

CHAPTER 1:—INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Justification

This thesis is a study of the white Rhodesian novel written in English between 1890 and 1994. Special, deliberate attention is paid to the content and character as they interact to give those messages that readers always derive from reading fiction.

However, while literature generally is supposed to educate as well as entertain, most of the white Rhodesian novels do educate, but hardly give pleasure to their African reader. For this reason, the thesis will discuss content and character with some bearing on how the black people are portrayed in the novels. This is imperative and it is not wise to read these novels while ignoring this aspect in them. It is also important to focus on this issue in a thesis like this because only then can the reader derive education from this fiction. Hopefully, the thesis will be a good resource book for other researchers, for students and for the general reader.

While most people are familiar with Zimbabwean and African history, their familiarity with Zimbabwean literature is often limited to that of the African authors and a few white authors such as Doris Lessing and Wilbur Smith. Few people are conversant with as many works, by white Rhodesians, as are discussed in this thesis. Yet in order to capture a lot of what the white people thought and did during and after the colonial era, it is important to read their literature. It is often through literature that we

get to learn and understand human behaviour and motives behind people's actions. This is especially true about the Rhodesian novel.

As this author writes at the end of the 20th Century, there are many arguments and counter-arguments, opinions, condemnations and suggestions in the daily/weekly newspapers concerning political, social and economic issues in Zimbabwe. Often we read a disturbing statement by some black people such as to the effect that "Smith was better" than the present rulers of Zimbabwe during his time as Prime Minister of Rhodesia, 1965 to 1978, up to the advent of the short-lived Zimbabwe-Rhodesia in 1979. People who think and write this way argue that the economy was better then. The statement is disturbing because one realises that those people do not have all the facts on what was actually happening to the black people during and before Smith's time. It is a real unfortunate possibility that such a statement may thoroughly mislead young people today to whom Chimurenga II is now ancient history because they were born after that liberation war had already ended. The real issues that caused it can be lost and we risk having them branded as the political propaganda of ruling parties.

Even though people are familiar with Zimbabwean History, the impact of the colonial humiliation on the African is not really articulated there. It is in the literature that we find such humiliation articulated, and hence, the importance that we place on the white Rhodesian novel. It gives the reader another window through which to view Zimbabwean socio-historical past in order not only to appreciate it, but also to learn from it.

It is hoped that the reader will be able to appreciate contemporary white writings within their literary and historical context, for we cannot conceive of the mental and spiritual torment to which colonialism condemned its victims, except by reading the literature written by such colonisers before and after 1980. We certainly get to appreciate the social, cultural and moral ghetto that black people lived in through this literature, which certainly complements historical knowledge.

Another benefit that should arise from this literature is that the reader gets to understand the black-white racial conflict and its causes and effects better as he/she reads about how old men working for white people were simply referred to as “boys” when, in reality, they were adults with families; and how these same men were given names such as Shilling, Sixpence, Tickey, Pudding, Saucepan, Moonlight, Smoke, and so on, because their white masters and mistresses felt it below their dignity to pronounce black people’s names and also because they just wanted to humiliate them by denying them their true identity.¹ The reader should further be able to relate to this same situation regarding names, in other black people’s works outside Africa, such as that described in Alex Haley’s novel, *Roots*.² The youth, in particular, should, as a result, appreciate why blacks in Zimbabwe had to take up arms

¹ My father was a cook (maybe he was called a “cook boy”) for one D.H. Crampton. Crampton and his wife called my father, Tickey (a tickey meant three pennies those days. It was a coin that was about the size of today’s 5-cent coin). My father’s first name was Tabombera, his middle name was Elias and his family name was Manase. I can understand why the Cramptons could have regarded his first name as a tongue twister. But there is little excuse for their not calling him Elias, preferring to call him Tickey! We never knew why, but now I know, after studying this literature...too late to ask my father how he felt all those years, about his given name.

² Alex Haley, *Roots* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1976).

against such structures of systematic humiliation in order to regain their dignity.

