CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SELECTED SHONA NOVELISTS’ CONCEPTUALISATION AND DEPICTION OF THE AFRICAN COMMUNITARIAN WORLDVIEW OF UNHU (HUMANITY TO OTHERS)

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DECEMBER 2016
I, Evans Mandova, declare that CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SELECTED SHONA NOVELISTS’ CONCEPTUALISATION AND DEPICTION OF THE AFRICAN COMMUNITARIAN WORLDVIEW OF UNHU (HUMANITY TO OTHERS) is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

____________________  ___________________
Signature  Date

December 2016
Munhu munhu navanhu (A person is a person through other people). A project of this nature could not have been accomplished single-handedly. I wish to express my profound gratitude to my promoter Prof. D.E Mutasa and my co-promoter Prof. M.J. Mojapelo for their constructive criticism in shaping this thesis. I also pay tribute to them for their patience, industriousness, dedication and insightful comments in the development of this study. May I also acknowledge my indebtedness to the University of South Africa for the Bursary that enabled me to undertake this research. Special mention goes to my family members for their guidance. To my colleagues in the Department of African Languages and Literature, I thank you for your encouragement. I wish to extend my gratitude to Prof. Nyota, Dr Gonye and Mr Moyo for the discussions and advice. I am deeply indebted to Dr Tavengwa Gwekwerere of California State University for the reading material and all interviewees for their time and ideas. Mr Mukandi and Mr Mutonhori deserve special mention for their support in producing the final copies of this thesis. That is the spirit of unhu (humanity to others).
DEDICATION

It is my sincere gratefulness and profound regard that I dedicate this thesis to my father Lamech and mother Jane, my two sons Tinaye and Mukudzei and my daughter Nzwirashe Mumbi for their unfailing love and unwavering support.
ABSTRACT

This study interrogates how Shona novelists conceptualise and depict the African communitarian worldview of *unhu* (humanity to others). The study relies on content analysis of selected Shona novels, critical reviews from various scholars, journals, newspapers and theses, augmented by interviews and questionnaires. The theoretical framework is guided by Afrocentricity and Africana Womanism which are pivotal to the explication of meaning from selected texts, with the view to examining whether or not the writers’ portrayal and understanding of *unhu* helps Africa’s socio-cultural and political liberation. Given that the African worldview of *unhu* celebrates virtues central to mutual social responsibility, mutual respect, trust, self-reliance, caring, among other attributes. These tenets help to revitalise and rejuvenate the decaying socio-cultural fabric of Zimbabwe. The study intimates that *unhu* principles could be fruitfully embraced in charting a dispensation in which all people of Zimbabwe could subordinate their personal interests to the national interests, respecting one another, thus forging enduring peace and development while, at the same time, the leadership would be governed by democratic tenets espoused through *unhu*. 
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Preamble

This study is a discourse on Shona novelists’ conceptualisation and depiction of the African communitarian worldview of *unhu* (humanity to others). The Shona novelists’ depiction of *unhu* is examined in the context of Africa’s struggles for social, cultural and political emancipation, both past and present. The research examines whether or not the writers’ portrayal and understanding of *unhu* helps in Africa’s social, cultural and political liberation. In that regard, the research assesses the extent to which the writers’ vision of *unhu* is progressive and liberating.

*Unhu* is a Shona word which is translated to *ubuntu* in Nguni. The African indigenous worldview of *unhu* embodies virtues that celebrate mutual social responsibility, mutual assistance, trust, sharing, self-reliance, caring and respect for others, among other ethical ethos. These axiological aspects influence the way people participate in various spheres of their lives. In this study, *unhu* is perceived as the school of Shona life that generates ethos which, in turn, proceeds to inform, govern and direct Shona people’s social, religious, economic and political institutions. *Unhu*, which is historically intergenerational, is a product of the Shona people’s cultural experiences and derives from their cultural heritage (Mandova, 2012:358). While this is a generalised
conceptualisation, a broader definition of unhu is proffered in chapter five.

Through a conceptual dissection of selected Shona works whose focus is on unhu, the research locates itself within the broad context of discourses that aspire to fashion out an emancipatory and sustainable solution to Zimbabwe’s contemporary nation building challenges. Given that the advent of colonialism in Africa witnessed a complete overhaul of African traditions, ethos and their way of life in general, this had negative consequences upon the African social and political structures, resulting in many challenges for the indigenous African people which are still felt today in the post-independence period. Accordingly, this study interrogates the role of Shona literary works in promulgating unhu as a central cog in the emancipatory trajectory of contemporary Zimbabwe.

There have been various reflections on the challenges faced by Africa today which include bad governance, contrived electoral processes, conflict and political violence, corruption, lack of proper education, debilitating poverty and hunger, rising unemployment, prostitution, HIV/AIDS scourge inter-alia (Mandova, 2011:303). Writers of Shona fiction have attempted to capture some of these challenges with varying degrees of success. Through an analysis of selected Shona works, the research contends that despite the globalisation trends, with a continuous interpretation, re-interpretation and re-appropriation, the unhu worldview remains relevant to our situation as it changes (Rukuni, 2007:72).

The fiction under scrutiny in this thesis ranges from novels that focus on unhu and the African traditional religion, like Mutasa's Nhume Yamambo (1990) and Misodzi Dikita Neropa(1991) as well as Matsikiti’s Rakava
Buno Risifemberi (1995); unhu and the proletarianisation of Africans, like Chidzero’s Nzvengamutsvairo (1957); the interface of unhu, homosexuality, governance and governmental principles, like Mabasa’s Mapenzi (1999).

1.1 Statement of the problem

Post-colonial Africa is riddled with a plethora of challenges. According to Chingombe (2010:303) these include political polarisation and bad governance which grossly undermine the principle of democracy through institutions of representation which have been converted into institutions of repression and suppression, feigned electoral processes, conflict and political violence, corruption, civil wars, abuse of state resources, the failure of economic reform programmes championed by the Bretton Woods institutions, lack of proper education, debilitating poverty and hunger, rising unemployment, high crime statistics, poor infrastructure, xenophobia, drug abuse, prostitution, HIV/AIDS and the general weakening of the social fabric that once held African societies together.

The myriad of challenges that bedevil post-independence Africa in her struggle to realise peace, genuine independence and sustainable development are a result of racially segregatory colonial rule and domination that engendered the intrusion of Western ethos and models in Africa and the onslaught on her unhu because, if the relationship between countries is symmetrical, it enriches the cultures and enhances the development of all the countries involved (Offor, 2007:91) which is the antithesis of what is obtaining in Africa. This research locates itself within the broad context of discourses that aspire to fashion out
emancipatory and sustainable solutions to Zimbabwe’s contemporary nation-building conundrum through a conceptual dissection of the Shona novelists’ understanding and depiction of the *unhu* world-view. The need for such an approach is the realisation that Zimbabwe needs to engage indigenous models to surmount the tragedies that continue to plague her. *Unhu*, which is deeply rooted in African culture, is viewed as an indigenous philosophy that validates and foregrounds the relevance and significance of indigenous solutions to African existential challenges. Thus, Rukuni (2007:44) asserts that:

So the general problems in Africa are only going to be solved by rebuilding the family, the extended family and the community and to re-establish strong values of *unhu-ubuntu-botho* within that group of institutions. Only then once again hunger and malnutrition, house breaking and domestic violence, crime and all the illnesses today, can be dealt with within the family and community structures. The role of the state would then be to support these institutions, rather than to carry the major burden.

*Unhu*, as an African indigenous worldview is, therefore, imperative in developmental issues. In the context of this study, literature is seen as an important platform to cascade the enduring values of *unhu*. Thus, Thelwell (1987:230) perceives an African writer as a pathfinder and conduit through whom the collective force and experience of the people is rehearsed, shaped and refined. In that regard, this study assesses the extent to which the Shona novelists’ depiction and vision of *unhu* values is progressive and liberating. In the present study, the African PHILOSOPHY of *unhu* is seen as having the same cultural rejuvenation impetus noted from diverse groups of the world. Thus, it has been noted that the Arab world is undergoing a governance evolution led by their prehistoric Kalam (speech) philosophy. In like terms, India is undergoing
a process of re-writing its history with a Hindu message and China has risen to become a world power through the use of its indigenous philosophical resources for socially constructing peace through Daoism, Buddhism and Confucianism (Kaheru, 2012:01). The general trajectory in today’s world is that societies are rediscovering who they are and who they want to be. Accordingly, the Zimbabwean society can also use unhu ethos towards a rediscovery of the Zimbabwean essence.

When one takes a cursory glance at Africa’s contemporary puzzles, one will appreciate that unhu is fundamental in realising a nation’s projected goals or aspirations and in asserting a nation’s space in the world. In essence, the philosophy of unhu needs to be acknowledged if real development is to be attained in Africa. This premise anchors upon the realisation that preservation of an ethical culture is important in the development discourse as it provides a fertile ground for both social and economic development (Mangena and Chitando, 2011:233) hence, the over-arching role of unhu tenets in charting the development paradigm of Zimbabwe. This research, therefore, sees the need to ruminate the thoughts that Shona novelists generate within the realm of unhu as a transformative philosophy with a view to finding an indigenous solution to Zimbabwe’s cultural, political, and economic quandary, both past and present.

1.2 Aim of the study

To investigate how the concept of unhu is portrayed in literature and could be applied in solving problems and/ or providing solutions to Africa’s problems, with special reference to Zimbabwe.
1.3 Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

(1) explicate the African communitarian worldview of unhu from a Zimbabwean vantage point;

(2) ascertain the extent to which selected Shona fiction is rooted in the African indigenous worldview of unhu;

(3) dissect the strengths and weaknesses of selected Shona fiction in their portrayal of the unhu worldview;

(4) establish the extent to which the writers’ depiction of unhu in their selected works provides solutions to social and political problems; and

(5) ascertain the relevance of the solutions proffered by the writers in finding an emancipative and sustainable solution to Zimbabwe’s contemporary nation-building conundrum.

1.4 Research questions

(1). What is unhu from a Zimbabwean context?

(2). What is the relationship between Shona fiction and unhu?

(3). How have Zimbabwean writers writing in the Shona language portrayed the African traditional worldview of unhu in their novels and what are their strengths and weaknesses?

(4). To what extent have writers of Shona fiction’s depiction of unhu provided solutions to socio-political problems and how have
they promoted the moral fabric of the Zimbabwean society?

(5). How competent are Shona writers writing in the Shona language in explicating *unhu* as a basis of solutions to politico-economic and socio-cultural challenges bedevilling Africa and Zimbabwe, in particular?

1.5 Justification

Discourse on *unhu* has gained prominence in academic circles in Africa. In particular, the following scholars have made reflections on the philosophical tenets of *unhu*: Ramose (1999); Maluleke (2000); Mutugi (2001); Louw (2001); Broodryk (2002); Higgs (2003); Nussbaum (2003); Tutu (2004); Gaylord (2004); Mkabela (2005); Murithi (2006); Rukuni (2007); Shuttle (2008); Mafunisa (2008); Murove (2008); Barrett (2008); (Washington (2010); Shumba (2011); Letseka (2011); Mucina (2011); Kaheru (2012); Whitehead (2012); Mofuoa (2012); Cornelli (2012); Mangena (2012); Mawere (2013); Brubaker (2013); Muyingi (2013); Niekerk (2013); Lehlohonolo (2013); Dolamo (2013); Idoniboye-Obu and Whetho (2013); Gade (2013); Samwini (2014); Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru and Makuvaaza (2014); Quan-Baffour (2014); Sikwila (2014); Praeg (2014), inter-alia.

In Zimbabwe, researchers have grappled with various facets of this area, with much research underscoring the significance of the African value of *unhu* in the following discourses, among others: environmental conservation; HIV/AIDS scourge; sexuality and homosexual debates; governance and governmental principles; education; health; gender; conflict resolution. However, very little attention has been committed to
unravelling the nexus between Shona fiction and the African communitarian worldview of *unhu*. The present researcher contends that there is a nexus between Shona fiction, the indigenous worldview of *unhu* and Shona life in general which gives the topic relevance as an area of inquiry.

Thelwell (1987:230) observes that:

> If ever a generation of writers had a clear, inescapable historical responsibility, it has to be the generation of black writers coming to maturity at this point in the black struggle for cultural autonomy, national identity and integrity in the world.

Drawing from a line of reasoning analogous to the above, this study seeks to search the extent to which Shona fiction has tussled with the political, social and cultural issues with particular reference to the *unhu* worldview. *Unhu*, which is historically intergenerational, can be traced in the Shona people’s lives as a moral and ethical framework that stresses collectivity and collective agency relevant for behaviour management and character formation, in turn, contributing to sustainable lifestyles (Shumba, 2011:84). This study is, therefore, significant as it can inspire the on-going dialogue about human dignity, human rights and the ethics that surround it.

In the contemporary dispensation where Africa continues to suffer from the neo-colonial order, a study that links *unhu* worldview and Shona fiction becomes fundamental as a field of inquiry since it provides the centre from which to confront neo-colonialism. To committed African
leaders, it provides the foundation for policy formulation and implementation.

This research contends that if the *unhu* ethos are utilised innovatively, they can complement Zimbabwe’s current socio-economic development agenda. Chiwome (1996:vii) observes that the correct path for the development of Zimbabwe has continued to be a matter for debate many years after independence as a result of the legacy from the epochal encounter of Europe and Africa. Proceeding from that realisation, this study is therefore a contribution to the development discourses. It is thus imperative to focus on the nexus between Shona fiction and the African communitarian worldview of *unhu*.

Furthermore, a study that focuses on the indigenous African culture of *unhu* is important in articulating Africa’s contemporary challenges. Scholars have noted that a *Return to the source* in Amilcar Cabral’s discourse, a *Homecoming* in Ngugi’s terminology and the engagement of *indigenous knowledge systems* in Chiwome and Gambahaya’s expression is cardinal in Africa’s developmental issues. Rukuni (2007:17) posits that:

> ...unless we Afrikans rediscover ourselves, our roots and heritage, and embrace and understand, even love everything that made our ancestors survive and thrive for millions of years, unless we understand how our ancestors succeeded so well in creating a dynamic society in the past, we cannot create a new, modern Afrikan society.

The *unhu- ubuntu-botho* pathways have existed from time immemorial, the challenge is to continue to interpret them and continue to re-interpret them, so that they remain current and relevant to our situation as it
changes (Ibid:72). The present researcher shares the above views and hopes to complement the existing dialogue on the topic.

The researcher acknowledges that while there are many novels, the selection of these specific Shona novels has been prompted by the view that the topic under spotlight is about the African indigenous worldview of *unhu* with special reference to the Shona culture which the researcher feels could be convincingly elaborated if Shona fiction is engaged. Furthermore, Chiwome (1996:iix) notes that narratives comprise a greater percentage of the literature published for use in schools and more people read fiction than poetry and plays. This observation compels one to interrogate Shona fiction.

### 1.6 Literature review

The present researcher acknowledges that various critical works have been written on the evolution and history of the Shona novel. Kahari has written widely on the Shona novel in his critical works which include: *The novels of Patrick Chakaipa* (1972); *The imaginative writings of Paul Chidyausiku* (1975); *The search for Zimbabwean identity: An introduction to the Black Zimbabwean novel* (1980); *Aspects of the Shona novel and other related genres* (1986); Herbert W. Chitepo’s Epic poem: *Soko Risina Musoro (Embedded tale) : a critique* (1988); *The rise of the Shona novel* (1990); *Plots and characters in Shona fiction* (1990); *The romances of Patrick Chakaipa* (1994); alongside  *The search for identity and Ufuru* (2009), which was originally published in 1980 as *The search for Zimbabwean identity*.

Utilising mainly the formalist approach, Kahari focuses largely on the general evolution of the Shona novel, demonstrating the narrative
techniques, characterisation, plots, symbolism, culture, conflict and the importance of traditional romance narratives. While Kahari employs more of a formalist approach in his works and dwelling on the general development of the Shona novel, the current research engages Afrocentricity to ascertain the extent to which selected Shona fiction is rooted in the African communitarian worldview of *unhu*.

Pongweni (1990) has also analysed some Shona novels particularly those by Zvarevashe, Chakaipa and Mungoshi in his *Figurative language in Shona Discourse: A study of the analogical imagination*. His focus is on the use of figurative language in the Shona novel, for example metaphors, similies and ideophones. While Pongweni is more inclined to the structuralist approach, the present researcher employs the Afrocentric theory of life. While Pongweni’s work is limited to fiction by three writers whose focus is on the pre-colonial era, the current research focuses on four writers whose works depict the pre-colonial, the colonial and the post-independence period.

Chiwome’s major focus in *A Social history of the Shona novel* (1996/2002) is on analysing the factors that have underdeveloped Shona fiction, with special reference to the period 1956-1980. He highlights aspects like the role of the Rhodesia Literature Bureau and the various forms of censorship, the influence of Christianity and Christian-oriented education and the colonial education policy as some of the factors that formed a barricade towards the production of committed literature with the consequent growth of moralistic and fantastical genres during the colonial era. While Chiwome has not really written on the Shona novelists’ depiction of the *unhu* worldview, his
observations, especially on Chidzero’s *Nzvengamutsvairo*, are quite valuable in this research.

