from the dynamics of political and economic power relations at play. Resistance results from different forms of conflict between and among individuals, social groups, and the nation. Violence shapes and typifies those contexts of conflict wherein the individual characters' negotiations of violence either in antagonistic or patronising positions in their struggle for survival. Tom and Nzou, a corrupt police officer I have mentioned already who buys foreign currency from John and Katy, are patrons of the state. Onai, John and Katy are the victims of the economic crisis and are depicted manoeuvring their survival strategies against the legal prescriptions of the state's power structures. John unlawfully deals in foreign currency and human trafficking while Onai and her children sell in the streets against municipal by-laws.

Considering the police's role that negates the ideals of a state, Hardt and Negri (2009:96) suggest that citizens are "likely to assume a common antinationalist or post-nationalist position and reinvent alternative narratives of resistance and freedom"

under such circumstances. *The Uncertainty of Hope* depicts a nation-state representative of a flawed system imposed on postcolonial populations and functions through violence to uphold dictatorship. The text portrays the Zimbabwean Government as using violence to invade white commercial farmers. The Government has also forcibly taken over multinational companies to adopt indigenisation and nationalising economic policies. As a state, the Zimbabwean Government's resistance stance against the Western capitalist monopoly of the economy is to protect the economic interests of the state against exploitation by Western capitalist countries. While the text circumvents direct political statements concerning the literary representations of Government, some snippets of characters' conversations shed insight into undercurrents of the political climate at play in their social space.

The disastrous impact of farm invasions is revealed through a conversation between Faith, daughter to Onai's friend, Katy, and her boyfriend's sister, Melody. Her boyfriend, Tom, has purchased a farm that belonged to Mr Johnson, who was murdered during the farm invasions. Melody absolves her brother, Tom, of any wrong-doing in that matter regarding his acquisition of the farm as she tells Faith that: "When Mr Johnson was murdered, Tom was in the process of making final payments on the farm…the sale had been agreed between them for some time" and that "after the farmer's death, his property appeared on the list of farms that had been repossessed by the government" (p.204*)*. Faith argues with Tom, decrying the disastrous impact of the farm invasions and demolitions of unplanned backyard rooms and shacks during a police and military operation code-named Operation Murambatsvina that leaves many families homeless. It is clear from Tom's averments that he represents middle-class interests shared by the African nationalist ruling class. He justifies the ex-combatants' invasion of white farmers' commercial farms, with the support of the Government, and the demolishing of the shacks during operation Murambasvina arguing that "It is the pattern of history my dear, and whenever social changes are effected to improve society, there is always someone who suffers" (p. 204).

Although Tom acknowledges that the Operation Murambatsvina has destroyed many people's livelihoods and resulted in other people's deaths, its benefits outweigh the losses it has incurred. He argues that point telling Faith that, "[I]n the end, whole

communities do gain the benefits. Think of wars of liberation, Faith…people died, people suffer…but in the end" (p. 204) people benefit. Tom's politically motivated, middle class and nationalist government-oriented perceptions of the economic and social problems are questionable. The farm invasions and the destruction of poor people's backyard homes as necessary steps that, "in the end", benefit whole communities is not represented in *The Uncertainty of Hope* as what happens. Such middle-class perceptions of a positive outcome from the farm invasions and Operation Murambatsvina are negated by the narrative's grim picture of violence, poverty and suffering people experience and deaths that befall others after these two events. The destruction of people's shacks in Mbare, the high-density residential suburb where Onai and Katy live, drives a woman to commit “suicide by taking rat poison when her tuck-shop and her shack were demolished within a few hours of each other [because] no home and no means to look after her six children, life had ceased to hold any meaning", (p.156*).* Another “woman's bloated body was also found floating in a ditch overflowing with raw sewage and [nobody] knew how she had died, and those who knew her said she might have died of grief because she too had lost virtually everything" (p.156).

Although some of the victims have their shacks demolished, they defiantly rebuild makeshift structures for shelter at Tsiga Grounds, an open space where “Families continue to map out new territory in open space as more and more people had their homes destroyed”, (p.156). The fact that the people map new territory confirms their resilience and ability to negotiate the calamitous circumstances created by the impact of the violence unleashed by institutions of power run by a dictatorial government on one level. On another level, destroying their shacks results in the replication of the conflict, proving that the problem of homelessness cannot be resolved by destroying the shacks but rather by providing decent housing facilities to the homeless.

Onai survives these turbulent times by negotiating the adversity she confronts through sheer resilience and assistance from her friend's family. John drives long-distance trucks and raises money for university fees for their child, Faith, by selling foreign currency, mainly the rand he gets when he travels to South Africa. He agrees to help his wife's friend, Onai. This couple helps Onai look after her children when her

husband, Gari, repeatedly beats her, deserts them, and goes to live with prostitutes. To save themselves from starvation, Onai and her children sell sweets, cigarettes, vegetables, and other commodities on the open market, where the police and the army occasionally arrest them. Government power structures unleash violence as "riot police swooped down on the camp at dawn and round the wretched vagrants …bundled them into army trucks with whatever of their few belongings that had survived the demolition and theft" (p.156). The images of violence caused inflicted on the poor citizens by the police are captured in the description that their "newly constructed makeshift homes were razed to the ground in a scene poignantly reminiscent to the initial demolitions" (p.156).

The characters in *The Uncertainty of Hope* portray survival instincts I have briefly sketched above. Mlambo (2011:200) describes resilience as “the capacity for strategically absorbing disturbance and challenges" and for "coping with the complex uncertainties in life to survive and move beyond survival." These characters both change because of the political and economic crises they experience. They survive through ingenuity and novelty in the crippled Zimbabwean economy of the era of the post-farm invasion *The Uncertainty of Hope* depicts. Kangira, Nhemachena, and Mlambo (2019:49) write that though the resilience theory has been positioned in social sciences, it is in its nascent stage in literary criticism, wherein this study considers it to critique mainly *The Uncertainty of Hope*. However, following Maurice Taonezvi Vambe’s decrying of the “poverty of literary theory” in Zimbabwean literature studies, Nyambi (2014:24) concurs with Kangira and Nelson Mlambo (2015:55) that "all these blossoming theories should be deployed in the explication of Zimbabwean literary studies."

When Tom discloses to Faith that he owns a commercial farm, she registers her displeasure with the prospect of him having acquired the farm through the Government's programme of violent and bloody farm invasions that had taken place and had been hailed as infamous by some people and yet celebrated by others. As far as the farm invasions are concerned, there seems to have been no room for negotiation as the occupation of those farms was violent and white farmers who did not leave the land were killed. In comparison, Pheng Cheah (2003:126) argues that

“the idea of negotiation is often defined as an attempt to seek a compromise between two pre-established positions”. In *The uncertainty of Hope*, the government power structures appear predisposed to violent methods of suppressing dissenting voices. The police always use guns, batons, and tear gas canisters to wreak havoc on civilians and do not avail of any platform for negotiation in the whole narrative.

Terrence Turner (2003:50) submits that “while states have salvaged their position by acting as mediators between the global economic system and the internal economy of the state, they have been [unhinged] from the nation”. They have been unhinged in the sense that the global economic system's interests negate the interests and welfare of the citizens represented in the internal economic system. The Zimbabwean Government, reflected in the *Uncertainty of Hope*, has engaged in a militaristic policy to invade western-owned multinational companies and land properties. The Government has cut ties with the global economic system, causing the country's economy to fail. However, from Turner's (2003:50) standpoint argued above, whether the Zimbabwean Government had not resisted imperialism or not, Onai, John, Katy, and the struggling inhabitants of Mbare would have been adversely affected. *The Uncertainty of Hope* does not represent anything positive from the postcolonial Zimbabwean state.

The narrative broadly condemns the state's power structures for inflicting the suffering most characters experience because they function by violence. The potential for a positively progressing state is held back by corruption, greed and patronage symbolised by the upper class and high-ranking government officials. These are represented by characters such as the police inspector Nzou whose greed for wealth is so much of an obsession that makes him believe in the superstitious money-making powers of *Tsikamutanda* driving him to go for wealth acquisition miracles" (p.203). Despite the instrumental role of violence, the nation-state has used to ward off imperialistic expansion, Krishnaswamy (2008:10) argues that the postcolonial nation-state can now act as a "protection against imperialism". The state uses the exact state security mechanisms to thwart internal dissent and maintain the newly established status quo. That scenario is represented in *The Uncertainty of Hope*, where the

postcolonial state wages an agrarian revolution in defiance of the Western global forces of imperialism and any of the citizens who oppose the farm invasions.

