# 9. Conclusion

Rhodesian nationalism was an assertion of belonging in and of a place and constituted the grounds for the whites' claim to a homeland. The settlers were able to depict themselves as being 'at home' because the black majority—distanced and produced as others—was 'not home' in Rhodesia. Instead, they were located elsewhere, in the peripheral spaces of the Tribal Trust Lands, urban townships and a few elite, but separate suburbs. Racism, as the highest expression of the colonial system, thus established fundamental and immutable distinctions between the colonist and the colonised. With the transfer of power, the order of the settlers' world began to be actively contested. Zimbabwe's newly installed political elite, while keeping and accepting pre-existing territorial borders, commenced a programme of decolonisation in order to claim ownership and control over the country and its institutions in the name of the black majority. Previous chapters addressed some of the challenges whites faced as political space was reconfigured and their subjectivity reconstituted within the memory of the discursive and material specificities of Rhodesian colonialism. To this end, representations inscribed in the national landscape, citizenship practices and the structure of the economy were examined. Each embodied a unique narrative, which, having been reworked, brought to the fore white 'unhomeliness', or what Bhabha (1994:9) called 'the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world'. Yet, while Zimbabwe's leaders set out to distance the country from the vestiges of colonialism, the point was made that 'whiteness' remained very much part of Zimbabwe's national conversation. How had this seeming paradox come about?

Zimbabwe, delimited in colonial terms, was inevitably racially and ethnically heterogeneous. To bring distinct populations together, a policy of reconciliation was introduced to promote the idea of Zimbabwe as a nation and to weld the people into a common identity and single loyalty. Its purpose was also to forestall further white emigration, with the concomitant loss of capital and skills—a factor that invariably accompanied reform after imperialism and the emergence of new states. The unmaking of Rhodesia and remaking as Zimbabwe proved no exception in this regard. Despite the departure of a sizeable proportion of the settler population around independence, reconciliation aimed to make everyone believe the country belonged to them and that all had a stake in its future wellbeing. Consequently the 1980s saw an attempt at 'civic nationalism' (Hammar and Raftopoulos 2003:25). The policy also established guidelines for managing the recent excesses committed by protagonists on all sides during the civil war. Unpalatable memories were not to be revisited and thereby made more familiar and approachable. A blanket amnesty allowed this part of the past to be put aside. The therapeutic agency of recall was not therefore an integral part of

Zimbabwe's reconciliation programme. Nonetheless, by extending an invitation to whites to stay and contribute to national reconstruction, reconciliation provided a new dialogic space within the politics of belonging. As an entreaty to resolve difference and end separation, the official discourse signalled the possibility of non-adversarial relationships binding African and European, as well as black with black, together in common awareness. A passage between fixed colonial identifications was suggested—a productive space of hope and an opportunity to move beyond Rhodesia's polarised colonial identities. As a double representation at once seductive and coercive (Gandhi 1998:14), however, the policy, while bringing minorities into the nation by flagging previously untried arrangements between them and the black government, enjoined whites to provide skills, create jobs and opportunities, co-opting them in effect to continue the symbiotic ties of the erstwhile colonial civilising mission.

The colonial legacy was also approached in other ways. The struggle for black self-determination and sovereignty began with the spatial re-inscription of the country. ZANU PF asked whites to accept African referents and national symbols as one step towards repairing social memory, of their thinking history together with the formerly colonised. In effect, decolonising the landscape provided a metaphor of cultural transformation and historical re-visioning, facilitating the reconstitution of Zimbabwe as a black African state, and beginning a process whereby the colonial past slipped away and with it the settlers' relationship with the place began to shift and weaken. Concomitantly, the State inscribed what was to be remembered, enter national consciousness and be carried forward into the future in Zimbabwe's commemorative monuments. Chapter 4 described the official critique of Rhodesia's past embedded at Heroes' Acre, today the nation's most significant architectural icon. The site records the colonial era's institutional violence, returning this to the present during ceremonies that seek to draw whites into a discourse that establishes the absolute necessity of their political re-education and loyalty. White 'liberation' entails the obligation to engage in a self-reflective recourse to history and to bring attitudes and practices into conformity. Thus, in Zimbabwe, constituting 'pastness' has proved a moral phenomenon, 'a tool' to compel whites to play an active part in their own subordination and domestication (Wallerstein 1988:78; Falzon 1998:66–8).