The value of this literature also lies in that it is still a lived experience in many cases. Consider, for a moment, the story of Nancy Patridge's novel, *To Breathe and Wait*. There is a black maid, Julia, who, with unparalleled dedication, looks after her employer, Deidre Messiter, a cancer patient. That is an experience one encounters in real life. On September 5, 2000 this writer listened to a black maid, Betty, telling a story of how she looked after her employer, Margaret, who was suffering from cancer of the breast, for which she had undergone an operation. Betty said she looked after Margaret in the crucial days after the operation, literally, for 24 hours a day, watching over her as she endured excruciating pain; and comforting her when she cried because none of her own family was around to comfort her. Margaret's son and family lived in South Africa, while her daughter had emigrated from Zimbabwe to Australia. Consequently, Margaret's best friend, confidante, and "relative" was Betty.

When Margaret recovered from the operation, she sold her house in Borrowdale, and was planning to move to South Africa to live near her son and his family. She wanted to go with Betty. Betty, on the other hand, refused to go to South Africa with Margaret. Unlike in the novel, *To Breathe and Wait*, where Deidre Messiter entertains Julia's family and is even run over by a car while trying to save Julia's niece, Betty's family was not allowed to visit her at Margaret's home in Borrowdale. This is in spite of the fact that Betty worked round the clock for weeks on end

without taking a break. So, while Margaret wanted to take Betty to South Africa to continue working for her, Betty complained that Margaret merely enjoyed the work of her hands, without caring about the welfare of her own family. Thus, Betty refused to go and work for Margaret in South Africa. The events recounted here happened between January and August, 2000.

One can imagine Betty's children reading the story of Julia and Deidre. It becomes a personal experience for them. Betty's children would relate to Patridge's novel in a personal way, and they would notice the pertinent detail that they were not allowed to visit their own mother at her work place, even though she had to work for many weeks without coming home, for a woman with the same ailment as Deidre in the novel.

Another important example of how this literature is a current experience is found in one of the children's novels, *Shangani*,³ where the Zulu people are described in derogatory terms, such as calling them "hordes" as in the sentence, "It is impossible to fix even approximately the number of men, women and children who were exterminated by the Zulu *hordes* but they must number many tens of thousands."⁴ Without condoning the killing of people by Zulu impis, the use of the word *hordes* in the Rhodesian novel is specifically reserved for the description of black people. One never talks of "Napoleon's or Hitler's hordes," for instance. It is also a word that readers will meet in current media. For example, in the *Showtime TV Guide* of June, 2001, there is this description of the movie, "Zulu:"

³ Oswald Pirow, *Shangani* (Johannesburg: Caxton, no date).

⁴ Oswald Pirow, *Shangani* 8.

"Zulus...Thousands of 'em! Michael Caine stars in the epic movie depiction of the battle of Rorke's Drift, in which a small band of English soldiers found themselves surrounded by *hordes* of Zulu *warriors* fresh from victory at Isandhlwana...."⁵ The difference between "a small band of English *soldiers*" and "*hordes* of Zulu *warriors*" is glaringly racist.

On a national and continental level, this literature should sensitise readers to global racism. The whole issue of how white people's western civilisation, generally, grew and developed on the back of African slave and other forced labour, is well dramatised in the novels. Today, Africans lag behind in development while whites are far ahead of them. Yet it is the Africans who have toiled for the white people in various ways, over many years. Western nations thrive, and look down upon Africa as a backward continent, yet it is African slave and forced labour that enriched these nations to the deprivation of the African continent itself, not only materially but also spiritually. Dr. Price has equated the disadvantaged position of black people, "to being entered in a 100-yard [or metre] dash against an opponent who starts out at the ninety-yard mark while we are staring [sic, the word should be *starting*] out at zero. Then Whites cross the finish line first and stand there, asking, 'How come you didn't do better in the race?'"⁶ Thus, we can hardly overemphasise the value of this literature.

Readers only need to look around them to discover that it is those western nations that enslaved and colonised the most that are today's political and

⁵ "Zulu" in *Showtime TV Guide* (June, 2001) 43.

economic giants. They only need to look around them to see that global racism is practised everyday in our lives. If they were to watch the western media outlets, CNN and BBC, among others, they would not fail to notice the difference between the portrayal of Africans and other third world peoples, and that of white people.