Flora Veit-Wild, in *Teachers, Preachers, Non-Believers-A Social history of Zimbabwean Literature* (1992) highlights the historical and social contexts of pre-independence Zimbabwean literature in Shona, English and Ndebele. She discusses three generations of Zimbabwean writers and concludes that the fate of Zimbabwean writers has been closely linked to the social and political history of their country. While Flora Veit-Wild focuses on the forces and experiences that have shaped the works of three generations of Zimbabwean writers writing in Shona, Ndebele and English, the current research focuses on Zimbabwean writers’ depiction of the *unhu* worldview and writing in the Shona language. The book is essential in this study as the author discusses some writers’ childhood, familial and educational background. Some of these writers, like Chidzero’s works, will be analysed in this research.

To the knowledge of the present researcher, no scholar has attempted to largely link the African communitarian worldview of *unhu* to the study of Shona fiction. However, there exist some works that do not focus on literature per se, but on *unhu* in general. Rukuni’s *Being Afrikan-Rediscovering the Traditional Unhu-Ubuntu-Botho Pathways of Being Human* (2007) centres on the notion of *unhu* and, in essence, contends that Africans ought to reclaim their roots, retrieve what is valuable and utilise it as the foundation for their way forward. While Rukuni does not focus on literature as the present researcher does, his arguments are quite handy as he explores Africa’s general challenges and proffers guidelines and a “General Theory” for the renaissance of African society.
Ramos (1999) discusses African philosophy through unhu. While he does not focus on literature, in particular, like the present researcher, his elucidation of the notion of unhu and his ideas on African philosophy and the quest for authentic liberation, religion through unhu, politics through unhu, especially his emphasis on traditional African political culture and human emancipation, inter-alia, are quite valuable in this research.

1.7 Theoretical framework

Research on indigenous African culture has typically addressed the concerns of the researcher (both Western and African researchers trained in Western methodologies) and ignored the African point of view. The findings of researchers reflect the way they approach and assess African culture (Hountondji in Mkabela, 2005:180). African indigenous culture has changed since the colonial encounter and many researchers have tended to see this culture in terms of the coloniser’s precepts and agenda, resulting in misrepresentations and distortions of this culture. Hountondji (ibid) notes that, “the time has come to conduct a responsible identification of African method that will constitute the ground frame for all research projects aspiring to be indigenous.” In view of the above argument, this study locates itself within the Afrocentric theoretical framework.

The chief exponent of the Afrocentric approach is Molefi Kete Asante and he has espoused his ideas in his works viz 1980, 1987, 1988, 1990, 1995, 1998 inter-alia. Afrocentric ideas have been developed and popularised by African scholars who include Chinweizu, Ngugi, Karenga, Diop, Achebe, P’Bitek, Marimba Ani and Clarke among others. Asante
(1998:2) describes Afrocentricity as a theory that places “…African ideals at the centre of any analysis that involves African culture and behaviour”. The theory asserts that African history and culture should inform that analysis.

Afrocentricity maintains that Africans had been moved from the centre in terms of identity, culture and history and it seeks to place Africans in the centre of their own narratives. It emphasises an emic approach which is the criticism of African issues by insiders of that culture as opposed to an etic approach which is the criticism of African issues by critics who are not part of the African culture and who do not participate in that culture. P’ Bitek (1986:37) asserts that:

> It is only participants in a culture who can pass judgement on it. It is they who can evaluate how effective the song and dance is, how the decoration, the architecture, the plan of the village has contributed to the feast of life, how these have made life meaningful.

The Afrocentric theory and unhu have a common denominator which places the theory at an advantage in this research. Western critics and historians have often regarded African culture as static and inferior. They have advanced the theory that Africa should look to Europe for models. Chinweizu (1980:27) however, counters this warped Eurocentric worldview, contending that Africa has her own models that are different from those in Europe and these have often inspired societal issues. The theory, therefore, stresses the need to look at indigenous models in undertaking Africa’s projects. These indigenous models should inspire and determine the path and pace of development. It is, thus, a liberating theory.
This study locates itself within the broader discourse to find an emancipative and sustainable solution to Zimbabwe’s contemporary nation-building conundrum through a conceptual dissection of the Shona novelists’ understanding and depiction of the *unhu* worldview. It realises that Zimbabwe needs to engage indigenous models to surmount the tragedies that continue to plague her. *Unhu* which is deeply rooted in African culture is viewed as an indigenous guiding worldview in the socio-economic and political growth and development of post-independence Zimbabwe.

The Afrocentric method is, therefore, the best theoretical framework to engage in this research as it considers Africa as the cultural centre for the study of African experiences and interprets research data from an African perspective. It is, thus, a method which deals with the question of identity from the perspective of African people as centred, located, oriented and grounded. The cultural aspirations, understandings, and practices of African indigenous people should position researchers to implement and organize the research process (Mkabela, 2005:179).

Afrocentricity aims at retrieving African dignity, identity and pride which she seems to have lost through mockery and humiliation by scholars informed by Eurocentric aesthetics. To this end, Asante (1998:2) posits that Africans have lost their cultural centredness and now exist in borrowed space. This denial of space has impeded Africa’s efforts to determine her destiny. This theory, therefore, seeks to rehabilitate African societies and calls upon Africans to regain their existential space in order to transform their societies in ways that tally with their needs.
In respect to the foregoing perspective, the African is portrayed as an active participant and not an object that is acted upon. This study propagates the spirit of active participation in issues of nation building and development. Afrocentricity forms the essential core of the idea that interpretation and explanation based on the role of Africans as subjects is most consistent with reality and it is opposed to theories that “dislocate” Africans in the periphery of human thought and experience. Thus, Afrocentricity locates research from an African vantage point and creates Africa’s own intellectual perspective. Such a position is critical in Africa as researchers may misrepresent indigenous cultural practices and thus continue to perpetuate myths about the indigenous African culture (Mkabela, 2005:179). The Afrocentric method is, therefore, the most appropriate theoretical framework because it has the advantage of analysing African realities from a point of rootedness in those same realities.

1.8 Research methodology

Good research requires a methodical and specific approach to the collection and analysis of data and the interpretation and presentation of findings. Research methodology can generally be categorized into either qualitative or quantitative. According to Marvasti (2004:07) quantitative research “... involves the use of methodological techniques that represent the human experience in numerical categories sometimes referred to as statistics. Conversely, qualitative research provides detailed description and analysis of the quality or the substance of the human experience.” The selection between the quantitative and qualitative research methods is premised on the type of research being
undertaken, the nature of the phenomena to be studied and the purpose of the research.

Proceeding from the above realisation, it follows, then, that choosing a research method is not about deciding right from wrong or truth from falsehood, but selecting an approach that is apposite for a specific study. Marvasti (2004:13) corroborates this view in his assertion that, “positivism and constructionism, as well as qualitative and quantitative perspectives should not be thought of as philosophical or methodological opposites. Instead they are different ways of doing research with the common goal of exploring the social world and generating knowledge.”

This study adopts the qualitative research methodology. Fossey et al. (2002:718) define qualitative research as “…a broad umbrella term for research methodologies that describe and explain persons’ experiences, behaviours, interactions and social contexts without the use of statistical procedures or quantifications”. Sarantakos (1999:6) quoted by Ashley and Boyd (2006:71) observes that qualitative research refers to “a number of methodological approaches based on diverse theoretical principles...employing methods of data collection and analysis that are non-quantitative, used to explore social relations and to describe reality as experienced by the respondents”.

Furthermore, Farooq et al. (2011:283) contend that qualitative research deals with phenomena that are difficult or impossible to quantify mathematically such as beliefs, meanings and attitudes. Hancock (2009:06) concurs with the above definitions and asserts that qualitative research focuses on reports of experience or on data which cannot be adequately expressed numerically and tends to focus on how people can have different ways of looking at reality, how attitudes and opinions
are formed, how people are affected by the events that go on around them and how and why cultures have developed in the way they have. Ashley and Boyd (2006:70) note that quantitative methodology is associated with the rational and objective measurement of observable phenomena while qualitative methodology focuses on assessment of subjective phenomena such as ideas and opinions.

A study whose focus is an exploration of the Shona novelists’ conceptualisation and depiction of the African worldview of *unhu* can therefore be best carried out by engaging the qualitative research methodology. This research sets out to ruminate the thoughts that Shona novelists generate within the realm of *unhu* as a transformative philosophy with a view to finding an indigenous solution to Zimbabwe’s cultural, political and economic quandary. Such an inquiry therefore does not seek to test any specific hypotheses, to quantify any problem, to assess any prevalence, to find if consensus exists on issues or to create any statistical models which are the focus of quantitative research (Creswell, 2009:1).

Given the nature of the research problem, the researcher was compelled to engage the qualitative research dynamics in order to develop explanations of social phenomena, alongside the following tenets: how opinions and attitudes are formed; how and why cultures have developed in the way they have (Watkins, 2012:154). Furthermore, qualitative research is adopted in this study because it focuses on in-depth understanding of context-phenomena relationship and answers the ‘why’, ‘how’ and ‘under what circumstances’ questions, while quantitative research focuses on exploring hypothetical relationships,
testing theories and answering the ‘what’ and ‘how many’ questions (Berg, 2001:3).

Meadows (2003:465) notes that qualitative research is often described as essentially inductive in its approach. This means that it is data-driven with findings and conclusions being drawn directly from the data while in quantitative research the deductive approach is commonly used whereby ideas and hypotheses are formulated and tested out in the data specifically collected for the purpose. In this investigation, the researcher seeks to interpret Shona novels and the meaning of data collected from various respondents hence the engagement of the qualitative method which is inductive in its approach.

Furthermore, this study adopts the qualitative research method because “it is much more fluid and flexible than quantitative research in that it emphasises discovering novel or unanticipated findings and the possibility of altering research plans in response to such serendipitous occurrences. This is contrasted sharply with the quantitative methodologist’s research design with its emphasis upon fixed measurements, hypothesis (or hunch) testing and a much less protracted form of fieldwork involvement” (Bryman, 1984:78).

Moreover, qualitative research has the advantage of using detailed descriptions from the perspective of the research participants themselves as a means of examining specific issues and problems under study. It therefore produces more in-depth and comprehensive information (Key, 1997:02).

There are a variety of methods of data collection in qualitative research and this study will use interviews, questionnaires, Shona novels and
critical works. According to Kvale (1996:1) interviews are “… conversations with structure and purpose that are defined and controlled by the researcher”. In this study interviews and questionnaires are used to explore the views of informants on the role of unhu worldview in fashioning out an emancipatory and sustainable solution to Zimbabwe’s contemporary socio-political, cultural and economic quandary. They are also used to explore respondents’ views on Shona novelists’ understanding and depiction of the unhu worldview. Interviews are used for exploring sensitive topics where participants may not want to talk about such issues in a group environment, where detailed insights are required from individual participants and they provide a ‘deeper’ understanding of social phenomena (Gill et al., 2008:01). Furthermore Kvale (ibid) argues that interviews can be free of bias and provide objectivity and mechanically measured reliability by amount of agreement among independent observers.

This research engages secondary sources in the form of critical works to explain the notion of unhu. Works on unhu by various African scholars will complement the data collected from respondents. The study analyses Shona novels set in the pre-colonial, colonial and post-independence Zimbabwe and accordingly it assumes a comparative thrust. This allows the researcher to evaluate the authors’ vision on unhu at different historical miliex. Furthermore, this research employs a socio-historical approach in its analysis of the novels. This method allows the researcher to delve into the unhu ethos articulated by the authors in their correct historical epochs.
1.9 Scope of the study

This study is an interrogation of Shona novelists’ conceptualisation and depiction of the African indigenous worldview of *unhu*. It examines whether or not the writers’ vision of *unhu* helps in Africa’s social, cultural and political liberation. The research has six chapters. Chapter one is the introduction which highlights the aim, research questions and objectives of the study. The chapter also outlines the methods used to gather information, justification of the study, the theoretical framework employed in this study, as well as the background to the research. The problem of the study is explicated in this chapter and the extant studies on the topic reviewed.

Chapter two proffers the literature review. It looks at earlier works and highlights gaps to be filled by this research. Chapter three focuses on the theoretical framework upon which the research is grounded. Chapter four presents the research methodology. Chapter five presents the research findings and analysis. Chapter six is the conclusion.

1.10 Key terms:

Africana Womanism
Afrocentricity
Communitarian
Conundrum
Culture
Discourse
Indigenous
Literature
1.11 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that not much scholarly attention has been committed to unravelling the nexus between Shona fiction and the African indigenous worldview of unhu. It has noted that there is a connection between Shona fiction, unhu worldview and Shona life, in general, which gives the topic relevance as a field of inquiry. Through a dissection of selected Shona works which are Chidzero’s Nzvengamutsvairo, Mutasa’s Nhume Yamambo and Misodzi Dikita Neropa, Matsikiti’s Rakava Buno Risifemberi and Mabasa’s Mapenzi, the research contends that despite the globalisation trends, with a continuous interpretation, re-interpretation and re-appropriation, the unhu worldview remains relevant to our contemporary dispensation.

This chapter has also discussed the theoretical framework, the methods used to collect information, the justification of the study, the scope of the study as well as the background to the study. The aim of the study, the objectives of the study and the research questions have been outlined. This chapter has also examined the statement of the problem while the extant studies on the topic have been reviewed.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The preceding chapter introduced this study by highlighting the statement of the problem, research questions, theoretical framework, scope of the study, research methodology and justification of the research. It has also stated the aim and objectives of the study. This chapter focuses on literature review as the *sine qua non* of every research of this nature. The chapter describes, evaluates, compares and connects the major arguments and paradigms on Shona novelists’ conceptualisation and depiction of the *unhu* worldview. The focus of this literature is on scholarly published material that is related and relevant to an understanding of the nexus between Shona fiction and *unhu* in order to distinguish the focus of this study from previous scholarship. This allows this researcher to situate this study within broader and historical perspective. The study analyses global/world narrative discourses, Africa and diasporan narrative discourses and Zimbabwean narrative discourses on the topic.
2.1 Global narrative discourses

This section appraises global/world literature in order to demonstrate how it relates to the present study. Engaging the sociological approach, Veit-Wild (1992) explores the social, educational, politico-economic and cultural factors which have shaped literary production in Zimbabwe. She illustrates how artists’ background and historical situation are important in analysing Zimbabwean literature by providing exhaustive individual biographies of writers and dividing them into three generations defined by an analogous socio-political and educational experience which may have influenced the depiction of certain realities in their works.

According to Veit-Wild’s classification, generation one covers writers born between 1917 and 1939 whose vision was mainly shaped by their upbringing and Christian missionary education obtained before and during the Second World War. She notes that these writers who include Solomon Mutswairo, Lawrence Vambe, Ndabezihle Sigogo, Stanlake Samkange, Ndabaningi Sithole and Bernard Chidzero are the pioneers of writing who laid the foundations of black writing in Zimbabwe. She further observes that this was a generation of writers who were acculturated into the European world and were ambassadors of social advancement and modernisation. This generation, according to Veit-Wild, supported the ideas of partnership and multiracial cooperation as the focal point for equality and progress and their works show the nexus between writing and early nationalist politics.

Veit-Wild classifies generation two as writers who were influenced by their upbringing and education after the Second World War and she labels them the “lost generation” of the 1970s because their works
exude feelings of anger, despair, pessimism, alienation and disillusionment. Veit-Wild observes that generation two writers’ adolescence was moulded by the political climate after Smith’s Unilateral Declaration of Independence in 1965 viz the polarisation between the radical white settler minority under Smith on one hand and the radical black nationalist movement on the other, political and cultural isolation from the outside world, international sanctions, fierce oppression inside and the general feeling of hopelessness. Veit-Wild further notes that generation two writers were much more exposed as individuals to social and political aggression, were torn between distinct sets of values, were alienated from their customary environment on one hand but had no easy access to the colonial culture and so became “cultural orphans” (Veit-Wild, 1992:189) who wrote out of pessimistic sensations.

According to Veit-Wild (1992) after independence the third generation of writers envisaged war traumas of their childhood and adolescence and continued to demystify the war of liberation while others became critical of the post-colonial realities obtaining in Zimbabwe.

While Veit-Wild (1992) rightly observes that generation one writers supported the ideas of partnership and a multiracial society as the basis of equality and progress, she does not ascertain whether such a vision of a multiracial society is rooted in the African indigenous worldview of unhu and also whether such a vision of partnership and progress provides solutions to socio-economic problems experienced by the Shona people from an unhu viewpoint. This study seeks to fill in this gap.

Furthermore, while Veit-Wild pays more attention to Zimbabwe literature in English, this research focuses on Zimbabwean fiction published in the
Shona language. In addition, Chennels (1993:18) contends that there are limitations to Veit-Wild’s classification of writers because the samples from the three generations are unequally represented in the survey. There are twenty five writers from the first generation, sixty two from the second generation and only nine from the third generation which is too small a sample to be genuinely representative of all the writers who have started writing since independence in 1980 (Chennels, ibid:19). However, Veit-Wild’s work is important to this study as it provides exhaustive demographic statistics of Zimbabwean writers and linking their educational and social backgrounds to literary development which is vital to a sociology of Zimbabwean literature.