ZANU PF's return to the past, many Zimbabweans would perhaps argue, has been less than an honest and inclusive attempt to develop a collective history that offers some recognition of diversity and interconnectedness. Representations of the civil war—the prototypical event of Zimbabwe's inception—portray the singularity of national origins and draw an exclusionary myth of national membership. Revolutionary language from the armed struggle, linking the current political elite with war veterans, peasants and workers, suggests wrongs that can neither be undone nor forgotten. So while Heroes' Acre reflects the

importance accorded by the political elite to whites liberating themselves, the monument simultaneously objectifies their difference. Otherness resonates within this anti-colonial national narrative in which state representations reassert past identities and inscribe repetition and the impossibility of going beyond old colonial habits and boundaries. The ruling elite has, in effect, revisited the colonial past in order to reclaim it in the party's interest. As an imposed, rather than a genuine recourse to, history, this self-serving rendering on behalf of its own authority and legitimacy has proved deaf to other memories of the war or, indeed, the colonial era. It is a telling that insists minorities 'forget' or discard memories incompatible with the State's narrative, thereby suppressing dialogue necessary to, and productive of, reconciliation.

The State's failure to develop a shared history has allowed, even encouraged, whites to fall back on and reassert a prior version of autochthony in defence of their community's place in the homeland. While the State appears set on having positive aspects of the Rhodesian past go unrecorded or 'remembered otherwise' (Esbenshade 1995:87), the white community had hoped to be written into the nation's history in more inclusive terms. Conceiving of national origins as deriving from before the country's recent revolutionary war, they seek to draw attention to continuity rather than rupture with the colonial past. Thus, they work to countermand the State's deconstruction of Rhodesian national identity, repudiate the degraded representations of themselves and have their era's positive contributions included in the genesis of national formation, for their future depends on the kind of past they can mobilise on this score.

Another reconstruction of the past, however, built on the illegality of the Rudd Concession and memories of colonial exploitation and dispossession, has provided the conceptual and ideological foundations to the government's economic policies and programmes. Soon after independence, practices of dis-assimilation in the public sector, based on insurmountable biological difference, were pursued in the interests of black affirmative action. A decade later, breaking the cognitive and economic confines of colonialism began to be formulated in popular, native terms. Political figures and lobbyists portrayed the nation as incomplete and referred to their responsibility to reverse previous colonial discrimination, to take remedial action and dispossess and displace in order that economic decolonisation be realised. Their creation of an insider's economic space for the formerly colonised in the name of indigenisation reflects black aspirations for materiality and modernity. The discourse references the theme of self-determination, with blacks insisting on control and exclusivity. Furthermore, black leaders intend to conduct the country's economic emancipation in a manner of their own choosing, even should the outcome appear flawed to Western eyes. This is a Pan-Africanist critique that insists on sovereignty. Yet, perversely, the discourse is not a wholly transparent rendering

on the colonised's behalf. Instead, indigenisation has increasingly been seen as a movement of and for the Shona ethno-cultural and political elite, in effect an 'exclusive' or 'ethnic' nationalism driven by accumulators from above (Hammar and Raftopoulos 2003:25). In view of this, critics question who among the black majority truly qualifies as an indigene, thereby revealing regional, class and gender lines, in addition to race, along which the nation threatens to split apart.

Importantly, assertions of indigeneity as nativism—an oppositional rather than a complicit discourse—create and maintain borders between native and settler by defining social membership, not in terms of birth in a particular territory, but more authentically, into a place of cultural affinity. Hence, to speak of indigeneity in the Zimbabwean context is to belong according to genealogical, cultural and historical experiences. Chapter 6 noted the tendency in some quarters to take these criteria back to race, to biological essentialism, in tandem with claims about the fixity or boundedness of cultural criteria. The argument turns on the notion that culture represents the community of original identity to which one belongs by descent. Accordingly, whites do not belong in Zimbabwe because their cultural origins, and therefore their place, are elsewhere. This constitution of indigeneity nullifies complex identities in favour of an obligatory status ascribed according to descent. Settlers—their identities over-determined in this way—are fixed in perpetual otherness and, despite their protests, are immobilised and beholden to the culture of their ancestors.