Africans and other so-called third world peoples are always portrayed graphically as poor, starving, and generally miserable human beings. Close-up photography is made of children eating dirty-looking food with flies swarming all over their mouths; of AIDS patients, skinny and bony and gasping for breath. It is as if the whole third world is populated by people of no other kind but these. By contrast, white people are always portrayed as wealthy, healthy, strong and satisfied human beings; their children smartly dressed in school, or at play, or working with computers. The AIDS pandemic is always ascribed to Africa more than to any other continent in the world. This is in spite of the fact that the western countries themselves have poor, starving and miserable human beings, too, and that AIDS probably started in their countries.

It is good to be sensitised to this sort of racism. It is a continuation of the dehumanisation of Africans and third world peoples generally; a continuation of what has been called, in this thesis, the plundering of the human soul, in order to continue to dominate them. Africans, in particular, are supposed to look up to the west with envy at their fantastic achievements, health, and so on. In most cases they do, indeed, look up

⁶ Frederick K.C. Price, *Race, Religion and Racism, Volume I: A Bold Encounter with Division in the Church* (Los Angeles, California: Faith One Publishing, 1999) 231.

to them. Sensitivity to all these issues may begin, in a very significant way, by reading the Rhodesian novel. Readers would be able to appreciate the physical and psychological obstacles that black people must overcome in order to assert their positive image in the world. They would be able to appreciate what black people have had to overcome to be what they are; to be where they are presently. They would also be in a position to appreciate the obstacles that black people still need to overcome in order to enter the cyberspace age ahead.

Reading this literature is similar to the reading of works about slavery by people who are former slaves and slave owners. In the USA, it was not until the revolutionary agitation of the 1960s that universities started to teach African American History and Literature in departments that they called Black Studies Departments. Previously, African American History and Literature were just by-passed and ignored, perhaps because they recounted and enacted a painful chapter in that nation's history.

Similarly, in Zimbabwe, many Rhodesian novels are not familiar to many people, perhaps for the same reasons that Americans did not read African American history and literature. This writer's reason for studying these novels is, simply, that they are part of the Zimbabwean heritage. If pre-colonial and post-colonial African history is studied, the literature of the same period must also be studied. It makes us attain a superior kind of literacy, for as Mackie argues,

...literacy is a process which continues throughout life.
To be literate is not to have arrived at some pre-determined

destination, but to utilise reading, writing and speaking skills so that our understanding of the world is progressively enlarged. Furthermore, literacy is not acquired neutrally, but in specific historical, social and cultural contexts. Far from being an end which merely reflects reality, it...is the means by which we comprehend, unravel and transform the reality in which we find ourselves.⁷

The study of the Rhodesian novel enhances understanding of the “inherently political nature of literature” and how literacy, in its broader terms, serves to liberate, rather than domesticate, an individual.⁸ This is an important observation because readers of this literature develop a broader view of historical-literary issues, and are able to carry out a more informative debate on whether, indeed, as a Rhodesian Prime Minister, “Smith was better” than the current leadership as far as black people are concerned. They would probably discover that he was very good to his fellow white people for the betterment of whose lives he harnessed all the Rhodesian natural and human resources. They would discover that he was not good for the black people whom he oppressed so much that they could not even walk on the pavements in towns. Perhaps, then, they would develop a different definition of freedom and independence.

To read the Rhodesian novel is to experience “how literature can produce value, how words can communicate attitudes which result in a [particular] psychological state in the reader.”⁹ These are the kinds of benefits one derives from reading Mark Twain’s *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*,

⁷ Robert Mackie, editor, “Introduction,” *Literacy and Revolution: The Pedagogy of Paulo Freire* (London: Pluto Press, 1980) 1-2.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

Puddin'head Wilson, or Richard Wright's Black Boy or Native Son; books that sometimes cause controversy in the American education system, owing to their subject matter which describes prejudiced black-white attitudes. Margaret Walker's Jubilee, on the other hand, deals with the subject of slavery, the American Civil War and the post-civil war era. Black-white attitudes and human relations are explored in depth and those attitudes do have an impact on the reader in a way that, hopefully, leaves him/her, not only more enlightened, but also more determined to do right in life, and to shun prejudice.