When Faith expresses her distaste for the farm invasions, Tom warns her that she should “watch what… [she] say[s] or else she might end up in trouble with the authorities” (p.203). That form of consciousness among people to identify as a nation is explored nearly exhaustively in *Half of a Yellow Sun.* The text, which I will investigate in the next chapter, depicts the Igbo in the Eastern province of Nigeria waging the Biafra War to create their nation guided by a strong belief that being of the Igbo tribe, they were marginalised by the Nigerian federal Government. The central Nigerian state economically ostracises the Igbo because they belong to a different tribe from that of the leaders, mainly Yoruba and Hausa, that come from the northern province and are the government leaders.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I analysed *The Uncertainty of Hope* to demonstrate how violence is negotiated in the text. I used postcolonial and feminist theoretical lenses to locate the causes of the violence. From that analysis, it emerged that violence pervades the political and cultural spaces represented in the novel. According to Mlambo and Chitando (2015), the feminist aspect of *The Uncertainty of Hope* is highlighted by how the novel profiles an array of female characters struggling to survive in society dominated by men and controlled by a repressive and violent system of government. Gwekwerere (2018) describes how the Zimbabwean post-independence government uses political power structures to unleash different forms of violence on these female characters, who are portrayed as either evading, coping with, or confronting the police with violence as a way of negotiating violence. Chapter Five, which comes next, also engages mainly postcolonial and feminist theoretical frameworks, and emphasises the concepts of resistance and narration of trauma to consider how *Half of a Yellow Sun* represents negotiations of violence.

CHAPTER FIVE: *HALF OF A YELLOW SUN*

Entrenched in ethnic identities: Negotiations of war violence

5.1 Introduction

Research on negotiations of violence focusing on the limits of narrating individual and collective trauma in current African literature studies is abundant. As the case is with *The House of Hunger, Harvest of Thorns* and *The Uncertainty of Hope*, the novel also represents violence negotiations through the different characters' responses to political and cultural forms of violence. As already mentioned, negotiations of violence occur when characters represented in the selected texts react to violence. Representations of the different characters' reactions to different forms of violence in *The House of Hunger*, *Harvest of Thorns*, *The Uncertainty of Hope* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* have taken different forms. The different ways of reacting to violence these characters reflect, such as when they endure violent experiences, react passively to violence, resist violence, evade violent confrontation, or confront violence by military means constitute negotiations of violence. This chapter presents political forms of violence represented in the Biafra war. The theme of war violence takes centre stage as has been the case in the analysis of *Harvest of Thorns*. *Half of A Yellow Sun* and *Harvest of Thorns* are texts that represent war violence among the selected texts. *Harvest of Thorns* represents the war of liberation in Zimbabwe and *Half of a Yellow Sun* portrays the Biafra civil war. Politics and culture are the main causes of violence in the novels.

The narration of violence and trauma caused by the Biafra War portrayed in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is centred on genocide perpetrated by the Hausa and Yoruba killing all the people of Igbo ethnic origins living in northern Nigeria, forcing them to flee to Eastern Nigeria. Olanna, who is an Igbo, escapes execution and flees back to Eastern Nigeria. When she returns home, she initially refuses to share her traumatic experience but later agrees. Anyadike observes that Olanna's perspicacity to “realise that her experience does not belong to her alone but should be represented in the book Ugwu writes enables the possibility of collective trauma being shared via its representability in novel writing” (Anyadike, 2008:139). Once again, *Half of a Yellow Sun* negotiates the limits of narrating collective trauma, a subject I will explore further to explain the concepts of individual and collective trauma.

According to Alan Cheuse (2007:124), Adichie writes about Biafra because "narrating Biafra takes the form of a responsibility to resist the silence imposed on [the] history". The novel exposes the Igbo ethnic group in the eastern region of Nigeria being excluded from national development programmes implemented by the successive Yoruba-dominated military and federal governments biased towards developing the northern parts of Nigeria. The novel represents the Igbo ethnic population inhabiting the eastern parts of Nigeria fighting for cessation of Biafra, and they are defeated. The text depicts their representation in the ensuing narrative of national history suppressed because they are a defeated minority. This chapter argues that *Half of a Yellow Sun* documents how the cultural, economic, educational, and political spheres of Igbos’ lives in Eastern Nigeria are muted. That part of Nigeria is excluded from a development trajectory by the central Nigerian government because of ethnic segregation. Susan Strehle (2011:650) supports this point of view by saying that Eastern Nigeria “is stifled by the federal government, mainly because of segregation on the grounds of different political and cultural identities among the Nigerians.” In the novel, the Igbo fight the Nigeria-Biafra war to rid their region of oppression. Another spell of repression follows in the wake of a succession of military governments that impose silence on the history of Biafra. *Half of a Yellow Sun* breaks.

5.2 Political and cultural identities: Origins of Violence

According to Mzali (2011:37), *Half of a Yellow Sun "*represents both the emergence of the "third generation" of Nigerian novelists and the "Renaissance of Biafra" in literature". The first generation of Nigerian novelists refers to classical novelists. Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka are prominent examples of this class of writers. They wrote the first Nigerian African literature novels in English, depicting the early encounter of Africans with colonialism. The second generation of Nigerian writers, according to Cheuse (2007), includes those writers who emerged before and soon after Nigeria's independence from British colonialism that attached to novel writing a nationalist vision of creating an ideal African state on precepts symbolised in the form of a novel as an allegorical representation of a state. Strehle (2011:653) writes that Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* documents "the inevitable failure of the nation created by British Colonialism and grounded in the Western myth of the nation as those born (*natio*) in a single family of those born to a homogeneous clan". This observation reflects novel writing in the context of articulating issues that are relevant to the historical realities of the Nigerian nation.

Nwakanma (2008) views the task of authoring a novel as equal to the task of building a nation. Imre Szeman (2004:67) holds the same view as other prominent African novelists, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi Wa Thiongo and Ayi Kwei Armah. In their novels, *Anthills in the Savana*, *Devil on The Cross,* and *Two Thousand Seasons*, they share themes of failure of the postcolonial governments to bring development to the state because of corruption, greed, nepotism, and ethnic conflict in the political administration of Nigeria, Kenya, and Ghana, respectively. Authoring stories that expose the government's shortcomings, therefore, ignite awareness of the need to address social ills among the state's political leaders and citizens, thus rendering the task of nation-building in the art of novel writing. These prominent African novelists rearticulate the political, social, economic, and cultural lives of the nations of their origin. This approach to writing novels is what Adichie does in *Half of a Yellow Sun* after realising the need for representation of Biafra. Nwakanma (2008) concurs that novelists have yet to write about the civil war as extensively as anticipated. The time considered is from when it occurred to when writing *Half of a Yellow Sun* can be the main reason Adichie decided to author a novel with a storyline based on the Biafra Civil war.

Szeman (2004:262) argues that the novel, as a genre, is considered as having been assigned a new role by intellectuals to inform good governance in a state and maintains that the "insistence on this genre rather than literature, in general, is not incidental and evokes the earlier assumption that the nation (and nation building) constitutes the postcolonial novel's main object and project". Novelists use fictional representation to expose the instability the Nigeria-Biafra war brought to the nation. Adesanmi and Dunton (2005) portray the emergence of repressive military governments, which they make their reference points to negotiate and start re-historicising and putting Nigeria in a new postcolonial context. The British used in colonial administration shaped the colonial context. The "divide and rule" policy the British colonial government practices promoted ethnic, political, and cultural identities among the powerful Nigerian tribes and fuelled ethnic hostilities among them. The author portrays the University lecturers mobilising a military front against the federal government on ethnic grounds. This literary representation of ethnic conflict reveals the enduring colonial tactics to foment ethnic conflict among the indigenous people to maintain a stranglehold on them. The lecturers' main argument is that the Federal Government oppressed the inhabitants of Eastern Nigeria, the Igbo, because the leaders in government, the Hausa, and Yoruba from northern Nigeria, do not belong to their Igbo ethnic group. This chapter gives a brief historical background that casts light on the context in which I will situate the violence *in Half of a Yellow Sun.* The text reflects the origins of violence etched in political and cultural identities that fuel the conflict among Nigerians.

