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Stanlake Samkange's Insufferable Zimbabwe: Distanciating Trauma from the Novel to Philosophy

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This article theorizes the Zimbabwean writer Stanlake Samkange's turn from the novel to philosophy as an effort to circumvent the representational pressure exerted by African cultural traumatization. In breaking with the novel form to coauthor a philosophical treatise called Hunhuism or Ubuntuism *in the same year as Zimbabwe achieves independence (1980), Samkange advances a comportment-based, deontological alternative to the psychic or subjective model of personhood that anchors trauma theory. Revisiting the progression from his most achieved novel,* The Mourned One*, to* Hunhuism or Ubuntuism *thus offers fresh insight into the range of options available to independence-era writers for representing the relationship between African individuality and collectivity. At the same time, it suggests a complementary and overlooked relationship between novelistic and philosophical forms in an African context.*

Keywords: African literature, postcolonialism, Zimbabwe, literature and philosophy, trauma theory, Stanlake Samkange

The Zimbabwean writer Stanlake Samkange's 1975 novel *The Mourned One* begins with a moment of shock. After a brief frame narrative introduces what follows as the contents of an old prison notebook, a Shona narrator recounts being sentenced to death by a British magistrate in 1935. He has been accused of raping a white woman, "legally, though not actually,"[1] and will soon hang for his transgression of settler-colonial racial boundaries. The man describes his ordeal in terms that can only be called traumatic. His sentencing, he writes, is "shattering and nerve-wrecking." And then, "I was dazed. My senses became numb. I lost all control of my limbs, power of speech and everything. It was as if I were having a bad dream and had become petrified."[2] This passage conforms neatly to what a reader versed in a "wound culture,"[3] per Mark Seltzer, might expect from such a flagrant act of legal and bodily harm: the chronic abuses of White minority rule come to a head in a public dissociative event as the violence undergirding Southern Rhodesia's existence writes itself into the body of an African subject.

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1 Stanlake Samkange, *The Mourned One* (London: Heinemann, 1975), 2.
2 Samkange, *The Mourned One*, 1.
3 Mark Seltzer, "Wound Culture: Trauma in the Pathological Public Sphere," *October* 80 (1997): 3–26.

The Mourned One, however, offers nothing so straightforward: it seeks to analyze trauma, not just represent it. Where today's readers are often primed to recognize suffering primarily or only in its announcement as such—including its bodily verification—Samkange's narrator quickly reroutes his somatic response through a distanced, cerebral one. Upon waking up in his jail cell the day after he is condemned to die, he writes, "I was refreshed and a man once more. I found my mind clearer than it had been for a long time and my nerves and mind strangely relaxed and calm; such calmness as descends upon a village after an angry whirlwind has swept through." And then, "Such calm fell upon me. I could think about fate—my fate; about death—my death; and about life—the life I would soon lose—as if it were not my own."[4]

The man called Ocky by his boarding school peers or Muchemwa in Shona (literally "he who is cried for" from *kuchema*, or to weep) here repurposes a traumatic dissociation as the catalyst for intellectual distance. His trauma becomes grist for the mill of his analytic powers, thereby raising two questions that guide this article. First, what kind of reckoning with suffering can account for its studied refusal? For cases, that is, where historical violence activates a philosophical rather than psychological response? And second, what kinds of individuality does an emphasis on its *psychic* dimensions occlude? For Samkange, I argue, these questions converge as a shift in textual form. When he interrupts his career as a historical novelist to write a philosophical treatise, *Hunhuism or Ubuntuism*, to mark Zimbabwe's birth in 1980, he endorses a non-psychological, deontological view of personhood that looks past the experience of trauma and toward a replicable mode of self-moderating comportment. As the novel uses trauma to mine the relationship between individual suffering and collective dispossession, Samkange's rejoinder is to move away from the novel.

The Southern Rhodesian Intellectual in a Postcolonial Frame

Samkange's own investment in analytic distanciation to subvert focus on immediate experiential pains offers a trenchant historical analogue to the fictional estrangement on display in the passage from the aforementioned *The Mourned One*. Terence Ranger's comprehensive *Are We Not Also Men?*, a collective biography of the Samkange family based on his unique access to their archives, quotes Stanlake Samkange reflecting on his dispassionate intellectual posture from the United States in 1965: "I find it more interesting to concern myself with the doings of Rhodesia seventy years ago than today. I tell my friends that when the news of today is that old, I shall as a student of history be interested in it."[5] As scholars of Zimbabwean writing have long noted, he is in some ways typical of a bygone "liberal nationalist" anticolonial intellectual profile, part of a generation of Southern Rhodesian writers and civic leaders poised on the cusp of multiracial, incremental democratic commitments and the more radical tactics characteristic of Zimbabwe's Second Chimurenga, or liberation war. In his tenure as general secretary of a stricken African National Congress—torn over whether and how to expand its base from cities into rural "reserves"—Samkange favors a bookish, patient

4 Samkange, *The Mourned One*, 2.

5 Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men? The Samkange Family and African Politics in Zimbabwe 1920–64* (Harare, Zimbabwe: Baobob Press, 1995), 203.

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leadership style. Again per Ranger, "Stanlake was an energetic general secretary. What this meant, however, was not congress activity on the ground but rather a stream of highly intelligent, sophisticated and well-researched memoranda to [the White] government about its Native Policy. Stanlake took the view that Congress needed to be better informed and that it needed to make more impact on officials by means of the expression of balanced criticism rather than blanket condemnation."[6] As illustration of how this tactic triumphed or erred, depending on one's view, Ranger notes that Samkange often received "long and even reasoned responses from government."[7] Although he is plainly aggrieved by his circumstances, it is not clear whether or how Samkange's broad, objective sense of Africans' suffering under the yoke of British (and post-1965, Rhodesian) rule intersects with suffering cast as subjective rupture.

In her seminal account of Zimbabwe's modern intellectual formation, *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers*, Flora Veit-Wild calls Samkange "the prototype of African advancement."[8] partial to "semi-fictional or directly documentary and historical" forms to convey commitments to progress through education and institutional reform.[9] (As evidence of this emphasis on the racial transformation of existing institutional models, in 1962 he founds a Black-led secondary school in Chitungwiza called Nyatsime College, loosely influenced by Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute.) The expiration of Samkange's "type," therefore—almost self-parodically erudite, measured, and committed to democratic means as much as restitutive ends—may now seem like an inevitable fact of liberation history. Nonetheless, to consign it to the dustbin of false consciousness obscures a model of personhood that poses a salient challenge to now-prevalent ways of locating selfhood *in* suffering, including but not limited to that wrought by colonial powers. As the French philosopher François Laruelle begins his landmark *General Theory of Victims*, suffering in a media-suffused world often seems to confer a legitimacy of its own, taking for granted suffering's recognizable articulation *as* pain. "As though it were miming and fabricating an artificial unconscious," he writes, "media corruption has made the victim a new ethical value…."[10] This attunement to suffering expressed as such—a naturalized correspondence of *living through* violence and clearly exhibiting its effects—in turn threatens to hide from view a tremendous range of rich and by no means straightforward African intellectual histories, the lives and texts of people who "suffered wrong," in terms less self-evident than our own.

