

From “The Members” to the “Good President”.
Debating nation in Zimbabwean communitytheatre

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FROM “THE MEMBERS” TO THE “GOOD PRESIDENT”. DEBATING NATION IN ZIMBABWEAN COMMUNITY THEATRE

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Abstract

This paper discusses representations of the nation in two Zimbabwean satires in the "community theatre genre". The background is the understanding of cultural expressions as a form of mass media; they are utterances which take part in hegemonic battles. The context is the political situation in Zimbabwe in 1999, when the opposition was gaining a foothold and there was a certain silent optimism concerning future development of democracy and strengthening of human rights. The plays criticise the regime. "The Members" (Amakhosi) criticises corrupt MPs and "Ivhu versus the State" (Rooftop) recounts the intervention in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The plays are analysed in relation to how they narrate actual conflicts in Zimbabwe. The analytical concepts derive from cultural studies and post-colonial theory which emphasise how the public sphere consists of conflicting discourses, and that political struggle is also a politics of representations. How do the characters experience their nation? - do they provide space for a multiplicity of national identities? Do they join counterhegemonic strategies for political change? It is demonstrated that both plays anticipate the crisis which been developing in Zimbabwe since 2000, and the plays' strategies of resistance are also the basis for the present opposition, including the latest play "The Good President".

Difficult living conditions and polarised narratives

In the 1990s the majority of Zimbabweans witnessed deterioration in their standard of living², whilst political and social criticism of the ZANU-(PF)-government increased. This criticism concerned the inadequate handling of economic and social problems and the government's misuse of power, corruption and violation of human rights. One result of this was increased support for the opposition; the opposition parties were strengthened and organisations mobilised at a grassroots level. The government responded with more control, struggling to win over the citizens' consciousness. Issues such as African authenticity, patriotic identity and national unity arrived on the agenda. The opposition argued for pluralism in both the understanding of identity and political representation. In this way the population became participants in a very polarised struggle over representations of the nation. Since 2000 the situation has developed into an explicit economic and political crisis; repressive legislation was brought into force. An intense struggle over definitions of national identity and unity flew

¹ This paper is based on a thesis delivered for the Cand. Polit. degree in Sociology. There I also discussed the plays' representation of gender, class, race/ethnicity and identity with emphasis on resistance. V. Glørstad, *Narratives of identity and nation in Zimbabwean theatre*. University of Oslo. Faculty of Social Science. Department of Sociology and Human Geography. 2005.

² *Human Development Report (HDR), Zimbabwe*. UNDP, Pover Reduction Forum, Institute of Developmentstudies. B. Raftopolous, .T.Hawkins, D. Amanor-Wilks (University of Zimbabwe. Harare. Dec 1998), p 40.

into full swing and resistance is now increasingly about extending and offering other narratives of identity and nation, in addition to surviving under difficult conditions.

The struggles were in 1999 summarized in four lines of conflicts³. The social and economic conflict relates to worries about social conditions worsening and increased economic problems and inequality. The political conflict-line unfolds between the openly critical civil society and the autocratic regime as Makumbe and Compagnon described the ZANU (PF) government in 2000⁴. The conflict concerns the view on the democratization of society and politics, the opposition argues also for strengthening the judiciary and respect for human rights. The problems in the country are attributed to lack of competence, transparency and responsibility. A regional conflict concerns the preferences of the northern /eastern regions of Zimbabwe at the expense of Matabeleland, Midland and the Ndebele population. The background is the 5th Brigades torture and killings of ZAPU- sympathizers in Matabeleland in the mid-eighties⁵. The atrocities ended with a Unity Accord in 1987, where ZAPU leaders were included in ZANU-PF. The opposition was then eliminated and made possible the de-facto one party state of ZANU-PF⁶.

In 1999 there were, especially in the government press signs of suggestions of a racial conflict between parts of the ruling black elite and the economically strong white society. The conflict is related to the social and political conflict. The whites are made enemies and scapegoats for the problems in Zimbabwe. CPN argues that this conflict lacks substance, and that racial tensions are made to cover the socio-economic conflict to distract criticism from the government⁷.

I see those conflictlines mentioned above as manifestation or expressions of the concept “the Zimbabwean nation”; including dominant and opposing discourses concerning governing, distribution, politics and identity. I describe how two theatre plays from Amakhosi and Rooftop challenged hegemonic notions of nation and open political spaces for differences⁸. After introducing my theoretical approach I will look at how the plays comment on the conflict lines, how they explicitly relates these conflicts to literally worries over their “nation”; i.e the one party regime ZANU-PF although none of the plays mention this party directly. One can have in mind that both the plays were written when ZANU-PF had a almost total majority in the parliament, but performed in a period of silent optimism in Zimbabwe⁹. One witnessed the launch of the main opposition party Movement of Democratic Change (sept 1999), a new independent Daily News and debate on constitution especially from

³ Conflict Prevention Network (CPN), *Zimbabwe: A Conflict Study of a Country without Direction*, (SWP-CPN Briefing Paper. Stiftung Wissenschaft Und Politik- European Union Analysis and Evaluation Centre. Brussel, Ebenhausen December 1998) , pp.9-10.

⁴ J. Makumbe and D. Compagnon, *Behind the Smokescreen. The Politics of the 1995 General Election* (Harare University of Zimbabwe Publication 2000), p.307. ZANU has dominated the executive and legislative assembly since independence in 1980. The constitution allows for a multi-party system, but opposition parties have been controlled both by financial restrictions, utilization of vagueness in electoral laws, and by attacks from ZANU and the security forces CIO (Central Intelligence Organisation) In 1999 the seats in parliament were distributed like this; ZANU-PF -117, ZANU (Ndonga) -2, Independent – 1. US Department of State. Country Report on Human Rights Practices. *Zimbabwe* Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour. February 23 2000, pp.1-2 <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/1999/279> [Reading date 15.09.2003]

⁵ Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) and the Legal Resources Foundation (LRF): *Breaking the Silence. Building True Peace. A Report on the Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands 1980 to 1988*. (Harare and Bulawayo 1997), p. 45

⁶ J. Makumbe and D. Compagnon, *Behind the Smokescreen*, p.1

⁷ Conflict Prevention Network, *Zimbabwe: A Conflict Study* , p.:9.

⁸ M.Winther Jørgensen, L. Philips, *Diskursanalyse som Teori og Metode. (Discourse-analysis as Theory and Method)* Roskilde Universitetsforlag. Roskilde. 1999), pp. 40, 59, 63-64

⁹ Welshman Ncube interview 2.10.1999. Harare

National Constitutional Assembly preparing for the referendum on the constitution in February 2000.

Theatre and representations

Community-theatre has since independence taken a critical role as a form of mass media¹⁰ and debated the lines of conflicts mentioned. In the 1980s and 1990s radical groups continued the tradition of discussion theatre from the guerrilla camps; this was the opposite of propaganda theatre. The aim was to inspire people to debate, and they were representing the voice and interest of the poorest "povo" in rural areas and townships (Amakhosi could be related to this tradition). In the last decade groups, often of mixed race, have performed plays as a combination of community theatre and more commercial theatre, which also attracts the urban middle-classes (Rooftop is an example). Although they also are critical of many aspects the one-party state they have often not this direct link to communitywork. But generally several theatre productions addressed the disillusion after the "the euphoria of independence" in terms of what they experienced as ZANU-PF "betrayal of the liberation war"¹¹.

Amakhosi Theatre Production is located in Matabeleland and Bulawayo, the "capital" of southeast Zimbabwe (approx. 800,000 inhabitants). Cont Mhlanga has been writing social plays and political satires since 1985; voicing the concerns of the townships and rural poor. "The Members" (1995), describes daily life whilst approaching the parliamentary elections of a corrupt member of parliament¹². Rooftop Promotion is based in Harare; the capital in the north of the country (approx. 2 mill. inhabitants) and its cultural activities is led by Daves Guzha. "Ivhu versus the State"¹³ aim was to stimulate citizens in relation to taking part in elections. Another key aim was to get the three "colours" (black, white and coloured) to talk to each other.

Amakhosi and Rooftop represent different approaches to cultural representations. Amakhosi is based in Matabeleland with a population mainly consisting of Ndebele, the second largest ethnic group (ca 18%, Shona 80 %). Amakhosi is also located in a township. Rooftop is based

¹⁰ P. Kaarsholm, 'Quiet after the Storm: Continuity and Change in the Cultural and Political Development of Zimbabwe'. In *African Languages and Cultures* 2. 229 (1989). p 184. See also P. Kaarsholm 'Mental Colonisation or Catharsis? Theatre, Democracy and Cultural Struggle from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe'. In *Journal of Southern African studies*, vol.16. no 2, (June 1990) and P. Kaarsholm, D. James, 'Popular Culture and Democracy in Some Southern Contexts; An Introduction'. In *Journal of Southern African Studies*. 26, Number 2. (June 2000) pp.189-208. M. Rohmer, *Theatre and Performance in Zimbabwe* (Bayreuth African Studies Bayreuth University 1999).pp 34-35

¹¹ J. Plastow, *African Theatre and Politics. The Evolution of Theatre in Ethiopia, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. A Comparative Study*. Cross Cultures 24. Readings in the Post/Colonial Literatures in English (Rodopi. Amsterdam Atlanta GA 1996), p.179

¹² C.M. Mhlanga, 'The Members'. Unpublished manuscript.(Bulawayo 1995). The manuscript I have used is based on transcripts from a performance at Township Square Cultural Center, Makokoba, Bulawayo in June 1999. Transcription: Fortune Ruzungunde. Translation from Ndebele: Fortune Ruzungunde and Nkosi Ndlela. Amakhosi, see also www.amakhosi.org. "The Members" was performed on 29 April 1999 at the Harare International Festival of the Arts (HIFA). Even though Amakhosis' play had first been performed in 1995, they won the public's prize for best local play at HIFA in 1999. This I take to signify that the play was still of the outmost topicality. "Ivhu" was performed between 18-30 May 1999 at the Theatre in the Park in Harare.