According to Hebert Ekwe Ekwe (2006), the British colonial administration created Nigeria from three northern and western provinces, considered ahead of smaller tribes in other parts of Nigeria. Ekwe (2006) further claims that although these three regions were influential in the state's political administration favoured the Northern Province over the eastern and western provinces in decision-making development matters. That allowed the Northerners to exploit the Nigerian oil-rich reserves at the expense of the other Nigerian regions. That creates relationships fraught with ethnic enmity among the different regions and forestalls the possibility of these tribes uniting against the colonial administration. A clear understanding of the violence of the Biafra civil war

Half of a Yellow Sun depicts stems from examining the political nature of the conflict among the Nigerian ethnic groups in the context of the country's colonial historical background. According to Ajayi (1992), before the independence of Nigeria, the British, through a federal administration of the country in the nineteen-fifties, encouraged conflict among the different regions so they could not unite against the colonial system. The British system of indirect rule masterminded the Northern Region's supremacy (Ajayi, 1992). As a result, the Yoruba ethnic group perpetuated its stranglehold on political, economic, and cultural supremacy engrained in its ethnic identity. Nigerian citizens became entitled to positions of privilege or exclusion from it based on the regional and ethnic side of the division to which they belonged.

The colonial system ensured that it maintained a steady exploitation of oil-rich regions by forging the supremacy of the Northers ahead of all the other tribes in the South and the East. The post-independence Nigerian state inherits a federal government fraught with ethnic, political, and economic conflicts that caused the civil war depicted in *Half of a Yellow Sun.* During the outbreak of the Biafra war in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the Northerners maintained a throttlehold on power. They executed the Igbo in the east to the proportions of genocide. I maintain that the origins of political divisions in Nigeria are rooted in the colonial government's political system of administration that hatched the ploy to fuel conflict among Nigerian tribes. Indirect rule succeeded in keeping them apart by promoting the wealthy northern tribe's cultural and political dominion over other tribes. That kept the Nigerians hoodwinked and unconscious of the advantages of cultural and political unity among their different ethnic groups. I argue that the advantage of the unity of the diverse ethnic divisions could have enabled them to work towards the formation of democratic political systems rather than foment outbreaks of violence following the military coups and dictatorships depicted as ruining peace in *Half of a Yellow Sun.*

It is the colonial systems' political agenda to set the Northerners, the Westerners, and the Yoruba in confrontation with the Igbo in the eastern region of Nigeria, as portrayed at war in *Half of Yellow Sun*. That is why the state promotes disunity among the Nigerian tribal groupings and inspires inequality among the tribes so that they cannot unite against the colonial state as a common adversary. Whereas the federal

government endeavours to advance its "northernization" programme, the military coup the generals execute forestalls an impending "Igbo coup" aimed at disenfranchising and imperilling groups of other ethnic origins (Harneit-Sievers, 1998:58). *Half of a Yellow Sun* portrays general dislike and political commotion that gives prominence to widespread massacres targeting Igbos and Eastern Nigerian subgroups residing in northern cities, including Lagos.

5.3 Negotiating accountability: Resorting to violence to create Biafra.

The countercoup in July, nineteen-sixty-six, triggered the violence and "Richard was surprised when he heard the announcement that the federal government had declared a police action to bring the rebels to order" (P.174). Although thousands of Igbos are killed in the north, the Federal government does not do anything to stop the killings, creating a deliberate lapse in government security that appals the Igbo rebels. The Igbo rebels erect to forestall infiltration of Biafra by Federal Government forces. When Richard, Kainene's boyfriend, tries to cross the roadblock into Igbo territory on his way from the north to Nsukka University, an Igbo rebel militant tells him, "It is you white people who allowed Gowon's [government soldiers] to kill innocent women and children" (p.76).

The grievances of the Igbo people in the east are legitimate, mainly because members of their ethnic group are executed in Lagos and some of the towns and cities in the north. The fact that the federal government ignored their plight infuriates the Igbo, who have resolved "that [n]othing is going to clear up; this war will drag on for years" (p.76). Biafrans thought Ojukwu had also been planning for a war with the federal government if it would not accept their declaration of Biafra as an independent state as "[t]hey thought Ojukwu had arms piled up somewhere, given the way he's been talking, "No power in Black Africa can defeat us!" (p.76). As the Biafrans had anticipated, no sooner did Chukwuemeka Ojukwu declare Biafra an independent republic than the federal government launched a military onslaught on Biafra.

The onslaught on Biafra ignited the civil war that, according to Falola Toyin and Matthew Heaton's (2008:158) historical submission on the details "was fought for three years in which about three million Igbo lives were lost". The text portrays ethnic and

cultural differences determining the political identities of the Nigerians into two armed camps that fight for political power. Political power vests the ruling ethnic group with the authority to control the state's economy in their favour. Just as the Hausa tribes currently control the economy through the Federal government, the Igbo declare the independence of Biafra so that they can control their state's economy. *Half of a Yellow Sun* depicts Kainene, a Biafran, financing the war as a form of investment in the war, as she relates in her conversation with Ujukwu to Richard, “It’s oil…[h]e suggested I donate some foreign exchange to the war cabinet so that when this [war] ends I’ll get any contract I bid for" (p.76).

The literary documentation of the civil war in *Half of a Yellow Sun* highlights deep-seated ethnic differences as prominent among the leading causes of the conflict. Olanna goes to stay with her relatives who stay in northern Nigeria and, being an Igbo from the east, finds herself out of place and identifies with the Easterners living in the north. During the same visit to the north, Olanna goes to "a gathering of Igbo citizens infuriated by the northerners' resolution to exclude Igbo kids from schools in the north" (p.238). If the Igbo children are banned from northern schools, the service delivery system is being reflected as politicised, and the segregation against the Igbo children is based on undesirable political, ethnic, and cultural identity among the northerners.

War violence is caused by the clash of belligerents, the Nigerian Federal state, and the Biafra state. Both warring parties perpetrate violence that causes the death and suffering of people whom the state should protect. *Half of a Yellow Sun* represents the Igbo ethnic group justifying cessation, arguing that the federal government fails to protect the Igbo population who are killed in the northern cities. In the reconfiguration of the negotiation of violence, the responsibility and accountability for the outbreak of violence rest on the government. The government assigns soldiers to kill the Igbo people and that contributes to the outbreak of the civil war.

5.4` Negotiating accountability and reconciliation

Among the significant preoccupations of *Half of a Yellow Sun*, through its central themes, the text also constitutes a response to Biafra's history of civil war violence through literary representation. *Half of a Yellow Sun* seeks to renegotiate existing

Nigeria, as a country, through different characters' perspectives of the causes of violence etched in political and ethnic conflict. The novel, through the primary character creations of Olanna, Ojukwu, Odenigbo, Ugwu, Richard, Kainene and others, whose role in the Biafra war I shall explain in detail later, does not give a projected narrative of the civil war, nor simply denounces war atrocities. Instead, the novel represents a series of contexts within which the different characters negotiate different spaces as they respond to the outbreak of violence and when the civil war affects them.

From a historical point of view, Falola and Heaton (2008:178) maintain that the involved worldwide engrossment protracted the fighting and made it intricate, averting prospects of stopping the massacres. The colonial administrations reflected in the novels cause political and cultural forms of violence. The texts depict the culture of violence in politics inherited by the nationalist governments in the post-independence era of the Zimbabwean and Nigerian nations. The narrator in *Half of a Yellow Sun* states that the preceding series of exterminations had happened because of ethnic divisions the colonial administration fuelled. As already noted in the section on political and cultural identities, these massacres occurred because of the entrapping nature of Indirect Rule the British had engrained in the colonial administrative system that ensured dissension among the Nigerian groups by supporting and promoting one ethnic group, the Yoruba northerners, against the other ethnic groups in the western and eastern provinces. Adichie identifies the origins of ethnic violence in *Half of a Yellow Sun* through “a book in a book” (p.160) written by Richard, a white British journalist. Richard writes a manuscript in which he identifies the origins of violence as “[I]t has been caused, simply, by the informal divide-and-rule policies of the British colonial exercise”, clarifying that “[t]hese policies manipulated the differences between the tribes and ensured that unity would not exist, thereby making the easy governance of such a large country practicable” (p.162).