While the second and third parts of this essay trace Samkange's disarticulation of suffering from his most achieved novel, *The Mourned One*, through his successive philosophical work *Hunhuism or Ubuntuism* (cowritten with his American wife, Tommie Samkange), it will be useful first to review some of the most visible debates surrounding trauma studies' relationship to postcolonial contexts. The main points of controversy center on the idea that something like "cultural trauma" makes sense as a way to conceive of long-term collective disenfranchisement; in other words, that the

6 Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?*, 144.
7 Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?*, 144.
8 Flora Veit-Wild, *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers: A Social History of Zimbabwean* Literature (Hans Zell Publishers, 1992), 66.
9 Veit-Wild, Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers, 17.
10 François Laruelle, General Theory of Victims, trans. Jessie Hock and Alex Dubilet (Polity Press, 2015), 1.

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historical violence of settler colonialism functions analogously to violence inflicted on an individual scale. Jeffrey C. Alexander, in "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma," defines it as the process of collective response to shared social disruption, which thereby fosters a more general capacity for communality. Far from being merely the sum total of individual traumas, cultural trauma in his view "illuminates an emerging domain of social responsibility and political action. It is by constructing cultural traumas that social groups, national societies, and sometimes even entire civilizations not only cognitively identify the existence and source of human suffering but 'take on board' some significant responsibility for it."[11] As a markedly constructivist enterprise, literature thus seems primed to forge cultural cohesion through self-conscious response to social rupture. And as J. Roger Kurtz points out in an essay called "Literature, Trauma, and the African Moral Imagination," Achebe's landmark *Things Fall Apart* is indeed often read representatively through a lens of assumed scalability from immediate and individual to prolonged and habitual violence. "*Things Fall Apart* is the story of a community left in fragmented disarray because of an external blow that overwhelms its ability to respond," he summarizes. "It is, in other words, a trauma narrative."[12]

The degree to which this is applicable to African colonial and postcolonial literary expression broadly has much to do with one's point of view: African traditions are invariably marked by both disruption *and* continuity across their respective periods of colonial dispossession. If, as Kurtz writes, one thinks that "all aspects of contemporary African writing … originate in the context of a massive, continent-wide experience of deep social trauma"—with trauma conceived of as "a universal rather than an exceptional experience"[13]—then even the refusal of trauma showcased in my framing example from *The Mourned One* must be read as one of its effects. In this light, Samkange's narrator's digression from his traumatic response to an estranged, intellectual one might be read instead as repression, an act by which "truth goes underground."[14] Muchemwa here would serve as an avatar for Samkange in his ultimately reactionary and, perhaps, delusional claim to distanciation, inverting the classic psychoanalytic trope of trauma expressed via nightmares to instead proclaim his awakening. To be "refreshed" and "relaxed" in the face of one's impending and unjust death, as much as to try to negotiate with White supremacist authorities, may just be a different variant of traumatic response: irrational precisely in its rational comportment. If, on the contrary, one sees colonialism as not *less* damaging but perhaps less *comprehensively* so—leaving some possibility of individual integrity intact—then the trauma framework obscures as much as it reveals about Samkange's expressive choices. The reader has no easy option: to take Muchemwa (and Samkange's) surpassing of traumatization seriously may be to minimize the psychological effects of living under racist power structures. Not to do so risks hewing to a script for dispossession that reflects more about the reader's historical emplacement than the subject's.

11 Jeffrey C. Alexander, "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma," in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, eds. Jeffrey C. Alexander, et al. (University of California Press, 2004), 1–16, esp. 1.

12 J. Roger Kurtz, "Literature, Trauma, and the African Moral Imagination," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 32.4 (2014): 421–35, esp. 422.

13 Kurtz, "Literature, Trauma, and the African Moral Imagination," 425–26.

14 Alexander, "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma," 5.

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The Western genealogy of trauma studies itself only exacerbates this bind, as many scholars have long since acknowledged. On the one hand, there is the unearned historical generality of what Wulf Kansteiner calls the "category mistake" of cultural trauma as an idea. In reference to Cathy Caruth's influential (and now, much-critiqued) work on trauma theorized as a universal problem of representational failure or aporia, he insists that, "Just because trauma is inevitably a problem of representation in memory and communication does not imply the reverse, i.e., that problems of representation are always partaking in the traumatic."[15] Then, there are the particular gray areas surrounding the convergence of the post-traumatic and the postcolonial: which world historical events should shed light on which others (what is gained or lost by connecting the Holocaust and transatlantic slavery, for example), and how does a common postcolonial emphasis on locational particularity square with trauma theorists' more abstract, universalizing tendencies? On this front, as Michael Rothberg writes in his response to a much-cited 2008 special issue of *Studies in the Novel* on "Decolonizing Trauma Studies," it is the European primacy of the Holocaust framework that is most often called into question. In advocating for greater effort to compare, rather than hierarchize or even chronologize widely disparate examples of historical violence, Rothberg also notes that the issue's essays "make a convincing case for the need to supplement the event-based model of trauma … with a model that can account for ongoing, everyday forms of traumatizing violence as well."[16] This, in turn, allows for finer attunement to trans-European suffering by dispossession, extending trauma's reach from "epochal events" to "the repeated degradations of a racist colonial regime."[17]

As these references suggest, the disciplinary and paradigmatic challenges attending postcolonial trauma have been extensively discussed. What is worth emphasizing again here is that the predominant focus on racial and geographic representation *within* the trauma framework—in effect, the rectification of trauma studies' Whiteness—has tended to obscure representational alternatives to trauma in the expressive working-through of African dispossession. As Ruth Leys has prominently argued, the ascendance of the trauma paradigm is fraught with limitations that go deeper than its noninclusivity. In an interview that expands on some implications of her dense work *Trauma: A Genealogy*, Leys links trauma theory to "the associated 'turn to affect' in cultural studies, a turn that often involves the belief that the affects must form a system independent of cognition."[18] In sum, attending to embodied response as due redress of overly rationalistic, oft-labeled "Enlightenment" models of human intellection becomes itself an overcorrection, valorizing embodied and automated conceptions of selfhood over analytic and agentive ones. "Put slightly differently," Leys contends, cultural theorists and neuroscientists "share a commitment to the idea that there is a gap between the subject's affects and his or her appraisal of the affective situation, such that cognition or thinking come 'too late' for intention, belief, or meaning to play the role in action and behaviour

15 Wulf Kansteiner, "Genealogy of a Category Mistake: A Critical Intellectual History of the Cultural Trauma Metaphor," *Rethinking History* 8.2 (2004): 193–221, esp. 205.