When, as in Zimbabwe, distinctions such as these are inscribed in juridical texts and administrative practices, settlers are denied the possibility of changing their status and shifting their sense of identity. To the extent that the 1984 state-run renunciation of foreign citizenship described in Chapter 5 was conducted along Western lines, where citizenship was conceived first and foremost as a political and legal relationship, the exercise was misconceived. Western-liberal conceptions of belonging to civil society are not subjectively and emotionally convincing when a citizen, constituted as a cultural affiliate, is a 'home boy' and a person of place. Conscious of this, whites, while they claim their home country is manifest in travel documents, do not trust their identity as citizens of Zimbabwe and hold an ambivalent vision of their future under the present regime. They, in anxiety and uncertainty, remembering events in neighbouring countries when colonial populations fled or were expelled, hedge their bets and attempt to control their destinies with passports and residence stamps—behaviour contributing, in fact, to the future they most fear. Indeed, disputes about how citizenship is to be reinstated cannot be resolved on legal grounds alone when the codes of belonging are also cultural and historical. Today, cultural descent, constructed as the natural link between people and place, distinguishes black Zimbabweans from others whose ties to the country are based on other, contractual links of association.

In sum, Zimbabwe's decolonisation programme has served to highlight the role colonial memory continues to play in public life, informing certain subject positions and social boundaries and setting limits to the white community's sense of belonging and notions of home. Clearly, the process of returning to the colonial past and projecting it into the future has revealed continuing, reciprocal antagonism tending towards rupture. With the nation defined through opposition, it has proved difficult to depart from alterity—'an idea', Loomba (1998:182) astutely notes, 'that has enormous force and power in the construction of anti-colonial narratives, by subjects who are themselves complex, mixed-up products of diverse colonial histories'. The past repeats itself when decolonisation, as a search for creative autonomy, gives way to backward-looking arguments about authenticity and culture; when, just as in the colonial era, otherness is mobilised as a disposal of power to compare, contrast and invariably amplify difference. Zimbabwe's multiplicity of national discourses has become simplified into a 'paralysing dichotomy' (Loomba 1994:306) of two opposing racial voices, making the realisation of reconciliation impossible. The State's essentialism refuses ambivalence and, repeating colonial lessons, demands instead the fixity of identity. Rather than crediting the extent to which the protagonists are 'embroiled with each other', their various subject positions and class interests (Parry 1995:94), official discourses assert the 'insurmountability' of cultural difference and the incompatibility of lifestyles (Brah 1996:186). By building on difference in this way, the State has re-formed the categories of settler and native and, turning colonialism's hierarchy on its head, replaced it with its mirror image. The insider is now the outsider, the subject is resituated as the object and, in the process, bonds linking whites to locations have given way.

While the State must bear some responsibility for having failed to make room for all Zimbabweans, the white community has, of course, contributed in its own way to Zimbabwe's atmosphere of hostile schismogenesis. The point was made that deconstructing and remaking settler identity were reflexive projects, re-visioning towards induction into a new kind of social membership. As a process of social and cultural transformation, identity re-formation implicated whites in acts of distancing and association in order to establish a new relational beginning and to recover a sense of their own rightful placement in the country. Would they, for instance, engage in critical self-reflection and 'unsettle old habits and ways of thinking' (Falzon 1998:70)? Were they prepared to de-authorise and decentre themselves, accept non-leadership roles and learn the art of being minor? Would whites forgo positional authority, give up cultural arrogance and economic dominance and accept secondary positions or insist on self-centring? Would they overturn the colonial ethos, divest themselves of colonial superiority and instead embrace a role of service? Beyond disavowal, would the white community engage in acts of cultural affiliation and recognise

that the politics of identification is performative, a matter of behaviours enacted or refused in everyday life? Their willingness, or otherwise, to renounce foreign citizenship was taken as a measure of their preparedness to conform not simply to externalities but, more importantly, to become habituated to deep-seated local values and customs. Would they allow themselves to be co-opted and assimilated? Would they cultivate and demonstrate organic solidarity, speaking in terms of 'we' rather than 'I', 'ours' and not 'yours'? Through these choices, the former colonists were expected to reposition themselves within the dominant normative culture by embracing practices that would re-form them as Zimbabweans.