The novel is unequivocal in its portrayal of Biafra as a nation as soon as the narrative introduces the outbreak of the civil war. Olanna describes Ojukwu, the military mastermind of the cessation of Biafra, as *His Excellence*, the ultimate leader of the Biafra state who starts running public campaigns to put Biafra on the map as a nation

that the Nigerian Federal government must grant autonomy. Whether Ojukwu will be an accountable leader for Biafra is a subject Adichie dramatizes in a conversation in which the twin sisters, Kainene and Olanna, disagree about Ojukwu being a good leader of the state or not. Kainene expresses her distrust for "Ojukwu's ambitions" (p.229) and suggests that they should eliminate Ujukwu as soon as Biafra attains independence.

Half of a Yellow Sun, through negotiation of Biafra's national leadership and examination of its accountability, does not seek unity in the different characters' perceptions about what the state of Biafra should constitute in terms of its leadership. Olanna represents an idealised vision of Biafra led by His Excellence, Ojukwu, and saviour and that perception clashes with Kainene's cynical and suspicious opinion about Ojukwu's leadership. Although there is a rumour that Ojukwu escaped before his surrender, the narrator says about Olanna that she passionately believes that His Excellency's flight was going to be successful, and "he would return with documentary evidence confirming the endorsement of Biafra as a free state" (p.511). Although these twin sisters disagreed about Ojukwu's leadership of Biafra after its establishment, they all supported the cause of the Igbo to create an independent nation. Although Olanna reflects affectionately on "His Excellency" (p.393) being a triumphant saviour of the Igbo and the state of Biafra, Kainene's sceptical aloofness permits her to lodge an indefatigable pursuit for the liberation of Biafra despite deep-rooted mistrust of Ojukwu's determination.

The question of accountability for the outbreak of the Biafra war and its course is crucial. Whom to blame for the outbreak of the civil war has answers as varied as the perceptions of the different characters belonging to the two groups of the warring parties on the one hand and the views of subjects from the countries that either support Biafra or the Nigerian federal government on the other hand. From the narrator's viewpoint in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the fear of ethnic cleansing is imminent amongst the people of Biafra, considering proliferating insurrections resulting in persistent food shortages worsened by the blockade. Ojukwu uses the state of unrest to launch his propaganda machinery, discrediting the federal government and, at the same time, bolstering Biafra's case for cessation (p.75). According to Herbert Ekwe Ekwe

(2006:58), all the events in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, starting from the exterminations the text portrays occurring in the north to “the slaughtering of the Igbo in the eastern parts of Nigeria, reflect well-orchestrated genocide by the state of Nigeria” having a bearing on the liberation struggles underway in southern Africa.

The narrative also implicates South Africa’s government participation by the apartheid regime attempting to “undercut postcolonial African states to buttress its ideology of white supremacy” (p.89). The narrator decries “the South African government’s strategy to harbour guerrilla fighters making military infiltrations in Zimbabwe to weaken their struggle against the colonial government” (p.89). The standpoint supported by deductions inferable from the narrative, that the state of Biafra had no alternative for protection and freedom besides through cessation, this study argues, makes the novel a project where the author's objective is to negotiate and generate a new image of Biafra in a postcolonial perspective that seeks to reintroduce Biafra in the literary landscape. This new image of Biafra can best be understood if this study considers the image into which Biafra is projected by Nigerian literature on the civil war in general before submitting the re-articulations of Biafra *Half of a Yellow Sun* proposes.

When the Nigeria-Biafra war ended, a wave of writing was produced about the war that is now referred to as Biafra civil war literature. Jane Bryce and Chidi Amuta (2008:53) coined the term "Literary phenomenon" to refer to the flood of works produced about Biafra in the nineteen-seventies and nineteen-eighties. The body of literature books that were published during this period comprises *Girls at War and Other Stories* (1972) by Chinua Achebe, *Destination Biafra* (1982) by Buchi Emecheta, *Behind the Rising Sun* (1971), *Never Again* as well as *Wives at War and Other Stories* (1980) both by Flora Nwapa. Although a detailed investigation of the significant works of literature written during this period is beneficial for this dissertation, what is more, expedient to consider are the main literary predicaments connected to the history of the Biafra civil war violence rooted in ethnic conflict because it is central to negotiations of violence depicted in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. In a critique entitled "The Nigerian Civil War and the Evolution of Nigerian Literature", Amuta (1983:86) notes how the Biafran civil war "awakens the Nigerian writers to the need to document the war in the literature

despite the civil war's historical documentation". Amuta (1983:86) contends that literature preoccupied with the issues about the civil war "symbolises some of the most cherished ideals of African Literature". The logic of this argument is that the violence of warfare urges writers to contemplate its effects on the nation and not on the rest of the continent. Despite the overbearing demands of historical accounts of the war, writers must contend with the theoretical problem of a link between history and literary representation. In this chapter, the idea of how history relates to literary representation is crucial to explain.

To resolve the dilemma a writer faces in balancing history and literary works, Hugh Hodges (2009:37) notes that "there is a need to reconcile objective historical facts" on the one hand and the "freedom to represent those facts objectively in war fiction" on the other hand. The difficulty that arises in attempting to "merge the contesting requirements of historicism and literary representation", Hodges (2009:38) insists, sometimes results in war fiction that does not give anything apart from historical documentation of events. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, for instance, some sections of the narrative are written in a documentary style that proposes an impartial contemplation of facts. However, this discriminating account of historical occurrences depicting civil war violence, according to Hodges (2009:6), “is deeply at odds with the allegorical nature” of the representation of fiction.

The unrecognised inconsistency in the relationship between what is considered as representation accomplished in works of fiction and the deliberate falsification of historical events, Hodges (2009:4) argues, "brings ambiguities and confusion" in the reading of literary works whether they should be considered as fictional or historical texts. Considering the contradictions that are inherent in the writer's dilemma in representing fictional and historical events, I corroborate Hodges' perspective that the apprehension cited is not rare to early novels, short stories, and poems about the Biafran civil war but also applies to the reading of *Half of a Yellow Sun*. As I have mentioned, this is key to the analysis I give about this text since Half *of a Yellow Sun,* as Hodges (2009:31) puts it, *“*dramatizes its incompleteness, its inability to fully comprehend (in both senses of the word) the Biafran war [and] negotiates the

‘dilemmas’ [embedded] in recounting war more effectively than most of its predecessors" (Hodges, 2009:3).

Since Adichie wrote *Half of a Yellow Sun* four decades after the civil war erupted, Mzali (2011) notes that it is evident that Adichie is indebted to many authors who had written about the civil war before her. Although Adichie might have enriched herself with the variety of literature written before her, *Half of a Yellow Sun* gives different assessments to those of the works written about the civil war before her. As already mentioned, negotiation of the violence of the civil war allows *Half of a Yellow Sun* to engage different characters to provide multiple narrative perspectives. This allows me to explore negotiation not only as a view of how representations of violence are etched in dynamics of political and cultural spaces, but also as an evaluation of the narrative scheme Adichie conscripts to approach Nigeria's disputed national history.

Half of a Yellow Sun narrates the trauma of civil war violence in the national context of the state of Biafra in ways that all the earlier literature is viewed as having been unable to do. This point is corroborated by Nwakanma's (2008:12) observation about these earlier writers, whose expression of the Biafra civil war they fail to designate space of a nation for Biafra. There is a scarcity of Igbo novels representing the trauma of the Biafra war written between nineteen-seventy and nineteen-eighty-three. Nwakanma (2008) further notes that Nigerian writing generally does not write about the civil war trauma expressing it in terms of the idealised space of a nation, thus denying Biafra the image of a nation the narrative of *Half of a Yellow Sun* projects. Hence, *Half of Yellow Sun* rearticulates perceptions about Biafra and ascribes a re-imaging of the state of Biafra in terms of a nation that earlier literature written about Biafra had not done.