16 Michael Rothberg, "Decolonizing Trauma Studies: A Response," *Studies in the Novel* 40.1 (2008): 224–34, esp. 226.

17 Rothberg, "Decolonizing Trauma Studies: A Response," 229.

18 Ruth Leys and Marlene Goldman, "Navigating the Genealogies of Trauma, Guilt, and Affect: An Interview with Ruth Leys," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 79.2 (2010): 656–79, esp. 666.

that is usually accorded them."[19] Whatever one makes of Leys's intervention into this broad and contentious terrain, it is certainly the case that her wariness of "a relative indifference to the role of ideas and beliefs in politics in favour of an 'ontological' concern with people's corporeal-affective experiences."[20] dovetails powerfully with larger misgivings in the African literary field. Empathy, warns the Zambian writer and scholar Namwali Serpell, tends to prioritize *feeling* over more intellectually demanding and less-immersive efforts to "'visit' an experience," in order "to learn or recognize what it's like 'to feel and think' when the specter of unexpected, unjustified, unjust state-sanctioned death hovers at every corner."[21]

The problem of trauma, then, is intimately linked to the problem of *experience* as an assumed representational priority in the face of racial dispossession; at the very least, it raises the question of whether and to what extent the conveying of experience of an immediate sort can be forcibly, intellectually surmounted in favor of other expository modes. By "experience," I do not mean the mere fact of being in the world, but rather what Joan W. Scott once described as an "appeal to experience as uncontestable evidence and as an originary point of explanation."[22] It is a difficult possibility to broach surrounding the fight for Zimbabwean independence and the manifold kinds of violence that attend it. A figure like Dambudzo Marechera, well known for laying the colonized psyche bare in all its trauma and tribulations, seems more apt as an expression of the extended liberatory "moment," as well as what Serpell identifies as a propensity to valorize feeling and viscerality in the consumption of African writing.

Marechera fits to a T what Ato Quayson has called the "symbolization compulsion" that marks much postcolonial African literature. In short, Quayson means a textual over-abundance of metaphorization where it does not seem to advance plot or character development, or what he calls an "intensification of the perceptual sensorium."[23] A brief quote from Marechera's 1980 novel *Black Sunlight*, published in the same year as Samkange's *Hunhuism or Ubuntuism*, makes their differences clear. "Europe was in my head, crammed together with Africa, Asia and America," thinks Marechera's narrator. "Squashed and jammed together in my dustbin head. There is no rubbish dump big enough to relieve me of my load. Swinging upside down, threatening to burst the thin roof of my brains."[24] Marechera, in this light, is broadly representative of exactly what Samkange is *not* doing. In the figure of Muchemwa, Samkange rejects psychic terrain altogether in favor of the self-estranging and yet self-defining act of what he considers his objective accounting.

Taking his turn away from suffering's immediate manifestations seriously thus entails rethinking what have become new disciplinary priorities on experience amid the affective turn, in which, per Leys, trauma studies plays a key early role. What has become

19 Leys and Goldman, "Navigating the Genealogies of Trauma, Guilt, and Affect: An Interview with Ruth Leys," 668.
20 Leys and Goldman, "Navigating the Genealogies of Trauma, Guilt, and Affect: An Interview with Ruth Leys," 668.
21 Namwali Serpell, "The Banality of Empathy," *The New York Review of Books Daily*, March 2, 2019.
22 Joan W. Scott, "The Evidence of Experience," *Critical Inquiry* 17.4 (1991): 773–97, esp. 777.
23 Ato Quayson, "Symbolization Compulsion: Testing a Psychoanalytical Category on Postcolonial African Literature," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 73.2 (2004): 754–72, esp. 766.
24 Dambudzo Marechera, *Black Sunlight* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1980), 3–4.

a widespread resistance to the norm of rationality—and to intellectualism as a force for surmounting embodied hardship—just does not square with Samkange's commitment to his powers of historical non-subsumption. Because Samkange stands in temperamentally for so many "lost" African intellectuals across otherwise disparate contexts, it makes sense to recuperate his work as a challenge to insufficiently global thinking about what intellectual dispositions "fit" work on marginalized writers. As one example, Samkange's rationalism echoes debates about Habermas's public sphere theory in its long-standing role as proxy for a misguided faith in rationalism's capacity to effect real democratization. Where Habermas famously extols "a relatively homogeneous public composed of private citizens engaged in rational-critical debate"[25] to counterbalance state power, his critics point to its social limitations. Michael Warner, in his critique of self-abstraction as the basis of public engagement, explains that "In the bourgeois public sphere … a principle of negativity was axiomatic: the validity of what you say in public bears a negative relation to your person."[26] Warner and others have convincingly worked through the limitations of this model, arguing that "the ability to abstract oneself in public discussion has always been an unequally available resource."[27] Habermas as a cipher for a socially naive faith in reasoned discussion has thus been cast as irrelevant or harmful to the causes of those who are not "implicitly, even explicitly, white, male, literate, and propertied."[28]

Though he is male and literate, Samkange and his Southern Rhodesian avatar in *The Mourned One* are markedly disenfranchised in a political, legal, and economic sense. And although I will not discuss it at length until the last section of this article, it is also worth noting that *Hunhuism or Ubuntuism* calls repeatedly and explicitly for another, similarly punctured liberal virtue, namely "civility," alongside what the book describes as "socially desirable attitudes" like fairness and humility.[29] Samkange sees the ideal African response to the violence of White minority rule, in fact, as foundationally civil, as he advocates for prioritizing "the attention one human being gives to another: the kindness, courtesy, consideration and friendliness in the relationship between people."[30] Similarly to the ways in which an insistently rational, anticolonial African intellectual like Samkange complicates critiques of Habermas and all he signifies, Samkange makes it difficult to accept some more recent interventions that home in with a historical sweep on civility's racist undertones. A short, much-circulated *Social Text* piece by the cultural theorists Tavia Nyong'o and Kyla Wazana Tompkins, for example—"Eleven Theses on

25 Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 179.

26 Michael Warner, "The Mass Public and the Mass Subject," *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 377–401, esp. 382.

27 Warner, "The Mass Public and the Mass Subject," 382.

28 Warner, "The Mass Public and the Mass Subject," 382.

29 Stanlake Samkange with Tommie Marie Samkange, *Hunhuism or Ubuntuism: A Zimbabwe Indigenous Political Philosophy* (Salisbury [Harare]: Graham Publishers, 1980), 79.

30 Samkange with Samkange, *Hunhuism or Ubuntuism*, 39. Following Tarisayi A. Chimuka's essay "Ethics Among the Shona," the Shona word *kuenzanisa/kuenzaisa* would best correspond to this sense of "justice conceived as fairness"; see *Zambezia* 281 (2001): 23–37, esp. 34. I think it is worth adding here that *kuenzanisa* can also be translated as "to compare." Interestingly, Chimuka then follows Herbert Chimhundu in seeing the Shona tendency to offer proverbs in contradictory pairs as evidence of a cultural bias toward moderation (ibid.).