¹³ Rooftop Promotion, 'Ivhu versus the State'. Last version. Unpublished theatre manuscript. (Harare 1999). "Ivhu versus the State" is a private commissioned play for Rooftop Promotion by Daves Guzha; producer and director. Authors: Andrew Whaley, Dylan Wilson –Max and Elton Mujanana. See also <http://www.rooftopaudio.co.zw/>

in the capital and seat of government in a more affluent area. Their geographical location thus has political and socio-economic implications. Both productions focus on inequality, misuse of power and resistance. However, I intend to demonstrate that they express different histories of nationalist politics and voicing different interests in their concerns for the nation Zimbabwe.

Representations

The manuscripts and dialogue are the sources of the analysis of these plays. I use *representation* as a central concept; in a "sociology of culture" and discursive sense: "[b]etween the world and our grasping of it are the representations of the world"¹⁴. Representations are patterns of meaning created through language, images and discourses, patterns of meaning which again produce discourses and culture in a wider understanding. The article explores a textual effect in the plays¹⁵. But at the same time the plays also represents in a political understanding; I will describe who's interest and aspirations are voiced in the different plays, and by this also different conceptions of the nation¹⁶.

I draw on Kaarsholm's definition of cultural expression as; "... a certain level within social life where experience are articulated, communicated and manipulated. The level, in other words where the circumstances, events and conflicts of everyday, private, political and economic life are appropriated by consciousness, given form and made available for social dialogue and initiative"¹⁷. Cultural expressions can be viewed as media for the creation of identity, as conditions for both sustaining and challenging and subverting power and control. Postcolonial theory describes how cultural expressions take part in re-arrangements of "the reality"; as re-significations of representations of nation and how people wants to be represented politically. Cultural expressions may be interrogated as counter-narratives about antagonism and differences in the postcolonial state. The expressions explore the borders of the nation, actual and conceptual, and they do "not so much reject the nation as interrogate its repression and limits, passing nationalist discourses through and (...) calls attention to the fault lines of gender, class, ethnicity, region, partition"¹⁸.

The nation "Zimbabwe" and the ZANU-PF government as cultural power

A nation is generally seen as a necessary "machine" for development and modernity. National culture is described as a main source of people's cultural identity¹⁹; regional and ethnic

¹⁴ S. Hall, 'The Work of Representation'. In S.Hall (ed.): *Representation. Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices* (The Open University. Sage publication. London, Thousand Oaks. New Dehli 1997), p.17. M.Winther Jørgensen, L. Philips, *Diskursanalyse som Teori og Metode. (Discourse-analysis as Theory and Method)* Roskilde Universitetsforlag. Roskilde. 1999), pp. 40, 59, 63-64

¹⁵ M.Rohmer, *Theatre and Performance in Zimbabwe* (Bayreuth African Studies Bayreuth University 1999), p. 19.

¹⁶ Drawing on six months fieldwork, I have also used interviews and participated in the daily life of the theatre groups to gather knowledge on how the producers and actors experience the plays and the society. Reviews and audiences reactions also gave me an appreciation of the reception of the plays.

¹⁷ P. Kaarsholm, 'Mental Colonisation or Catharsis? Theatre, Democracy and Cultural Struggle from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe'. In *Journal of Southern African studies*, vol.16. no 2, (June 1990), p 38

¹⁸ E. Shohat, 'Framing Post-Third-Worldist Culture: Gender and Nation in Middle Eastern/North African Film and Video'. In *Jouvert. A Journal of Postcolonial Studies*. 1., Issue 1. (1997), p. 10,8. H. Gilbert, J. Tompkins, *Post-colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics* (Routledge. London. New York 1996).

¹⁹ S. Hall, Stuart, 'Chapter 6. The Question of Cultural Identity'. In S. Hall, T. McGrew, D. Held (ed.): *Modernity and its Future* (Polity Press in association with the Open University. Cambridge. 1992), pp. 292 -293, 296

differences are put under one political roof and a common language creates national cultures. To make political national states work, a common culture is constructed as "lifeblood and minimal shared atmosphere". Despite differences related to gender, ethnicity, language or class people are pulled together under this common roof and they are expected to participate in a "synchronic breath". In this way the people are made Zimbabwean citizens. The Zimbabwean national culture is then also discourses, symbolic power which construct meanings which again influence our understanding. The "Zimbabwean nation" appears as narratives in history books, literature, media and popular culture, and also as accepted statements on current debates as they appear in media as newspapers, radio and TV ²⁰. The narratives are for instance about how to cope with common experiences related to politics, socioeconomic conditions, regions and ethnicity/race.

In 1980 nationalism in Zimbabwe was described as being about 'national development'. "(...) modernisation and productivity, delivered through a centralised bureaucracy for the benefit of a disciplined citizenry"²¹. On the surface this corresponded to "civic" nationalism; according to Hammar and Raftopolous; the nation is seen as a community for all, irrespective of race, colour, creed, language, gender or ethnicity; the people are viewed as similar inhabitants imbued with rights. But as an answer on criticism from the left and disadvantaged groups the Zimbabwean nationalism developed exclusively; power and privilege came into the hands of a few and it started to define new essentialised categories of authenticity, belonging and loyalty²².

Amakhosi and Rooftop plays represents counter-narratives and dissonances when they ask whether identities, cultures and politics constructed in the narratives of Zimbabwe are as uniform as is purported. The plays represent voices of people who not are able to identify with the offered narratives and argue for the value of their own experiences.

How the plays tell about the Zimbabwean (Zanu-pf s) politics

By showing how the plays criticise nationalist politics along the conflictlines mentioned above I will argue that these criticism is deeply a struggle over the representation (in the discursive and political understanding) of their Zimbabwe. And in these worries the plays are articulating aspirations for specific groups, related to the theatre- group's different "localisation".

Representation of conflictlines in "The Members"

The story takes place over a couple of weeks and opens in the office of an elderly MP (of ZANU-PF we assume) **Mjaji** in Bulawayo. A critic describes him as "one of many corrupt, alcoholic, complacent veteran politicians"²³. He is working on his election campaign and issues for his rural constituency of **Mbomanzi**. In the beginning he is visited by a younger, ambitious party colleague, **Nkosenhle** (shortened to **Nkosi**) who is interested in changing the politics and the older MP's relation to his voters. After a while they find themselves in disagreement, and the veteran MP's loyal secretary, **Gloria**, tries to negotiate. The older MP is

²⁰ B. Lindgren, "Makt og Motmakt i Zimbabwe. Politisk Vold och Kulturell Motstand". (Power and Resistance in Zimbabwe. Political violence and Cultural Resistance). I *Haften for kritiska studier* 03,(2003), p. 60.

²¹ A.Hammar & B. Raftopolous, 'Zimbabwes unfinished business; Rethinking land, State and Nation. In A. Hammar, B. Raftopolous, S. Jensen (ed.): *Zimbabwes Unfinished business. Rethinking Land, State and Nation, in the Context of Crisis*. pp 24-25

²² Ibid, p. 25

²³ Ziana Library.The Herald 15.5.1995: How They All Loved This Latest From The "Watchdog"; Members Only, By Cont Mhlanga. Reviewed By Sheila Cameron.

also visited by a villager, **Nkomazana**. This is a highly committed citizen who wants the MP to help him establish a water project in the village, but Mjaji tries to avoid him. After a while the pressure from the younger colleague and the villager becomes so great that he must go to a rally in Mbomanzi, which ends up in disaster - the villagers ridicule him. At the same time the secretary starts a small revolt and the veteran MP thinks a female MP, **Mrs Jamila**, is competing with him for the villagers' votes. The old MP tries to get some money from donors for the water project, bribe the villager and use his last card - to get the President to attend a rally. The play, however, ends with his losing the election.

The conflict between the outspoken sections of civil society and the government is fronted in the "Members" by the criticism of the political culture of ZANU-PF; the (weak) constitution, "electoral malpractice" and "the culture of fear". Criticism of weaknesses in the constitution is expressed when the young MP Nkosi says to Mjaji: "I feel that party politics must change, especially policies that protect the top brass of the party (...) I feel we should remove all mechanism that makes us retain the First Secretary (Mugabe my remark) of the party at every congress. (...) We cannot have the same first secretary for 20 years. It's ridiculous (...). A party is not like a private shareholding company, a party is a public institution (...)"