Gelfand (1973) attempts to define unhu and to explore some Shona ethos. Gelfand rightly observes that the Shona have their concepts of virtues celebrated by the society including humility, love, forgiveness, compassion, industriousness, trustworthiness and love inter-alia and vices such as ingratitude, selfishness, pride, hatred, negligence and covetousness, among others. However, like what most Western scholars project, Gelfand suggests that the Shona system was not based on unhu ethos but these were survival values as the title of his book implies. Gelfand (1973:74) writes that:

The end of Shona culture is survival. The means towards the end hinge on the complexity of beliefs, practices, taboos, social conventions and so on that have, in fact, succeeded in assisting the Shona people to survive as a people for a longer period of time than the English people, as such have survived.

There is distortion and misrepresentation of African cultures in general and the indigenous Shona culture in particular by scholars who subscribe to Eurocentric conceptions of history as the works of Kant,
Hume, Trevor Roper, Hegel and Fukuyana reveal. While Gelfand acknowledges the existence and importance of indigenous Shona culture, he appears to have approached his studies from a prejudicial vantage point, registering the view that European civilisation was “the dominant force in world history” Chimuka (2001:23). The African people in general and the Shona people in particular have been presented as having a distorted humanity precisely because some Europeans were bent on undermining their cultures in the name of civilisation. (ibid, 2001:23). The study attempts to deconstruct Gelfand’s Eurocentric views that are predicated on cultural arrogance by explicating the African communitarian worldview of unhu from a Zimbabwean perspective. In light of Gelfand’s views, the study further attempts to answer the question: How have Zimbabwean writers writing in the Shona language portrayed the African traditional worldview of unhu in their novels and to what extent is that depiction compatible with the promotion of Shona fiction that is utilitarian?

Haasbroek (1974) reviews Kahari’s *The novels of Patrick Chakaipa* (1972). Haasbroek’s overall assessment is that Kahari “…looks for the genealogy of his literary scholarship mostly to such dubious or culturally distant ancestors as Henry James, Allot Forster, Lever Ghent” Haasbroek (1974:119). Writing in the 1970s, Haasbroek makes an important observation about the criticism of African literature. Asante (1982:02) writes about the importance of placing African ideals at the centre of any analysis that involves African culture and behaviour while Chinweizu, Jemie and Madubuike (1980:27) note that Africa has her own models that are different from those in Europe which have often inspired societal issues. Sharing Haasbroek’s views, Gwekwerere (1913: 46) writes that:
As the pioneering black Zimbabwean critic of “the black Zimbabwean novel” in Shona, Kahari’s acceptance of European critical models is considered problematic because it unfurls without the critic ever venturing to affirm the significance of critical values developed against the backdrop of grounding in the African cultural experience in history. By looking up to Europe for intellectual inspiration, Kahari misrepresents Africa as pupil and exalts Europe as teacher. Kahari’s intellectual homage to Europe endorses Europeans as sole exemplars of intellectual accomplishment.

This study notes that as a white critical scholar and writing in the 1970s, Haasbroek makes important observations on the study of the Shona novel which are vital in this research.

### 2.2 Africa and diasporan narrative discourses

Most of the critical works under review in this section do not focus on the Shona novel per se. These are critical works on African literature whose arguments have a link with Shona novelists’ understanding and depiction of the *unhu* worldview. Apart from these critical works on African literature, some of the narratives focus on various facets of the *unhu* worldview which also have a connection with the thematic concerns of the Shona novels under spotlight.

Chinweizu et al. (1985) focus their attention on the criticism of African fiction and poetry. They note that in contemporary African literature and criticism, there have been various approaches towards the African past which include rejection, romantic embrace and realistic appraisal. Chinweizu et al. (1985) observe that critics and writers should avoid a romanticisation of the past because Africans cannot progress on the basis of misinformation. They therefore, argue for a critical appraisal of the African past because it enables writers and critics to arrive at a fair
historical judgement, a judgement that perceives the African past like any other acceptable era of culture. Such an approach according to them allows Africa to appreciate objectionable connections between the past and the present in order to embrace desirable elements from the arts of the African past as Africans endeavour “to anchor our modern culture in our tradition” (Chinweizu et al., 1985: 258).

Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa Jemie and Ihechukwu Madubuike note that since the African past has been denigrated by imperialism, Africans need to reclaim and rehabilitate their genuine past, to repossess their true and entire history in order to acquire a reliable springboard into their future. Chinweizu et al. (1985:239) therefore conclude that the process of decolonisation requires a calculated method of syncretism:

Our basic assumption in this essay is that contemporary African culture is under foreign domination. Therefore, on the one hand, our culture has to destroy all encrustations of colonial mentality, and on the other hand, has to map out new foundations for an African modernity. This cultural task demands a deliberate and calculated process of syncretism: one which, above all emphasises valuable continuities which our pre-colonial culture welcomes vitalising contributions from other cultures, and exercises inventive genius in making a healthy and distinguished synthesis from them all.

Vakunta (2008) focuses on post-colonial challenges in independent Africa. He argues that cultural domination was precondition for the economic and political hegemony of Africans. He observes that the worst tragedy that befell Africans during the colonial epoch was the loss of their cultural values, dignity and self identity. He therefore notes that the principal responsibility of historians and African writers today is that of assisting Africans know who they are and enabling them to regain their lost dignity and identity by conveying to them through literary and
historical books what they lost as a result of slave trade and colonisation. Like Chinweizu et al., Vakunta (2008) notes that African renaissance does not entail the rejection of other cultures because Africans do not believe in exclusion.

Vakunta further observes that colonial shortcomings did not disappear with the advent of independence in Africa as some African leaders have failed to meet people’s aspirations. He notes that internal factors like corruption and abuse of power have become barricades to nation-building. Vakunta’s arguments are relevant to this research especially in the analysis of novels like Mabasa’s Mapenzi.

Diop (1996) focuses his attention on African culture, development and the function of African art. Diop argues that Africa needs to rediscover herself and the African should regain self-confidence and rediscover his dignity. He therefore notes that art should attempt to assist African people to solve their current challenges in his assertion that:

> Whatever its significance might have been in the past, art should today help us to solve our present problems, to adapt to new conditions of existence. In our socio-political context, art must without ever losing its aesthetic ideal, address the burning issues of the day: class relations, political demands, national aspirations cultural and intellectual aspirations. In terms of philosophy, it should enhance the realisation of an objective view of the world (Diop, 1996:125).

This study shares Diop’s views and hopes to augment some of the concerns raised by answering the question: What is the relationship between Shona fiction and *unhu*?

Thelwell (1987) contends that artists must recreate the truth they perceive from the distortions of foreign interference and manipulation. He argues that the black novel has not yet portrayed the unifying images
of Africa’s historical experiences, identity and culture. He therefore concludes that the current generation of black writers has a clear, inescapable, historical responsibility in the current black struggle for cultural autonomy, national identity and integrity in the world.

George (2008) writes about culture, democracy, development and the role of the African writer. He contends that the writer in Africa had always functioned as the record of mores and experience of his society and as the voice of vision in his time. He notes that in contemporary Africa the mission of every writer should be to liberate the minds of the oppressed and the oppressors in order to cultivate a harmonious society. George further argues that writers articulate a certain vision which must order society and any writer therefore who believes in the assertion of human ethos will speak when humanity is betrayed.

Ngugi wa Thiongo (1981) writes about the politics of language in African literature. He writes that Europe appropriated valuable art from Africa to embellish houses and museums and continues to “steal treasures” of the mind to enrich their languages and cultures. Ngugi notes that Africa needs back her economy, politics and culture from Euro-American based hegemony. According to Ngugi (1981) writers are surgeons of the heart and souls of a community and must be the pathfinders. They, therefore, have a role to play in struggles of African people to liberate their economy, politics and culture.

Armah (2006) discusses the role of colonial education on the African child, culture, identity, literature, challenges and possible solutions. Armah notes that contemporary African societies have lost their sense of self and direction because they have allowed their connections with their past to be obliterated, partly because of the colonial education system.
He argues that the colonial school invited Africans into the European universe and moved them away from their home realities into a formally organised world in which African realities were repudiated while the European values were projected. He observes that:

The school made sincere attempts to inject a certain consciousness of African values in our student lives, but this was done in such a way as to imprint on our minds the idea that whatever came from Africa was necessarily subordinate to what came from Europe (Armah, 2006:48).

Armah further argues that the history that was taught the African child was not balanced because African history was ignored while European history was elevated. The African child’s sense of home as a centre of values was obliterated and a new vision that stressed the significance of European ethos was inculcated. Armah further argues that under colonial educational system, literature was projected as an expression of European racial superiority in which only Europeans were visible as humans while Africans were invisible and inconsequential. According to Armah, the understanding was that Africans had never generated literature and they were made to appreciate literature from a European viewpoint presented as universal. African images were turned into emblems of everything negative. Armah contends that the imposition of European rule was a violent crime and that Africa needs to understand what Africa had before that onslaught, and Africans also need to know who they are in order to realise sustainable development. He summarises what Africa needs to do thus:

Finding out about Africa, exploring what values have proved positive in the past and which have proved poisonous, so we can absorb the positive and throw up the poisonous as we ready ourselves to imagine our new society and then to create it. (Ibid: 258).
Osundare (2002) writes about African literature and culture. He contends that Africa is the most dehumanised continent in the world with her history characterised by dispossession and impoverishment. He notes that Africa lost her human and natural resources together with her dignity. Osundare observes that the image of Africa has been that of a jungle and the representation of African issues has been predicated on a long tradition of racist arrogance. Furthermore, Osundare contends that Africa is a humane continent with virtues and vices and there is need to constantly engage the past, examine the present and anticipate the future. He writes that:

A proper understanding of history will put our present anomy in clearer, if not more bearable, perspective, a more tough-minded dialogue with the past will reveal how much we have gone through, and how far we are capable of going. A philosophy of Africa not informed by historical wisdom is most likely to end in a kind of pessimism born out of prognostication without diagnosis, a sure way of the ontology of defeat (Osundare, 2002:144).

Mukundi (2010) focuses his attention on the preservation of cultural identities in post-colonial African, Indian and Caribbean literatures. Mukundi, like Chinweizu et al. who advocate cultural syncretism in the process of decolonisation and Vakunta who advocate cultural hybridity, contends that hybridity is to be experienced in post-colonial societies because the religious, political, economic and social systems of pre-colonial societies have been influenced by colonisation. He observes that while cultural hybridity is a harmless, voluntary process if it is perceived as a fusion of different cultural values, post-colonial hybridity is an agonising experience because it is a consequence of colonial denigration of indigenous ethos.
Mukundi argues that since colonisation is irrevocable, post-colonial societies should redefine their identity in a manner that recognises their uniqueness as non-western civilisations and carefully fuse their values with positive Western systems.

It is important to note that writers like Diop (1996), Chinweizu et al. (1985), Ngugi (1981), Armah (2006), Mwakimu (2008), Vakunta (2008), Mukundi (2010) and Osundare (2002) acknowledge the dominance of Western culture in Africa's contemporary institutions. They also concur on the urgent need for Africa to reclaim and rehabilitate her genuine past through a process of cultural syncretism in order to acquire a reliable pedestal into the future. This study departs from the works reviewed above in that it looks specifically at the Shona novel unravelling the nexus between Shona fiction and the unhu worldview. This research shares the above views and hopes to complement the existing discourse by answering the question: How competent are Zimbabwean writers writing in the Shona language in explicating unhu as a basis for solutions to politico-economic and socio-cultural challenges bedevilling Africa and Zimbabwe in particular?

Ramose (1999) proffers an elaborate meaning of unhu, discusses metaphysics and religion, law and politics, medicine and ecology and makes a critical assessment of globalisation on the basis of unhu. Ramose contends that contemporary Africa is an image and reality of an alien culture which has become part and parcel of the African experience. He notes that the foreign culture has affected and conditioned the cultural perceptions of the indigenous people of Africa. He further argues that the morally and politically unjustified subjugation of the indigenous people of Africa continues to be a conundrum to the
indigenous people of Africa. Ramose observes that it is not feasible to pretend that contemporary Africa can ignore this alien cultural experience and proceed with the search for an emancipative epistemological model. It is Ramose’s contention that African traditions should remain the foundation for an innovative paradigmatic reconstruction. Ramose (ibid:130) avers that:

The argument for the return to African traditional society can hardly be construed to mean that since everything in the pristine tradition of the indigenous conquered people of Africa was good, it is therefore necessary and desirable to readopt that tradition now. On the contrary, the imperative to return to this tradition means that the tradition must function as a source from which to extract elements that will help in the construction of an authentic and emancipative epistemological paradigm relevant to the conditions in Africa at this historical moment.

Ramose, therefore, sees the urgent need for Africa to embrace the African tradition as the launching pad into the future.

Dolamo (2013) defines and describes the concept of unhu, discussing the forces that diluted the notion of unhu as Africa came into contact with other cultures and suggesting ways and means by which those lost or distorted liberating precepts and ethos entrenched in unhu could be retrieved for the benefit of Africa and Africans. Dolamo notes that the industrial revolution, urbanisation and modernisation in general have led to the corrosion of some of the values and norms of unhu. Ng’weshemi (2002:39) cited in Dolamo (2013:05) comments that:

The work of the agents and agencies of the West have in various ways caused an experience of disorientation and distortion of the identity, dignity, humanness and value of African people’s life. The encounter has plunged African people into an existential diversion and dehumanisation.
However, Dolamo notes that not all was lost as a result of slavery, colonisation and globalisation and so Africa needs to recapture the values and principles of unhu which is a fundamental part of African ethics immersed in matters of development, identity and liberation. Like Ramose, Dolamo observes that Africa cannot return to the pre-colonial understanding of unhu and he therefore advocates for cultural hybridity since culture itself is dynamic.

Higgs (2003) writes about the impact of Apartheid on South Africa’s educational system and the possible solutions in a new South Africa. Higgs contends that the centuries-old domination of Africa through slavery and colonial exploitation left an indelible mark that remains conspicuous years after the dismantling of colonial rule. He observes that during the Apartheid era, philosophical dialogue about the quality of education, teaching and learning was dominated by Fundamental Pedagogics which was seen to proffer the essential environment for apartheid education in the form of the system of Christian National Education. Higgs notes that with the demise of apartheid system in South Africa and the end of the system of Christian National Education, it became imperative to articulate a new philosophical discourse in education.

Like Chemhuru and Makuvaza (2014), Higgs argues that unhu provides an effective philosophical configuration for the establishment of empowering knowledge that respects diversity, appreciates lived experiences, challenges the supremacy of Western forms of universal knowledge and enables communities in South Africa to contribute to their educational development.
Van der Walt (2010) considers the potential of *ubuntugogy* as an optional African educational model. He notes that life in Africa has now been characterised by wars, violence, crime, xenophobia, delinquent behaviour, selfishness, corruption, racism, collapse of family life and the general lack of moral literacy which are treacherous to the quality of personal and communal life. Van der Walt observes that the Western-style colonialist education has not served the people of Africa well and that a return to *ubuntugogy* as an indigenous approach to education should be considered as it attaches a unique African flavour to education. He argues that a romanticised return to *ubuntugogy* based on *unhu* values without taking into account the impact of Western pedagogical influences on African education system does not seem feasible.

Like Dolamo, Van der Walt advocates cultural syncretism in his contention that most current African educators and educationists have already become fused with Western mode theory of education, its structures and implications that an unadulterated return appears implausible. He argues that *ubuntugogy* has to take root and should not only embody the most positive features of *unhu* but also those of the prevailing Western-style education.

He rightly points out that:

A romanticised return to *ubuntugogy* based on *ubuntu* values is not viable, a return is not possible without taking into account the impact of Western pedagogical influences. *Ubuntugogy* has to be based on precepts of ubuntu that are able to withstand the test of relevance in modern, globalised and industrialised societies, education in Africa has to move from solitary (Western-style individualism) to solidarity, from independence to interdependence from competition to cooperation... (Van der Walt, 2010:12).
Van der Walt concludes that *ubuntugogy* has to be adapted and a qualified return to traditional African form of education which sustains pedagogical development in Africa has to be adopted. The contention is that while embracing the basic tenets of *unhu*, Africa needs to innovatively fuse them with the educational contributions of the west.

Lehlohonolo (2013) analyses reasons for the acts of xenophobia in South Africa and the possible remedies. He notes that among other reasons, there is generally a breakdown of ethos that is causing moral values to disappear from among black communities. He observes that there is need to challenge xenophobic acts morally and respond to these acts in terms of an *unhu* ethos of human solidarity, compassion and care.

Murithi (2006) examines the role of *unhu* in conflict resolution and reconciliation in Africa. Murithi contends that pre-colonial African societies developed mechanisms for resolving disputes and promoting reconciliation with a view to healing past wrongs and maintaining social cohesion and harmony. He notes that the societies placed a high value on communal life and maintaining positive relations within the society was a collective task in which everyone was involved.

Murithi further argues that consensus building was embraced as a cultural foundation with respect to the regulation of relationships between members of the community. He notes that conflict resolution mechanisms also functioned as institutions for maintaining law and order within the societies. Murithi maintains that the guiding principle of *unhu* was centred on the notion that parties needed to be reconciled in order to rebuild and maintain social trust and social cohesion with a view to
preventing a culture of retribution from developing and escalating between families and the society as a whole.