Civility"—pronounces it as fundamentally antiprogressive. "Calls for civility seek to evade our calls for change," they write. "The accusation of incivility is a technique of depoliticization aimed at undoing collectivity." Postcolonial subjects, in particular, are imagined as buying into civil norms in only a strategic and subversive way, as in Homi Bhabha's well-known concept of "sly civility," which Nyong'o and Tompkins cite.[31] All things considered, the critical climate of roughly the past twenty years leaves little room for taking Samkange's intellectualized suffering at face value.[32]

It is now received as nearly axiomatic that truly democratic reading practices must attend to the suffering inflicted on dispossessed subjects in acute and chronic ways, using an emphasis on affect—especially feelings of anger and pain—to confront histories of traumatization and thereby invest in their ongoing redress. Samkange, however, urges readers toward precisely a non-emotive and, crucially, trans-experiential analytic mode, asking his reader to think *with* and even about him, more than to feel *for* him. The scene with which I began is the very opposite of Seltzer's "wound culture," which becomes "a sort of crossing point of the psycho-social."[33] When he reflects on the clarity of intellectual purpose wrought by his racist death sentence, the narrator of *The Mourned One* wrests his mind away from its embodied cooptation by socially normalized suffering. The timely tensions I have presented so far—between calls for broader attunement to embodied experience, on the one hand, and more distanced efforts to reflect on dispossession, on the other—indicate how relevant such an effort remains.

The Mourned One and the Failed Search for Transcendent Selfhood

Samkange's career as a historical novelist is marked by what one might loosely call a liberal orientation toward cross-racial reciprocity, process, and individual integrity even in its most hardline anticolonial forms. In *On Trial for My Country* (1966), his best-known work, both the duped (and last) Ndebele King Lobengula and the British colonial mogul Cecil John Rhodes are given space to literally make a case for their historical transgressions. The demonstration of an "unbiased" intellect, as described in the previous section, is part of both the form and content of the novel on multiple levels. Written correspondence between historical actors, including Lobengula and Queen Victoria, is presented as a story that an old man relates to a young Samkange just outside Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second largest city and the one where he spent the greater part of his childhood. "Thus it was that the old man told me his tale which I will repeat as simply as he told it to me," Samkange's fictional avatar states. "I speak only the words he spoke."[34] Within the narrative thus framed, Lobengula and Rhodes affirm their commitments to dispassionate retelling, with the courtroom setting allowing them an equal hand in establishing the shared truth of their interactions.

31 Kyla Wazana Tompkins and Tavia Nyong'o. "Eleven Thesis on Civility," *Social Text* online, July 11, 2018.

32 For an informed and extremely clear discussion of civility's fraught position in African and decolonial studies, see the philosopher Olufemi O. Taiwo's recent essay for the American Philosophical Association website, "What Incivility Gets Us (And What It Doesn't)." Official blog of the American Philosophical Association, September 3, 2019.

33 Seltzer, "Wound Culture: Trauma in the Pathological Public Sphere," 4.

34 Stanlake Samkange, *On Trial for My Country* (London: Heinemann, 1966), 8.

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The Mourned One, begun two years later in 1968, has a much harder time maintaining this air of remove. As in *On Trial for My Country*, Samkange begins the book with a transparent frame narrative of having been spontaneously gifted with a story: in this case, he claims to happen in 1960 upon a prison memoir by a now-deceased young man, wrongly hanged for having raped a White woman, which had been kept safe by his former cell guard. Unlike its historical novel predecessor, however, whose characters' "realness" allows Samkange to position himself as a mere observer, *The Mourned One* assumes the task of actually building a character to do the observing. The novel proper picks up where its plot terminates in 1935, in a prose whose plaintive quality, at first, stands in contrast to Samkange's own, immediately preceding profession of tedious scholarly work. "Well, it is all over now," the narrator pronounces, before launching into the confession of wrecked nerves and sensory numbness from which this article evolves.[35] The reader, as I have suggested, is primed for a novel about colonial trauma, but ends up encountering one about suffering as a boon to intellectual distance.

The thematic crux of the novel—the betrayal of mission-educated Black Zimbabweans by the White institutions that have raised them—is not difficult to uncover, and Samkange's speaker, Muchemwa, gives it pithy formulation as "I was saved to die."[36] It is the following passage that reveals the book's most substantial inquiries. Muchemwa ponders, "Can it be that there are other values—ideas, concepts, traditions, personality, religion, civilization—nay, a whole heritage which perhaps, like me, has been saved to die?"[37] *The Mourned One*, here, announces itself not simply as a novel of disillusionment with the liberal values of British missionaries as they are wielded to persecute (and prosecute) African subjects, but as an investigation into whether and by what mechanisms of telling those values may, in part at least, be salvaged. In asking a series of historically specific questions about Muchemwa's racist condemnation—"How does one relate Christianity and civilisation to all this? Is it Christian to hang a man for such a reason? Is that society civilised which has such laws [against miscegenation] and such an attitude to fellow human beings? Is the so-called pagan and primitive society not, in fact, higher and better than this civilisation?[38]—Samkange also raises the more general challenge of whether his distanced, comprehensive way of telling can survive the suffering that is being told. How does one evaluate such tarnished intellectualism's merits when it is reclaimed by a person for whom these stakes are quite plainly life or death?

Samkange's investment in a narrative and analytic "bird's-eye view" is now expressed via a narrator whose ability to enforce it derives from being privy to both strands of his own dual cultural origin. In effect, his access to a doubled cultural perspective grants him twice the suffering *and* twice the drive to hover enough "above" both cultures to be able to take their measure. Muchemwa is also named Lazarus Percival Ockenden, or "Ocky," after the White minister who adopts him, and he has access to both Shona and British colonial institutions and norms. As Mbongeni Malaba suggests, "*The Mourned One* enabled [Samkange] to tease out the various strands of his identity,

35 Samkange, *The Mourned One*, 1.
36 Samkange, *The Mourned One*, 4.
37 Samkange, *The Mourned One*, 4.
38 Samkange, *The Mourned One*, 4–5.

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as both 'a son of the soil' and a representative 'new African' shaped by Christianity and western education."[39] Ocky thus becomes a model of analytic comportment as well as the historical "event" being analyzed: he is form and content alike. The fact that he is inclined to dispassionately narrate his own autobiography, inclusive of inception and babyhood, is enabled by the missionary education he receives as a result of being left to die by his birth family, in accordance with the (Zezuru) Shona custom of killing at least one twin. Muchemwa, we learn, is rescued by a White man who crosses paths with his family when the narrator-as-infant is near death's door from illness, set to be killed by being "put away" in a pot in a river. Even prior to this, there was speculation in his mother's village that he would be cursed at birth. "Thus, even before I was born, my life was in danger," Muchemwa-cum-Ocky writes to conclude the novel's second chapter, "and, like today, it was not known whether I would live or die."[40]