The younger MP describes the need to limit the number of times the president can be re-elected and outlines the need for transparency in political processes, and is thus anticipating the National Constitution Assembly's suggestions for constitutional changes²⁴. It was brave of "The Members" in 1995 to suggest limiting the number of times the President can be re-elected. At that time political adversaries also were treated harshly²⁵ and it was only ten years since the atrocities in Matabeleland, to which the play indirectly refers which I will return to.

The older MP accuses the younger one of treachery; "You're a sell out... I'm not your friend, angisi size yakho mina (I am not of your age) Get out!" He interprets political disagreements as personal attacks and refers implicitly to a political culture in which opponents are met with draconian countermeasures, which the younger one refers in conversation with the secretary; "One of these days Gloria I will crash into a military truck or I will see a black dog". He is referring to political murders or attempted murder, and seeing black dogs is a warning sign. Zimbabwe has throughout its history witnessed torture, imprisoning and killings of political opponents. This culture of violence is described as being a part of "Mugabe's balancing skills"; "Potential rivals was either kicked out of the party (...). Other potentially dangerous politicians died in mysterious car accidents"²⁶. A culture of fear creates a symbolic form of violence. Makumbe and Compagnon refer to the historiography on Zimbabwe's liberation which indicates that coercion was decisive in Zimbabwe's rural areas to obtain political support from the ordinary people. This is the background of the culture of fear, seen as an essential component of political regulation in today's Zimbabwe. "When coercion become the norm, even the threat of coercion is sufficient for obedience to speedily follow"²⁷.

Worries about deteriorating social conditions, increasing economic problems and inequalities all appear in the play's description of indigenisation politics benefiting the elite, corruption, attempts to control donor money and ignorance of the regional water need as it is manifested in Mbomanzi. The villager Nkomazana tries to talk to MP Mjaji about the water

²⁴ National Constitution Assembly 1998

²⁵ US Department of State, Zimbabwe. Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1996. Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Right and Labour. United States Embassy in Stockholm 1996), p. 1.

²⁶ Conflict Prevention Network, *Zimbabwe: A Conflict Study*, p. 45.

²⁷ J. Makumbe, D. Compagnon, *Behind the smokescreen*, p.:302

project but he only gets hold on secretary Gloria in the office: "We didn't know my daughter, if these MP's are campaigning and wants votes, they promise us food, good health, everything. They even promise us tickets to go to heaven. They will be lying. Tell Mjaji when he comes here that if his asshole is shaking he must follow me to Mbomanzi. I will make sure he will no longer be the MP of Mbomanzi again (*Angrily and throwing his bag down*); after all he doesn't live in Mbomanzi, he doesn't feel what we feel (...)"

The villager shows how voters are bought with food supposed to go to drought-relief. Combined with the weaknesses of the electoral laws and corruption, this electoral malpractice results in elections which not can be declared "free and fair". Electoral malpractice has influenced the results of the all the elections, also in the 1995 election (the context of Members), in which ZANU-PF again won the majority of the seats in parliament²⁸.

But MP Mjaji feels safe as long as he has the support of the President, and he uses threats: "They can never take me out of power. No one can. There is only one person who can, and he is the only man I respect (*Goes to the picture frame [we see a picture of a hand puppet which looks like the party's first secretary, Mr. Mugabe]*). The only man who can do anything to me and he is the First Secretary of the Party, as from today Gloria, it's going to be war. I can massacre the whole lot koMbomanzi, ngiythumela amasotsha bathintithe azake ukuzwe (I can send a car and kill all those people)²⁹. Just keep my positions of power. As from today its going to be fire, fire, its going to be dirty politics ntanami until elections are over, its going to be politics (...) I am going back to Parliament povo or no povo (people)".

Here "The Members" implicitly points to what the CPN terms a regional conflict. Mhlanga lets the older MP say he can massacre the whole lot, which gives associations to the 5 Brigades atrocities (Gukurahundi) in Matabeleland. Besides the language in the play, Ndebele/ndenglish refers to this region; and Mbomanzi's water problems may relate to the lack of a Zambezi Pipeline. Mjaji has one of his filing cabinet drawers marked "water project". The Zambezi Pipeline is a project, promised since 1980 to supply water to the dry areas of Matabeleland but it has always been delayed, often due to political reasons.³⁰ Some people want the pipeline more than they want compensation for Gukurahundi. A newspaper article refers when the President apologized in a meeting with a congregation in Bulawayo, "the fifth brigade's massacres were regrettable and that victims would be compensated". But it is seen as a lip service; the President is simply pre-electioneering. The article refers one of the audience; 'Giving out cash will take forever. If they are sincere, they should just allow for a bit of development in Matabeleland. Give us the Zambezi pipeline and the dams and everyone will be grateful'³¹.

The lack of responsibility on behalf of the poor is a central theme, as Mackey Tickey, the actor who plays MP Mjaji formulates it:

With "the Members"; now, the one we have, the one we have is too old; we can't compete in a rat race. (...). So we need new ideas. That's what's all about (in)"Members Only". These guys who have been grabbing that power, they do not want to leave. They have taken enough, they should leave (...). The older you get, the more your brain rust. (...) The third generation is now fighting them and while the medium generation is not fighting them – we are keeping quiet. And when we starts reacting they says it is politics,.. aha.. (*laughs*). They are very dumb. *They should open space. They should be grooming us so that when we grow up, we groom the other generation.* Then you find that life become easier. If they had been grooming our generation, they would not have been talking like this. The generation would

²⁸ J. Makumbe, D. Compagnon, *Behind the smokescreen*, p. 16, 18-19

²⁹ Members are using ndebele and ndenglish (mix ndebele/english) in several parts.

³⁰ When ZANUPf lost to the MDC in Bulawayo in the parliamentary election in 2000, the water pipe was put back onto the agenda so that people would not have a reason to vote for the MDC (Financial Gazette 15.10.2000).

³¹ ZimBizMagazine 08.11.1999-Happenings

have been busy fixing things (...). So that when you go further you find that it is prepared; unlike grabbing every thing".³²

Through the positions the play takes on political and socio-economic issues and regional conflict, the play is countering how the nation is managed from the ZANU-PF government. Dominant discourses are challenged by articulating the views of the poor villager, woman and the young more radical MP, along the counterhegemonic positions in the conflictlines.

Representation of conflictlines in "Ivhu versus the State"

In "Ivhu versus the State" the story takes place on one evening. Three men meet up, perhaps on steps outside a shop or in a beer garden. The men represent each of Zimbabwe's "races"; black **Reward** from the township, white **Stuart** from the northern affluent suburbs and **Troy** from Arcadia, the 'coloured' suburb. They have received party invitations from an anonymous state, and are asked to come in their traditional clothes "and bring a suitable bottle". The men cannot find any host and reflect on their pasts as black, white and coloured men. Through different tableaux, a discussion on contemporary Zimbabwe takes place: the intervention in DRC, the land-question, the politicians. Their views are coloured by their race and class-position in society. To their surprise, a student-like **teenage girl Susan** suddenly appears, and she says she is their host. The guys get scared because they do not know who she is, and suspect that she may be from the security services? They suddenly then transform into police interrogators and start torturing her with crocodile clips, as the journalists in *The Standard* where tortured to reveal their sources. But after a while they come back to their senses. Susan then introduces herself as a judge with a message on cooperation and dialogue. In their debate on the land question, she lets the men perform the colonising process up to today. She tries to make them see that the relation between the races and the lack of unity are the source of Zimbabwe's problems.

The political situation and racial "problem" is expressed in the men's worries over the invitation. Stuart feels he is a target because he is white, "You take my situation, right? My home is my castle. But outside, I am a target, I am white. They think just because I am white I am against, I am versus the state. Of course I am versus the state, everyone is versus the state". Reward remembers that also blacks were tortured; besides he has written a letter to the editor which he fears was too critical; "Then twelve days later I get invited to a party *against* the state. Which paper gave my name and details to the state"? Troy believes this a recruitment to a political party; "TUPAC. Trade Union Party Against Corruption. I'm all for it, as a worker. But I'll join silently". A central message in "Ivhu versus the State" is that the lack of dialogue between the races is the reason for many of the country's problems. The arguments about their not being able to unite for the common good and the conclusion that they need to talk to each other and perhaps give up their erstwhile identities imply that the race conflict is at least in part seen as a reason for Zimbabwe's problems. The problems could be solved by giving up the prevailing identities and trying someone else's.³³

Worries over deteriorating social conditions, economical problems and increased inequality are referred to by pointing to the intervention in DRC, and the enrichment which followed,

³² Mackey Tickey. Interview 30.6.1999 Amakhosi/TSCC, Bulawayo, my emphasis.