Muyingi (2013) evaluates the effectiveness of *unhu* strategy in solving conflicts and promoting peace, freedom, human dignity and development in the Democratic Republic of Congo. He notes that the bond which connected the Congolese people has been broken, social solidarity has collapsed, political tension has been generated, human lives have been lost, infrastructure has been destroyed while socio-economic development has been severely retarded as a result of conflict.

Muyingi observes that conflict resolution is a crucial precondition for peace, justice, human dignity, development and stability throughout the world. He notes that the influence of traditional African moral values in conflict resolution is integral in solving disputes in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Like Murithi, Muyingi concludes that the *unhu* worldview which was appropriate in traditional Africa to instigate peace and maintain social harmony can still assist in conflict resolutions in the Democratic Republic of Congo in order to engender peace, genuine reconciliation, justice, unity, freedom and sustainable development. This thesis departs from the above scholars who have written on *unhu* in that while the scholars focus on the various facets of *unhu* in general, this study engages the themes of *unhu* to analyse the Shona novel. The arguments raised by the scholars remain valuable to this study.
2.3 Zimbabwean narrative discourses

The present researcher acknowledges that various critical works have been written on the evolution and history of the Shona novel by Zimbabwean critics. It also acknowledges that various Zimbabwean researchers have grappled with various facets of the *unhu* worldview and most research has underscored the significance of *unhu* in environmental conservation, in the HIV and AIDS scourge, in homosexual debates, in education, health, gender, governance and governmental principles, in conflict resolution inter-alia. No scholar to the knowledge of the present researcher has attempted to largely establish the nexus between *unhu* and Shona fiction.


Kahari (1990) focuses on the qualitative and quantitative growth of written narratives since the publication of the first Shona novel *Feso* in
1956. He outlines a short history of Shona orthography and writing, examines the oracy-literacy nexus, provides a general overview of how romance narratives developed into the novel and classifies oral literature. He also focuses his attention on narrative techniques, characteristics of the folktale and the novel, discusses the structure of the folktale, folktale plot and influence of oral literature on the Shona novel. He also examines poetry and drama in the same book.

His *Plots and characters in the Shona novel* is a chronological list of Shona fiction published from 1956 to 1984. It outlines the plots of the fiction and a dictionary of about 2000 names of characters in the novels. Kahari’s (1997) *Moral Vision of Patrick Chakaipa* was originally published by Longman in 1972 as *The Novels of Patrick Chakaipa*. In this book, Kahari examines the themes, narrative techniques of some of Chakaipa’s novels. He also examines the influence of the church, the school, the village store and the colonial government on Chakaipa’s characters. In this book Kahari attempts to define *unhu* basing his definition on Samkange (1980). With reference to *Garandichauya*, Kahari rightly observes that Chakaipa’s characters live with insignificant reference to their community. He states that the characters have become insensitive towards the feelings of the society around them. This means that they have lost their humanity to others because of the new order.

Kahari (2009) focuses on the narrative techniques, symbolism, setting, authorial background, realism, characterisation and the oracy-literacy link. He also proffers a brief overview of the occupation of Zimbabwe, highlighting the traditional background which has influenced and determined the form and content of the novel and the short story.
It is important to note that in most of Kahari’s works indicated above, the major preoccupation in his criticism is an examination of Shona fiction’s formalist concerns, as highlighted above. Such an engagement of theories which do not emanate from Africa’s cultural and historical experiences makes Kahari obliterate Shona people’s struggles, their worldview of *unhu* and ethos, as espoused by writers of Shona fiction in their works.

Chiwome (1994:05) as cited in Gwekwerere (2013:20) notes that Kahari employs quantitative, evolutionist and formalist theories of literature in his study of the “black Zimbabwean novel” in Shona. Such an approach, according to Chiwome, disqualifies him from the arena from which to critique the “black Zimbabwean novel” in Shona, in terms of its creative value and contributions in the struggle for black Zimbabwean freedom from colonialism. In support of this argument, Gwekwerere (ibid:46) contends that Kahari’s stance serves to affirm the European claim that Africa lacks cultural and intellectual blueprints of endemic origination, a claim that inspired and justified the enslavement and colonisation of African people because it enabled Europeans to see Africans as sub-human.

While Kahari engages quantitative, evolutionist and formalist theories of literature to critique Shona fiction, this study adopts the Afrocentric paradigm which is a liberating theory and suits well this research which situates itself within the broader discourse to find an emancipative and sustainable solution to Zimbabwe’s contemporary nation-building challenges through a conceptual dissection of Shona novelists’ understanding and depiction of the *unhu* worldview. Furthermore, the
approach has the advantage of analysing African realities from a point of rootedness and centredness in those same realities.

While Kahari in some of his works cited above examines Zimbabwean literature in Shona and English, drama, poetry, folktales, songs inter-alia, this research focuses on the Shona novel. As one of the pioneer critics of the Shona novel, Kahari provided a basis for the criticism of Shona fiction. This study is therefore a contribution to existing dialogue on the Shona novel.

Chiwome (1996) highlights the factors that have underdeveloped Shona fiction and he focuses on Shona novels produced during the colonial period from 1956 when the first Shona novel was published to 1980 when Zimbabwe attained political independence. Chiwome contends that The Southern Rhodesia Literature Bureau which was established in 1956 as part of the Ministry of Information is one of the factors that led to the underdevelopment of Shona fiction. He argues that the Literature Bureau edited writers’ manuscripts to make them coherent with government policies before they were published. Chiwome (1996) further explores various forms of censorship and concludes that government agents offered writers limited creative space as they regulated the choice of genres, expression and length of manuscripts resulting in the underdevelopment of Shona fiction. Chiwome also explores the role of colonial and missionary educational institutions in the underdevelopment of Shona fiction.

Chiwome observes that writers are correct in rendering African thought as communal experience. He notes that contrary to the claims of Eurocentric ethnophilosophers, Africa had the unhu worldview used by elders to consolidate and revise indigenous customs and ideas. He
notes that this worldview is the basis of communal consensus and is therefore an intrinsic part of the vision of African writers. These are very crucial observations which Chiwome does not explore in *A Social history of the Shona novel* (1996) as it is probably not his focus. This study concurs with Chiwome’s observations and seeks to validate the extent to which Shona fiction view this *unhu* worldview as the basis of communal consensus and also the extent to which they view this worldview as part of their vision as African writers. This study further examines whether or not the writers’ vision of *unhu* helps in Africa’s social, cultural and political liberation with reference to Zimbabwe by attempting to answer the question: How competent are Shona writers writing in the Shona language in explicating *unhu* as a basis for solutions to politico-economic and socio-cultural challenges bedevilling Africa and Zimbabwe in particular?

Chiwome (2007) contends that modern Shona literature was born in 1956 in contradictory circumstances as cultural nationalists sought to preserve their heritage in the midst of the entrenchment of white settler rule while missionaries aspired to promote Christian values and in the same vein the Southern Rhodesia Literature Bureau vetted manuscripts submitted by African writers in order to ensure that no subversive texts were published. Chiwome thus sees this literature as a site of struggle in which the objectives of the state, the church and traditional society were at variance.

Chiwome further asserts that in the pre-colonial era, where culture evolved through its own internal dynamics, art, as a functional part of Shona culture, reflected the primacy of African cultural shared ethos, beliefs and knowledge systems. He further contends that this art
strengthened fundamental facets of the African heritage through exploratory artistic creativity and buttressed the African family and community life as the foundation of Africaness (unhu). This research, whose focus is on the interface between unhu and Shona fiction, finds Chiwome’s arguments quite valuable.

Chiwome and Mguni (2012) appreciate the literary paradigms which connect Shona and Ndebele literature in Zimbabwe, specifically fiction, poetry and plays. They assert that literary creativity is not a separate undertaking as it is closely connected to power relations in society and, so, “through literature reality can be reorganised to suit the interests of those in power” (Chiwome and Mguni, 2012:iii). Chiwome and Mguni note that writers can either represent powers that oppress the masses or write from below in order to bring the people living on the margins closer to the centre. In a situation where the masses suffer from foreign or national domination, Chiwome and Mguni expect writers to be preoccupied with the predicament of the majority. It is, thus, crucial, according to Chiwome and Mguni, for the Zimbabwean critic to establish whether authors speak with their own voices or with official voices. In this study, therefore, it is critical to establish whether writers’ understanding and depiction of unhu worldview furthers the aspirations of the suffering majority or not. It is also interesting to establish whether or not the writers’ depiction of unhu after independence transcends official truth.

Nyaungwa (2008) investigates folktale influence on the development of plot, setting and characterisation in targeted Shona novels. He examines characteristics of the folktale, the classification of traditional prose narratives as well as characteristics of the novel. He concludes that the
Shona novelist has been influenced to a significant extent by the Shona folktale, *nhango dzapadare*, proverbs and traditional registers and that the influence of the folktale on the Shona novel has been positive. He further observes that novels set in the period before the advent of the whites have more folktale tendencies than those set after the arrival of the whites.

Pongweni (1990) has also analysed some Shona novels. His focus is on the use of figurative devices in the Shona novel for example similes, proverbs, metaphors, idiophones, and also the function of the proverb in the novel. Pongweni concludes that the works by Mungoshi, Zvarevashe and Chakaipa provide circumstances in which the Shona use proverbs, metaphors, similes and idiophones to converse the complexities of the Shona culture by means of analogies between it and their environment.

Like Kahari, Nyaungwa engages the formalist approach while Pongweni is more inclined to a structuralist approach. Both Nyaungwa and Pongweni engage theories and approaches based on European literary traditions which dissuade them from appraising Shona writers’ understanding of their socio-political history and the extent to which their works are compatible with the promotion of Shona fiction that is utilitarian. According to Gwekwerere (ibid:46) by regurgitating European critical values in their analysis of the “black Zimbabwean novel” scholars:

> Participate in the furtherance of the myths that represent Europe as teacher and Africa as pupil, positing Europe as the only and indispensable source of all cultural and intellectual values of significance.

This study engages the Afrocentric method in order to establish the extent to which writers’ depiction of *unhu* in their selected works provide solutions to Zimbabwe’s nation-building challenges.
Musiiwa and Ndlovu (2005) explore the representation of ethnicity in Zimbabwean literature of Shona and Ndebele expression. They argue that as a multi-ethnic nation, Zimbabwe’s social progress is affected by how its citizens of varied cultural backgrounds interact. They observe that some writers embrace a humanistic stance in their representation of ethnicity in Zimbabwe and they attribute this to the authors’ educational, professional and personal experiences. They note that the authors acquired their secondary education at boarding schools and trained as teachers and priests at colleges and seminaries where students from varied cultural backgrounds were able to meet and interact together. Such interaction, according to Musiiwa and Ndlovu, broke colonial cultural and tribal confrontation and made ethnic divisions less important.

They also observe that the unity agreement of 1987 further inspired Shona and Ndebele writers to renounce tribal animosity by depicting the negative consequences of ethnocentrism. However, some Shona and Ndebele novelists, they note, write celebrating their own ethnic groups thus promoting narrow ethnic identities. They attribute this to the writers’ upbringing. While Musiiwa and Ndlovu focus their attention on the representation of ethnicity in Zimbabwean novels and plays of Shona and Ndebele expression, part of the current study’s thrust is on unhu and ethnicity as portrayed in the Shona novel. This research thus hopes to complement existing dialogue on ethnicity as depicted in the Shona novel.

Samkange and Samkange (1980) are among the pioneer critics to write on unhu from a Zimbabwean perspective. They rightly note that unhu permeates and radiates through all facets of Shona people’s lives viz
religion, politics and economics, among others. They also observe that it is not necessary for Africans to absorb alien ideologies more suited to the West than to Africa and to duplicate them for application in Africa. They further note that it is the duty of African scholars to appreciate *unhu* so that it can provide African solutions to African problems (Samkange and Samkange, 1980:103).

Rukuni (2007) centres on the challenges facing Africa today and the possible solutions. Rukuni argues that one of the challenges facing Africa in the contemporary dispensation is that traditional and indigenous knowledge has been relegated to an inferior position compared to western forms of knowledge. This according to him has resulted in Africa’s failure to surmount her problems. Like Samkange and Samkange (1980), Rukuni therefore, suggests that Africa does not need to westernise but to modernise by continuing to interpret and re-interpret the *unhu-ubuntu-botho* so that they remain current and relevant to Africa’s situation as it changes. Africa therefore ought to reclaim her roots, retrieve what is valuable and utilise as the foundation for sustainable development.

Mangena (2011) provides a brief account of Western leadership philosophies and their theoretical bases before explaining why these theories do not apply in Africa. He further argues that pre-colonial Zimbabwean leaders behaved in accordance with the dictates of *unhu* which created desirable qualities in the leaders and also in the subjects. Mangena observes that ethical leadership is an urgent matter in Africa because of the leadership challenges facing the continent today which has led to vices such as corruption, ethnic wars and despotism. He
therefore, proffers *unhu* as the post-colonial African leaders’ moral compass.

Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru and Makuva (2014) assess the current Zimbabwean educational system in light of its relevance and challenges. They contend that the Zimbabwean education system is currently harnessed in a philosophy of education that is alien and which cannot result in authentic existence. They further argue that the challenge of relevance in the Zimbabwean education system is an historically situated problem that elicits the deconstruction of the colonial inherited education system and the reclamation of the indigenous Zimbabwean philosophy rooted in the philosophy of *unhu* which is the basis of African metaphysics, axiology and epistemology. Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru and Makuva therefore, argue for the adoption of *unhu* as the philosophical foundation of Zimbabwean education and also as a philosophy that should inform the socio-political systems in Zimbabwe in order to restore the dignity of the African people thereby rendering their existence authentic.

Ndofirepi and Ndofirepi’s *Education or (e)ducation in traditional African societies* (2012) explores the place of traditional systems of education in African societies prior to the colonisation by the West. They contend that the African ways of transmitting ethos are unique and apposite to their existential conditions with the major goal of nurturing a complete individual who is cultured, respectful, integrated, sensitive and responsive to the needs of the family and neighbours. Ndofirepi and Ndofirepi (2012) argue that indigenous education is unlike formal western education in that it is very pragmatic and prepares the individual
for life, passing on the values of life that have been evolved from experience and tested in the continuing process of living.

They note that among the traditional Shona people, educatedness is attributed to one’s ability to engage in productive, refined and polished debates with other community members and displaying a willingness to listen carefully to what others say. Ndofirepi and Ndofirepi (2012) observe that there are numerous aspects of tradition in Africa that can be recovered, reclaimed and reconstituted by Africans today in their endeavour to reproduce and better their lives. They argue for a return to those aspects of traditional African education that were and are still deemed to be valuable and can therefore inform educational reconstruction in Africa. Ndofirepi and Ndofirepi (2012), Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru and Makuvaza (2014)’s arguments are critical in this study.

Chemhuru (2012) examines the practice of same sex relationships and marriages within the Zimbabwean context in his Rethinking the legality of homosexuality in Zimbabwe: a Philosophical Perspective. He examines the libertarian, the human rights notion, as well as some of the feminists’ perspectives informing some contemporary justifications for homosexuality. Chemhuru asserts that although Zimbabwe still has to show its commitment to the democratisation process as well as the protection of human rights and justice including the purported rights of individuals to choose partners of their free choice as argued by libertarian and feminist philosophers, still, homosexual relationships and marriages remain unthinkable and a cultural threat to Zimbabwean communities in terms of their ethos. Chemhuru thus concludes that despite almost growing consensus on the tolerance of homosexuality among globalising, democratising and libertarian societies of the world,
same sex relationships remain alien, travesty, unthinkable and difficult to justify from a Zimbabwean perspective where generally value systems are sacrosanct to the philosophies of communitarianism and “unhuism” among other values that formed the mainstay of traditional Zimbabwean and African communities at large.

The works reviewed above which do not focus on literature per se, like the present study, but on unhu in general are relevant to this research as they serve to corroborate some of the arguments raised with regards to how the unhu worldview is portrayed and applied in Zimbabwean literature written in the Shona language.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to review extant studies on the topic by describing, evaluating and connecting material that is related and relevant to an understanding of the Shona novelists’ depiction of the unhu worldview. The chapter has demonstrated that various critical works have been written on the evolution and history of the Shona novel under an array of rubrics by several scholars, chief among whom are the following: Kahari (1972), (1980), (1985), (1990), (1994), (1997); Haasbroek (1974); Pongweni (1990); Veit-Wild (1992); Chiwome (1996); Musiiwa and Ndlovu (2005) and (2007); Nyaungwa (2008); Chiwome and Mguni (2012); Gwekwerere (2013), among others.

It has been noted that writers like Kahari, Nyaungwa and Pongweni, inter alia, engage European critical models in their analysis of the Shona fiction, an approach which denies them an arena from which to critique the Shona novel in terms of its imaginative value and function in the struggle for black Zimbabwean freedom. While the above scholars
employ theories which do not emanate from Africa’s cultural and historical experiences, this study engages the Afrocentric paradigm which is a liberating theory that suits well this research which locates itself within the broader discourse to find an emancipative and sustainable solution to Zimbabwe’s contemporary nation-building conundrum. It has also observed that the pioneering critics’ analysis of the Zimbabwean novel in Shona remain valuable to this research as they provide the foundation for the criticism of Shona fiction.