From the novel's get-go, Muchemwa-cum-Ocky is critical of both possible paths his life may have taken. Of the custom of putting twins to death, he writes, "What was abnormal was evil, and therefore had to be destroyed."[41] This implicit condemnation of his originary community then applies just as fully to the White milieu in which he ends up, so that the novel cultivates a peculiarly static quality. Indeed, its third chapter ends almost identically to the second, which in turn echoes the first: "Thus, even at the time I was born, my position was much as it is today. I was to be deliberately put to death."[42] For this reason, *The Mourned One* might be read as a "failed" novel, promising character development where it offers only a thematic stutter.[43] Ranka Primorac offers a more generous reading when she describes it as a "colonial-native inversion" of the biographical novel in its Bakhtinian definition, which depends on the typicality of its main character's life progression as it is established over the course of generations. A typical unfolding, in Ocky's case, is impossible because as Primorac writes he is fated to "a life of anxiety in an unjustly dual moral system. In his role as the narrator, he therefore positions himself in an in-between discursive space, allowing his own voice to be 'contaminated' by echoes of both the 'traditional' African and the missionary discourses with which it is in dialogue."[44] Crucially, though, I do not see Ocky as exemplary of a "neither/nor" position, but rather as a "both/and" one. In other words, the significant trait of his narration is not that he is denied full access to both the Shona and missionary worlds, but that he is able to penetrate each of them with encompassing and exacting precision. Ocky's blessing is his curse: his understanding of each of his worlds is comprehensive and systematic. He does not see either as simply *what they are*, but as a frustrating interplay, as if watched from afar, of their respective virtues and failings.

39 Mbongeni Malaba, "'A Series of Seemings': Inclusion and Exclusion in the Religious Environment Explored in Stanlake Samkange's *The Mourned One* and Charles Mungoshi's'Sacrifice," *Current Writing* 24.2 (2012): 177–85, esp. 180.

40 Samkange, *The Mourned One*, 11.

41 Samkange, *The Mourned One*, 16.

42 Samkange, *The Mourned One*, 17.

43 See, for example, Neil ten Kortenaar's chapter "Doubles and Others in Two Zimbabwean Novels" in *Contemporary African Fiction*, ed. Derek Wright (Bayreuth: Bayreuth African Studies, 1997), 19–41.

44 Ranka Primorac, *The Place of Tears: The Novel and Politics in Modern Zimbabwe* (London and New York: Tauris, 2006), 61.

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As *The Mourned One* goes on to show, however, the breadth and tonal remove of Ocky's narrative facility also teeters on the edge of historical credulity. His mode of balanced, omniscient telling moves toward its fullest expression as the novel literally approaches the Waddilove Institution, the prestigious, real-life Methodist high school that Samkange himself attended. At this point Ocky even demonstrates retrospective access to his peers' minds, albeit in a curiously non-intrusive way, for example, "Their minds, for the first time, drifted back to the people who had accompanied them, …"[45] This line and the chapter in which it appears are devoted to the journey of two of Ocky's school peers, Gore and Kahari, as they make their way toward Waddilove. It is the most spatially descriptive section of the novel, providing a rich, detailed view of Southern Rhodesia's racial geography in all of its daily hardships. Over the course of several weeks, the two boys walk the reader through the onerous task of getting school supplies at the one store in a twenty miles radius; their community-wide farewell; and their eighteen-mile trek to the closest town and train station, during which they "knew all the streams and rivers they had to cross."[46] Upon arrival there, Samkange spends three pages chronicling the boys' interaction with White railway personnel as they are "served through a hatch about a foot square," which was "usually closed until the white man inside took it in his head to open it and serve Africans."[47] The ordeal of buying tickets is among the most vivid in the book: "Finally, one of the boys knocked gently at the wooden shutter of the hatch. In a minute the shutter flew open and out came a string of the most sonorous, unprintable, vulgar swearwords in kitchen Kaffir [a debased White version of Shona] the boys had ever heard."[48] Such vividly racist interaction continues through the train ride itself. The overarching effect is that the novel's setting gets the most "real" as it builds toward the space of Samkange's intellectual ideal, upheld by the Waddilove Institution in all its multiracial erudition. The school, that is, appears on the horizon as either an island refuge or a lie.

Formally, Samkange seems determined that it should be both. Ocky's uniquely knowledgeable role grants him the ability to record the many settings and experiences that detract from Waddilove's primacy. The supporting figures whose lives he channels either reveal an alternative Shona community or imply the hypocrisy of what James Graham, in his book *Land and Nationalism in Fictions from Southern Africa*, calls the school's representation as an "ideal landscape of hybridised Afro-European modernity."[49] At no point, though, does *The Mourned One* narratologically invest in the experiences its narrator describes. Ocky "abstracts" himself, to use the Habermasian vocabulary, from the long road to Waddilove in a literal sense, maintaining an omniscient distance from others' fraught journey from village to town. The novel thus only partly adheres to what Robert Muponde, in *Some Kinds of Childhood*, refers to as a "nationalist journey motif" that entails leaving home and then returning with greater

45 Samkange, *The Mourned One*, 66.
46 Samkange, *The Mourned One*, 58–61.
47 Samkange, *The Mourned One*, 62.
48 Samkange, *The Mourned One*, 62.
49 James Graham, *Land and Nationalism in Fictions from Southern Africa* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 23.

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commitment to its anticolonial bulwarking.[50] Although it is true that it contains many of the key tropes associated with nationalist coming-of-age narratives—Muponde even includes Samkange on his list of "idealogues of black nationalism"[51]—at no point does it relinquish its claim to this *removed* and meticulously balanced narrative sensibility. The various African settings being marshaled in support of a nationalist politics in the 1960s are portrayed with a similar impartiality, appearing as parts of a rounded historical awareness rather than singular, felt commitments. Samkange, we might say, is searching for a critical posture more than an embodied response.

On the one hand, there is the heated, urban environment of the city, and specifically Bulawayo; here, the strongest sentiments are reserved mostly for minor characters' speeches. (A "big, fat fellow with a deep baritone voice," for example, is picked-up *in medias res* shouting, "But the white man does not want us to be workers. He wants us to be his tools" before quickly disappearing again.)[52] On the other, there is the welcoming, communal environment of Ocky's home village, where he feels "the inexplicable, serene tranquility" of communal Shona life.[53] This, too, is presented as an ebullient but short-lived "vacation" followed closely by a critical description of rural gender norms.[54] As Graham pronounces, Waddilove does, indeed, serve in many ways as the political and moral center of the novel, described as "a small but beautiful place."[55] Graham explains this fact in historically specific terms, casting *The Mourned One* as Samkange's act of mourning for "the demise of the religiously inflected, liberal and multi-racial politics of an earlier generation of African nationalists in the context of a seismic shift towards a more radical nationalist ideology."[56] Although I do not disagree, there seems something still more at stake: namely, a mode of intellectual comportment that can maintain an encompassing and if necessary, self-abnegating critical posture amid a quickly changing reality and set of political actors. In response to persistent questioning by other students about his identity, Ocky narrates, "I confess these questions embarrassed me because, up to this time, I had never given much thought to who I was."[57] Given that "who he is" is then related to "where he is from" by virtue of language (Ocky bemoans that he "spoke English before [he] could utter a word of Shona,"[58] Samkange offers Ocky an easy path to a galvanizing plotline of cultural reclamation. But *The Mourned One* is not this—it pulls back each time it approaches anything like full-throated cultural or political endorsement. Instead, it offers a multiply framed plot structure rife with checks and balances.