5.5 Nation and the novel after Biafra war

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Adichie creates an uneducated main character, Ugwu, living with university lecturer characters, Odenigbo, professor Ezeka and Miss Adebayo. Ugwu calls Odenigbo "Master" and starts learning to read and write while he works as his houseboy. He shows natural intelligence and develops into a writer who documents the events of the Biafra War in a novel, *The World Was Silent When We Died*. The

lecturers' debate about colonisation, racism and ethnic conflict enables the reader to have insight into the intellectual debate about the origins of violence from a layman's perspective, as the author presents it through Ugwu's memory when he imagines himself taking part in the debate when the lecturers have gone to sleep after a party. "Ugwu would sit on the same chair and imagine himself speaking swift English, talking to rapt imaginary guests, using words like *decolonise* and *pan-African*, moulding his voice after Master's" (p.32). When speaking to Miss Adebayo about his African identity, Odenigbo says:

> [T]he only authentic identity for the African is the tribe…I am Nigerian because a white man created Nigeria and gave me that identity. I am black because the white man constructed *black* to be as different as possible from his *white.* But I was Igbo before the white man came. (p.32)

Odenigbo calls for war violence against the Federal Government and blames the Federal government for causing the war violence, disregarding that he is also complicit in causing the violence. Odenigbo states that white colonial settlers who divided the Nigerian population into feuding tribe members should be vilified. *Half of a Yellow Sun*'s depiction of Odenigbo's flawed sense of judgement alerts the reader to discern that although colonisation caused tribal conflict among Nigerians, the Nigerians should take responsibility and stop the violence by not being tribalist in the first instance. They should seek negotiations of peaceful state governance and stop blaming colonisation for the continued spates of violence caused by ethnic fighting. *Half of a Yellow Sun* reflects Odenigbo refusing to take part in the construction of his own identity long after the divide-and-rule policy used by the British colonialists to control the local Nigerian population.

Odenigbo disowns the responsibility to negotiate a new identity in the context of the conflict between the different tribes, such as Miss Adebayo does by proposing a pan-African identity. Miss Adebayo argues that "Pan-Africanism is simply the most sensible response" and accuses Odenigbo of being a tribalist, "The problem is that Odenigbo is a hopeless tribalist, we need to keep him quiet," Miss Adebayo said. Professor Ezeka derides Odengbo's error of omission for not including the idea of all colonial constructions of the African subject's identity, reminding him that tribal identity is a result of colonial constructions of identity just as are notions of race and nation. He

says, "[b]ut you became aware that you were Igbo because of the white man. The pan-Igbo idea itself came only in the face of white domination. You must see that tribe as it is today as colonial a product as nation and race" (p.132).

The discussion these lecturers engage in locates negotiations of violence in the political history of colonisation, focusing on how tribalism is at the centre of the conflict that results in outbreaks of civil war. Writing *Half of a Yellow Sun* allows the author to express ideas about the causes of violence in the historical representations of the origins of violence in the state of Biafra, which should not be viewed as caused only by colonial policies of indirect rule. The violence is also fuelled by post-independence African leaders who capitalise on ethnic conflict to wield political power. The Federal government wields state power through ethnic control mechanisms that put the Hausa in the north ahead of the Igbo in the east. Odenigbo, who sees himself as a liberator of the Igbo, also advocates for the ethnic supremacy of the Igbo and *Half of a Yellow Sun* represents him as a misguided tribalist through Miss Adebayo's assessment of his character.

Odenigbo can be described as one of the "African leaders [who have] departed from anti-colonial narratives to build on ethnic, religious, and class rhetoric to sustain their grip on state power and resources" (Madu and Nwankwo, 2021:2695) and have divided communities along "these fault lines, especially ethnicity, generating various tensions and conflicts". Sule Emmanuel Egya (2022:162) corroborates Madu and Nwankwo to identify politics as the root of violence and contend "that political failure is integral to Africa's stagnation – a place of backwardness, poverty, diseases, corruption and violence". Egya (2022:162) adds that the "structure of violence inherited from colonialism is what political leaders deploy and rely on to inflict violence on Africa". Both the Federal government's power structures that inflict violence on the Igbo minority citizens and Odenigbo and Ujukwu's call for an Igbo-dominated government in Biafra ironically represent a desire to inherit colonial structures of violence from colonialism in *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

While the creation of Ugwu embodies Adichie's re-invention of the state of Biafra, the twin sisters, Olanna and Kainene, symbolise the perpetuation of the state of Biafra

even after being defeated by the government forces at the end of the novel. When Biafra is defeated, Kainene disappears, and Olanna feels excellent relief that the end of the war allows her to set out on a new journey to find her sister, Kainene. The latter symbolically embodies the state of Biafra. Through an analysis of the characterisation of *Half of a Yellow Sun*, I argue that Adichie expresses literary recreations of violence not only via the characters' actions but also through their fate at the end of the novel. That analysis coheres with a reading of the text that locates violence as etched in political and underlying ethnic conflicts responsible for its incidence. This claim is evident as *Half of a Yellow Sun* narrates the war's specific event, makes characteristic representations of violence, and exposes the violence of civil war. the Nigerian government's power structures cause violence by using force to exclude the Igbo from benefiting from the central Nigerian government.

The novel creates characters that negotiate their locations within the precincts of their backgrounds. Examples are Odenigbo and OJukwa, who use their positions at the university and the army barracks to gradually link their fear of violence and trauma to other community members to enable a concerted front in resisting the enemy. Odenigbo shows current notions of development when he bemoans the predicament of the postcolonial state that he thinks is less developed compared to other African states because the federal government deprives the Igbo ethnic group of "the tools to *negotiate* this new world" (p.129). Odenigbo and all the university professors that rally behind Ujukwu in declaring the cessation of Biafra symbolically denigrate the vision of a united Nigeria, which contradicts the notion of the ideals of novel writing being synonymous with nation-building. This is the case because the national ideals subsume the goals of independence, self-determination, and freedom for which the proponents of an independent state of Biafra fight to achieve at the level of ethnic autonomy. That conflict is the source of violence in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, where contention centres on exercising power in the politics of control over national resources. The Igbo in the east sees the northern-dominated Nigerian central government as depriving them of a fair share.

Adichie problematises the obligation to interrogate notions of a nation as defined in how I have already discussed similar ideas of a nation in *The House of Hunger*,

Harvest of Thorns, and *The Uncertainty of Hope.* The point of departure in Adichie's representations of violence and the idea of the nation arises in considering how *Half of a Yellow Sun* exposes the concept of accountability for violent political conflict. The text places the blame for the outbreak of violence on both the conflicting parties depicted in *Half of a Yellow Sun* in search of new connotations of a nation that incorporates positive accountability values. *Half of a Yellow Sun* evokes intertwined responsibilities for civil war violence through Olanna's refusal to retell her experiences of violence in the north to her relatives in the east when she survives the violence. Ugwu's re-writing of Olanna's experiences in the novel underscores the possibility or impossibility of transmitting individual trauma and individual experiences shared by those who read the story. If one shares the traumatic event with other community members, they experience the trauma through its narration which makes it collective trauma. In this way, an individual finds it within one's limit or obligation to share or not share an experience of trauma.

The narrative emphasises giving a new meaning to accountability to enable an informed understanding of how individuals may deny or accept responsibility for different actions or be held liable as they negotiate individual or collective responses to violence in their engagements in the civil war. For example, when the government commands soldiers to kill all Igbos living in the north, the question arises if the blame lies with the military or central government when civilians go on the rampage and kill the designated targets of the genocide. Negotiations of violence should seek to reconcile belligerent parties through commissions of inquiry that entreaty perpetrators of violence to accept responsibility for having done wrong to allow for reconciliation and healing between victims and perpetrators so that violence does not recur in future.

5.6. Negotiation of violence through narration

Half of a Yellow Sun reconstructs Biafra narratives reflecting gruesome proportions of war violence. Nwankwo (2021) enquires what Adichie could write about that has not been done by Buchi Emecheta, Chinua Achebe, or Wole Soyinka in the work they have contributed to the literature on the Nigerian civil war. However, the approach of reading *Half of a Yellow Sun* acknowledges the fluid relationship between history and representation, which the narrative accomplishes, highlighting narrative accountability

about the techniques it uses to narrate violence and trauma. When Olanna refuses to share her experience of the violent acts she witnesses in the north, I argue that an individual's experience of violence and trauma defies translation into a collective experience. However, considering another incident when a woman shows Olanna the remains of the head of her child she has stored in a calabash, that event is an attempt to share trauma in a collective sense.