Furthermore, some of the critical works reviewed in this chapter do not focus on the Shona novel per se but on African literature in general viz Ngugi waThiong’o (1981); Chinweizu et al. (1985); Cheikh Anta Diop (1996); Ayi Kweyi Armah (2006); Vakunta (2008) and Mukundi (2010), among others. These scholars seem to concur that post-colonial Africa is riddled with diverse multifaceted challenges that are a result of colonial rule and domination that engendered the intrusion of Western ethos and models in Africa. While acknowledging that a return to pre-colonial Africa is not feasible, these writers agree on the urgent need for Africa to reclaim and rehabilitate her genuine past through a process of cultural hybridity in order to acquire a reliable pedestal into the future. This study which seeks to investigate how the concept of unhu is portrayed and applied in Zimbabwean literature written in the Shona language shares the above views and hopes to complement the existing discourse.

Apart from these critical works on African literature, some of the narratives reviewed in this chapter focus on various facets of the unhu worldview which have a connection with the thematic concerns of the Shona novels under spotlight. These include: Samkange and Samkange
(1980); Ramose (1999); Chimuka (2001); Higgs (2003); Murithi (2006); Rukuni (2007); Walt (2010); Mangena (2011); Ndofirepi and Ndofirepi (2012); Chemhuru (2012); Mbagu Muyingi (2013); Leholohonolo (2013); Dolamo (2013); Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru and Makuvaza (2014).

These writers seem to share an analogous contention that one of the challenges facing Africa in the contemporary dispensation is that traditional and indigenous knowledge has been downgraded to a subordinate status compared to Western modes of knowledge which has resulted in Africa’s failure to surmount her problems. They argue that in order to craft a positive future, Africa needs to return to models which do not stem from the former period of colonial subjugation, but are entrenched in pre-colonial times.

The writers also note that Africa needs to engage indigenous models to surmount the tragedies that continue to plague her and they proffer unhu which is deeply rooted in African culture as an indigenous worldview that validates and foregrounds the relevance and significance of indigenous solutions to African existential challenges. However, these scholars contend that Africa cannot return to the pre-colonial conception of unhu and so they advocate for a calculated process of cultural syncretism where the basic tenets of unhu are embraced while innovatively fusing them with fundamental inputs from other cultures. Such works are valuable to this research as they serve to corroborate some of the arguments raised in this study.

This chapter has also demonstrated that some writers like Gelfand who subscribe to Eurocentric perceptions of history have distorted and misrepresented African cultures in general and Shona culture in particular and appear to have approached their studies from a prejudicial
vantage point. This research attempts to deconstruct their views that are predicated on cultural arrogance by explicating the African communitarian worldview of *unhu* from a Zimbabwean perspective.

This chapter has thus appraised the narrative development of literary criticism on the Shona novel and it has also attempted to distinguish the crux of this study from previous scholarship with a view to locating this research within broader and historical standpoint. The chapter has observed that no scholar, to the knowledge of the present researcher, has attempted to chiefly ascertain the nexus between *unhu* and Shona fiction. This study attempts to fill that gap. The current research’s effort is complementary to earlier reviews’ pioneering work on the study of the Shona novel as it develops from the inputs of these previous writers. Chapter three presents the theoretical framework.
CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

We do not have the luxury of spending excessive time on external nuances like form at the risk of sacrificing internal nuances such as content and meaning. Thus, our own critical theories for analysing our own critical experiences are needed so that we can begin to create institutions of ideas, Black thought, for housing and disseminating our life experiences, historically currently and futuralistically. Like the dominant culture in preserving the integrity of its culture and art, we need these kinds of theories, African-centered, for our own survival and the survival of our culture and history. Hudson-Weems (2007:80).

3.0 Introduction

The foregoing chapter has reviewed existing literature related to the current research and this chapter discusses the theoretical framework employed in this study, that is, Afrocentricity and Africana Womanism. The chapter explores the critical tenets of the two theories and justifies their engagement in this research as fundamental lenses for a close textual analysis of critical perspectives on Shona novelists’ conceptualisation and depiction of the African communitarian worldview of unhu (humanity to others).
3.1 The Afrocentric Paradigm

Molefi Kete Asante, who coined the term Afrocentricity, is the principal advocate for the Afrocentric school of thought. Among other scholars who have helped to inspire, develop and popularise the Afrocentric ideas are the following: Ama Mazama; Ngugi wa Thiong’o; Marimba Ani; Kwame Nantambu; Danjuma Modupe; J.A Sofala; Maulana Karenga; Chinweizu; Runoko Rashidi; Terry Kershaw; Cheikh Anta Diop; Chinua Achebe; Kariamu Welsh Asante; John Henrik Clarke; Chancellor Williams; Jacob Carruthers; Tsehloane Keto.

Asante (1998:02) defines Afrocentricity as “...literally placing African ideals at the centre of any analysis that involves African culture and behaviour”. He also avers that “Afrocentricity is an intellectual perspective deriving its name from the centrality of African people and phenomena in the interpretation of data” (Asante, in Hudson-Weems, 2007:29). The Afrocentric perspective, Okafor (2010:11) contends, “...is a simple idea that African ideals and values must be centrally situated in any analysis involving African culture and behaviour”. Asante (2003:02) also asserts that:

Afrocentricity is a mode of thought and action in which the centrality of African interests, values and perspectives predominate. In regards to theory, it is the placing of African people in the centre of any analysis of African phenomena.

From all the above definitions, one can assert that Afrocentricity, as a literary-critical theory, seeks the centrality of Africans, continental and diasporic, in their own history in all circumstances where Africans are involved. Proceeding from the above definitions, Afrocentricity is an appropriate perspective for this study because:
It is clear that we need to operate from the start with Africa at the centre of all analyses concerning Africana life and thought, thereby eliminating futile efforts in appropriating outside constructs. To be sure an authentic paradigm must be mandatory for Africana theorists so that our lives and texts could be accurately construed and interpreted. (Hudson-Weems, 2007:85).

Africans have been moved off their cultural locations and now exist in borrowed platforms. Ani (1994:01) notes that culture carries rules for thinking and if people impose their culture on their victims they could limit the creativity of their vision, thus annihilating their capacity to act with tenacity and in their own interest. She notes that Europeans commit their cultural lifetime to becoming what to others is not necessarily desirable.

The European representation of the ‘non European’ is the phenomenon that they disdain. In their opinion, people of other cultures are in essence irrational (ibid:240). An African-centred reading of European cultural history expounds the centrality of racialist perceptions in European ideology (ibid:241). This is why Zanden, cited in Ani (ibid:292) writes that:

The social, moral, and political, as well as the physical history of the Negro race, bears strong testimony against them; it furnishes the most undeniable truth of their mental inferiority. In no age or condition has the real negro shown a capacity to throw off the chains of barbarism and brutality that have long bound down the nations of that race: or to rise above the common cloud of darkness that still broods over them.

Thus, European self-definition and self-fulfilment depend on ‘negative’ representations of others and the role of European image of others is to buttress the European self-image.
Afrocentricity thus, seeks to reposition Africans and reality from the fringes of European thinking, attitude and doctrines to a centred, positively located place within the domain of science and culture (Asante in Hudson-Weems, 2007:30). Thus, it contests the furtherance of white racial supremacist notions in the imagination of the African and the entire world (Asante, 2003:02). Afrocentricity interrogates the perpetuation of white racial domination over all images. Thus Asante in Hudson-Weems (2007:31) writes:

No one constructs or writes about re-positioning and re-centering merely for the sake of self-indulgence, none could afford to do so because the African dispossession appears so great and the displacing myths so pervasive that simply to watch the procession of African peripheralisation is to acquiesce in African de-centering.

Thus, to be centred is to be situated in the framework of African interests and culture. Afrocentricity as a liberating perspective contends that Africans possess the cultural aptitude to see, explicate and interpret from the vantage point of their existential location. Afrocentrists contend that one’s analysis is more often than not related to where a person’s mind is located, for instance, one can tell if an African is located in a culturally centred position vis-a-vis the African world by how that person relates to African information (Asante, 2007:42).

Asante thus further argues that the term location in the Afrocentric sense refers to the psychological, cultural, historical or personal place occupied by a person at a given time in history and it follows then that discovering one’s location means ascertaining whether or not a person is in a centred or marginal place with regards to his or her culture. An oppressed person is thus dis-located when he or she operates from a standpoint that is centred in the experiences of the oppressor (ibid).
The Afrocentric paradigm as a theory of human liberation is therefore the best guiding framework in this study which examines whether or not the Shona novelists’ depiction and understanding of *unhu* helps in Africa’s social, cultural and political liberation. It puts the researcher at an advantage in ascertaining whether or not the writers are in a centred or marginal place with regards to their portrayal of the African communitarian worldview of *unhu* because there could be no social or economic struggle that would be significant if African people remained entangled with the philosophical and intellectual locations of white hegemonic nationalism as it relates to Africa and African people. More over:

Afrocentricity is the most complete philosophical totalisation of the African being at the centre of his or her existence. It is not merely an artistic or literary movement, or an individual or collective quest for authenticity, it is above all the total use of method to effect psychological, political, social, cultural and economic change (Asante, 1998:137).

Afrocentricity establishes agency as fundamental for freedom. An agent means a human being who is capable of acting independently in his or her own best interest while agency is the capacity to provide the psychological and cultural resources essential for the progression of human freedom (Asante, 2007:40).

Asante (1999:ix) thus notes that:

Afrocentricity is the relocation, the repositioning of the African in a place of agency where instead of being spectator to others, African voices are heard in the full meaning of history.

He reiterates that:
Afrocentricity is a paradigmatic intellectual perspective that privileges African agency within the context of African history and culture trans-continentally and trans-generationally. (Asante, 2007:02)

He further stresses that:

Afrocentricity is a frame of reference where phenomena are viewed from the perspective of the African person as an agent in his or her own narrative. (Asante, 2013:79).

Asante in Mazama (2007:07) emphasises that:

Afrocentricity is a quality of thought or action that allows the African person to view himself or herself as an agent and actor in human history, not simply as someone who is acted upon.

The argument is that Africans have been marginalised in the system of white racial domination and their images have been obliterated, resulting in the destruction of the spiritual and material personality of the African. Therefore, the African must be conscious of this peripheralisation and seek to elude marginalisation and be seen as an agent in economic, cultural, social and political terms. When agency does not exist the condition of marginality prevails and the worst form of marginality is to be marginal within one’s own narrative (Asante, 2007:41).

Gwekwerere (2010:119) contends that the demise of the slave, whose space the African has historically occupied, implies the realisation of African people’s agency, an indication that African people are transcending the indolence and paralysis imposed upon them by centuries of enslavement and disparagement:

The realisation of agency and subjecthood means that African people cease to exist as the inert victims with whom the occident is comfortable. The combat with Eurocentrism creates a new man who finds no obligation to either pay
homage to Europe or appeal to the ‘generosity’, ‘good nature’, and ‘magnanimity’ of the occident...the new man born of the combat with Eurocentrism creates his own terms, sets his own goals and runs his own affairs.

In the same vein, Asante (2003:03) posits that the practice of Afrocentricity as a transforming agent in which all things that were old become new and a transformation in people’s lives of attitudes, beliefs, ethos and behaviour creates, inter alia, a revolutionary perception on all facts as a new reality is evoked while a new vision is established.

Agency is thus fundamental to the Afrocentric paradigm because without agency whites persist on maintaining that Africans did not have civilisation prior to contact with whites, that Africans never invented anything, that Africans are inferior beings to whites and will continue to uphold their imagined status as teacher and Africa as pupil and as long as such images persist Africans remain vilified because:

To allow the definition of Africans as marginal and as fringe people in the historical processes of the world is to abandon all possibility and all hope of African agency and allow Africans to become only the amaneuensis for Europe in its most degraded form (Asante, 1999:08)

Thus the demise of Eurocentrism is necessary because it structures a set of ethos and insists on a framework that views Africa and Africans in a junior light (Asante, 1999:ix).

The centrality of agency as a crucial notion of the Afrocentric perspective resonates well with the demands of this study. By establishing agency as a critical conception for freedom, the Afrocentric school of thought liberates the African. It is, thus, imperative to ascertain in this research whether or not the Shona novelists’ depiction and conceptualisation of
the African communitarian worldview of *unhu* recognises African agency or not, because:

White supremacy cannot be accommodated in a normal society and therefore when a writer or scholar or politician refuses to recognise or ignores the African’s agency he or she allows for the default position-white supremacy-to operate without challenge and thus participates in a destructive mode for human personality (Asante, 1999:06).

European writers like Jacobs (1971:176) have often defined Africans as periphery people, Africa as pupil while Europe is teacher and it is thus critical to establish the extent to which writers of some selected Shona fiction have located themselves in a centred position and also whether or not they have managed to portray the African from a standpoint of African agency and not as a spectator or a junior in their depiction and conceptualisation of the African communitarian worldview of *unhu*.

Asante (2007:43) posits that the defence of African cultural elements is one of the minimum requirements for approaching any subject Afrocentrically. The Afrocentrist is concerned with all protection and defense of African cultural ethos and elements as part of the human project (Schiele, 1994:284 cited in Asante, 2007:43).

This constitutes responses to centuries of abuse and prevarication of the African historical experience and is embedded in attempts to respond to and repudiate the aristocratic scholarship which justified slavery and discrimination as Adeleke (2001:23) notes:

Authorities in different disciplines pontificated on the themes of African and Black inferiority and the historical and cultural sterility of Africa. This in effect suspended Blacks in a kind of existential nullity. That is having contributed nothing to humankind and civilisation, Blacks counted for nothing and
were assigned a place at the base of socio-political and economic structures of life.

One cannot assume an inclination to African agency without according space to the creative aspect of the African. The Afrocentrist employs linguistic, psychological, sociological and philosophical elements to defend African cultural elements (Asante, 2007:43).

In an e-mail interview, respondent Q, a lecturer at California State University writes that:

The prominence of the Afrocentric paradigm in literary critical discourse allows African historical experiences to inform all debates on African literature thus empowering African scholars to achieve agency.

However, Okafor (2010:12) notes that recognising the agency of Africa in the evolution of human affairs does not circumvent reflection of their omissions and commissions and thus an Afrocentric study of African civilisation would probe not only glorious moments of the African past but also ancestral failures and weaknesses.

Arguing from an angle analogous to the above, Asante (2007:43) contends that defending African cultural elements does not mean that all things African are good but it implies that what Africans have done and what Africans do symbolise human creativity. He further avers that given the arguments against African ethos, habits, customs, religion, behaviours and thought, the Afrocentrist unpack the authentic African understanding of the elements without imposing Eurocentric or non-African interpretations.

Afrocentricity, therefore, has the advantage of allowing this researcher to have a clear appreciation of the African cultural elements embodied in the unhu worldview. Furthermore, the theory has the advantage of
analysing African realities from a point of rootedness in those same realities.

Asante asseverates that a commitment to lexical refinement is one of the minimum characteristics for an Afrocentric project and Africans’ liberation from the custody of racist language is imperative (Asante, 2003:41). He further argues that there can be no freedom until there is a freedom of the mind and that the first tenet for the freedom of the mind is the freedom of language which is basically the control of thought. This follows then that it becomes impossible for Africans to direct their future until they regulate their language because language provides understanding of reality:

Black language must possess instrumentality, that is, it must be able to do something for our liberation … liberation is fundamentally a seizure of the instruments of control. If the language is not functional, then it should have no place in our vocabulary (Asante, 2003:41).

It is therefore fundamental to note that if African agency and therefore freedoms are to exist, Africans must acquire language that is not adversative to Africans because to choose the discourse of white racists as Africa’s own language with no reference to Africa’s historical circumstances is to choose enslavement (Asante, 1998:43). This means that the discourse engaged should be a language that posits Africans as subjects and agents of history:

Unless we reflect on the terms we use, we may continue to use terms that encapsulate us, distort our historical reality, cloud our own minds and render us impotent in the face of psychological, political, or cultural challenges (ibid:43).

For a study whose focus is on Africa’s struggles for social, cultural, and political emancipation, a commitment to lexical refinement as one of the
minimum characteristics for an Afrocentric project and Africans’ liberation from the custody of racist language is vital. It is fundamental to establish whether or not the discourse engaged by Shona novelists in their portrayal of the unhu worldview posits Africans as subjects and agents of history.

3.2 Africana Womanism

Africana womanism is an African-centred theory propounded by Hudson-Weems, which places Africa at the centre of analysis of issues that relate to Africana women. Considering its definition Africana womanism is an appropriate literary critical theory for this study because:

...there is no need for Africana texts to be analysed and explicated via the use of outside theory. To be sure, all of these theorists place Europe and whiteness at the centre of their analysis, which we as Africana people should find somewhat problematic for an Africana perspective (Hudson-Weems, 2007:77).

Africana womanism has its roots in the discrepancies between women of African descent and women of European origins. The principal foundation of feminist thought is embedded in historical hegemony and non-inclusive strategy for Africana women as it is founded on Western oriented realities.