The Mourned One, then, ultimately serves to extricate a measured, contextually transcendent mode of intellectual inquiry from the missionary-colonial project to which Samkange to some degree remains self-consciously beholden. Its main character "self-abstracts" in a way that permits selective reclamation of the African cultural context that

50 Robert Muponde, *Some Kinds of Childhood: Images of History and Resistance in Zimbabwean Literature* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2015), 55.
51 Muponde, *Some Kinds of Childhood*, 4.
52 Samkange, *The Mourned One*, 120–21.
53 Samkange, *The Mourned One*, 96.
54 Samkange, *The Mourned One*, 106.
55 Graham, *Land and Nationalism in Fictions from Southern Africa*, 29.
56 Graham, *Land and Nationalism in Fictions from Southern Africa,* 21.
57 Samkange, *The Mourned One*, 90.
58 Samkange, *The Mourned One*, 90.

has wronged him in its own right. Across multiple settings from a rural village; to a White-administered rail station; to a multiracial boarding school; and, finally, to a deeply unjust court of law, the novel unfolds through an overarching, surveyistic sensibility. A moral value of distanced and "fair" observation is decoupled from its personal and institutional betrayals, creating a paradoxical bottom line of suffering's transcendence by precisely the tools of its infliction. Although "the missionary" teaches Ocky that "all men are equal and important in the sight of God" and that "colour means nothing," Ocky remarks that he "forgets that Christianity must not only be practised but must be seen to be practised every minute of the hour, every hour of the day, every day of the week, every week of the year and every year of the lifetime."[59] In effect, Samkange keeps behavior and belief on separate planes in order to demand just conduct, which in turn has the effect of salvaging *how* he exercises his mind from the suffering and dispossession that is built into his identity imagined only in terms of racial experience.

Although it is by no means innocent, Shona culture for Ocky upholds a standard of measured comportment that is oddly in sync with the best of what he encounters at Waddilove (for example, its prized debate culture). In other words, the *right way to be* holds steady across vastly different experiences of the world. "For instance," Ocky explains to his long-lost twin brother on death row, "See an old woman walking over there, she may be dirty and poor, or she may be rich and clean; you will greet her and accord her the respect due to, first, a human being, second, an old person … and third, a woman."[60] Muchemwa-cum-Ocky thus hews to Samkange's broad faith in a transcendent power of intellectual understanding, as Southern Rhodesian politics grow more racially bifurcated. "Education will ultimately enable us to meet the white man on his own ground and topple him from his pedestal,"[61] Ocky avers on the book's penultimate page. The investments ideally bequeathed by education can be summarized as openness to the measured evaluation of everything, using a standard of analysis that is derivable from but unwavering across culturally variable contexts. Having staked these claims, though, *The Mourned One* is held back from their full realization by the racism of its time. In its stunted narrative development and uncertain death, the book chomps at the bit of the history it knows so well. It chomps at the bit of all history, in fact, observing it in service of a philosophical aim at once grander and more emplaced.

Hunhuism or Ubuntuism: Philosophy contra Immediacy

When he turns from the novel to writing a philosophical treatise approaching Zimbabwe's long-sought moment of independence in 1980, Samkange seems to be searching for a representational mode that is *individualized* but not *subjectivized*. Rather than root Zimbabweans' historical experience in the pain he cannot escape given his time and place, the author of *The Mourned One* seeks to articulate a culturally inculcated behavioral code that can nonetheless outlast its immediate circumstances. This means downplaying *immediacy*, period, to elevate the moral dimensions of individuality over its psychic or even most plainly experiential ones: the greater the range of life trajectories

59 Samkange, *The Mourned One*, 145.
60 Samkange, *The Mourned One*, 145.
61 Samkange, *The Mourned One*, 146.

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Ocky-cum-Muchemwa accesses, the less possible it seems to maintain a "rational" distance from their trials and tribulations. And yet at the same time, Samkange remains committed to refusing the intellectual paralysis of traumatization. Because the realist novel in his hands has proven unable to sustain a distinction between experiencing suffering and analyzing its sources—because his narrator was "saved to die"—Samkange and his coauthor, his American wife, Tommie, look now in another direction.

Hunhuism or Ubuntuism: A Zimbabwean Indigenous Political Philosophy begins with what amounts to another multilevel frame device, familiar from Samkange's efforts to grant his novels an appearance of objectivity. In its two-page preface, Stanlake describes his rejection of Western-originating socialism and Marxism in favor of a Shona moral system called hunhuism. He enjoins fellow Zimbabwean intellectuals: "It is our business to distil this philosophy and set it out for the whole world to see."[62] Keeping pace with Ocky's documenting both the richness and liabilities of Shona culture in *The Mourned One*, the Samkanges adds, "It is not our claim that everything Africans evolved under hunhuism or ubuntuism is superior to anything evolved elsewhere," and insists, "We must develop the perspicacity to discern what must be preserved and what must be eschewed in both hunhuism and Western culture."[63] The "we" here is specifically "the majority that will soon rule Zimbabwe"[64] but also extends, by design, to a wider theoretical readership. The book's authorship and title are transcultural and transnational: "ubuntuism" is the Zulu- and Ndebele-language version of the Shona "hunhuism," and the book's first chapter explicitly notes that there is "a sense in which we are all Africans: black, white and brown."[65] The relevant point here is that the work is set up to facilitate movement from an immediate context to a broader public, with the preface stating its intention to put forth "the wisdom of centuries" as it will "stand the test of time and space" (10). In effect, it offers guidelines for its own reading as a means of connecting Zimbabwe's independence to a universally replicable way of being.

Hunhuism or Ubuntuism accomplishes this through a narrative strategy of "zooming out" in time and space, which allows for both cultural specificity and narrative flow without demanding the individualized interaction of setting and character that a realist novel does. The Samkanges begin the book's first non-introductory chapter with a vivid yet vast description of its privileged locale: "Between the waters of the mighty Zambezi, in the north, and the languid Limpopo river, in the south, lies a land which is bounded in the east by the coastal waters of the Indian Ocean. Today, a large portion of this land is called Rhodesia, and its coastal trip is part of Mocambique."[66] Zimbabwe, in this way, lays claim to epic grandeur and an unusual degree of situatedness at the same time, a complementarity made still clearer in the next paragraph's parallel between the date of its first habitation and the birth of Christ.[67] It is a magisterial, evolving space—the Samkanges walk the reader through the Mwene Mutapa and Rozwi empires that once occupied it, and into its agricultural advancement through the nineteenth

62 Samkange with Samkange, *Hunhuism or Ubuntuism*, 9.
63 Samkange with Samkange, *Hunhuism or Ubuntuism*, 10.
64 Samkange with Samkange, *Hunhuism or Ubuntuism*, 14.
65 Samkange with Samkange, *Hunhuism or Ubuntuism*, 14.
66 Samkange with Samkange, *Hunhuism or Ubuntuism*, 15.
67 Samkange with Samkange, *Hunhuism or Ubuntuism*, 15.