Generally speaking, the white response was not encouraging and the pace of 'their becoming' Zimbabwean slow. They remained distrustful of reconciliation as a discourse of social, cultural and economic negotiation, readjustment and accommodation, and bulked at practising self-transformation, proving unwilling to be formed into moral subjects. Perceiving themselves as victims, rather than as the oppressors they were portrayed to be in the nationalist discourse, they also failed to understand the essentialism apparent in, for instance, Zimbabwe's current discourse surrounding indigeneity. Elsewhere, Curthoys (1999:4) has argued that the 'white blindfold' version of history works against Australian settlers understanding the colonial past. Equally, Zimbabwe's settlers' defensive articulation of the colonial period's positive worth has proved an ontological resource, myopically inhibiting their recognition that political independence has not in itself brought an end to the unequal colonial relationship. While various scholars caution that the 'new man' does not emerge immediately—rather, the colonist and colonised live on for some time—material presented in the body of the text suggests that many hold on to a prior identity, managing only partially to distance or disengage themselves from Rhodesia. To remember, though, is not solely to report on the past as to establish one's relationship towards it. The inability to repudiate the colonial era ties them, in the eyes of the once colonised, to the side of the oppressor, and makes theirs an immobilising rather than an empowering rendering of the past.

While Curthoys (1999:17) intimates that for Australians to face up to and acknowledge another, competing historical consciousness is to risk, metaphorically at least, becoming displaced, dislocated and homeless, this research suggests that, for the white settlers of Zimbabwe, lack of recognition is a path to expulsion in a more concrete sense, for far-reaching consequences arise from their lack of affinity with the time, place and history of the new Zimbabwe. White historical amnesia, or non-innocence, means they share neither the majority's colonial memories nor prevailing ideas regarding the nature of a future just society that these underpin. Many remaining in the country now sense themselves as estranged from their surroundings, 'caught in a historical

limbo between home and the world' (Gandhi 1998:132). While not wishing to put too fine a point on it, males invariably spoke of loss of place in terms of their recently devalued national housekeeping tasks. Their eschewing Africa had existed alongside notions of progress and service. Women spoke more commonly of family, homemaking and their loss thereof. These unhomely moments reflect the psychic uncertainty that arises out of the disjunction between their personal history and wider political existence (Bhabha 1994:10, 12). The former coherence between themselves and the locale dissolved as families splintered and geo-cultural re-territorialisation disengaged these settlers from what was once their country. They now find themselves strangers and outsiders in the land where they were born, raised and continue to be domiciled.

Rhetorically, the question was posed whether whites could find a passage, or think, a way out of their current deracination. In common with other peoples of the diaspora (Hall 1995:206), they must come to some kind of settlement with the culture, albeit oppressive, that now immerses them. Could they countenance the unfamiliar and adjust to a life very different from the one that had given them form? Heideggar suggests the transformative quality of estrangement, of change producing encounters and confrontations with the alien as a precondition for self-discovery and relocation (Dallmayr 1993:153–5). To be at home in Zimbabwe, whites must discard the self constructed out of racial privilege and reconcile with all that they once kept separate. The majority have, however, failed to 'come home' by Heidegger's route—that is, by proximity or drawing near to that which is most alien to them, by way of a journey through otherness. While a few among them have long appreciated that to perceive oneself as securely and properly located and at home in the world depends on links created with human beings, as well as with the landscape, most refuse the disruptive, unsettling and ultimately transformative effects of association. Memmi (1965:40), writing of the need to empty one's identity in order to be reborn, comments that for settlers such as these it is 'too much to visualise one's own end, even if it is to be reborn another'. Both he and Fanon (1963:27), however, insist that this is the 'minimal demand of the colonised'. To refuse, as white Zimbabweans have found, is to reside anomalously as colonists, aliens and foreigners.

Unable to dissolve their separation or imagine the annihilation of their identity—the dissolution of the self—they have opted to remain as exiles in a state of *unheimlichkeit*, or 'not-at-homeness' (de Beistegui 1998:129–30). Not finding themselves to be at home is a matter of their reluctance to recognise that being at home in Rhodesia was an illusion grounded in colonial privilege. As those who once enjoyed dominance, most have failed to move on, to in effect leave home in order to come home. Like other refugee and exiled groups, Zimbabwe's settler population is 'marked by a loss' that 'they do not want to let go of' (Breytenbach 1991:75)—something reflected in a somewhat defiant refusal to

accept the permanence of their changed status. A sizeable number share the sensibility of an era and the distress of identifying themselves with a country that no longer appears on any map and a place to which there is no return.