³³ However, this antagonism between white and black was not very widespread in 1999. At that time, race was not seen as an everyday conflict among most of the ordinary, poor Zimbabweans. It was a mere line of propaganda developed to stir up trouble in race relations (D. Blair, *Degrees in Violence. Robert Mugabe and the Struggle for Power in Zimbabwe* (Continum. New York. London. 2002), p.:42-43, Conflict Prevention Network, *Zimbabwe. A conflict study*, pp. 27-30).

which many assumed the rest of the world was not aware of before the UN report came out³⁴. The men refer to some Zimbabwean businessmen, who have been involved in shady business deals in DR Congo, with other Zimbabwean military personnel and politicians. They see that protecting them is the reason for the intervention. "Reward: And body-guarding the chefs who are using Billy's³⁵ trucks to ship out the minerals".

The story about the Standard case can also be interpreted as being a desire for democratization and criticism of the violation of human rights. It refers to the government's reducing freedom of speech to avoid political criticism. The men use torture with "crocodile clips" as CIO did on the journalist from the independent newspaper (Ray Choto), *The Standard* after the newspaper had written an article in February 1999 about a planned military coup because of dissatisfaction in the army over the intervention in DRC³⁶.

Ivhu's presentation of the corruption problems shows how money and property which belongs to the community is mere loot with which the powerful can fill their pockets, "Troy: (...) We are losing millions right here at home. (...) Reward: But now affirmative action affirms the chosen few. Indigenous business is business for a few who are more indigenous than others. Troy: It's like rats in a cage - as the food keeps coming, they get fatter and fatter and then you turn off the food and they start eating each other". Ivhu refers to a culture of self-enrichment; the lack of interest in sharing with the community; and by this the play voices interests of the disadvantaged. This is also expressed through the land question debate; where it's argued for the importance of access to resources as arable land and more equal distribution.³⁷

The political conflict is ascribed to the lack of competence and accountability of the ageing leadership. They don't understand the "the working of a modern state"³⁸. "Ivhu versus the State" ironically describing the parliamentarians as handicapped. Reward refers to how the fund for compensation of injured war veterans was looted by politicians who argued they were more handicapped than they were.

.... Our cabinet, according to official reports, is made up of paraplegics and spastics and mentally deficient". Stuart: "And they deliver speeches like that (*Troy and Stuart make like mad things.*) Reward: the nation needs a strait jacket.³⁹

Stuart blames Mugabe's political choices for the problems; "You know, when you look at it, Mugabe is a kind of fucked-up visionary. He's got this idea that we have to be great". Susan, Troy, Reward and Stuart criticize the parliamentary politics which was also a central theme in "Members". The parliament's weak critical role toward the executive president is made explicit. The use of a judge as a host may also indicate a wish for a more effective and responsible judiciary.

³⁴ UN Security Council, *Report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo*. UN Security Council S/2001/357 12 April 2001. http://www.afrol.com/Countries/DRC/documents/un_resources_2002_govt_zim.htm. [Readingdate 21.03.2003], paragraph 22-35.

³⁵ Rautenbach

³⁶ D. Blair, *Degrees in Violence. Robert Mugabe and the Struggle for Power in Zimbabwe* (Continum. New York. London. 2002), p. 41.

³⁷ Troy argues for a plan which had already been made at an "International Donors Conference on Land Reform and Resettlement". The meeting was held between the government and donors in September 1998, and plans for resettling and finances were approved (Human Development Report, Zimbabwe (Harare 1998), p. 18).

³⁸ Conflict Prevention Network, *Zimbabwe: A Conflict Study*, p. 28

³⁹ The portrait of the parliamentarians as "paraplegics and spastics and mentally deficient" is a common postcolonial strategy in theatre aimed at ridiculing the people in power by referring to their bodily defects. Deformed bodies dissolve "the oppressors" as positions.

Ivhu is obviously critical of the ZANU-PF government; it comments on the current conflicts in the nation and counters hegemonic positions. But we do not see the characters in a specific and local actual struggle in Ivhu. It's the positions of the black, white and coloured generally which are articulated through a description of problems at a general "national" level. When the criticism not is related to a local struggle (as in Members) it may become weaker. In addition it could also be a problem that the category race is used as an static identity-positions to argue from , we are not shown the actual common political work going on blacks, whites and coloured together. Members chooses to make race as a category absent, by not mentioning it. However Ivhu points to important solutions, the need for dialogue and leave ones racial identity behind or put it in the "communitychest".

Representations of the nation Zimbabwe

I have now described how the plays criticises the ZANU-PF politics and articulates the interests of marginalized groups, and as especially Members, take part in their struggles. The plays strategies along conflictlines and subject recognizers are summarised in the figure below.

Figure 1. Variables of analysis; dominant discourses and the resistance in the plays

Variables of analysis -lines of conflicts -subject- recognizers – the nation	Representation – strategies in hegemonic discourses	Representations in "The Members"	Representations in "Ivhu versus the State"
Conflict lines 1. Political 2. Socio-economic 3. Race 4. Ethnicity	1. Opposition between the people's party (Zanupf) and traitors (MDC) (Closing of political space). 2. International society (former colonies) has created great problems for the economy (polarisation). 3. The whites/ British are the enemy. The Africans as a race must stand together (essenstialism). 4. Co-optation.	1. Refers to constitutional weakness for a real democracy, and an MPs who do not take their task seriously. Listening to the people is described as a solution. 2. Refers to unequal distribution and corruption. 3. Race is not mentioned as a factor 4. Argues "softly" for a improvement in the Ndebeles' living conditions. Argues for inclusion of new elements (i.e. arguments) in dominant discourses along all conflictpoints.	1. Refers to a weak parliament which does not take the people seriously. 2. Refers to exploitation, corruption and inequalities land a fair distribution as a part of the solution. 3. Race as an explanatory factor. Refers to the need for dialogue between the races as a solution. 4. Refers only to Shona ethnicity. Argues for including some new elements in dominant discourses, especially related to point 1 and 2.
Class/discourses on distribution.	Unequal distribution of land has created the differences in the society. In addition unfavourable conditions from the world bank.	Refers to exploitation and a culture of self enrichment as reasons for the unequal distribution. Mjaji's business-possibilities are contrasted with Nkomazana's poverty. But Nkomazana is the one who challenges this explicitly and does the local development job. Post-Marxist understanding of economic struggle. Deconstructs the relation governing - governed	Refers in depth to a culture of self-enrichment and a "get rich" discourse. But does not refer to a specific/individual opposition against this, such as Reward's wish for better distribution. Except for " we as civilians must stand together". Equivalence of class and race.

Race	Argues for a patriotism related to race; authenticity as solution to Zimbabwe's problems.	Does not mention the signifier race. Implicit shows that racial antagonism is a smokescreen to hide other difficulties. Avoids an essential use of the race category.	Sees lack of dialogue between the races (white, black, coloured) as reason for Zimbabwe's problems. But can be interpreted as essential use of race in part.
Gender	Discrimination of women on the basis of social structures and values. Dominance of a patriarchal male role.	Visualises workplace discrimination. Refers to Gloria who challenges value-oriented discrimination. Shows plural gender positions under development. Disidentification. Nkosi and Nkomazana as positive male positions, Mjaji as an old-fashioned, discriminating male role	Gives a woman a seer's position. Susan becomes a catalyst, organiser, the one who knows. Little specific gender-role challenges. Icon more than essential. The men are willing to learn, but in terms of gender positions they display traditional characteristics

I would argue that the struggles in the play can be interpreted as an explicit expression of concern with their Zimbabwean nation. I will now also show that they express concern at another level. More precisely how they express the concept nation literally, including how they discuss representation in the political understanding and voice resistance.

"The Members" - "One Nation"

The word "nation" and "Zimbabwe" are used in a rally at Mbomanzi which the President attends. Besides this, these signifiers are not used:

MJAJI: Forward with people's party
 AUDIENCE: Forward!
 MJAJI: Forward with people' party
 AUDIENCE: Forward!
 MJAJI: One party state!
 AUDIENCE: One Zimbabwe!
 MJAJI: One Zimbabwe.
 AUDIENCE: One nation!

Mjaji, the audience and the President use the word "one" in front of "nation" and Zimbabwe", and they also add "one party state". One unity of the people is argued for, represented as one nation, one-party state and one Zimbabwe. But the unity MP Mjaji argues for, as I have shown, actually excludes the villager Nkomazana; "which Nkomazana" as Mjaji says when Nkomazana for the third time arrive his office. Mjaji excludes his secretary Gloria; "do you know you bite the hands that feeds you" he says when she argues for better working conditions. And he threatens the younger MP Nkosi with murder "You young members of the party who go against us. One day I will deliver a speech at your funeral".

This emphasis on unity can be seen as a necessary ritual practice of inclusion, because the nation, as the government is governing it, is under pressure from differences and the existing leadership lacks support. It seems necessary to symbolically draw people into this unity, and let the people be reminded of it because people try to escape it in different ways. By satirizing the attempts for unity "The Members" criticizes the strategy and consequences of maintaining a *de facto* one-party state of Zimbabwe; where a necessary unity is obtained by subsuming (and ignoring) all differences under the roof of one party⁴⁰.