Similar reactions are experienced upon reading Alex Hailey's novel, Roots, or upon viewing the African American film, The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman or Fannie Kemble. Zimbabwean readers need to be given the opportunity to shape their own responses to the literature in which blacks appear consistently as objects and very rarely as subjects of the story. They would then develop a keen appreciation of the anger, frustration and "drought" that surfaces in the first African novels and short stories, such as Charles Mungoshi's Coming of the Dry Season, Waiting for the Rain, and Dambudzo Marechera's The House of Hunger. They would also develop an insight into why Samkange's first novel is entitled, On Trial for My Country. Familiarity with the subject matter of the Rhodesian novel leads to a better understanding of the subject matter of the African novel. It is also helpful in the understanding of titles such as Zimunya's and Kadhani's And Now the Poets Speak, implying that the

⁹ David Daiches, Critical Approaches to Literature, Second Edition (London & New York: Longman, 1981) 133.

black person has finally become the subject rather than the object of the story, both in fiction and in reality.

Similarities can be drawn between what we are doing in this thesis and what African American scholars have done in critiquing their own literary heritage from its beginnings, tracing “the birth of Afro-American literary tradition [which] occurred in 1773 when Phillis Wheatley published a book of poetry,”¹⁰ to the present time in order to understand how their own sense of identity had been distorted in their history.¹¹ This thesis is, therefore, meant to contribute to the literary criticism of our Zimbabwean literary heritage.

The role of the literary critic, therefore, becomes very important as it affects this study. Often writers have expressed some dislike for critics and the reasons for such a negative view of critics are, sometimes, justified particularly when they face hostile criticism.¹² Generally, however, criticism is valuable, for the writer’s works are there to be read and critics are professionals who interpret and stimulate debate on these

¹⁰ Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Foreword: “*In Her Own Write*” in *Six Women’s Slave Narratives, The Schomburg Library of Nineteenth-Century Black Women Writers* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) vii.

¹¹ See Charles W. Chestnut, *Frederick Douglass*, Preface (Boston: Small, Maynard and Co., 1970), vii-viii. See also Dr. Frederick K.C. Price, *Race, Religion and Racism* Volume 1 (Los Angeles, California: Faith One Publishing, 1999).

¹² Adeola James, *In Their Own Voices: African Women Writers Talk* (London: James Currey; Heinemann, 1990 reprinted 1991) 12-13. See also Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa Jemie & Ihechukwu Madubuike, *Towards the Decolonization of African Literature: African Fiction and Poetry and Their Critics* (Enugu, Nigeria: Fourth Dimension Publishing Company Ltd., 1980) 7-46; and Chinua Achebe, “Where Angels Fear to Tread” in *Morning Yet on Creation Day* (London: Heinemann, 1975 reprinted 1981) 46-48.

works. Ama Ata Aidoo has expressed the critic's function aptly when she says, "Our people say that if you take up a drum to beat and nobody joins then you just become a fool."¹³ Henry Louis Gates, Jr. puts it another way when he says that "the most dreadful fate for an author [is] that of being ignored then relegated to the obscurity of the rare book section of a university library."¹⁴ Some of the novels we will study in this thesis have, indeed, become obscure because they have not been studied and debated for years. The writer, thus, writes his/her book, or beats the drum, and the critic joins in the drumbeat by reading and interpreting that book. Together they impart a message of wisdom. This writer sees her role as that of an important critic for the Rhodesian novel.

CRITICAL WORKS ON THE RHODESIAN NOVEL

Although there are many critical works in the form of books, projects and conference papers on Zimbabwean Literature in English, few focus on the Rhodesian novel.¹⁵ Those few that do so include one long work, a D.Phil

¹³ Ama Ata Aidoo answering one of Adeola James's questions in *In Their Own Voices: African Women Writers Talk*, 21.

¹⁴ Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Foreword: "In Her Own Write" in *Six Women's Slave Narratives*, xii.