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century—whose present racial geography is but a blip on the civilizational radar.[68] If Zimbabwe is, thus, established as an indisputably fertile cultural landscape best viewed on a scale of "deep time," it is also one whose intellectual contributions require an unusual amount of context, at least as far as philosophy is concerned, to be brought to full fruition. Samkange thus "experientializes" philosophy even as he opts for philosophy over a more experiential kind of narrative, demanding that the reader extract an intellectual modality from a real place.

With *On Trial for My Country* and *The Mourned One* fresh in mind, it is as if Stanlake Samkange has made his way from the historical novel genre, with its characters granted by life; through a more "abstracted" fictionalized avatar in Muchemwa-cum-Ocky, a combination of autobiography and historical distillation; and, here, has arrived finally at a fully generalized mode of exposition. "Hunhuism or ubuntuism is, therefore, a philosophy that is the experience of thirty-five thousand years of living in Africa," the Samkanges write. "It is a philosophy that sets a premium on human relations. In a world increasingly dominated by machines and with personal relationships becoming ever more mechanical, Africa's major contribution in the world today may well be her sense of *hunhu* or *ubuntu* which her people have developed over the centuries."[69] *Hunhuism or Ubuntuism* thus pairs an emphasis on distanciation with one on virtues that are lived, in the sense that customary behavior is key to the moral value that Samkange assigns the broader question of moderate comportment. On the following page, he offers an account of hunhuism in the flesh, recalling an episode in the early 1950s when two young Shona men refused payment for getting his stuck car out of a ditch. Their refusal, a local elder reminds them, should be dictated by a distant family (what Samkange calls tribal) relation, on account of which accepting compensation "*hahungave hunhu ihwo hwo*," or "would not be humanness."[70] The ordering of elements, here, is significant. Samkange begins with an implication—at once moral and historical—and only then summons the example. Philosophy thus performs or, more aptly, is defined *as* an explanatory function that is distinct from the cultural codes it observes. As a result, *Hunhuism or Ubuntuism* marshals a sense of cultural embeddedness that also avoids the trap of so-called ethno-philosophy, which, as Valentin Mudimbe succinctly puts it, is often seen to mistake "a language *of* experience" for "a language *about* experience."[71]

Instead of seeing Shona particularity as an antidote to speciously generalized first principles, thus consigning African philosophy to a "critical reading of the Western experience" that is "simultaneously a way of 'inventing' a foreign tradition" to quote, again, Mudimbe,[72] the Samkanges see Zimbabwean codes of conduct as intrinsically morally valuable and thus ripe for explication as a replicable way of living. *Hunhuism or Ubuntuism* particularizes in the name of hard-won generalization: a preexisting

68 The kingdom or empire of Mutapa, often written elsewhere Mwenemutapa, lasted from 1430 to 1760, and the Rozwi empire, which emerged from Mwenemutapa, from 1684 to 1834. The Samkanges' main purpose in introducing them is to show the diverse origins of what is collectively referred to as "Shona" culture.

69 Samkange with Samkange, *Hunhuism or Ubuntuism*, 34.

70 Samkange with Samkange, *Hunhuism or Ubuntuism*, 35.

71 V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (England and New York: James Currey, 1988), 146.

72 Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa*, 171.

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language of experience ("we act in this way for this reason") is grafted to a language about it ("here is why this way of doing things should matter"). In asserting philosophical truths alongside anecdotal description, the Samkanges encourage a moral bottom line of how, rather than who (in terms of interiority or essence) or what (as a social identifier), one is. In this sense, *Hunhuism or Ubuntuism* aligns with *The Mourned One*. It finds an ideal of intellectual comportment through Shona culture and elaborates Shona culture through an ideal of comportment, but unlike the novel, the philosophical work does not venture to concoct a representative figure for either. There is no Socrates here, self-reflexively conversing as the fleshly embodiment of his epoch, no Shona man who teaches, but instead the authors' gentle observation of what there is to learn. In the figures of the young men rescuing Stanlake Samkange's car from a ditch, Samkange offers the reader an unknowing model of the values he then translates, in and as his body of work, into an at-once intellectual and moral disposition of "kindness, courtesy, consideration and friendliness in the relationship between people."[73] But philosophy need not broach the question of whether such comportment seems historically justified or likely. It only aims to ascertain whether, in ideal circumstances, it is right.

Ironically, though hunhuism is not defined negatively in a broad intellectual sense (that is, it is not for the most part asserted to escape or negate Western values), Samkange notes that it is typically identified in its context of origin by absence and not fulfillment. "It is a peculiarity of the concept of hunhuism that it is more discernible when described in terms of what it is not than what it is," he writes. "'*Hausi hunhu ihwo hwo* ("That is not hunhuism"),' we are often told, usually as a reprimand. The positive side: '*uhwu ndihwo hunhu chaihwo* ("This is real hunhuism"),' is rarely pointed out."[74] Implicitly, then, humanity is by default aligned with fairness and generosity, making Samkange's insistence on such norms when it does not seem politically possible or even reasonable, an act of hunhu in its own right. This identification by lack is also linked to Zimbabwe's racial demographics, recoding Samkange's simultaneous disenchantment with British hypocrisy *and* dismay at the nascent country's bifurcation along race lines. Europeans are not seen by default to exhibit hunhu, as evidence for which Samkange cites the Shona phrase "*Hona munhu uyo ari kufamba no murungu*" or "There is a *munhu* [person] walking with a white man" (38) as a common reaction to seeing a White and Black man approaching together.[75] And yet, neither are Africans granted automatic claim to it.

As Ruby Magosvongwe writes, "A good/virtuous person (*munhu chaiye*) embraces and observes the duties and responsibilities that uphold peace, justice, freedom, and stability for society's greater good, while those who shun such social responsibility are usually deemed bad and/or useless people (*munhu pasina*) or senseless and insensitive—*munhu asina musoro/rombe*."[76] Hunhuism, thus, is a choice: it is made by the act of its explication into a system of "attributes," to use Magosvongwe's word, that can thereby be transmitted. It is a moral code into which some are born, but into which one need not be born to adopt, a ritualized and yet *rational* process of becoming best summarized as a

73 Samkange with Samkange, *Hunhuism or Ubuntuism*, 39.
74 Samkange with Samkange, *Hunhuism or Ubuntuism*, 40.
75 Samkange with Samkange, *Hunhuism or Ubuntuism*, 38.
76 Ruby Magosvongwe, "Shona Philosophy of Unhu/Hunhu and Its Onomastics in Selected Fictional Narratives," *Journal of the African Literature Association* 10.2 (2016): 158–75, esp. 159.