⁴⁰ J.M. Makumbe, D.Compagnon, *Behind the Smokescreen*.p. 1.

The Members further emphasise and criticise Mjaji's egoism; "I am going back to Parliament povo or no povo", Mjaji displays his meaning of representation: "M.P member of parliament, that's not it, MP. Member of Power".⁴¹ Mjaji is signaling a community, a MPs' club and is setting this up in opposition to the "povo". The people are a unity only if they remain demobilized:

MJAJI: Any international seminars coming your way? NKOSI: Oh yes, as always I will be attending a seminar in Denmark some time to come. MJAJI: Wow Fantastic! You know I love these seminars, drinking and dining on behalf of the poor. NKOSI: You know, sometimes I wonder how some people would do without these ignorant masses sinking in poverty? MJAJI: Just keep them that way ngoba lingabavusa (because if you wake them up) they will be problem.

In Mjaji's and the first secretary's opinion it seems that there is no room for different ways of being national and a Zimbabwean, other than being a member of a sleeping "povo"; a vast yet vague mass of obedient and loyal women and men.

Gloria, Nkosi, and Nkomazana challenge the understanding of one nation through their specific struggles. They seek to extend the political space and argue implicitly for a different content for and governing of Zimbabwe. Mhlanga let Nkosi challenges the idea of Zimbabwean people being that of a sleeping mass: "(...) Look Mjaji, the people you represent have got eyes and ears they know what is happening around them" and "You have to talk to your people and share ideas". In Nkosi's version of the nation the people are thus participating in a different way than they do in Mjaji's statements: "They hear, they see but don't think, they only listen to what us, politicians tell them". But for Tholo, one of the villagers, the Zimbabwe of today is not the one for which he struggled and lost a leg he tells Mjaji at the rally:

Look at him (Tholo refers to Mjaji) people. I am now limping, is this not because of the liberation war. What was I dying for? Mjaji? We voted for you, for the 1st, 2nd and you never came back. Now he is here again. Don't play games with us. We no longer need you. What do you want? Money? You want our votes so that you can go and sleep in Parliament. I can even beat you up. People, we no longer want to vote for Mjaji. He is playing us in the dust like football.⁴²

Nkomazana and Tholo are referring to exclusions from the historical narrative as independent nation when they criticise Mjaji's hiding behind a simplified nationalistic narrative, as he says "we started the revolution, we pushed it through and no one, I repeat, no one is going to stop us from driving this country where we want it to go, right my little boy."

Nkosi, Gloria and Nkomazana are concerned about their nation, though they use the term "country" as a signifier, as Nkosi says: "What I'm talking about is what the country needs and the party needs". As if the concept nation belongs to the ruling ZANU-PF discourses. The characters try to act themselves out of limiting versions of Zimbabwean national identities. In this way, they are also taking the needs of the country into consideration and poor peoples aspirations, new viable "povo" positions are offered; other ways of being a woman, villager, and opposition politician.

A lack of political representation at local level are also pointed at when Nkomazana accuses Mjaji of: "representing us when you don't consult". Zimbabwe's progress is questioned. Discourses about the ZANU-PFs right to decide and fix interpretations of reality, "people's unity" and "top-down ideas" about the relationship between the governors and the governed, rich and poor are challenged. The arguments for unity of *party-state-nation* are questioned.

⁴¹ The original title was "Members Only" but "Only" was removed because they were afraid the audience should believe that the performance was only for members (Mackey Tickeyes 19.7.1999. Tandais Shebeen. Makokoba.)

⁴² Original text in Ndebele/Ndenglish. Translation by Fortune Ruzungunde.

By this I will argue that representing the nation is in fact the central concern in their criticism of the nationalist politics. This is also expressed in a kind of new historytelling in the play. Firstly by how Gloria and Nkomazana succeed with their projects and in addition, there is indirectly an argument for a kind of soft ethnicity; a constructive agenda for minorities to be seen⁴³. Mhlanga argues for the inclusion of the history of the Ndebele minority; as shown the language is Ndebele, the "water project" may associate with the need for the Zambezi pipeline, Mjaji refers to the 5th Brigade's massacres in Matabeleland. But it is not an essentialised or "hard" ethnicity strategy here; the aim is to make a group visible, display misuse of power which disallows parts of the population and at the same time argues for fairer distribution of resources. Mhlanga says: "They are complaining that all the work that comes from me or Matabeleland is tribalistic. Then they shall understand that it is themselves they are seeing; results of how they are governing". He argues that if they "had governed effectively they would not have been seeing a tribal face". He refers to how he uses theatre to express "how people are developed and governed. It will always show you the level of development". And "because we have been such and such ruled and controlled tribalistically; that's why the work comes out"⁴⁴.

Bhabha refers to how the margins within societies currently experienced may represent counter-narratives which "wake and split the totalising borders of the nation – both actual and conceptually, and by this disturbing the ideological manoeuvres which gives imagined communities essential ideas"⁴⁵. In "The Members" space is provided for marginal experiences within Zimbabwe, which adds new voices to the narratives of an inclusive nation. Mhlanga's statements emphasize this; he does not want a nationalism which refers to different ethnicities as tribalistic:

...and we are saying to hell with that kind of nationalism. It is not applicable to 2000. All of us are getting proud of who we are, all of us is going to see something different each day. I don't want to eat the same Ndebele food everyday. I want to be able to go out and eat that Tonga food and have a Shona dish. That's how we are brought up. Because of so much information from all of the world, that prepares you mentally to see many different things. So the age of information has rubbed out the age of nationalism were everybody is the same. Talks the same language; have the same political parties, painting the houses in the same colours, that is out, out.⁴⁶

"Ivhu versus the State"; worries over Zimbabwe

Ivhu also represents a concern for the nation as expressed in the characters' worries over their nation. In *Members* the characters avoided using the word nation. In *Ivhu* the characters use the word nation and Zimbabwe explicit. The men and Susan have the feeling of being inscribed in a problematic national discourse. Rewards solution is robust, putting the politicians and the nation in a straightjacket. The judge and host; Susan describes how the men feel: "You've got Zimbabwe down your throat. A bad case of it". Reward: "You talk like it is a disease", as if the nation as it appears to them is an illness. Susan is the catalyst who

⁴³ P. Kaarsholm, 'The Ethnicisation of Politics and the Politicisation of Ethnicity: Culture and Political Development in South Africa'. In *The Journal of Development Research. "Ethnicity, Gender and the Subversion of Nationalism"*. 6. 2. (Dec 1994), p.38.

⁴⁴ C. M. Mhlanga. Dramatist. Interview 30.6.1999. Bulawayo.

⁴⁵ H.K. Bhabha : 'DissemiNation, Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation. In H.K. Bhabha (ed.): *Nation and Narration* (Routledge. London. New York.1990b), p.300

⁴⁶ C.M. Mhlanga. Interview 30.6.1999. Bulawayo.

wants to give their understanding of the nation a new positive content. The men refer to a past where they felt important during the liberation war as inhabitants; Reward; "... they (the guerrillas) were the fish, we civilians were the water. They needed us to swim". It's the idea of active citizens they are advocating, where they were respected as the povo, now they seem to have a feeling of being mis-used by the ZANU-PF regime. They feel as in Members, that they are treated as an obedient mass, they are "the people" the government wants them to be.

In "Ivhu" the "nation" and "Zimbabwe" are sometimes depicted as being synonymous with the regime, which the characters are fed up with, but the "nation" and "Zimbabwe" are also portrayed in another way, something they would like to seek out without exactly knowing what it is. Through the play they try to define other ways of being national. Susan is a catalyst, and tries to show the men other ways of filling the signifier "nation" and their national identity as Zimbabweans constructively. And also overcome what Stuart experiences as the differences between the races; "Chalk and bloody cheese. Oil and water. Fire and paraffin". Reward: Pashamwari wedu. A kind of unity. Stuart: "Since when was there unity? Sure we try, every so often we try, but the gaps are so big between us, there's no hope of ever coming together. Troy: Because old Reward here comes from his shack or pondok or numbered kaya somewhere in the location and old Stu here has his northern suburbs, villa or farm or both, and me? Flatland Arcadia".

When they ask who Susan is she answers "I am a Zimbabwean", and gives it a positive connotation, she is indicating the people are more than synonymous with the different races. But do they figure out what a common, positive, national project can be? Troy uses Martin Luther King's speech: "one day all men will be free" in satirizing the current Zimbabwean intervention in DRC: (*In the mock-voice of Martin Luther King*) I have a dream. I have dream that one day all the gold and diamonds in the Congo will be ours to share around. I have a dream that one day all those little starving, poor suffering Congolese children will be little, poor starving suffering Zimbabweans". The original content of that speech about equality and justice could also reflect their implicit, unarticulated visions for Zimbabwe.