¹⁵ Book length studies on Zimbabwean Literature in English are, G.P. Kahari, *The Search for Zimbabwean Identity* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1980); M.B. Zimunya, *Those Years of Drought and Hunger* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1982); Flora Veit-Wild, *Teachers, Preachers and Non-Believers: A Social History of Zimbabwean Literature* (Harare: Baobab Books, 1993). Examples of book chapters include the following: T.O. McLoughlin, "Black Writing in English from Zimbabwe" in G.D. Killam, *The Writing of East and Central Africa* (London: Heinemann, 1984), and those found in E. Ngara editor, *New Writing from Southern Africa* (London: James Currey; Cape Town: David Philip; Harare: Baobab Books; Nairobi: E.A.E.P.; Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1996. Examples of unpublished student projects include the following: M. Hancock, "Cultural Disintegration and the Individual: A Comparative Study of Mungoshi's *Waiting for the Rain* and some Earlier Novels (unpublished. B.A. English project, English Department, University of Zimbabwe, 1985.); P. Gazimbe, "The Land Question in Zimbabwean Literature: A Critical Perspective" (unpublished. B.Ed. English project, Department of curriculum and Arts Education, University of Zimbabwe, 1992). There are many of them available but these will serve as examples of what people have written on African literature in

thesis, and some shorter pieces, namely an article, a book chapter and an introduction to one author's novels and poems.¹⁶ Thus, this is the second long research in Zimbabwe to focus on the Rhodesian novel, and, therefore, a very important piece of work.

In her recently published book on Zimbabwean African writers, Flora Veit-Wild acknowledges that

the white settler community has produced a corpus of creative writing; however, apart from some institutional or personal links, cross-influences [in her work and theirs] must be considered minor. On the whole, because of the completely different social and political background of the two races, the two literatures would have to be considered in separate contexts.¹⁷

Significantly, Veit-Wild quotes Chennells as the only critic who has written on the white Rhodesian literature, and so as we have said, this is the second one to focus on that subject.

Zimbabwe. Many articles tend to focus on an individual author, either alone or in comparison with other authors.

¹⁶ See Professor Antony J. Chennells whose D.Phil. thesis (unpublished), "Settler Myths and the Southern Rhodesian Novel" (University of Zimbabwe, 1982) is the only other study besides this one, which deals with the Rhodesian novel for an extended period. His research covers the period, 1890 to 1972). Professor Chennells has also published an article namely, "The Treatment of the Rhodesian War in Recent Rhodesian Novels" in R.S. Roberts, ed., *Zambezia, the Journal of the University of Rhodesia*, 5 (ii), 1977; a book chapter: "Rhodesian Discourse, Rhodesian Novels and the Zimbabwe Liberation War" in N. Bhebe and T.O. Ranger, *Society in Zimbabwe's Liberation War*, Volume Two (Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1995); and an "Introduction" to A.S. Cripps' novels in G.R. Brown, A.J. Chennells and L.B. Rix, eds., *A.S. Cripps, A Selection of his Prose and Verse* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1977).

¹⁷ Flora Veit-Wild, *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers* 6.

The point of departure of this thesis from Chennells' work is that it extends the period of coverage from 1972 where he ends, to 1994. It makes an in-depth analysis of the portrayal of black people in the novels written between 1890 and 1994 to highlight the kind of humiliation that black people have suffered at the hands of their colonising masters. It not only highlights the role of women in some of the novels themselves, but also focuses on the role of white women in the colonising process of Zimbabwe. So there is a chapter that discusses white female novelists to show how their writing portrays male-female issues in Rhodesia during this period. This is also the first time that a pre-colonial historical background has been discussed in a literary critical work on Zimbabwean literature. The books that are currently on the market discuss the historical background from 1890 when Zimbabwe was officially colonised.¹⁸

There is need to develop an awareness of what makes up the foundations of contemporary literary output in Zimbabwe. As Adeola James points out, "A writer does not come out of a vacuum." There are antecedents.¹⁹ This earlier literature is antecedent to contemporary literature and so should be studied critically.

¹⁸ The books that are on the market at the time this thesis is being written, critique African writing and they both have a historical background that begins from 1890. These are: G.P. Kahari, *The Search for Zimbabwean Identity* and M.B. Zimunya, *Those Years of Drought and Hunger*. Veit-Wild's book has no section on the Zimbabwean historical background.

¹⁹ Adeola James, *In Their Own Voices: African Women Writers Talk* (London: James Currey; Heinemann, 1990 reprinted 1991), 24.