Proceeding from the above realisation, feminism appeared problematic and incapable of addressing all the needs of all women all the time and so this inspired Africana womanists’ refutation of the fundamental tenets of feminist ideology and prompted the formulation of a paradigm on the
function and place of Black women in the women’s movement (Ntiri in Hudson-Weems, 2007:310)

Hudson-Weems (2004) notes that Africana womanism developed from a group of women of African descent who aspired to be properly named and officially defined according to their own unique historical and cultural realities, a perspective that would mirror the co-existence of men and women in a mutual struggle for the survival of their entire family:

Arguably, feminism and by extension Black feminism, carries its own baggage that does not work with a Black historical and cultural context. Invariably, it either directly or indirectly, overtly or covertly includes anti-male sentiments and gender exclusivity or at least the prioritisation of gender issues at the risk of downplaying the critical significance of race priority for Africanans. Such baggage cannot be afforded in the Africana community and thus, should not be encouraged, as it would further complicate the crucial concerted struggle of Africana men, women and children for human parity (Hudson-Weems, 2004: xx).

Hudson-Weems has identified eighteen culturally derived Africana womanist traits that explicate the nature of the Africana women and this study will utilise these descriptors in analysing issues that relate to the depiction of unhu and Shona women in selected Shona fiction rendering the theory appropriate in this study because “…it is in the concept of Africana womanism which neatly fits in the category of African literature, criticism and theory in its authentic presentation of Africana life, history and culture” (Hudson-Weems, 2004:132).

The eighteen descriptors are self namer, self definer, family centred, genuine in sisterhood, strong, concert with their men in the liberation struggle, whole, authentic, flexible role player, respected, recognised,
male compatible, spiritual, respectful of elders, ambitious, adaptable, mothering and nurturing.

According to Hudson-Weems, an Africana womanist places high premium on family centrality and this is a critical component of Africana Womanism. She argues that an Africana womanist does not disconnect her survival from that of her entire family and she stays connected to her family and participates in the common struggle assuming leadership when required (Hudson-Weems, 2004:53).

In concert with her male counterpart, the Africana womanist continues to share the mission of bringing about total liberation for her people and so within the Africana womanist trajectory, men are not excluded from women’s concerns but are invited as allies in surmounting life’s existential challenges (Ntiri in Hudson-Weems, 2007:314).

In the same vein, historically Africana women have fought against sexual discrimination, as well as race and class discrimination. They have actually challenged Africana male chauvinism but not to the magnitude of purging Africana men as partners in the struggle for liberation and famililhood thus demonstrating that they are opposed to the model of white feminists who want independence and freedom from family responsibilities (Hudson-Weems, 2004:24).

Furthermore, long before Africa’s colonisation, strong African women stood as equal partners with their male counterparts and functioned within a cooperative, collective, communal system and contrary to the white feminists’ need to be equal to men as human beings, Black women have always been equal to their male counterparts in spite of some Africana men’s endeavours to subdue them on some levels
Asante in Hudson-Weems (2004:138) thus stresses that:

The fact of the matter is that Africana womanism is a response to the need for collective definition and the recreation of the authentic agenda that is the birthright of every living person.

Moreover, while some levels of subjugation of women predate the advent of colonialism in Africa, it was not the kind of exploitative oppression as defined in the current dispensation in terms of female oppression reflecting why, as Africana womanism proposes, most of eighteen distinct features characterising the Africana woman, it proposes most of the same features for the male counterpart (Hudson-Weems, 2004:90).

This follows that a true Africana man is female compatible, moral, role model, supportive, respectful of women, protective, fathering, loving, and both male and female counterparts are self namers, self-definers, family centred, in concert with their counterparts in the struggle, flexible role players, strong, ambitious, respectful of elders, whole and authentic.

This shows that historically and currently both Black men and women work together cooperatively toward attaining liberation and equality demonstrating that the experiences and hence the strategy of Africana women are contrary to those of white women as the experiences of white women contradict the demands of Africana women and so:

Feminism, an agenda designed to meet the needs and demands of white women is plausible for that group, with its victims of gender oppression primarily. They are within their rights to tailor a theoretical construct for the purpose of addressing their need to eradicate female subjugation first (Hudson-Weems, 2004:44).
While feminism prioritises the obliteration of female subjugation, the fundamental idea championed in Africana womanism is recognition of the legacy of the prevalence of strong, proud, family-centred women of African descent whose first priority since the intrusion of white supremacy over people of African descent, is race empowerment (Hudson-Weems, 2004:57). This indicates that most Africans do not share the same ideology with traditional white feminists.

This research regards Africana womanism as the best theory to engage in analysing issues that relate to the depiction of *unhu* and Shona women in selected Shona fiction because “we need our own Africana theorists, not scholars who duplicate or use theories created by others in analysing Africana texts” (Hudson-Weems, 2007:75). Moreover, Africana womanism is an Africa-centred theory which places Africa at the centre as it relates to Africana women:

Africana womanism is an ideology created and designed for all women of African descent. It is grounded in African culture, and therefore, it necessarily focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs, and desires of Africana women … the primary goal of Africana women, then is to create their own criteria for assessing their realities both in thought and in action (Hudson-Weems, 2007:82).

The theory therefore puts this researcher at an advantage as it is an authentic African-centred theory for Africana women. Furthermore, “… Africana womanism is a viable and effective method of ascertaining the purpose, role, and direction of literature written by or about Africana people” (Asante in Hudson-Weems, 2004:137).
3.3 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the Afrocentric perspective and Africana womanism as the two literary critical theories utilised in this study. It has explored the critical tenets of the two theories justifying their utilisation in this research as appropriate critical lenses for a close textual analysis of unhu and Shona fiction. It has established that as a theory of human liberation and as a theory that is grounded in African history and culture which seeks the centrality of African ethos, interests and ideals, Afrocentricity is an appropriate guiding framework for this study.

The chapter has also established that Africana womanism is a relevant literary critical theory for this research in as far as it is an African centred paradigm which locates Africa at the centre of analysis of issues that relate to Africana women. Furthermore, this research will utilise the eighteen descriptors which define Africana womanism in analysing issues that relate to the portrayal of unhu and Shona women in selected Shona fiction.
CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Not everything that can be counted counts and not everything that counts can be counted (Einstein, in Bricki and Green, 2007:02).

We do not conduct research only to amass data. The purpose of research is to discover answers to questions through the application of systematic procedures (Berg, 2001:06).

4.0 Introduction

The preceding chapter has discussed the theoretical framework utilised in this research, notably, Afrocentricity and Africana womanism. This chapter examines the research methodology adopted in this study. The qualitative research inquiry, is used in this study in a bid to justify its engagement as a fundamental modus operandi in dissecting selected Shona novelists’ conceptualisation and depiction of the African communitarian worldview of unhu. In that regard, the chapter defines qualitative and quantitative research methods, compares and contrasts them, unravels the main features and the nature of qualitative research and juxtaposes these aspects to this study’s statement of the problem and research questions as it acknowledges that “methodology and procedures depend on the nature and type of the research question or
problem” (Somerset, 2013:13). The argument of this chapter is that the qualitative research approach is the most apposite method for a research of this nature. The chapter further defines and illustrates the strengths and weaknesses of the methods of data collection used in this research which are interviews and questionnaires in its appreciation that “Research endeavours are carried out through the help of different types of research instruments. There is no one best method to use when collecting primary data for research work” (Parajuli, 2004:52). Each instrument is therefore suitable for gathering specific type of data and is influenced by the nature of information needed for a particular research.

4.1 Qualitative Research Method

This research engages the qualitative research inquiry as its methodological approach to ruminate the thoughts that Shona novelists generate within the realm of unhu as a transformative philosophy with a view to finding an indigenous solution to Zimbabwe’s cultural, political and economic quandary both past and present. Various scholars have attempted to define qualitative research method. According to Devetak, Glazar and Vogrinc (2010:78) qualitative research is an exploratory approach emphasising words rather than quantification in gathering and analysing the data. In the same vein, Bricki and Green (2007:02) asseverate that:

Qualitative research is defined by its aims which relate to understanding some aspect of social life and its methods which (in general) generate words rather than numbers, as data for analysis.

Sharing the above definitions, Murphy, Dingwall, Greatbatch, Parker and Watson (1998:11) note that qualitative research involves the “collection,
analysis and interpretation of data that are not easily reduced to numbers”. While qualitative research is an approach for probing and understanding social phenomena concerned with words:

Quantitative research is a means for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables. These variables in turn can be measured typically on instruments so that numbered data can be analysed using statistical procedures (Cresswell, 2009:03).

This study seeks to explicate the African communitarian worldview of *unhu* from a Zimbabwean vantage point and to dissect the strength and weaknesses of selected Shona fiction in their portrayal of the *unhu* worldview. Such objectives generate words and not numbers as data for analysis thus rendering the qualitative research method relevant in this research.

Moreover, qualitative research methods endeavour to answer questions about the “what”, “how”, or “why” of phenomenon and not the “how many”, or “how much” which are addressed by quantitative methods. Qualitative research seeks to answer questions about why people behave the way they do, how opinions and attitudes are formed, how people are affected by the events that go on around them and how and why cultures have developed in the way they have:

Qualitative research is concerned with finding the answers to questions which begin with why?, how?, and in what way. Quantitative research on the other hand is more concerned with questions about how much?, how many? How often?, to what extent? (Degu and Yigzaw, 2006:3).

The qualitative research method thus fits very well in this research which seeks to address the following questions: How competent are writers of Shona fiction in explicating *unhu* as a basis of solutions to politico-
economic and socio-cultural challenges bedevilling Africa and Zimbabwe in particular?, In what ways have writers of Shona fiction promoted the moral fabric of the Zimbabwean society?, How have Zimbabwean writers writing in the Shona language portrayed the African traditional worldview of *unhu* in their novels?

Mack, Woodsong, Macqueen, Guest and Namey (2005:02) contend that qualitative and quantitative research methods differ primarily in their analytical objectives, the types of questions they pose, the types of data collection instruments they use, the forms of data they produce and the degree of flexibility built into study design. It is pertinent to replicate Mack et al’ s table 1 here which proffers the basic differences between qualitative and quantitative research methods:

**Table 1 Comparison of quantitative and qualitative research approaches**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General framework</th>
<th><strong>Quantitative</strong></th>
<th><strong>Qualitative</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seek to confirm hypotheses about phenomena</td>
<td>Seek to explore phenomena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instruments use more rigid style of eliciting and categorising responses to questions</td>
<td>Instruments use more flexible, alternative, style of eliciting and categorising responses to questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use highly structured methods such as surveys, questionnaires and structured observation</td>
<td>Use semi-structured methods such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, participant observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical Objectives</td>
<td>To quantify variation</td>
<td>To describe variation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To predict casual relationships</td>
<td>To describe and explain relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To describe characteristics of population</td>
<td>To describe individual experiences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Format</th>
<th>Closed-ended</th>
<th>Open-ended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Format</th>
<th>Numerical (obtained by assigning numerical values to responses)</th>
<th>Textual (obtained from audio-tapes, video-tapes and field notes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Flexibility in study design</th>
<th>Study design stable from beginning to end</th>
<th>Some aspects of the study are flexible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participant responses do not influence or determine how and which questions researchers ask next</td>
<td>Participant responses affect how which questions researchers ask next</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Study design is subject to statistical assumptions and conditions</td>
<td>Study design is iterative that is data collection and research questions are adjusted according to what is learned</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the table above, Mack et al. (2005) note that qualitative research methods are more flexible than quantitative approaches in that they accept some form of naturalness in the interaction between the
researcher and the participant, for example, the researcher asks mostly “open-ended” questions that are not essentially articulated in an analogous style with each participant. The utilisation of open-ended questions bequeath with the participants the latitude to respond in their discourse unlike in quantitative methods where participants choose from fixed responses. It follows then that open-ended questions have the aptitude to evoke responses that are meaningful, culturally salient, rich and explanatory in nature (ibid:04).

Moreover, from the above table one can note that qualitative methods describe and explain relationships while quantitative methods predict causal relationships and this renders qualitative methods more suitable for this research which seeks to address the question "what is the relationship between selected Shona fiction and unhu?"

Sharan’s (2014:18) Table 1.2 which presents characteristics of qualitative and quantitative research inquiries helps to further qualify the preference of qualitative methods to quantitative instruments:

**Table 1.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Point of Comparison</th>
<th>Qualitative Research</th>
<th>Quantitative Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus of Research</td>
<td>Quality(nature, essence)</td>
<td>Quantity(how much, how many)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophical Roots</td>
<td>Phenomenology, interactionism, symbolic constructivism</td>
<td>Positivism, logical, empiricism, Realism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associated Phrases</td>
<td>Fieldwork, grounded, constructivist, naturalistic</td>
<td>Experimental, empirical statistical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal of investigation</td>
<td>Understanding, description, meaning, hypothesis generating</td>
<td>Prediction, confirmation, control, hypothesis testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>Small, non-random purposeful, theoretical</td>
<td>Large, random, representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>Flexible, Evolving</td>
<td>Predetermined, structured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>Researcher as primary instrument, interviews observations, documents</td>
<td>Inanimate instruments( scales, tests, surveys, questionnaires, computers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary mode of analysis</td>
<td>Inductive, constant, comparative method</td>
<td>Deductive, statistical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings</td>
<td>Comprehensive, holistic, expansive, richly descriptive</td>
<td>Precise, numerical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table above shows that the practice in qualitative research is inductive which entails gathering data to develop concepts, hypotheses or theories while in quantitative research hypotheses or theories are tested deductively. In this study, no hypotheses or theories are being tested but information from interviews, observations and questionnaire is connected in order to investigate how the concept of *unhu* is portrayed and applied in Shona fiction in providing solutions to Africa’s problems with special reference to Zimbabwe. Somerset (2014:03) notes that in qualitative research:

> Researchers usually approach people with the aim of finding out about their concerns; they go to the participants to collect the rich and in-depth data that can then become the basis for theorising. The interaction between the researcher and the participant leads to an understanding of experience and the generation of concepts. In other types of research, assumptions and ideas lead to hypotheses which are tested ... in qualitative research, however, the data have priority.

The approach in this study is therefore inductive and this justifies the employment of the qualitative research inquiry as the most appropriate method for this study.

### 4.2 Text analysis: Primary Sources

The study analyses selected Shona novels set in the pre-colonial, colonial and post-independence Zimbabwe and, accordingly, assumes a comparative thrust. This allows the researcher to evaluate the authors’ vision on *unhu* at different historical milieux. Furthermore, this research employs a socio-historical approach in its analysis of the novels. This
method allows the researcher to delve into the *unhu* ethos articulated by the authors in their correct historical epochs.

The fiction analysed ranges from Shona novels that focus on *unhu* and the African traditional religion, namely: Mutasa’s *Nhume Yamambo* (1990) and *Misodzi Dikita Neropa* (1991) as well as Matsikiti’s *Rakava Buno Risifemberi* (1995); *unhu* and proletarianisation of Africans, particularly, Chidzero’s *Nzvengamutsvairo* (1957); *unhu*, homosexuality, to governance and governmental principles, as represented by Mabasa’s *Mapenzi* (1999). The researcher acknowledges that while there are many novels, the selection of these specific Shona novels has been prompted by the view that the topic under spotlight is about the African indigenous worldview of *unhu,* with special reference to the Shona culture which the researcher feels could be convincingly elaborated if Shona fiction is engaged. These novels allow the researcher to investigate how the concept of *unhu* is portrayed and applied in Shona fiction in providing solutions to Africa’s problems with special reference to Zimbabwe.

4.3 Text analysis of Secondary sources

This research engages secondary sources in the form of critical works on various facets of the *unhu* worldview which have a connection with the thematic concerns of the Shona novels under spotlight. These include: Samkange and Samkange (1980); Ramose (1999); Chimuka (2001); Higgs (2003); Murithi (2006); Rukuni (2007); Walt (2010); Mangena (2011); Ndofirepi and Ndofirepi (2012); Chemhuru (2012); Mbagu Muyingi (2013); Lehlohonolo (2013); Dolamo (2013); Makuvaza (2014) Mkabela (2005); Washington (2010); Shumba (2011); Kaheru
These works which do not focus on literature per se, like the present study, but on unhu in general are relevant to this research as they serve to corroborate some of the arguments raised with regards to how the unhu worldview is portrayed and applied in Zimbabwean literature written in the Shona language.

Some critical works on African literature were used to complement the data collected from respondents and help to substantiate arguments raised. These critical works include: Asante (1998); Chinweizu et al. (1980); Chiwome (1996); P’Bitek (1986); Thelwell (1987); Diop (1996); Ngugi (1981); Armah (2006); Mwakimu (2008); Vakunta (2008); Mukundi (2010). These works were corroborated by journal articles, newspapers and theses.

4.4 Interview and questionnaire research instruments

Berg (2001:66) defines an interview as “a conversation with a purpose” and that “specifically the purpose is to gather information” (ibid). This research employs in-depth interviews, qualitative telephone interviews, in-depth e-mail interviews and focus group interviews. According to Mark et al. (2005:29) an in-depth interview is “a technique designed to elicit a vivid picture of the participant’s perspective on the research topic”. They are generally conducted face-to-face and involve one interviewer and one participant although phone conversations and interviews with more than one participant also qualify as in-depth (ibid).