Guzha, the producer of Ivhu wants a kind of patriotism which prevents people speaking only within segregated groups:

We are supposed to advocate a whole new movement of; nothing other than, patriotism. Yes, we can act common, we are Zimbabwean. That's the most important. (...) As this is our country, we can still go back and wear your (...) Scottish outfit, (...) Shona outfit; or your colour outfit attitude. That what makes you you. That is something bigger; that is basically patriotism (...) We get them talking to each other; which is good, which is an interesting thing about this country; people talk. But they are talking in clusters (...). Once /the moment you say I am Zimbabwean, I am patriot of this country. Then there is no way you are going to turn a blind eye on someone, who is lesser than you. Because the problem will be staring you straight in your face⁴⁷.

The starting point is that people must lay aside their racial identities and start a dialogue. Susan asks the characters to come in traditional clothes, and play out the different history of blacks and whites in Zimbabwe from the start of colonisation. She then later asks them to put their fixed racial identity in the community chest and "to try someone else's dress". Attempts are made to establish Zimbabwe anew, as another place, another representation, by playing out Zimbabwe's history. But this national story is told in the traditionally official approved version, the "essentialised" one. The whole story is not told, e.g. the history of Zimbabwe as a nation with different ethnicities, the atrocities in Matabeleland are left out.

Troy's statement: "Wives and kids do not know where to run" shows their feeling of powerlessness may refer to a lack of new discourses which offer alternative ways of

⁴⁷ D. Guzha Producer. Leader of Rooftop Promotion. Interview 16.9.1999. Margolis Plaza .Harare.

belonging to the nation Zimbabwe; not the "belonging" which ZANU-PF makes dependent on land and race. But what are they going to fight? Guzha says the characters see the state and governments as the enemy: "the characters themselves identified one enemy; that's the state itself; it is the government"⁴⁸. The enemy is set synonymous with the state and government. But also sometimes the nation, as when Reward says the nation needs a straightjacket. It's the problem associated with the "African one-party state", which binds together the notions of party/ /state/ regime which is at stake. But these unclear borders between the regime, state and the nation may cause confusion; it is difficult to articulate alternatives. When the state is synonymous with the regime (although that's the fact); its difficult to articulate a concept of positive power. The state should ideally be a necessary instrument for distribution and protection; in Members this is made possible through a constructive MP (possible presidential candidate) character Mrs. Jamila. Ivhu has fewer reflections on adequate political representation. But Ivhu as Members point to the civilians, although Members perhaps are closer to in referring to specific struggles.

Zimbabwean multiculturalism

Generally the degree of acceptance or ignoring of difference indicates how different people experience that they are heard and also can contribute to the Zimbabwean communities - in other words, the degree to which the regime may be said to be practicing a radical multiculturalism, building on people's differences to the advantage for the whole community. Radical or critical multiculturalism argues for institutionalising of heterogeneity as it appears in new knowledge-production, in new identity positions and social movements⁴⁹. An "inclusive" society gives spaces for people's performance of different "citizen" identities⁵⁰. In contrast "light" versions of multiculturalism (liberal and left-liberal multiculturalism) are problematised by Goldberg because of assimilation of differences⁵¹.

I have explored how Members and Ivhu challenge ZANU-PF repressing positions along different conflictlines; the socioeconomic, political, regional and racial . In both plays the current regime is portrayed as ignoring positive differences, it's as Ncube said⁵²; only acceptance of differences as a rhetoric strategy. This is characteristic of conservative multiculturalism; which argues for the hegemonic role of the dominant culture (broadly understood); the monoculture which other groups needs to adjust to⁵³. But how are the plays opening spaces for differences in politics, history and for identity positions?⁵⁴ The Members do this by demonstrating omissions in the history writing (as the atrocities in Matabeleland) and by this challenging actual hegemonic discourses, moving beyond restricted official approved versions. Nkosi, Gloria and Nkomazana are also interested in their Zimbabwe, not as obedient inhabitants, but as people prepared to fight for specific local and national political issues. And in these struggles they are creating new identities as citizens whom can rest on other than the offered dominant (ZANU-PF) national discourses; on trans-national discourses about human rights and democracy: "Citizenship is not just a certain status. It is also an

⁴⁸ D. Guzha, Interview 2.6.1999. Harare

⁴⁹ P. MacLaren, 'White Terror and Oppositional Agency: Towards a Critical Multiculturalism'. In D.T. Goldberg, (ed.): *Multiculturalism. A critical reader* (Oxford UK. Blackwell 1994), p.53. H. K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London. Routledge 1994), p. 34.

⁵⁰ W. Kymlicka, W. Norman (ed.), *Citizenship in Diverse Societies* (Oxford University Press. Oxford. 2000)

⁵¹ D. T. Goldberg, (ed), *Multiculturalism. A critical reader* (Oxford UK.. Blackwell. 1994)

⁵² Welshman Ncube interview 2.10.1999. Harare

⁵³ D. T. Goldberg, (ed), *Multiculturalism*, p.11

⁵⁴ M. Winther Jørgensen, L. Philips, *Discourse-analysis as Theory and Method* (Roskilde 1999), p 40, 59, 63-64.

identity, an expression of ones' membership in a political community"⁵⁵. These are, I would argue, ideas for a radical multiculturalism expressed in *Members*. As Mhlanga says;

We believe that it needs to be ethnic diversity, and we need to bring that diversity to create national identity. So you have all of it. There is a blanket with many colours, that's all we want. We didn't want one red blanket or one black blanket. There is so much that the world can learn from each people (...) Nationalism is gone. Now we are talking about a different interpretation of society and community. I don't have a word for it, but it is ethnic diversity. (...) In 62 it was not just about nationality, it was about who we are - Immediately it got lost when people were in power. The basic principle is power to the people; the governing of the people, by the people; that's the definition of democracy. Do we have it; no we don't. So why are we so scared to have it?

Ivhu touches important questions concerning sameness and difference and tries to interrupt a ZANU-PF version of unity. Susan tells the men to take off their racial national identities and put it in the community-chest, and be open for others identity. And they are at the beginning hesitatingly stating "we - the same". But what kind of unity or "sameness" is possible which not is the ZANU-PF version? "Sameness" may refer to a concept for unity and similarity which does not articulate differences in a positive, inclusive way. Instead it implies there being a need for Zimbabwean people to be similar to one another to work in a community. "Sameness" may then have traces of liberal multiculturalism, a general (reductive) humanism, "the universality of man" which ignores differences. At the same time, however, a common Zimbabwean national project presupposes a kind of "sameness", which needs to include differences. In fact there are two competing processes going on in this kind of multicultural struggle. Petersen describes it well in the context of SA;

The evolution of a broad, non-racial, national identity on the one hand; and the emergence of racial and ethnic identities in new forms, on the other. Exactly how these two processes are to be reconciled is what constitutes perhaps the most important challenge (...) For in a context where difference—multiplied, reified, extended, extrapolated and systematically insinuated—has been the basis of domination and oppression, talk of its liberating possibilities has seemed alien and alienating. And so it is not "difference," but the struggle to be "the same," to establish a state on the basis of constitutionally secured legal equality, that has been the basis of the fight against apartheid and for the construction of a new nation ⁵⁶.

"Sameness" may be defined as a constitutionally secured legal equality built on the basis of agreement on differences, "contingent nationalism" in Browns conception⁵⁷. Differences can mean acceptance of differences in experience and knowledge - not just race.

In Ivhu the men are asked to take off what apparently makes them different, i.e. the race positions. But they are not offered the opportunity to articulate their own different experiences along the conflictlines in other "citizen" discourses. The lack of these other possibilities may indicate that Ivhu operates within a notion of liberal multiculturalism, or express the Zimbabwean society in this understanding. For the actors to have been able to discuss and develop a new politics of identity and difference (i.e. radical/critical multiculturalism), new discourses and subject positions would have had to be offered in the play which went beyond leaving ones racial identities. There was a first draft of Ivhu where the characters were shown in their daily positions and fighting with their specific problems.

⁵⁵ R. Mattes, 'Do diverse Social identities Inhibit Nationhood and Democracy? Initial considerations from South Africa', In M. Palmberg, (ed.): *National Identity and Democracy in Africa* (The Human Sciences Research Council of South Africa, the Mayibuye Centre at the University of Western Cape and the Nordic Africa Institute. 1999), p. 274.

⁵⁶ R. M. Petersen, *Chapter III. Discourses of difference and sameness in South Africa. Race, Racism and non-racialism*. [http:// www.crvp.org/book/Series02/II-6/chapter_iii.htm](http://www.crvp.org/book/Series02/II-6/chapter_iii.htm). [Reading date 04.11.2004 (2000)], p. 3.

⁵⁷ D. M. Brown, 'National Belonging and Cultural Difference'. In *Journal of Southern Africa Studies*. 27. (December 2001). p. 766.

Reward was a man receiving a plot of land which later was taken by an official. Troy a coloured businessman losing the opportunities of indigenization economic politics. They both related their problems to a weak government. Stuart was the one with an identity-crisis and Zimbabwe as a nation was only a thin line which he wasn't able to balance on; as if the nation was defined too narrowly for them all. As I have shown, the version of the play which was actually performed was not that specific.