The crisis of legitimacy, arising between the former colonised and former colonisers, is approached differently in today's New World settler societies. With the idea of assimilation out of favour, access to the other through acts of self-negation or self-denial appears untenable (Falzon 1998:37). Instead, in Australia and New Zealand, where settler descendants remain politically dominant, sensitivity towards a recently reinstalled subaltern history and culture is located within a discourse of cultural diversity and multiculturalism. They are well positioned to represent their sense of locatedness in iconography that provides recognition of the rightful place of all the various peoples who today make up the nation. These accommodate difference within society by speaking to past and future interconnectedness. Native land title and reparations allow whites to meet colonialism's moral and economic challenges. Through acts of remembrance and compensation, state officials and scholars hope to create a hybrid consciousness and way of life for all nationals, for hybridity 'entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy' (Bhabha 1994:4). Here one-time colonists and settlers are not contained by state discourses that construct their identities and infer their anomalous presence. Instead, mutuality facilitates the permeability of boundaries and allows the construction of a number of versions of indigeneity not tied rigidly to specific colonial dates. In this way, colonial separation is erased and their legitimate placement established.

Notwithstanding this, various Third World scholars, as well as Zimbabwe's political leaders, remain unconvinced that memories of colonial violence can be transcended or replaced with readings of the era's negotiation and intimacy, arguing instead that hybridity is not the 'only enlightened resolution' to the colonial encounter (Gandhi 1998:136). They sceptically question whether hybridity overturns the colonial hierarchy, lessens the desire for retribution or establishes the equality of cultures. The concept has, as Moore-Gilbert (1997:194) cautions, been too often deployed on behalf of the dominant party and perhaps dispenses too quickly with where, and with whom, expectations of change lie. Aware that perturbing and unequal relations are not confined to the colonial past but exist currently within the North–South divide and relations of globalisation, scholars have expanded the scope of analysis, detaching ideas of hierarchy, exclusion and knowledge from the colonial context and examining them within this broader, contemporary framework. Others, writing more generally, have expressed reservations about the degree to which the indigene in settler societies is constructed within the larger narrative of the former oppressor (Griffiths 1994:84). Goldie (1989), in particular, is concerned by the extent to which the indigene is valorised, and by this means devalued and

silenced, in the acquisitive settler's desire to belong. The argument has been put that New Zealand and Australian settlers have, in effect, appropriated the icons and discourse of the colonised, thereby perpetuating the imperial process.

Clearly, the decolonisation of the colonisers' identity, as a route to legitimacy and their homecoming, is attained differently when the balance of semiotic power has been reversed. In Zimbabwe, where the State dominates the processes of subjectification, the colonial heritage has not been easily put aside. National historical, geographic and economic recovery has produced the once colonised as 'authentic' and 'at home' and whites, the former colonisers, as those who are 'different', 'out there' and 'not home'. Authenticity here relates an attitude to identity, a matter of choice and ways of being in the world, where historical re-visioning, political re-education and economic and cultural assimilation are the minimal preconditions for white social membership. The ruling party's insistence upon oneness as unity works against the legitimacy and acceptance of difference, making it instead a condition that must be done away with. Consequently, Zimbabwe's white community—with much historically and culturally in common with European settlers elsewhere—lives its unhomeliness more profoundly, for they carry the burden of colonial memory in a way their Antipodean counterparts do not. Assertions of indigeneity—central to the resolution of the settler identity crisis—cannot creditably be made simply on the basis of birth or claimed through affinity with the landscape. Rather, indigeneity in Zimbabwe is determined at the moment of colonial imposition. Being at home is, in this context, less a matter of expropriation or arrogation, something that can be taken for granted most of the time, but possible only through estrangement or exposure to otherness. Many white Zimbabweans have found this understanding or apprehending the other a tall order, particularly as this has been set against the rapid erosion of their prosperity. The State, however, argues that assimilation as a programme of profound change leads in one way or another to the minority's disappearance, thereby bringing the colonial relationship to a close. Taken as fundamental to state purposes, assimilation eliminates distinctions between the former colonisers and formerly colonised, putting an end to historical difference and leaving a way open for community.