In this study, in-depth interviews are conducted in order to gather data on Shona novelists’ conceptualisation and depiction of the African communitarian worldview of unhu partly because “they are an effective qualitative method for getting people to talk about their personal feelings,
opinions and feelings” Mack et al. (ibid: 30). Furthermore, “they are also an opportunity for us to gain insight into how people interpret and order the world” (ibid).

Where key informants are in geographically distinct locations and very far away from the interviewer, this research engages the telephone interview which saves time. “The telephone interview is immediate and researchers and participants are able to respond spontaneously to each other” (Somerset, 2013:101). The shortcoming of using the telephone interview however, is the lack of deeper interaction as the interviewer may not know the participants. (ibid).

Apart from qualitative telephone interviews, this study employs in-depth e-mail interviews where key informants are not easily accessible. In-depth e-mail interviews are useful to this research as they allow access to individuals often difficult or impossible to reach or interview face-to-face or via telephone, they also allow access to individuals regardless of their geographic location and they eliminate the interruption that takes place in face-to-face/telephone interviews (Meho, 2006:1292). However, the major drawback in this form of inquiry is that it disconnects participants who have no access to computers even though they might possess vital data to this study.

In investigating the extent to which Shona fiction has tussled with the political, social and cultural issues with special reference to the unhu worldview, this study also engages focus group interviews. Berg (2001:111) defines the focus group as “an interview style designed for small groups”. In the same vein, Mack et al. (2005:51) note that “A focus group is a qualitative data collection method in which one or two
researchers and several participants meet as a group to discuss a given research topic”.

In this research, focus group interviews are particularly fundamental in explicating the African communitarian worldview of *unhu* from a Zimbabwean vantage point as Mack et al. (ibid:02) observe:

> Focus groups are effective in eliciting data on the cultural norms of a group and in generating broad overviews of issues of concern to the cultural group or subgroup represented.

Furthermore, focus groups extract data on an array of values and opinions over a comparatively concise period. They are also valuable for accessing a broad variety of views on a specific topic as opposed to achieving group consensus and so the diversity of the group because of differences in age, gender, education and access to resources results in divergent viewpoints on a topic Mack et al. (2005:52). This study thus uses focus group interviews as one of the qualitative research instruments because:

> Focus groups contribute to this broad understanding by providing well grounded data on social and cultural norms, the pervasiveness of these norms within the community and people’s opinions about their own values (ibid).

However, the hitch with focus group interviews is that some people abhor opening up their inner thoughts in public and may be reluctant to answer some questions (Somerse, ibid:133).

This research engages the questionnaire method in a bid to gather participants’ views on the interface between selected Shona fiction and *unhu* worldview. Parajuli (2004:52) defines a questionnaire research instrument as “a method to collect data and information in social
research in which information is obtained with the help of well-prepared questionnaire” while a questionnaire is “a form containing a series of questions and providing space for their replies to be filled in by the respondent on their own” (ibid).

The significance of the questionnaire method in this research is that the questionnaire curtails the identity of respondents and offer enough time to the participants to express their views thus inspiring uncontrolled opinions. However, the application of the questionnaire method is limited to respondents who are literate and this disengages non-literate participants even if they have vital information for this research.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the research methodology engaged in this study. It has established that the selection between qualitative and quantitative research methods is premised on the nature and type of the research and the purpose of the research. The chapter has ascertained that a study whose focus is an exploration of the Shona novelists’ conceptualisation and depiction of the African worldview of unhu can best be carried out by engaging the qualitative research methodology. The chapter has defined qualitative and quantitative research methods and it has unravelled the main features and the nature of the two methodologies in a bid to justify the engagement of the qualitative research inquiry as the most apposite method for a research of this nature. The chapter has also defined the data collection instruments used in this research which are interviews and questionnaires, chronicling their strengths and weaknesses. The limitations highlighted for each data collection instrument are handled in this study by the use
of other data collection methods underscored. The chapter has stated the selected Shona novels employed as the primary sources of data and the secondary sources of data engaged to corroborate the arguments raised in dissecting selected Shona novelists’ conceptualisation and depiction of the *unhu* worldview.
CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter, which encapsulates the main discussion of this study, focuses on how the concept of unhu is portrayed and applied in selected Shona novels. It attempts to proffer a conceptual analysis of unhu by applying the Zimbabwean perspective and situating it within the broader African location. The aspects of unhu espoused are adopted in the analysis of Shona novelists’ conceptualisation and depiction of unhu worldview. This chapter also attempts to establish the extent to which the writers’ depiction of unhu in their selected works provides solutions to social and political problems. In that regard, the chapter assesses the extent to which the writers’ vision of unhu is progressive and liberating.

The thesis advanced in this chapter is that the indigenous worldview of unhu is portrayed and applied in selected Shona novels in ways that are both oppressive and liberating. It argues that Chidzero does not conceptualise and depict the unhu worldview in a way that produces Shona fiction which is utilitarian and which liberates Africans in the face of a harsh, exploitative, oppressive and dehumanising colonial regime. Chidzero’s understanding of unhu is the existence of harmonious relationships between blacks and whites during the proletarianisation of the African peasantry in spite of the unequal socio-economic relations between the two races. The chapter further contends that Mabasa’s
conceptualisation and depiction of the unhu worldview in Mapenzi is positive and promotes Shona literature which is utilitarian. It argues that Mabasa’s Mapenzi challenges leaders to embrace unhu as their guiding precept in formulating and implementing policies which are people oriented and which promote peace, stability, accountability, harmony, happiness, equality and honesty, a standpoint which renders his solutions relevant to Zimbabwe’s current nation building challenges. This chapter argues that Mutasa’s conceptualisation and depiction of unhu worldview is positive in Misodzi, Dikita neRopa and ambivalent in Nhume Yamambo. It also contends that Matsikiti’s portrayal of unhu worldview and pre-colonial Shona life is ambivalent in Rakava Buno Risifemberi.

This chapter engages Afrocentricity which is a theory of human liberation and a theory grounded in African history and culture, a theory which seeks the centrality of African ethos, interests and ideals in interrogating selected Shona novels. It also employs the Africana womanist theory, especially the eighteen culturally derived Africana womanist traits that explicate the nature of the Africana women, in analysing issues that relate to the depiction of unhu and Shona women in selected Shona fiction. As highlighted in chapter four, this chapter engages interviews, questionnaires and selected Shona novels as primary sources of data.

5.1 The Zimbabwean conception of unhu worldview

Unhu is a Shona word which has no direct translation into English. During a focus group interview to define the unhu worldview, respondent A, an elderly woman who resides at Chimhanda township argued that:
This respondent A emphasises the need for harmonious relationships in the Shona society. During the same focus group interview, respondent B, a nurse at Chimhanda hospital described the unhu worldview by engaging proverbs such as *ushe madzoro hunoravanwa* (chieftainship is like a cattle herding roster, you take it in turns) and *ishe itsime* (a chief is like a well) in a bid to demonstrate the centrality of unhu in governance while respondent C, a teacher at Chimhanda High School echoed sentiments from most participants who defined it in terms of the Shona aphorism *munhu munhu navanhu* (a person is a person through other people).

While the researcher benefited from the focus group interview, all the participants confined their definition of unhu to the Shona experience. This researcher contends that it is fundamental to explicate the Shona conception of unhu and situat e it within the broader African location. This allows readers to have a wider appreciation of the concept. In that regard, this researcher argues that the concept unhu is an African ethic which is ubuntu in Nguni, botho in Sotho, vumunhi and bunhu in Tsonga, vhuthu in Venda and umunthu in Chewa.

The concept is found in many African languages, for example, umundu in Kikuyu which is a Kenyan language, buntu in KiSukuma and Kittaya which are spoken in Tanzania, vumuntu in Shiswazi and ShiTswa spoken in Mozambique, bomoto in Bobangi spoken in the
Democratic Republic of Congo and *gimuntu* in Kikongo and Gikwese which are spoken in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Angola. Kamwangamalu in (Koenane, 2013:63).

*Unhu*, as an African concept is not easily definable in foreign languages. The fundamental precept of *unhu* is enshrined in the Shona axiom *munhu munhu navanhu* (a person is a person through other people) which persists across the diverse African languages and whose underlying ideology is similar in all African cultures:

*Motho ke motho ba batho ba bangwe*...(Sotho)

*Umntu ngumntu ngabanye abantu* ...(Xhosa)

*Umuntu ngumuntu ngebantu* ...(Siswati)

*Mundu ni andu*...(Kikamba)

*Mtu ni watu*...(Swahili)

*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*...(Zulu)

(Kuene, 2012:02).

The foregoing multi-lingual dialectics echo one ethos: that one’s humanity is incomplete in the absence of others. That is, the African ontology or worldview is premised on a communal lifestyle, where society is an organic entity unifying all members on the common goal of the well-being of societal members. The concept of *unhu*, in Zimbabwe, is similar to that of other African cultures. *Unhu* embodies virtues that celebrate mutual social responsibility, empathy, collective unity, conformity, tolerance, humanness, harmony, obedience, group solidarity, mutual assistance, togetherness, brotherhood, equality, compassion, sympathy, trust, sharing, unselfishness, self-reliance, caring and respect for others. It means patterns of behaviour acceptable to the Shona people. This involves an ethical stance and attitudes that
influence the way people participate in various departments of their lives. Their ethos amounts to their conception of what is right and wrong, beautiful and ugly. This ethos constitutes the parameters used to qualify a Shona person as munhu, and not just a human being (Mandova, 2013:357).

Proceeding from the above apprehension, one must assume that not all Shona people are vanhu (human beings). In Shona culture, a person has to meet certain obligations regarded as good according to the Shona worldview in order to be referred to as munhu. Unhu is perceived as the school of Shona life that generates ethos which proceeds to inform, govern, and direct Shona people’s institutions: namely, social, economic, political, and religious. It therefore regulates, informs, and directs action and approaches to life and its challenges. Unhu sets a premium on Shona people’s behaviour and relations.

Traditional Shona society celebrates cooperation and discourages individualism. Social relationships in Africa are not only found among the people but also exist between the people and their natural environment and are also extended to encompass spiritual forces. Relationships on all these levels are sustained through the maintenance of ethical values such as reciprocity, participation, harmony, and hospitality. The Shona people say:

*Imbwa mbiri hadzitorerwi nyama.*

(Meat cannot be taken away from two dogs).

Meaning: This suggests that when people are united, they are more likely to resist any challenge or threat to their well-being. Meat being a
core dietary part of dogs, the metaphor here is that united people can defend their life support base.

*Gumwe rimwe haritswanyi inda.*

(A single thumb does not kill a louse).

Meaning: This means that collective effort helps to destroy or annihilate a common foe. Thus, given the menace paused by lice, ridding oneself of their irritating bites and blood-sucking becomes supreme. Therefore, since the act of destroying the lice is expedited using a thumb and an adjacent figure, this conjures the image of unity of purpose against a menace or opponent.

*Rume rimwe harikombi churu.*

(A single male person no matter how big does not surround an anti-hill alone).

Meaning: This suggests that to tackle a formidable task requires the help of others. The idea of an anthill symbolises a fortress that should be 'stormed' by first encircling it. Consequently, the more people join forces against a seemingly insurmountable task or formidable enemy, the higher their chances of emerging victorious.

The above proverbs are profoundly reflective of the binding philosophy of the Shona people. An individual views his position in relation to the aspirations of the community. A fragmented stance subverts the possibility of positive participation and contribution. Every member is connected to his society:

Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say 'I am because we are and since we are therefore I am'. Mbiti in (Kaphagawani, 2006:337)
Traditional Shona society, thus, celebrates connectedness and cohesion. It does not elevate the individual and does not see him as solitary and unbound. Okot p’ Bitek (1986) contends that a man is incapable of being free, because his thoughts and actions are guided by the philosophy of life instilled in him from childhood. Traditionally, Shona society is against individuals who seek fulfilment beyond the context of the group and ignore the fact that fulfilment itself is not uncluttered space or an absence of controls. It is a powerful and demanding presence. The Shona, therefore, say:

*Varume ndivamwe, kutsva kwendebvu vanodzimurana.*

(Men are all the same, when their beards burn, they help each other to extinguish the fire).

Meaning: The foregoing ontological perspective reflects that when one is in trouble or need, others should come in and help him out. Thus, the essence of collectivity, oneness, solidarity and, above all, empathy for the plight of others, streamlines the Shona philosophy of *unhu.*

It is the spirit of communal fellowship and solidarity that Shona culture celebrates. The Shona people believe that all those that constitute their society should join common cause in confronting challenges that threaten their existence. The individual’s separate existence is viewed as surbodinate to that of society. Ani (1994:351) posits that the idea of thriving on competition and individual achievement is a feature of European culture:

*European culture creates a being who thrives on competition and, therefore, on individual and distinct achievement because a person’s existence as a member of the group does not in itself mean much- the individual strives to be*
“better than” to stand apart from others in his craving for recognition.

The Shona people believe that social fragmentation is detrimental to the realization of societal goals. It produces individuals who act in ways that are not commensurate with the celebrated ethos of Shona society. The essence is to view one’s interests within the framework of societal aspirations. An individual is not analysed apart from his problems, because his challenges are also the challenges of his society. As Ramose (1999:79) observes:

The African view of man denies that persons can be defined by focusing on this or that physical or psychological characteristics of the lone individual. Rather man is defined by reference to the environing community. As far as Africans are concerned, the reality of the communal world takes precedence over the reality of individual life histories, whatever these may be. And this primacy is meant to apply not ontologically, but also in regard to epistemic accessibility.

The human individual is thus inextricably linked to the all-encompassing universe. However, communalism does not negate individualism. Communalism does not necessarily make the individual a mere victim of inflexible demands on the part of society with neither individual freedom of action nor personal responsibility. Society recognizes that each individual has his or her separate life outside the community. Communalism is not pursued to the detriment of individuality. Individualism has to be pursued within the matrix of the welfare of society and consequently brings honour and pride to that society. Individualism is accepted when it correlates with societal aspirations. Everybody has a role to play in communal obligations, but they also have private lives. The individual therefore has to strike a balance between the claims of individuality and communality, because individual
welfare and communal welfare are not exclusionary entities (Mandova, 2013:360).

The African spirit of commonality is maintained through the extension of hospitality to others. In traditional African communities, hospitality had no functional limit. Strangers and visitors were generously received and fed. The Shona say:

Shiri ipinda haipedzi mhunga.

(A bird is a passerby it cannot deplete your millet).

Meaning: A passerby cannot deplete your resources. Accordingly, this encouraged hospitality and generosity to visitors or passers-by. In essence, the philosophical tenet encouraged magnanimity.

Mweni haaendi nedura.

(A guest does not carry away the granary).

Meaning: The underlying message is that just as one gives, one should also expect to be given in return. This implies reciprocity between the people involved. It is as if giving were a storing-up for future use. Thus, the Shona say:

Kupa kuturika, mangwana unoturunura.

(To give is to bank, tomorrow you will withdraw).

Meaning: Those one helps will never forget the benevolent act that in the event that the benevolent person is struck by adversity, the one he helped would have the moral obligation to reciprocate the past act of benevolence.
The Ndebele proverb says *Unyawo alulampumulo* (the foot has no rest), which means that one may also find oneself in a situation where he or she too, is a stranger or visitor. For this reason, one must be generous to others, just as one expects them to be when he or she is lost or when travelling. Hospitality is thus regarded as a stringent duty (Mandova, 2013:366).

Coming from a capitalist society, the whites misconstrued hospitality as a sign of weakness. According to the Rudd Concession, the whites first asked for permission to hunt, and permission was granted on condition that *Mweni haapedzi dura* (the visitor does not finish the granary). The whites later asked for permission to dig gold from a single hole. According to Beach (1994:82) they were allowed to dig the gold because a single hole had insignificant effects on this eldorado.

As a virtue, humility encourages harmonious co-existence in Shona society, promoting mutual assistance. Those members of Shona society who are prosperous are greatly discouraged from boasting about their position in the society. The Shona are aware that nobody praises himself but the lowest among them. They believe that fortune is mutable:

*Aiva madziva ava mazambuko.*

(What used to be pools are now fords).

*Chai temura chave kuseva.*

(One who used to eat morsels without relish is now dipping morsels into gravy).

Meaning: The first perspective means that those who are prosperous today may be less privileged tomorrow, due to the changing tide in the wheels of fortune. Thus, to this day, the researcher acknowledges the
truth of this saying through the fate of several renowned business people whose business ventures have collapsed, rendering them ‘paupers’, in a way. In the same vein, the Shona also believe that those who are less prosperous today may be successful tomorrow, hence the importance of upholding the primacy of the value of mutual respect, regardless of one’s position in society. These proverbs manifest one of the fundamental aspects of Shona culture, which is the importance it attaches to the person. The Shona people places humanity at the centre of the universe and construct everything around the person. Behaviour that is acceptable in Shona society is generally that which promotes solidarity and harmony in human relationships. It is also such an ethos that gives human relationships their sense of humanity. This is why the Shona have the following proverbs:

*Kugara hunzwana.*

(Living together calls for peaceful co-existence).

Meaning: This means for peace to prevail in a community, there is need for mutual understanding. Here, the interests of an individual are subordinated to the general interests of the entire community. As such, common good supercedes personal aggrandisement. Accordingly, what the Zimbabwean government has been preaching in 2016 under the banner of ‘Unity’ could well be enacted through the foregoing Shona philosophical perspective.