Negotiation rallies together diverse and occasionally contradictory accounts of components of individual, communal, and national history. As already alluded to earlier, this strategy outsets the instability of historical and identity politics, guiding an approach of negotiation into either individual or collective locations of violence and trauma. The instability, for example, lies in the difficulty in determining whether trauma and violence an individual experiences defy descriptions of collective trauma. In a previous section of this dissertation above, I have exemplified how Olanna and Ugwu make excruciating efforts to contain the effects of violence on their lives by recounting their experiences to others, illustrating the inadequacy of the transferability of "trauma from individual into collective terms and vice versa" (Mzali, 2011:134).

All the texts in this study represent postcolonial literature that expresses the loss of freedom. The narrative reflects wars of liberation to regain freedom in three of these texts, *The House of Hunger, Harvest of Thorns,* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. In *The Uncertainty of Hope,* the oppressive system of government disempowers the population in the low-density suburb of Mbare. The upper-class, police and army structures corruptly dominate and exploit the economy at the expense of the lower class. They deny the marginalised and poor citizens access to national resources they should have a share of to sustain their livelihood. The narrative of *Half of a Yellow Sun* portrays the loss of freedom caused by colonialism that Fanon (1967:100) foresees, requiring a collective effort from the individual and the group to regain freedom through fighting the oppressor. This observation by Fanon makes a distinction between the group and the individual essential to consider. For that reason, it becomes imperative to realise how Olanna and Ugwu encounter difficulties in expressing their excruciating experiences of the violence and trauma of the civil war to confirm how negotiation, as a reading methodology, foregrounds the instability of the text when it comes to

identifying the specific location of violence either in the individual or the collective entities that experience it.

Craps and Buelens (2008:04) submit that although Fanon recognises the “limitations of an [strict] individualist approach to postcolonial trauma, [he] does not assume an unproblematic translation from individual to collective trauma". It becomes essential to trace the origins of the trauma discourse in the Western literary tradition and estimate how I can apply and relate it appropriately to nuances of individual and collective trauma in the postcolonial African conditions the selected texts represent. According to Annie Whitehead (2020:14), the subject of individual and collective trauma becomes problematic owing to the wholesale "exportation" of the discourse on trauma from the West, where it started, to the African perspectives without contemplating whether it would be as relevant in the African context, considering that these African communities would be different from those where it originated.

Considering that the prevailing discourse on trauma may be insufficient, owing to its origins from the western perspective, as noted by Whitehead (2020), it becomes credible to suggest the limitations of its assumptions in the Zimbabwean and Nigerian postcolonial contexts. To conclude "that all trauma, by being postcolonial, is solely expressed and experienced collectively" (Mzali, 2011:116) is a pitfall my interpretation of *Half of a Yellow Sun* mitigates by highlighting the indeterminate characteristics of collective and individual representations of violence and trauma steeped in instability. These, as indicated in the introductory section of this study, can only be read via the approach of negotiation that problematises and considers the multiplicity of facets attached to individual characters and communal perspectives of the subjects that experience trauma that I will focus on below.

The civil war in *Half of a Yellow Sun* pulls the Igbo from different social classes together. It gives the individual characters a collective sense of belonging to their ethnic community that should share the experience of trauma and violence. In its narrative, *Half of a Yellow Sun* portrays the Federal Nigerian government forces attacking the Biafrans. Because they experience the attacks collectively, I argue that they share the violence and trauma of specific events of war contact, such as the

bombings and killings where there are survivors that live to tell the stories of the attacks. However, when the attack takes place, not all people experience it in the same way; their emotional and physical reaction to the attack, the nature of their injuries and their experience of the trauma would be varied and different, hence the impossibility of a collective experience of violence and trauma.

In this debate on the possibility or impossibility of collective experience of trauma, it is interesting to consider whether trauma and violence have an equivalent that partakes of an ideal form reminiscent of the “ideal form” that has a universal and independent existence as postulated in the Platonic theory of forms, a situation that would make it possible to contemplate the possibility of collective trauma becoming experiential. However, *Half of a Yellow Sun*'s literary representations of violence and trauma caused by the Biafra civil war aimed at creating an impression of an understanding of “a collective experience of loss” (Durrant, 2004:54). Durrant (2004:54) further argues that “the conception of people who share a loss, such as a lack of economic, political, and cultural representation in government because of postcolonial conflict, is rendered complex by outbreaks of political violence.” The narrative in *Half of a Yellow Sun* portrays the Igbo ethnic group experiencing that collective loss because the Nigerian central government excludes them and their region from national development programmes. That sense of loss strengthens or even restructures fresh societies, associations, and antagonisms inside the entire national space, as evidenced by the community of university professors that always gathers in Odenigbo's house, united by a shared vision in support of the creation of the state of Biafra, and Odenigbo's servant, Ugwu eventually knows the "regular guests" (p.23). This experience justifies their resolve to fight for the independence of Biafra.

Olanna bears the gruelling war experience with her family members in the east, where they eat little as the government cuts food supplies through a blockade the Nigerian government enforces to cripple Biafra's war effort. When Olanna experiences violence in the north, she initially refuses to share her experiences even with Odenigbo, her husband. He is the closest person to her at the height of the civil war. Such is the case because of the estranged relationship with her sister, Kainene, following her sexual encounter with Kainene's expatriate boyfriend, Richard, that Ugwu divulges to Kainene

and to which “both Richard and Olanna confess to Kainene” (p.121). The narrative of *Half of a Yellow Sun* portrays Olanna, over time, getting over the initial refusal to share her experience of violence. Although Olanna shares her suffering with her family and community members regarding the experience of war in the east, what she has experienced in the north, where she has visited her relatives living there, remains a treasured space that she does not want to share with anyone. However, she mingles with other refugees from the north who have had the same experience.

During a conversation, Odenigbo angrily speaks about the death of Olanna's cousin, Arize, and labels all the Northerners murderers. Odenigbo's accusations shock Olanna, who witnesses Arize's brutal murder. Because her friend, Mohammed, had rescued her from imminent death, the statement that all the people in the north are murderers is outrageous to Olanna. The narrator in *Half of a Yellow Sun* says that Olanna detests Odenigbo's remark because he "cheapened Arize's memory to make a point in a spurious argument" (p.238). Even though exasperated with Odenigbo because what he says stirs memories of her terrifying experience in the north, how she reacts to his speech exposes her feelings about the memories of her relatives that perished in the north. She distinguishes those experiences as a personal treasure of a tragic experience that she cannot share with anyone and would remain irreducible to any form of collective memory. The narrator describes the effect of Odenigbo's remarks about Olanna's treasured tragic experience in the north as another "Dark Swoop" (p.239), of several attacks she suffers from overwhelmingly acute drowsiness that she must fight because of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Olanna progresses through a gradual negotiation of personal memory within the collective history of the Biafrans at war and eventually overcomes her disability to voice her trauma. She cultivates her self-esteem and indefatigable pursuit of a project to have her experience of violence heard and written in Ugwu's book. From an individual experience of violence that Olanna represents and initially refuses to share with her immediate relatives, the novel necessitates her transformation guided by a desire to articulate her experiences of violence. Her audience grows figuratively as Ugwu continues writing about Olanna's story within both a regional and worldwide

perspective of the history of Biafra, thus negotiating violence from a particular context to a communal and universal space through narration.

Half of a Yellow Sun represents the most intense forms of violence, documenting genocide. The political violence caused by the civil war depicted in *Half of a Yellow* Sun contrasts with the war violence depicted in *Harvest of Thorns*, *The House of Hunger* and *The Uncertainty of Hope.* All the texts reflect politics and culture as contributing to the outbreaks of violence in the Nigerian, Rhodesian, and Zimbabwean states. The three Zimbabwean texts do not define and identify the origins of violence, with the ethnic geopolitics of Zimbabwe's division into Mashonaland and Matabeleland as spaces for whose control the Ndebele and Shona fight. The case is different from the one illustrated in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, where the geographical space of the north, particularly Kano, is the site of ethnic cleansing where the Igbo living there. They kill them because they originally belonged to the Eastern province of Nigeria. The horrific massacres in the north unfold abruptly, and Olanna's visit to her relatives there allows the narrative to set the stage for an ethnic and cultural conflict. The conflict ignites the gruesome massacres perpetrated against the Igbo residents there. The Hausa and Yoruba ethnic group members among whom they live turn against them and kill them. When the war escalates, “the texts narrate acts of brutality perpetrated by both belligerents” (Anyaduba and Maiangwa, 2020:511).