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"covenant with the land" reinforced by a series of rites from birth to death.[77] Hunhuism's definition as a disposition that a person may or may not fulfill, best captured in the Shona word *tsika* or "culturedness," thus suggests a continual possibility of redemption through self-moderation. Hunhuism as an *idea* points to an ongoing aspiration toward a developmental *ideal* that is at once social and individual: it is an "education that is intended to develop the whole person"[78] or, as Patrick Sibanda puts it, a call to behave as "a good citizen who is able to act upon both his/her rational consciousness and according to the expectations of the society."[79]

Negotiating between rational analysis and social harmony also influences institutional function. "In passing final judgement," according to the Samkanges, "the African court will take into consideration an element which a Western court would consider quite extraneous and irrelevant, and that is whether the judgment or sentence reconciles the parties to the dispute" because they have to go on living together.[80] In behaving with hunhu (which is to say, with an eye to civility and reciprocity), individuals thus offer a model for institutional decision-making. The individual as the primary unit of analysis carries within it a blueprint for the self-bracketing moral logic of society as a whole. In this case, an African court of law exists to maintain not only procedural correctness but also sincere moral conciliation. At the same time, the Samkanges' exposition of how parts and wholes work together within African jurisprudence is a far cry from imagining group unification through pain or disruption; scaling up, that is, from violence inflicted on individuals to its collective implications. In systematizing the *ideal* relationship between the individual and social institutions rather than what may seem like the *real* one, Samkange uses philosophy to represent the inverse of cultural trauma.

There is furthermore a central paradox in play that echoes that of the willful self-abstraction I described, via debates about Habermas, in the first section of this article, whereby one achieves fully fledged intellectual participation by opting into self-erasure. The ready association of self-abstraction with the normative status of Western and implicitly, White men looks less obvious in the Zimbabwean frame. "The importance of [codes of respect conveyed by greeting]," the Samkanges write, "is that there is a tendency among the Shonas to concede their higher status," so that "not being arrogant, pompous or puffed up when one meets or deals with other people, is a characteristic of a true Mashona gentleman or lady."[81] There is no doubt an element of status, here, inherent in *who* self-effaces appropriately. And yet in reclaiming self-*un*marking as a point of cultural restitution, the Samkanges force confrontation with what one really indicts when rejecting norms such as rationality or civility. Is the problem with a fungible situational effect (with a bent toward "moral harmony" itself, that is), or with the racial power dynamics of its historical enforcement? Although hunhuism thus cast is in some sense conservative in its insistence on social propriety, the mechanism of earning social

77 Magosvongwe, "Shona Philosophy of Unhu/Hunhu and Its Onomastics in Selected Fictional Narratives," 160.

78 Magosvongwe, "Shona Philosophy of Unhu/Hunhu and Its Onomastics in Selected Fictional Narratives," 161.

79 Patrick Sibanda, "The Dimensions of 'Hunhu/Ubuntu' (Humanism in the African Sense): The Zimbabwean Conception," *IOSR Journal of Engineering* 4.1 (2014): 26–29, esp. 27.

80 Samkange with Samkange, *Hunhuism or Ubuntuism*, 44.

81 Samkange with Samkange, *Hunhuism or Ubuntuism*, 72–73.

status through humility suggests an egalitarian possibility as well. Through learned practices of deferential greeting, one both announces oneself as discriminating and moves incrementally toward a nondisciminatory network of relations. "Furthermore," Samkange continues, "all this enables us to claim relationship with just about anyone and have that claim allowed…. There is no Mashona who cannot show himself to have a *hukama* (relationship) with whomever he chooses; and that relationship will rarely be disclaimed or disallowed."[82] Self-definition and self-restraint go hand in hand.

To have hunhu, then, is to demonstrate moral maturity by asserting a priority on moderate behavior, to acting out a measured ideal regardless of whether it can be contextually motivated. It is, quoting Oswell Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru and Ngoni Makuvaza, a decision to cultivate dialogue as a means of "inculcating respect for others as much as we would like them to respect us," on a par with the golden rule.[83] Hunhuism thus emerges as a deontological belief system in the sense that its demands exist apart from those of situational consequence, but its elaboration, by Samkange and others, has often been put to contextually specific ends. Given this long-standing interplay between cultural specification and trans-contextual significance, it is not surprising that hunhuism is frequently discussed in the context of Zimbabwean education reform. It is marshaled as a homegrown norm of liberal comportment that counters both its duplicitous British incarnation, as well as for Samkange and others what is perceived as an overly mechanistic and imported socialism introduced in its aftermath. Whether through an ongoing claim to land access or by reinstating a hunhuist idea of social consensus-building into Zimbabwean schooling, as Samkange saw himself doing with the aforementioned Nyatsime College, it dictates a rational choice to exceed what might seem like rational calculation. Acting with hunhuist restraint is its own reward because hunhuist principles cut grooves for a world of habitual decency.

The problem, as I have suggested, is that hunhuism for Samkange is not quite *representable* in novel form during Zimbabwe's extended liberatory moment. On the simplest level, this is because it is nowhere to be found in its full, lived expression: *The Mourned One* cannot quite maintain the communitarian exuberance of Shona village "tradition" in the shadow of its own injustices, and the civility ostensibly on offer at Waddilove gives way to the racial betrayal at the book's core. In structural terms, the challenge of expressing hunhu, as per Samkange's understanding of it, is that it demands a separate, meta-experiential space: the one wherein Ocky hovers after he overcomes the trauma of his death sentence to examine his life as if it were not his. *Hunhuism or Ubuntuism* transposes it from a fictive to a philosophical register by focusing on what he sees as the objective *functionality* of hunhu, not simply the fact of its cultural value. Samkange advises, for example, that the new Zimbabwean government would do well to employ *ngangas* (divine "seers" and healers, often spelled *n'anga*) in preventing murder. This is not on account of his believing in traditional faith practices, but because enough people do believe in *ngangas*' power that fear of their ability to discern guilt can be

82 Samkange with Samkange, *Hunhuism or Ubuntuism*, 73.

83 Oswell Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru and Ngoni Makuvaza, "Hunhu: In Search of an Indigenous Philosophy for the Zimbabwean Education System," *Journal of Indigenous Social Development* 3.1 (2014): 1–15, esp. 11.

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mobilized as incentive to act in hunhuist ways.[84] Samkange thus gestures toward ontological questions—that is, Do spirits (*ngozi*) and seers exist?—without needing to develop or resolve them beyond the moral codes they facilitate.

One could certainly quibble with how the book selects the historical evidence from which it draws general claims, and debates about ubuntu continue apace in academic philosophy. The argument I am making is not that Samkange is "right" about its meaning or implications, but that he uses philosophy to fill gaps in what the realist novel and, by extension, an experientially oriented narrative can do in his place and time. Hunhuism, here, occupies the space of a culturally rooted best practice that need not (though in his case, arguably does) correspond to how anyone actually lives: philosophy assumes the task that Muchemwa can embody but not fulfill. A human protagonist, that is, cannot attain to the level of abstraction that a philosophical system can and must. Ocky is essentially martyred to the conjoined cause of narrative omniscience and an untenable posture of intellectual fair-mindedness. Philosophy then steps in to advance Samkange's literary ambitions where literature falls short: it looks to the past to instantiate values for the future, bypassing the pain of the present.

84 Samkange with Samkange, *Hunhuism or Ubuntuism*, 53–54.

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