Despite this Ivhus argument for dialogue and identities is a first step for providing specific places for differences which may contribute to expanding the discourses of the Zimbabwean nation. Differences can be included without assimilating everyone into one, single discourse: "add to without adding up" which is Bhabha's description of these processes⁵⁸, as in radical multiculturalism. And one saw in 1999 that social movements about identity and politics were beginning to grow in Zimbabwe. Based on the above discussion the representation-strategies concerning the nation can be summarised as in the figure below:

Figure 1. Representations of the nation

Analyses - variables	Representation-strategies in hegemonic discourses	Representation-strategies in "The Members"	Representations in " Ivhu versus the State"
The Nation	The nation as a "cultural umbrella" is defined by Zanupf, including defining what being a "real and proper" Zimbabwean is. No space for diverging views. A narrow patriotism and essential history telling. Conservative multiculturalism?	Mjaji argues for the nation like Zanupf. Gloria, Nkosi and Nkomazana reject the unity and argue for space for their differences in creating their Zimbabwe. Challenges a national identity, and offers different ways of being national. Towards a radical multiculturalism?	The nation is described as sick. The state no longer takes the people seriously. The characters refer to real discomfort with this, and suggest dialogue as a solution, that civilians also have power. But the struggles are not shown in any specific way. Refers to few new ways of being national. Liberal multiculturalism?

Conclusion; foreshadowing the criticism after 1999

Since ZANU-PF lost the referendum on the constitution in February 2000 and MDC won 57 seats in parliament in June 2000, the government has increasingly used racial antagonism, the land question and repressive legislation to retain power. In the parliamentary elections in March 2005 ZANU-PF again won the majority of seats, though again the elections were not considered free and fair. The crisis is described by Hammar and Raftopolous as connected to three analytical and empirical areas: distribution of land and resource allocation, reconstruction of the nation and citizenship and the transformation of the state and governing bodies. These three arenas coincide partly with the conflict lines I have taken as a point of departure.

⁵⁸ H.K. Bhabha, 'DissemiNation, Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation'. In H. K. Bhabha (ed.): *Nation and Narration* (London. New York. Routledge.1990), pp. 306, 302,312.

Land, ethnic nationalism and supercitizens

Mugabe has tried to gather all economic and political questions around the land question as a national and panafrikan problem, and to a much lesser degree in defence for the weakest "classes" or a more fair distribution. "Ivhu versus the State" questions already in 1999 the linking of the trope "land" to the authentic, national identity. But "Ivhu" is not quite clear about how to loosen the question of identity as tied to the question of land; "Our Home – this landbusiness" as Troy says. The Members are not discussing the land question (although Amakhosi has done this in more recent plays), though it does criticise the politics of distribution and implicit show how a constructive national identity can be connected to the identity of citizen, instead of land.

Hammar and Raftopolous also describes how the governments nationalism started to define new essentialised categories of authenticity, created what is called "ethnic nationalism", a fictive ethnicity; the population is "ethnised (or essentialised)" into the politics of nation building⁵⁹ Narrow identity categories are constructed according to political loyalty and participation in the war of liberation, rather than ethnic definitions of Shona and Ndebele. The party leadership, loyal war veterans and the youth militia are the legitimate defenders of freedom and thereby "super citizens". Anyone who opposes the regime becomes a "non-citizen"⁶⁰.

Both "The Members" and "Ivhu versus the State" recount what they regard as a limiting, exclusive idea of the "ethnic" narrow identity constructions. They refer to the ongoing struggle against constructing some inhabitants as more legitimate than others. Mjaji is criticised for ignoring the people and in "Ivhu" the "indigenous capitalist" is criticised for being more national than others. The characters in the play protest against being put into limiting discursive pigeon holes. "The Members" explicitly visualized those who are excluded, "non-citizens" and shows counter-reactions. But Ivhus tendency to use race as a sole identitymarker are not to the same extent constructing new citizenidentities. Instead Ivhu were predicting the increasing use of racecategories which restricted possibilities for more multifaceted national identities.

A "patriotic history writing"⁶¹ supports the "ethnic nationalism"; constructing some citizens as better than others based on a selective reading of national history; simplified versions of the revolt against the first colonisation in 1896; the guerrilla war between 1972-1980 (the first and second chimurenga respectively) and "The Third Chimurenga"; the land distribution struggle (2000-2005). Patriotic history does not include the killing of political opponents or the massacre in the 1980s in Matabeleland. The "Members" answered already in 1995 the tendencies of this history writing by indirectly talking about the atrocities in Matabeleland. "Ivhu" protests against harassments and the way the exploitation of the Congo not has come into the open. It shows alienated citizens-arguing for a home.

The state has monopolized the media and tells people about racial unity and historical victories, it gives a standard for; "a hegemonic stable and uniform national identity, which is used against all other forms of identification and it decides what a good Zimbabwean is "⁶² The above analysis of the states monopolizing practice makes "Ivhu's" use of the concept

⁵⁹ A.Hammar & B. Raftopolous, 'Zimbabwe unfinished business', p. 23. With ref to

M. Igantieff, *Blood and Belonging. Journeys into the New Nationalism* (Vintage. London 1994), pp 3-4

⁶⁰ A.Hammar & B. Raftopolous, ' Zimbabwe unfinished business', p. 25-28.

⁶¹ T. Ranger, 'Nationalist Historiography and the History of the Nation. Struggle over the past in Zimbabwe'. In *Journal of Southern African Studies*; 30 Number 2 (June 2004)

⁶² B. Raftopolous, 'Nation, Race and History in Zimbabwean Politicism'. (In; The Ngo network alliance Project-an online community for Zimbabwean activists. www.kubatana.net/html/archive/opin/040706ids.asp?sector=OPIN July 06.2004. [Reading date 11.11.2004]., p.2

"state" reasonable. But in 1995 and 1998 (when *Members* and *Ivhu* respectively came into being) the media strategy had not been so finely honed as it was when Jonathan Moyo as Minister of Information became influential in 2000 and later. Nevertheless both of the plays anticipated what they regard as being the degradation of undesirable citizens. Nkomazana: "You didn't listen to us". Susan: "We civilians used to be the water".

ZANU-PFs control over state institutions has led to a reduction in economic and social rights. A new regime of self-enrichment has developed through land distribution, mining, financing and telecommunications. For those near ZANU-PF, the crisis in Zimbabwe has been an "a kind of clearing operation making way for a renewed modernisation project around an emerging anchor class"⁶³. "*Ivhu versus the State*" was quite accurate in its description of this new regime of self-enrichment in the way it pointed out a "get rich discourse by any means". And "*Members*" made visible the old relationship between politics and the world of business, as when Mjaji refers to his Safari business. Mugabe has also increased using a violently racist political discourse to attack whites and the opposition. His ideal voter is a "unified black subject at a regional panafrikan level"⁶⁴. As I have shown; "*The Members*" answers this tendency towards an essentialisation of race by refuting race as a turning point. "*Ivhu versus the State*" is also uncomfortable with the distances between the races, but does not challenge the thinking in the same way.

I have now tried to show that in the plays criticism they carried the seeds and foreshadowed the coming difficult situation. The plays mirror the Zimbabwean society, and anticipated the coming crises. This they are able to do, I will argue, because they write with the history of the people in Zimbabwe in their minds. They wanted to warn about tendencies they have seen throughout the years. "*Members*" builds on the tradition from the theatre of discussion, in which the goal is not only to produce finished arguments with which the audience should then identify. The audiences are invited into a dialogue about a MP's lack of skills as the representative of the people. In contrast "*Ivhu*" is presented as a classical, ideological plateau which maintains a specific stance to a specific issue; previously socialism or the unity of the people, now *Ivhu* shows a regime which should be blamed, and it shows the importance of the people agreeing in their criticism: "to unite for something good".

Writing positions and differences of Amakhosi and Rooftop

The plays different "localisations" offer an explanation in part for their different representational strategies. "*The Members*" critical position may be related to Mhlanga's own experiences of the atrocities in Matabeleland in the middle of the eighties and the life he sees in the townships. His identity position as Ndebele has given him an engagement in his criticism, but this is not an identity position performed essentially. Mhlanga uses the suppression in Matabeleland as a sign for the woeful condition of the regime; he has a national agenda which relates to better welfare for everyone. That "*Members*" was not specifically commissioned, but that Amakhosi has had a general, administrative support from donors, may also have given Mhlanga room to develop more freely⁶⁵.

Rooftop's localisation does not directly relate them to communitywork. Besides Rooftop's belonging in Harare, with the government "right beside" them and that they, having a Shona

⁶³ A. Hammar, B. Raftopolous, 'Zimbabwe's unfinished business', p. 40.

⁶⁴ B. Raftopolous, 'The State in Crisis: Authoritarian Nationalism, Selective Citizenship and Distortions of Democracy in Zimbabwe'. In A. Hammar, B. Raftopolous Brian, S. Jensen (ed.): *Zimbabwe's Unfinished business. Rethinking Land, State and Nation, in the Context of Crisis*. (Harare. Weaver Press 2003), p. 231.