SCOPE AND COVERAGE

The research is a study of a selection of the Rhodesian novel in English, 1890 to 1994. More specifically the selection is limited to the novel in order to limit the scope and coverage to manageable proportions.

Because “fiction has been the medium for most writers’ vision in Zimbabwe,”²⁰ a study of that medium should enhance the heritage of literary criticism in Zimbabwe.

The year 1890 was chosen as the beginning of the study because that is when the country officially passed from the control of black people to that of the white people under Cecil John Rhodes’s Chartered Company. Later, in 1923, the country became a colony of Britain. The year 1994 was chosen as the end of the study because that is when the proposal for this thesis was written. Officially it was not possible to choose a future date to conclude the study.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Rhodesia is applied to present day Zimbabwe between 1890 and 1979 and Rhodesian to the white novelists who wrote between 1890 and 1979. Although “Zimbabwean” may be applied to white novelists after 1980 by virtue of the fact that the country became known as Zimbabwe, it is to be noted that the basic vision of the white novelist remained Rhodesian. Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa Jemie and Ihechukwu Madubuike discuss

²⁰ T.O. McLoughlin, “Black Writing in English from Zimbabwe” in G.D. Killam, *The Writing of East and Central Africa* (London: Heinemann, 1984) 102.

considerations that help classify a literary work as African. We subscribe to their point of view. These considerations are: “the primary audience for whom the work is done; the cultural and national consciousness expressed in the work, whether through the author’s voice or through the characters and their consciousness, habits, comportment and diction; the nationality of the writer, whether by birth or naturalization [sic]...; and the language in which the work is done.”²¹ However, Chinweizu, Jemie and Madubuike, correctly acknowledge that “the point is not so much [the writers’] passports as the consciousness they project in their works and the primary audience to which their works are directed.”²² The reader will note that the Rhodesian novel, indeed, exhibits a “British consciousness...with prejudices calculated to appeal to [the authors’] British audience.”²³ Although some of the novels were written after independence in a country called Zimbabwe, their vision remains Rhodesian. For this reason we shall call all the novels discussed in this thesis, Rhodesian novels.

The acronyms ZANU and ZAPU will no doubt come up in the discussion of this literature. ZANU stands for Zimbabwe African National Union and ZAPU for Zimbabwe African People’s Union. PF stands for Patriotic Front.

²¹ Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa Jemie and Ihechukwu Madubuike, *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature*, Volume 1, 13-15. These authors give, as one example, Joyce Cary’s novel, *Mr. Johnson*, and argue that although set in Africa with most of its characters including the central character being African, it cannot be classified as an African novel on the grounds that the author describes Africans “with a decidedly British consciousness and with prejudices calculated to appeal to his British audience.”

²² *Ibid.*, 14.

²³ *Ibid.*, 15.

The “First Chimurenga” refers to the first African war of resistance in Rhodesia, 1896 to 1897, while the “Second Chimurenga” refers to the guerrilla war of liberation in the 1960s to 1979. Sometimes these are called Chimurenga One and Chimurenga Two.

THE REFERENCING SYSTEM

In this thesis the Modern Language Association (MLA) style of footnoting will be used rather than the American Psychological Association (APA) style of referencing. This is because literature is basically a humanities subject which, therefore, calls for the use of the MLA style, even though the thesis is housed in the Faculty of Education. Where a particular text is referred to several times, the subsequent notes will give “only enough information to identify the work.” Although “the author’s last name alone, followed by the relevant page numbers is usually adequate,”²⁴ we shall often quote the author’s name, the title of the book and the relevant page numbers in order to avoid some ambiguities that may arise.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

Library and archival research were used to collect data. In discussing the selected novels, we have used the analytical method, utilising the Marxist theory and the socio-historical approach. This is another difference

²⁴ Walter S. Achtert & Joseph Gibaldi, *The MLA Style Manual* (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1985, fifth printing 1992) 205.

between Chennells' work and this one because Chennells uses the descriptive method to discuss his novels.²⁵

Socially and historically, Rhodesia was born in a situation where one race came to another's country, usurped the land which was the economic base of the people of that country and proceeded to denigrate and belittle those people in a bid to ensure that the indigenous people felt inferior culturally, socially and politically. This was done in order to use these local people to build a colonial empire and consolidate its economic base, agriculturally and commercially, while in the process creating a complementary superstructure to sustain this newly established, illegal and immoral state of affairs. This is where the Marxist literary theory will be a great help. As Eagleton states, "Marxist criticism analyses literature in terms of the historical conditions which produce it; and it needs, similarly to be aware of its own historical conditions."²⁶ The reader will observe that it is the struggle to control the basic means of production in Rhodesia, with all its attendant consequences, that is reflected in the white novel between 1890 and 1994.