Adichie represents Olanna visiting her relatives who live in the north to explore the theme of ethnic violence in the text. Olanna’s experience in the north allows the author to present the genocide through Olanna’s experience as she escapes the horrific massacre of Igbo people who live in the north. Adichie also shows that the violence originates from ethnic conflict by recreating a scene at the airport in Kano where the soldiers kill the Igbo people and spare the northerners and Richard because he is a white man. That selective killing spree "sets the stage to explore” negotiations of violence vis-à-vis its corollary discourse of individual versus “collective trauma illustrated when she eventually shares her experience with those relatives in the east” (Maiangwa, 2020:511). In addition, I also argue that the debate on the possibility of the transferability of individual trauma to “collective trauma and vice versa” (Mzali, 2011:134) is problematic and, under close examination, shows that it is both possible

and impossible from the way *Half of a Yellow Sun* represents it if Olanna's position is critically appraised. On the one hand, suppose sharing her experiences in the north facilitates the group of relatives' experiences of collective trauma. On the other hand, I also contend that her location as a survivor of the genocide in the north destines her to testify as a lone survivor among her family members. That excludes the group to who she narrates the events from having partaken of the individual experience of trauma that remains a preserve of a witness providing a testimony.

Mzali (2011:108) notes that when Olanna shares “her experience with her relatives is not the only instance where *Half of a Yellow Sun”* negotiates the limitations in the narration and memorialisation of individual and collective trauma. Mzali (2011:108) reiterates once again that the act of memorialising violence in the incident “on the train where a bereaved mother sitting near Olanna calls travellers to see the remains of her butchered daughter’s decapitated head she has stored in a calabash.” This gesture attempts to reconfigure an expression of collective trauma as the passengers experience the shock at the spectacle of violence. However, this collective experience of trauma, as has been consistent with my argument, counterbalances with Olanna’s ultimate decision of narrating to Odenigbo her terrifying experience in Kano. Once again, *Half of a Yellow Sun* negotiates the limits of narrating collective trauma, a subject that theorists on the discourse of trauma, such as Linda Belau (2008), and Felman and Caruth (2016), may assist in shedding light on the incomprehensible nature of the concepts of individual and collective trauma.

Felman and Caruth (2016) regard trauma as an ideal that exists in its own space, apart from the subjective human experience (Felman and Caruth, 2016). The notion of trauma as an ideal makes it lie beyond representation. Linda Belau (2008) submits that trauma does not lie beyond human understanding, as Felman and Caruth (2016) suggest. Belau (2008) contends that trauma's 'seeming incomprehensibility", conceived in Felman and Caruth's definition, assigns it to the level of an idea that it is not because if trauma is ideal, then by implication, it would lie beyond the realm of representation. Petar Ramadanovic (2011) contends that representations of trauma are possible. From this study's reading of all the selected texts, I argue that describing violence and trauma can be represented through narration. However, the narration of

trauma has its limitations. Narration of the traumatic experience cannot capture an individual's authentic experience of the event through representation.

Gökçen Kara (2020:377) argues 'that this belief in the possible and imperfect narration of trauma underlies the project of *Half of a Yellow Sun* that recreates the Biafran civil war." However, Kara (2020:392) argues further that the "implications of Olanna's narration remain obscure for her, even though she senses a larger purpose". Jane Bryce (2008:46) notes that Olanna realises a purpose larger than herself as expressed by agreeing to have her experiences written into a novel and 'the act of recording, and therefore sharing, cannot subsume the individual aspect of trauma to its collective" facet. More precisely, "the ambivalence implied by the persistence of the dual dimensions of trauma" (Bryce, 2008:46), conceived as an individual and collective experience, dictates Olanna's reaction to the announcement over the radio that Biafra has surrendered to the Federal Government forces, thus defeated.

5.7 Conclusion

When Ugwu hears about the surrender over the radio, he is astonished. To his surprise, when he asks Olanna the question, "What now, man?" she quietly answers: "Now I can go and find my sister" (p.255). Just is the case with the ex-freedom fighter, Benjamin, in *Harvest of Thorns*, to whom Zimbabwe's independence barely represents anything more than an opportunity to start looking for a job when he finds himself unemployed after independence. In this passage, Olanna disconnects herself from the collective implications of the Biafran state's disintegration and parallels the war's end with the timely reopening of roads and a potential reunion with Kainene. Another way of looking at Olanna's reaction to the war's end is that her trauma, like everyone else's, devastated during the war, will always be doubled as individual and collective. Olanna leaves behind the collective responsibility for the fruitless war effort and sets out to seek reunion with her sister, and, in a way, exhibits the triumph of manifestations of individual trauma over collective trauma.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion and recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

This chapter provides a synthesised overview of the preceding chapters, including reflections on the five texts that constitute the selected corpus. Lastly, I will give the research recommendations considering the findings made in the study regarding the view that negotiations of violence are entrenched in politics and culture.

An analysis of the historical background of all the selected texts shows how they depict different forms of violence originating from the colonial and post-independence political systems. The texts present depictions of negotiations of violence embedded in political and cultural conflicts. Cultural conflict causes ethnic bloodletting in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, and patriarchal-driven forms of violence exposed in *The Uncertainty of Hope* occur in the context of the fictionalised Nigerian and Zimbabwean societies represented in the two texts, respectively. *The House of Hunger* and *The Harvest of Thorns* reflect political violence emanating from colonial authorities' brutality in the political administration of the colonised Rhodesian state. The texts portray the colonial agents' subjugation of the Shona and Ndebele indigenous Zimbabweans through a violent military takeover that annihilates the indigenous inhabitants' political, economic, and cultural system and replace it with their colonial systems.

Postcolonial theory, psychoanalytical theory and the concepts of metonymy and spectres offered a theoretical and conceptual framework for analysing *The House of Hunger* and *Harvest of Thorns*, exposing negotiations of violence etched in politics and culture. I have also added to postcolonial theory relevant strands of feminism, resilience theory, and negotiation and violence concepts. These assisted in considering ways in which *The Uncertainty of Hope* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* represent nuances of negotiations of violence from female authors" perspectives. *Half of a Yellow Sun* represents the ethnic conflict between the Hausa in Northern Nigeria and the Yoruba in the Southwest, fighting against the Igbo in South-eastern Nigeria. These

conflicts are at the centre of negotiations of violence embodied in the Biafra War. Thus, I argue that political and ethnic conflicts are the leading cause of violence in Zimbabwe and Nigeria, which come after the violence of colonisation by the British in both countries.

In chapter one, I posed the main research questions. The first research question was about how the selected texts use to make representations of negotiations of violence and to what extent the narratives succeed. Consequently, chapter one outlines how the texts depict wars fought during and after colonisation. I considered examining the selected texts" depictions of options of negotiation characters take as a strategy to deal with violence. The selected texts reflect characters that experience these conflicts, responding to and being affected by violence in different ways and, ultimately, narrating their experience of violence differently. They portray different forms of violence from unresolved political, social, cultural, and economic conflicts in diverse contexts that defy a singular narrative perspective.

The second research question was about how authors, through their fiction, open discourses of politically marginalised voices exposed to violent political and cultural spaces. This is followed by its corollary that asks to what extent these fictional representations embody the notion of negotiation of violence. The third research question was on what strategies the authors use to expose the negotiations of violence by women characters to highlight their emancipation from patriarchal and politically driven forms of oppression.

In response to these questions, I deployed the qualitative research methodology which I found relevant to expose negotiations of violence in the selected texts. In chapter two, I explored how negotiations of violence are represented in *The House of Hunger*. Next was chapter three, *Harvest of Thorns*, then The *Uncertainty of Hope* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* in chapters four and five. As mentioned, I highlighted how the texts written by female authors were preoccupied with the themes of the emancipation of women from violent and oppressive patriarchal practices. I reiterate the opinion I submitted earlier that women's position is worse off than men's because, apart from enduring all other forms of political and ethnic violence, they experience violence on a

different front at the hands of abusive men. This viewpoint is corroborated by the assertation that "women are doubly oppressed at home and a gendered labour marketplace that favour men over women" (Bozzoli, 2004:326).