⁶⁵ Mhlanga 27.6 1999. Gecau points also to the fact that Mhlanga used the townships language, not "national arts form". He describes Mhlanga's agenda as postmodern versus for instance Chifunyise's realistic representations. (Kimani Gecau interview without tape 13.8.1999)

connection, would make it difficult with a radical criticism of the regime⁶⁶. But the fact that the play was commissioned and that Rooftop is located close to the "the donor politics of Harare" has also had consequence for the expression of political criticism. Despite this the play is a big step forward in Rooftops criticism that time.

Present

To conclude, both plays have in one way "been right"; the inhabitants have got even more narrow categories of identity within which to operate, and the dominant discourses are to an even greater extent closing the political spaces⁶⁷. But by displaying acting characters, especially in *Members*, the audience is provided with new images and representations of how they could be black, woman, politician and citizen. This is less visible in *Ivhu* which focus on how they could engage in a racial dialogue. As written documents and live performances the plays are media for creation of identity which at the same time explore the nation's borders and limits. As representations they are literally and symbolic power which could expand the national culture and identities. The plays each tell about the possibility of being different, and in a different degree supporting the new flexible and non-essential identity positions which now are flourishing in Zimbabwe. They participate in building a new Zimbabwe, which will not only be about reconstructing economic and political structures: "(...), but also about creating new spaces to rethink issues around national identity and belonging"⁶⁸.

And these spaces they have continued creating. Amakhosi still sheds light on the individual struggles in the middle of the crisis. Amakhosi put on "Witness and Victims" about the political atmosphere before the parliamentary elections of 2000. The play looks at the life of two squatters who take part in a farm occupation, Two Boys and his wife Ma Mxzizi. Two Boys is an ex-freedom fighter who feels betrayed by the government, which he helped into power⁶⁹. Amakhosi has been able to show an edited version of "Sinjalo" about the ethnic relations in a humoristic version, as a TV series on ZBCTV. "Dare/Enkundleni"⁷⁰ was put on before elections and encourages tolerance and dialogue among Zimbabweans who have different political views. In 2004 they had a soapserie on ZTV, "Amakorokoza", about the life of poor gold miners compared to others on the social ladder. At HIFA (Harare International Festival of the Arts) 2005 they put up "Tomorrows People"⁷¹, about Zimbabwe's issues as political violence, corruption and the culture of intolerance and ask whether the Unity Accord

⁶⁶ Susan Haines and Bright Mbiri (then in National Theatre Organisation (NTO)) says it could be difficult to have Harare as a production place for plays as "The Members", Haines refers to the performance of *Members* at HIFA in Harare in 1999; "Members" – with the puppet (*who looked like Mr Mugabe , my remark*) that came up here.. oh it was shocked faces on the opening night. I gathered CIO was there. I wasn't in there but (...) CIO keeps an eye. One thing; Harare groups are not very couraged, this is the central government, and they are very rough in following ... And certainly there is that thing. The black dog runs across the road and you suddenly find yourself very dead. People just fear (...) Bright Mbiri; People here would like to stage those plays, they got more appeal to the public. But because of this invisible threat, people just rather wait for the kind of time. May be when it comes to just push through their plays and get people to join them, that would decrease (...).(Interview 8.9.1999. Harare).

⁶⁷ Also described in current literature as; Darnolf and Laakso , *Twenty Years of Independence in Zimbabwe. From Liberation to Authoritarianism*. (Palgrave Mac Millan Basingstoke 2003). H. Campell, *Reclaiming Zimbabwe. The Exhaustion of the Patriarchal Model of Liberation*. (David Philips Publishers. South Africa 2003). R. Muponde, R. Primorac, (ed.) *Versions of Zimbabwe; New Approaches to Literature and Culture* (Harare. Weaver Press 2005)

⁶⁸ S. Chiumbu, 'Redefining the National Agenda. Media and Identity. Challenges of Building a New Zimbabwe'. In H. Melber, (ed.); *Media, Public Discourse and Political Contestation in Zimbabwe*. Current African Issues No. 27 (Uppsala Nordiska Afrikainstitutet., 2004), p. 34.

⁶⁹ Written by Raisedon Baya. Directed by Sihlangu Dlodlo and produced by Bhekuzulu Masuka.

⁷⁰ Written by Cont Mhlanga co-produced with Rooftop

⁷¹ Amakhosi with Bambela Arts Ensemble and Qhube Production

signed in 1987 between ZANU-PF and ZAPU is benefiting everyone. Actors from Amakhosi have also performed in "Pregnant with Emotions"⁷². It's about a troublesome pregnancy; the girl's delivery date is overdue and the baby refuses to be born unless it is guaranteed a clean world, free of all societal ill.

Rooftop has had success with "Rags and Garbage" a one-man show with Walter Muparotsa⁷³ a satire that becomes very popular. In 2003 they produced "Superpatriots and Morons"⁷⁴. The play is described as a political satire which mirrors the government's political party. The play is set in a country suffering from severe food shortages and queues for food, coupled with a repressive government infamous for using the state to silence dissenting voices⁷⁵. It toured for one year and was performed by local theatre groups. The play was put on with success during HIFA 2004 and was the first play which was banned and censored by the government. In 2006 Rooftop produced "State of the Nation"⁷⁶, described as a "set of vignettes; a combi being stopped by police, an informal vendor being harassed, a TV show with Tafataona Mahoso, the minister of culture (Aeneas Chigwedere) being harassed by his son. The punch line was; you must choose; are you with the nation or state; people can't keep playing both sides or sitting on the fence, but have to take a stand and stand up for what is right, and with their community"⁷⁷. To complete "The Member`s" was again put up at Theatre in the Park in December 2005⁷⁸. But in June 2006 the country lost one of its most award-winning actors; Mackey Tickey; in his characters he had embodied the experiences of the Zimbabwean peoples struggles.

"The Good President"

"An End to the Stalemate? – the International Crisis Groups last report⁷⁹ sees a chance to resolve the situation through the retirement of President Mugabe when his terms ends in 2008. Together with a power-sharing deal to create a transitional government tasked with preparing a new constitution and holding elections by 2010. In this context Amakhosi Theatre launched "The Good President" written and directed by Cont Mhlanga, co-produced by Rooftop. Mhlanga interrogates leadership in the broader socio-political context and then uses recent events of beating of political leaders, opposed to the ruling party to guide his thoughts. Mhlanga says "There is no vicious way of killing humanity than failing to respect and defend the institution of leadership. It is not our way in African Culture to beat a leader elected or otherwise and then go on to display the images for the young ones to see. (On Rooftops webpage) .

The play resolves around the story of an old woman Gogo who comes to town to seek treatment for her eyes. Her grandson Neto a former exile in South Africa who comes back Zimbabwe to benefit from governments controversial landreform programme, refuses to give her bus fare to return to the village where she is determined to vote the sitting president back

⁷² Edgar Langeveldt. Rooftop has also taken this play on a national tour. Financial Gazette May 17, 2006

⁷³ 2002 Raisedon Baya, directed by Dylan Wilson Max) produced by Rooftop.

⁷⁴ Written by Raisedon Baya.

⁷⁵ Times of Zambia, BBC 11.5.2004.

⁷⁶ Daves Guzha, Edgar Langveldt and Chirikure Chirikure

⁷⁷ Sara Dorman who saw the play 9 nov 2005 Harare, (e-mail correspondence). And Dorman comments: "it displays a broad definition of politics –eg question of citizenship asp in multi –racial, urban contexts. Politics was not about parties and elections, but about life choices and claiming the nation.(...) Rooftop is important because they bridge all those divides (race/class) within themselves and can be accessible to multiple audiences".

⁷⁸ "The Herald" June 17, 2006.

⁷⁹ "Zimbabwe: An End to the Stalemate?" International Crisis Group Africa Report No 122 5 March 2007 www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm (reading date 06.03.2007)

into office. While Neto benefited from the land reform he wants the president voted out because tourists no longer visit his game ranch due to the government's policies. Gogos grandson Razor is a policeman who brutally beats up the leader of an opposition party. Gogos decision to vote for the President again is not premised on his good leadership qualities but on a call by the late Father Zimbabwe Joshua Nkomo to his followers to vote for the ruling president. Matters come to a head when she tells her grandson that their fathers were killed by soldiers during the 1980 disturbances in Matabeleland. The grandsons are angry that Gogo did not tell them earlier about the cause of their fathers' death. In this way Mhlanga is able to touch the issues of Matabeleland and the current leadership in a complex way. To the extent that a High Court judge has ruled that certain unspecified sections of the play undermine President Robert Mugabe's authority. The judge, Justice Francis Bere, made this ruling in Bulawayo on Friday 22.6.07 with the concurrence of both Rooftop Productions and Amakhosi Productions Trust who filed an urgent application against the police in Bulawayo. The judge said only after the redrafting of the script would the play be fit to be performed publicly. The court application resulted from the swift action of the police to ban the premiere of the political satire on Wednesday night⁸⁰. So the Zimbabwean nation is still heavily debated in the theatre.

⁸⁰ www.thezimbabwetimes.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1017&Itemid=44 (reading date 24.04 2007)
http://www.thezimbabwetimes.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1017&Itemid=44 (24.6.2007) <http://www.amakhosi.org/> (24.6.07)