The literature chosen for this thesis reflects the condition of the black people in Rhodesia, sometimes as a people engaged in a struggle to regain their lost land, and most of the time, as a vanquished people who must look towards a better day in the future when they can regain their land. An examination of white attitudes to black people and vice versa,

²⁵ A.J. Chennells, "Settler Myths and the Southern Rhodesian Novel," Introduction.

²⁶ Terry Eagleton, *Marxism and Literary Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1976) vi.

will be made as well as that of the “values and feelings by which men [and women] experience their societies at various times...values and feelings...available to us only in literature.”²⁷

In discussing selected white Rhodesian novels, attention will be paid to content and character. These are important elements of fiction. “True character [for instance], must combine typicality and individuality.”²⁸ It will be interesting to see the kind of characters in the novels, whether they combine typicality and individuality, and how these characters affect the story being told in terms of plot, theme and point of view.

Content, on the other hand, combines with the author's style to form a closely knit unit in a work of art, as Eagleton asserts, “forms are historically determined by the kind of ‘content’ they have to embody; they are changed, transformed, broken down and revolutionised as that content itself changes. ‘Content’ is prior to form just as for Marxism it is *changes in a society’s material ‘content,’* its mode of production, which determine the ‘forms’ of its superstructure.”²⁹ Ernst Fischer adds:

The basic content of society (i.e. [sic] the forces of production—human beings[not only] with their tools and their ever-increasing knowledge of production, but also with their material and spiritual needs) is constantly changing and developing. The forms of society show a tendency to remain stable, to be passed down as an inheritance from generation to generation. Always it is the ruling classes with their political and

²⁷ *Ibid.*, vii.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

ideological machinery that cling to the traditional forms and make enormous efforts to invest them with the character of something eternal, immutable, and final. And it is always in the oppressed classes that new forces of production rise in revolt against antiquated production relations. The oppressed classes see nothing sacred or morally superior in the traditional forms but only a handicap to human progress.³⁰

In the case of Zimbabwe, the conservative ruling class was the colonial forces while the oppressed class was the indigenous African population, which sought to change its oppressive conditions under which it lived. This is the historical content that is re-enacted in the Rhodesian novel. Content, therefore, becomes very important in a work of art and the novel is no exception. The way the white Rhodesian novel will be understood will be partly determined by the position of the indigenous population within the history of Zimbabwe. The content and meaning of those novels are products of Zimbabwe's particular history and their study will illustrate the meaning of Marx's dictum, "it is not the consciousness of man that determines their being, but on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness."³¹

If we consider the economic structure of Zimbabwe before 1980, we see that the social relations between Africans and white people were bound up with the way they produced their material life: whites as masters and blacks as native or "kaffir" servants. This relationship is evident in the white Rhodesian novel. After 1980 the same relationship still appears in

³⁰ Ernst Fischer, *The Necessity of Art, A Marxist Approach* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1959 reprinted 1963; 1978) 129.

³¹ K. Marx and F. Engels, *The German Ideology* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964 reprinted 1968; 1976) 42. See also K. Marx and F. Engels, *On Literature and Art* (Moscow: Progress, 1976 reprinted 1978; 1984) 43.

the novel, perhaps as a reminder that the new political order where blacks now make up the ruling class, has not been reflected at the economic production level. Marx and Engels have asserted that “the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e. [sic], the class which is the ruling *material* force of society is at the same time the ruling *intellectual* force.” They continue:

The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, consequently also controls the means of mental production, so that the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are on the whole subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relations grasped as ideas; hence of the relations which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance.³²