In chapter two, *The House of Hunger*, I presented how the text exposed negotiations of violence entrenched in the colonial political power structures the colonial state used to rule the state. The novella and short stories depict the police and military forces using violent strategies to suppress colonised black Africans who organised anti-colonial nationalist political parties. The political conflict between the colonial state and the nationalists culminates in the war for liberation in whose context the narrator in *The House of Hunger* is depicted negotiating violence. I highlighted the narrator's quest for a heroic African identity through self-imaging, thus exposing negotiations of violence in the fragmented narrative of the text. The narrator's self-imaging in pursuit of an authentic African hero's identity unifies the fragmented narrative in the novella and the short stories. The unity subsists in that all the short stories and the novella reflect the narrator's ongoing quest to escape from the physical and psychological nuances of violence in *The House of Hunger*. The narrator finds solace in recreating himself into the ideal African hero, which, I argue, is a form of negotiation of violence. This chapter describes negotiations of violence depicted in the narrator's experience as he grapples with the problems of poverty, hunger, deprivation, and violence. The society in which he lives fights against the conditions of oppression caused by the colonial political system. Hence, negotiations of violence are entrenched in politics.

Chapter Three, based on *Harvest of Thorns*, progresses from focusing mainly on the struggle by an individual character, the narrator in *The House of Hunger*, to a struggle of the whole nation of Zimbabweans fighting against the colonial government in the war of liberation. While the individual character takes centre-stage as the narrator in *The House of Hunger*, in *Harvest of Thorns*, representations of violence focus on the nation-state that emerges from negotiations for peace after a devastating war. The emphasis shifts from the concerns about how the individual negotiates violence by re-inventing a fluid self-image through writing to negotiations of violence to create a new state portrayed in *Harvest of Thorns*. The postcolonial state created after the war of liberation remains attached to the Western capitalist economies, thereby necessitating

this study to consider, more centrally, the social-political theory of cosmopolitanism as a methodology to assist in illumining how the state uses violent methods to control the nation.

In chapter four, I explored ways in which *The Uncertainty of Hope* represents negotiations of violence emanating from politics and culture through the lens of postcolonial theory, resilience theory and relevant strands of feminist theories and the concepts of violence and negotiation. *The Uncertainty of Hope* depicts negotiations of violence embedded in the Zimbabwean government's political power structures, including the police and the army. The narrative largely censures the state's power structures for the suffering most characters experience because they function by violence. I considered how these depictions of negotiations of violence in this text compare with reflections of those I have identified and analysed in *The House of Hunger* and *Harvest of Thorns* in chapters two and three, respectively. I have also referred to instances of negotiations of violence depicted in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, which I focused on in chapter five, to augment a thorough inter-textual examination of negotiations of violence across the body of the selected texts.

Negotiations of war violence entrenched in political and ethnic identities centres on the Biafra war to represent violence. In this section I capitalised on ethnic conflict represented in Half of a Yellow Sun to demonstrate how violence is negotiated in the text. I used postcolonial and feminist theoretical lenses to locate the causes of the violence. From this analysis, it emerged that violence is caused by political and cultural conflicts, as has been the case in the analyses of the other three books covered in the preceding chapters. As with *The Uncertainty of Hope*, the novel also represents negotiations of violence through the different characters" responses to different forms of violence. Depictions of negotiations of violence are read as the choices victims make reacting to violence, such as endured co-habitation, passive antagonism, evasion of violence, or bloody military confrontation portrayed in the Biafra war that contrasts with the war of liberation represented in *Harvest of Thorns*.

This chapter argued that the narrative depicts eruptions of violence etched in conflicts caused by expressions of political and cultural differences based on ethnic identities.

Those rival ethnic entities, mainly the Igbo versus the Yoruba and Hausa, got embroiled in an economic, political, and cultural conflict that caused violence in the Biafra war. In this chapter, I argued that negotiations of violence are interpreted in the light of narrating individual and collective trauma, a contested subject in current African literary studies. I have already noted that the novel portrays Olanna escaping from genocide perpetrated by the Hausa and Yoruba against Igbo people in the north so that she can narrate the experience of violence and trauma to her relatives in eastern Nigeria. When she returns home to Eastern Nigeria, Olanna initially refuses to share her traumatic experience but later agrees. She eventually recognises that her experience does not belong to her alone but to the rest of humanity. Her story should be represented in the book Ugwu writes so that collective trauma can be shared through its representability in novel writing. Individual readers would subject the narration of trauma to their subjective interpretation, resulting in multiple perspectives on the narration of violence and trauma.

Once again, *Half of a Yellow Sun* negotiates the limits of narrating collective trauma. I explored the same subject further in depicting the battle in the hills at Sachikonye village in *Harvest of Thorns* to explain the concept of narration of individual and collective trauma. As an approach to narrating trauma, the multiple narrative perspectives manifest in the story of the battle on the hills peddled in different viewpoints among members of the Sachikonye village. The narrator puts it that "Now many stories" were "told about" the battle on the hill in Sachikonye's village (p.212). Many stories, some true, some not true, some highly coloured by the terror and imagination of the people who heard" about what happened from those who saw it" (p. 212*)*. I will distinguish between negotiable and non-negotiable forms of violence represented in the selected texts.

The representations *of Harvest of Thorns* exemplify non-negotiable violence makes by the guerrilla fighters' irresistible desire to kill enemies in a battle. Non-negotiable violence is also represented differently in *Half of a Yellow Sun,* where Olanna refuses to tell her relatives about the carnage she has witnessed in the north. These two conceptions of negotiations of violence show that traumatic experiences manifest in specific contexts of an individual's physical or psychological experience of a violent

event. When that traumatic experience is shared among numerous recipients of the distressful event through narration, the collective shock experience is inevitably subjected to several interpretations. The various perspectives and conceptions of violence and trauma recreated through its narration and imparted to those with whom it is shared, therefore, preclude a definite or singular narrative representation of the truth.

In conclusion, the different analyses of negotiations of violence reflected in the selected texts open multiple perspectives of violence as a physical engagement with violence in the wars depicted in *Harvest of Thorns* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. In *The Uncertainty of Hope*, Onai's negotiation of violence is characterised as an evasion of violence. In *The House of Hunger*, the narrator negotiates violence through writing, thus escaping violence through the subsequent self-imaging that is his conduit to refuge from violence. I have also conceived negotiation as a reading strategy that assists in understanding representations of violence and trauma. All these interpretations confirming multiple negotiation perspectives show that this subject remains a discursive area in literary studies.

6.2 Recommendations

This research recommends that postcolonial theory, African feminist theories, resilience theory and gender theory are appropriate paradigms to appraise texts written by African authors. These theories constitute the building blocks underpinning the conceptual framework within which to analyse ways the selected corpus depicts negotiations of violence. Postcolonial theory recognises the importance of the historical settings of the selected novels. The historical settings assist in locating outbreaks of violence entrenched in contexts of both the colonial and post-independence political systems represented in the selected works of art. Since two of the selected texts, *The Uncertainty of Hope* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*, were written by African female authors and share Afrocentric feminist inclination, the African feminist theoretical lens provides an appropriate conceptual framework to analyse these novels comprehensively, reducing the possibility of the issues raised being misconstrued. I also recommend further research on representations of negotiations of violence in other published texts by Zimbabwean authors, such as *The Book of Memory* and

Rotten Row, by Petina Gappah. *The Book of Memory* represents violence and suppression of women's voices, symbolised by the protagonist living with albinism on death row at Zimbabwe's Chikurubi Maximum Prison. *Stone Virgins*, by Yvonne Vera, is also relevant to the study of negotiations of violence in the Zimbabwean context because the text portrays the ethnic civil war between the Ndebele and the Shona soon after independence. Since three of the primary texts examined in this dissertation were written by Zimbabwean authors and only one was written by a Nigerian author, I recommend further research on other Nigerian texts reflecting negotiations of violence. Research on other Nigerian texts is invaluable because the scope of this study has yet to provide a balanced number of texts from the two countries.

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