Indeed, when there was a racist ruling class in Zimbabwe during the colonial period, the racist ideology was dominant in the day to day lives of the people. Black people in certain areas of employment such as the police, the army, the hotel industry and so on, also reinforced those racist ideas by beating up their fellow Africans or segregating against them in the use of certain social facilities. The segregation was legalised and so the police and all the other people who maltreated their fellow Africans had no choice but to enforce the laws of the day underpinned by the ruling ideas of the day which, as will be seen, are reflected in the novels. This is because art–literature in particular–is part of the superstructure of society. On this point, Eagleton writes,

Literary works are not mysteriously inspired, or explicable simply in terms of their authors' psychology. They are forms of perception, particular ways of seeing the world; and as such they have a relation to that dominant way of seeing the world which is the "social mentality" or ideology of an age. That ideology, in turn, is the product of the concrete social relations into which men enter at a particular time and place; it is the way those class-relations are experienced, legitimized and perpetuated. Moreover, men are not free to choose their social relations; they are constrained into them by material necessity—by the nature and stage of development of their mode of economic production.³³

To understand the novel by white Rhodesians, therefore, is to do more than interpret its symbolism, study its history and add footnotes about sociological facts of which it is made. "It is first of all to understand the complex, indirect relations between those works and the ideological worlds they inhabit—relations which emerge not just in 'themes' and 'preoccupations,' but in style, rhythm, image, quality and form."³⁴

The different racial groups emerge very clearly in the novels and it is quite easy to see where those groups stand in relation to the mode of production because literature permits us to 'feel' and 'perceive' the ideology from which it springs by putting that ideology into dramatic situations. Herein lies the difference between science and art—"science gives us a conceptual knowledge of a situation; art gives us the *experience* of that situation"³⁵ by dramatising it, moving it from a theoretical to a practical level with people actually living out the

³² Marx & Engels, *The German Ideology*, 67.

³³ Terry Eagleton, *Marxism and Literary Criticism*, 6.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

proposed ideology of the day. By doing this, it allows us to ‘see’ the nature of that ideology, and thus, it begins to move us towards that full understanding of it which is *scientific knowledge*. That is why some literary works end up being banned in some countries because they elucidate some ideology in such a manner as to make it appear wholly ridiculous. Ideology is given shape, structure and a determinate form in literature, thereby being transformed into something different all together.

An attempt will be made to elucidate content and character in the selected white Rhodesian novels, using an analytic method which will assist the reader to understand the works better from their historical and ideological points of view.

ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

Before discussing the various novels, it is helpful to focus on two crucial issues: the history of Zimbabwe before and soon after 1890; and the ideological concerns that surface in the white Rhodesian novel and how these are rooted in the ideology espoused by Cecil John Rhodes, founder of Rhodesia.

The historical background to Rhodesian/Zimbabwean literature in chapter two, helps the reader to find out what the country and its people were like before the advent of colonialism. What was it like too, soon after 1890 when the country’s name became Rhodesia? This background

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

information will also indicate the kind of setting Cecil John Rhodes and his Chartered Company found themselves in when they came to settle in Rhodesia in 1890. The next chapter, therefore, focuses on the historical background of Zimbabwe before and soon after 1890.

Chapter three discusses the ideological concerns that surface in the white Rhodesian novel and how these are rooted in the ideology espoused by Cecil John Rhodes.

Chapters four to nine discuss content and character in selected white Rhodesian novels. Each chapter, however, lays emphasis on facets of these on a specific type of a novel. For example, while chapter four discusses the historical novel, chapter five focuses on a particular content and character of those novels that evoke what has been viewed as the vengeance of the earth on the white man.

Chapter six continues the discussion of content and character in novels that largely critique settler ideology in Rhodesia. Chapter seven focuses on those novels that deal with African nationalism and the Second Chimurenga. Chapter eight discusses some Rhodesian women novelists and chapter nine deals with various other topics and concerns in the Rhodesian novel. These topics and concerns which are dealt with in several novels other than the ones discussed in the preceding chapters, do not necessarily warrant a full chapter for each of them.

Chapter ten is the conclusion to the thesis.

The reader is now invited to sit back and enjoy an exciting exploration of the pre-colonial history of Zimbabwe, the settler ideology and the Rhodesian literary works, some of which have not been in bookstores or on regular bookshelves in libraries for many years.