*Murombo munhu.*

(A poor person is also human).
Meaning: This means that poverty should not strip one of his or her humanity. This is a direct attack upon the Western segregatory parameters where the poor were given little regard, to a point of being disenfranchised, if one considers the requirements for one to vote from the Black community during the colonial era.

This study contends that good governance is a manifestation of *unhu*. The Shona proverbs *ishe makurukota* (a king is his council) and *munhu kubata ushe makurukota* (kingship depends on councillors) embody governmental principles that put at the centre the active participation by society. While the first proverb implies that a ruler is sustained by his advisors, the latter further echoes the inviolable import of advisors, hence denigrating monopolistic or dictatorial tendencies. The proverbs remind the leaders that decision-making is not a one-man process. The emphasis that the proverbs establish on the virtue of consultation in governance is a weapon against authoritarianism.

It reasons, therefore, that the issue of *dare* as a properly constituted platform for dialogue, is fundamental to national progress. Ramose (1999:144) attests that the concept of a king with absolute power is odd to traditional African constitutional thought because the king’s orders to the nation derived their validity from the fact that they had previously been discussed and agreed to between the king and his councilors. Different voices should be heard. Gyekye cited in Ramose (ibid) makes it profusely clear that:

> It appears that the most important injunction was that the chief should never ever act without the advice and full concurrence of his councilors, the representatives of the people. Acting without the concurrence and advice of his council was a legitimate cause for his deportation.
The central issue of principle is that elders, who are themselves repositories of Shona history and culture assisted leaders. These were the old men who occupied the chair of Shona history. The advisors and councillors of kings were mandated by experience to take over the preservation and dissemination of Shona history and culture as the vital core of governance. These councillors and advisors had a strong grasp of governmental principles that were in tandem with the shared philosophy of life of the Shona people. They were the archives of governmental principles.

Leaders, therefore, ruled with the assistance of councillors and advisors. The advisors were the main anchors in assuring that sanity prevailed in state politics. They provided the checks and balances and in the process, monitored leaders whenever their actions were at variance with the Zimbabwean people’s collective aspirations and hopes. *Unhu* underscores the importance of consensus and gives priority to the well-being of the community as a whole.

History and culture were, thus, at the centre of governmental principles. Culture is the compass that informs people about the direction their projects should obtain. This is why it is important for African leaders today to work with advisors who are granaries of African cultural and historical wisdom. People who do not supplicate energy to run or manage the institution of governance from their history and culture are like a headless chicken. It is, for this reason, that this research contends that governance and governmental principles in Zimbabwe should be predicated on the *unhu* worldview.

In the Shona proverb, *ishe itsime* (a chief is like a well), a chief is likened to a well where everyone has the right to draw water and in *ishe*
ihumbarota (a chief is like a rubbish pit), a chief is likened to a rubbish pit where everyone has the right to throw litter. A chief is, thus, reminded to attend to all the disputes brought before him. Every subject is entitled to get a fair hearing. The proverbs emphasize patient negotiation during the hearing.

In the administration of justice, leaders were not expected to use violence or to intimidate disputants. This is why the Shona say mhosva haitongwi nepfumo (A case is not settled by a spear). Related to these proverbs is Dare harivengi munhu, rinovenga mhosva (The court does not hate a person but the crime) which further emphasizes the fairness and impartiality when settling the disputes. The elders were to have no regard of persons, they were simply to be guided by the matter of the case presented before them.

Discrimination among the suspected offenders was greatly discouraged. Emphasis was on the intensity of the crime and not to harbour grudges against suspects. Nepotism was greatly discouraged when settling disputes. This is why the Shona say Kumuzinda hakuna woko (At the chiefs court, there is no relative of yours).

The democratic nature of traditional Shona governmental system is expressed in the Shona proverbs ushe madzoro hunoravanwa (chieftainship is like a cattle-herding roster you take it in turns) and ushe usiyiranwa (chieftainship is legacy). The traditional Shona were wary of a Government by a single individual because it ran the danger of becoming dictatorial and absolutist, which would have been detrimental to freedom and the administration of justice. (Mandova, 2013:367).
The traditional Shona system of governance celebrates rotational leadership and this has pedagogical insinuation in a continent bedevilled by political instability today. Rotational leadership promotes accountability and reduces corruption and checks despotism. According to Mutyasira (2002) politicians who normally overstay their welcome have a tendency of practising dictatorship, which results in many unethical practices. He posits that some African leaders, notably of revolutionary parties, believe that they have a right to rule their countries for as long as they want because they liberated their countries from colonial hegemony.

Liberating one’s country from colonial subjugation is an incontrovertible semblance of national patriotic culture. However, the cult of long incumbency which breeds dictatorship goes against *unhu* which celebrates the principle of democracy. Muamar Gadaffi cited in Mutyasira (2002:90) remarks that:

> Revolutionary leaders should not have expiry dates. They are not like tinned drinks which have expiry dates. It is a big mistake to deny such leaders a chance through elections. My brother Museveni was born a revolutionary. He is not made to go to the people to demand votes because he is a revolutionary.

Such a statement by an African leader is anathema to the central tenets of good governance and democracy articulated by the Shona proverb *ushe usiiranwa* cited above. The Shona understanding is that no one man is mother of all wisdom and so the Shona political institutions celebrate rotational leadership. The proverb challenges African leaders that accumulation and personalization of power in the hands of one man does not fall within the realm of African celebrated political ethos and *unhu*. 
Kambudzi (1998:27) argues that rotational leadership is health for African political institutions. He correctly observes that the cult of long incumbency breeds an aversion to voluntary retirement in the African leaders. He further contends that corruption and failures haunt some African leaders so much so that they imagined that if they left power, their subjects would immediately call for their arrest. Kambudzi (ibid) states that:

Nationalist leaders on assuming office at the end of colonial rule took it for granted that the nationalist movement had endorsed their unlimited incumbency in the independence era. The problem of this cult of long stay in power by a single man is the brutal stifling of political development in the African states.

The Shona proverbs *ushe varanda* (chieftainship depends on the subjects), *ushe ukokwa kuna vanwe* (chieftainship is realised through subjects.), *ishe vanhu* (a king is a king because of his subjects) and *ushe hauzvitonge* (To be a chief means there are subjects) articulate a fundamental motif of traditional African constitutional thought premised on *unhu*. It stresses the view that the king owes his status and the powers that go with that status to the will of his subjects. His mandate to rule rests upon and remains dependent on the consent of his subjects. They are the ultimate source of the king’s authority to rule. Proceeding from that realization, it stands to reason, therefore, that it is the subjects who wield ultimate power. A leader, who is without the consent of his subjects, lacks *unhu* and is not a semblance of power. He is not even the reality of that leadership.

The proverb invokes in African leaders the urgent need to prioritize their subjects and to serve them with justice. The traditional African society was characterized by the freedom of subjects to express themselves in
all matters concerning their very existence as a people. There should, therefore, be a thick dividing line between colonial administration and post-independence African governmental systems. Okumu (2002:87) notes that:

During the demoralizing period of colonial rule, Europeans saw Africans as objects rather than as subjects of governance. Now, after independence, it is tragic that African leaders have also developed a system in which they continue to demonstrate their insincerity, their lack of affection, and even hostility towards those they govern and see them more as objects to be manipulated.

The above proverb *ishe vanhu* is, therefore, very relevant in reminding African leaders today that the leaders’ power has meaning only within the collective and when used to improve the lives of the subjects. It records the mutual reciprocity and interdependence that is expected between the ruler and the governed according to the *unhu* worldview.

The king is as responsible for his subjects as the subjects are for him. He is the axis of the people’s socio-cultural, economic and political relations. Emphasis is on the primacy of the society and its collective over the king and his private interests (Mandova, 2013:366).

This section has engaged focus group interviews and secondary sources of information to explicate the African communitarian worldview of *unhu* and situating it within the broader African location. The definition is employed in the analysis of selected Shona novels.

5.2 Mutasa’s conception of *unhu* and pre-colonial gender in *Nhume Yamambo* (1990) and *Misodzi Dikita neRopa* (1991)

This section contends that Mutasa’s conception of *unhu* and pre-colonial gender in *Nhume Yamambo* is ambivalent. While he depicts pre-colonial
women as people who are endowed with *unhu* values and occupying influential socio-political and religious statuses, the writer demeans pre-colonial Shona women by depicting them as people who can sacrifice their humanity in some situations. The section further argues that Mutasa’s conception of *unhu* and pre-colonial gender in *Misodzi, Dikita neRopa* is positive as he acknowledges the full humanity of pre-colonial Shona women.

*Nhume Yamambo* is a novel which chronicles the history of the Rozvi people, underlining how Chirisamhuru, the *Mambo* (king) of the Rozvi state conquers Dyembeu’s army in a chieftaincy dispute. The socio-political and religious realities of the Rozvi people are being recounted by Chuwe Tavada, a spirit medium. In the novel Chirisamhuru sends Tavada, his mediator, to the Mabweadziva shrine to solicit for support in a battle for chieftainship against Dyembeu. Mavhudzi, the high priest of Mabweadziva concurs and this instigates Dyembeu’s conquest and the installation of Chirisamhuru as the king of the Rozvi state.

In the novel, Mutasa casts pre-colonial Shona women as people who are endowed with *unhu* ethos, people who are very visible and active in society, occupying influential socio-political and religious statuses and as people whose existence is interconnected with that of their society. They occupy significant religious positions at Mabweadziva shrine as *mbonga*. *Mbonga* are female religious attendants (virgins) who are at the service of the High Priest at Mabweadziva shrine. They function as intermediaries between the Shona people and the High God *Mwari*. *Mbonga* have no sex life and do not customarily marry. They are expected to remain virgins during their stay at Mabweadziva while serving the High Priest. These special qualities of the *mbonga* show a lot
of sacrifice for the sake of the community, which is a tenet of *unhu*. The cornerstone of *unhu* as a core value in African ethics is the community. The individual’s whole existence is relative to that of the group ensuring the survival of the group and concurrently the individual. In the novel, *mbonga* include Chisvo, Nyikite and Masikinye.

The Shona people believe in a Supreme Being, *Mwari*, who is the creator of everything. They regard all aspects of creation as sacred because they are reliant upon God’s creative supremacy. In Shona traditional thought, *Mwari* is believed to regulate the fertility of the land and is regarded as the rain giver who is ultimately approached to provide rain and good crops (Mutambara, 2008:27). By projecting pre-colonial Shona women as intermediaries between the High God *Mwari* and the living people, Mutasa is making a statement that women were respected, responsible and had *unhu*. The sanctified status of the *mbonga* renders pre-colonial Shona women important space in the society. Mutasa describes the role of the *mbonga* and even states that it was taboo to see them, through Chuwe Tavada who says:


(Uncle Mavhudzi had told us to meet *Mwari*’s respectable maidens, the best and highly respected female attendants. These female attendants were responsible for all the sacred duties performed at the shrine. There was nothing hidden to them and it was
often taboo for ordinary people to see them in person. On arrival at the shrine, we were so eager to see what kind of people stayed at the heart of Mwari’s shrine, Mabweadziva. They were five women only. They knew how to dress well and were very smart. They were expert poets, chanters, cooks, singers, dancers, ritualists and well behaved women).

According to Mutasa therefore, pre-colonial Shona women, the mbonga, upheld the religious ethos and cultural standards expected by the Shona society hence vaive neunhu (they were endowed with unhu) as Sibanda (2014:26) notes:

Traditional African philosophy thrives on the vision of a perfect and virtuous individual—an individual who upholds the cultural values and norms of a true African society ... thus a person with hunhu is one who upholds the African cultural standards, expectations, values, and norms and keeps the African identity.

Furthermore, the role of the mbonga in Shona society according to Mutasa is complemented by manyusa (male religious attendants). Like mbonga, manyusa do not have sex life and are not allowed to marry while serving the High Priest at Mabweadziva. In the novel, Manyusa include Mukwati, Chuwe Mugura, Mwenje and Mavhudzi. The transcendence of the High God Mwari, as depicted by Mutasa renders the function of mbonga and manyusa very significant as it was a remarkable accolade to serve Him. Moreover, Mutasa establishes that women and men in Shona society have analogous religious functions as religious attendants, validating the fact that historically women and men worked together mutually and their roles were complementary. Mutasa portrays women who are politically visible in the Rozvi state. Men and women’s political roles are complementary. Mutasa’s portrayal of pre-colonial gender suits Chitando’s (2011:34) observation that:
Essentially, *ubuntu* is an African approach to reality that places emphasis on the community and taking responsibility for each other’s burdens.

At the level of the Rozvi politics, Mutasa depicts women who are recognisable and whose function complements that of men. He portrays women who believe that the burden of the Rozvi state is also their burden and they are devoted to wage a war against Dyembeu alongside men in order to conquer him and to install Chirisamhuru as the chief of the Rozvi people.

Women participate at king Chirisamhuru’s court and make very vital contributions that partly lead to Dyembeu’s defeat. During a court session, Ndomboya, chief Chirisamhuru’s sister is requested to proclaim her views about the chieftaincy dispute and she urges the court to fight Dyembeu “*Ini ndinoti handeyi tose tichinorwa naDyembeu*”. (p.174). (I say let us all go and fight Dyembeu). Harupindi, the chief’s wife is also requested to avow her standpoint and she concurs with Ndomboya that they should wage a war against Dyembeu, a position that was appreciated and adopted by the court. Mutasa writes that:

*Kana naiye changamire vakafara pavakaona ruzhinji ruchifarira mashoko omukadzi wake...dare rakatsokodzera nyaya iyi ndokupedzisira richiwirirana kuzotora zano ranyachide wachangamire waro.* (p.175).

(Even the king was happy when he realised that the court and all attendants were pleased with his wife’s words and decision to fight Dyembeu...the court ruminated over this issue and ended up in agreement with the advice of king’s favourite wife to go to war).

In order to win the war against Dyembeu, Chirisamhuru mobilises support from various chiefs. He dispatches emissaries like jinda Chakamanga to chief Chireya in Gokwe, Washaya and jinda Gumunyu
to chief Gutu and chief Zimuto, jinda Musaka to chief Chirumhanzu, Ndomboya, Karukai and Ticharwa to chiefs Njerere and Ndumba, Tavada and Harunandima to Mabweadziva shrine to solicit for their support. This validates the view that women were not peripheral in the politics of the Rozvi state but played central roles which were complementary.

Furthermore, Mutasa portrays women as crucial war strategists engaging critical military stratagerms which lead to the conquest of Dyembeu’s army. Chirisamhuru’s war commanders acknowledge that Dyembeu has a robust army which enjoys superiority of numbers over them. Moreover, Tumbare, Dyembeu’s chief army commander employs various tactics against Chirisamhuru’s army including intimidation which leads to desertion by some of Chirisamhuru’s soldiers. Ndomboya, Karukai and the other women counter Tumbare’s strategies by climbing up a hill and singing before Dyembeu’s army while naked. The general effect was to destabilise Dyembeu’s army as the writer states:


(It was claimed that all those of Dyembeu’s warriors who saw the bodies of these naked women would suffer the misfortune of dying in this war. The sight of women’s naked bodies would have a deadly effect on the soldier’s ‘minds’ who would immediately be confused like fools. Such a sight could make their muscles weak and their hands powerless. They would then miss their target but meet their death. The
enemy's weapons would turn slippery, fall down and break into pieces).

Moreover, Harupindi and Harunandima stage manage a scene where Tavada masquerades as Mavhudzi while the two are disguised as mbongas. Tavada delivers an eloquent harangue to the two camps proclaiming that Mwari and Mabweadziva are supporting Chirisamhuru’s army hence he will emerge victorious. He also warns of Dyembeu’s imminent defeat. After the performance, Mutasa writes that:

Varwi vaChirisamhuru vakadengenyesa makomo namatondo noruzha rwokufara. Vaipembera, kuimba nokutambira vadzimu neZame. Varwi vaDyembeu navatungamiriri vavo vakarukutika ura hukange huchadambuka nokutya. (p.194).

(The warriors of Chirisamhuru’s jubilant songs and dances reverberated among the mountains and forests expressing their triumphal joy. They celebrated, sang and danced in praise of Mwari, their God. Dyembeu’s warriors and commanders were weak and demoralised and in their stomachs, it seemed the intestines would break in fear).

The overall impact of Harunandima and Harupindi’s war tactic is to boost the confidence of Chirisamhuru’s army while further weakening Dyembeu’s because it was the general belief among the Rozvi people that a camp with Mabweadziva’s blessings triumphs.

When asked to comment on whether there is a nexus between unhu worldview and Mutasa’ Nhume Yamambo, interviewee D, a lecturer at Great Zimbabwe University responded thus:

Yes, there is a connection between unhu worldview and Nhume Yamambo. Mutasa seeks to restore the pre-colonial Shona people’s dignity in the novel. He departs from previous Shona novelists like Chakaipa who have helped to advance Eurocentric views about Shona past.
Asked the same question, respondent E, a fourth year Honours Shona student at Great Zimbabwe University remarked that:

There is a link between unhu worldview and Nhume Yamambo. Reading the novel is quite refreshing. The writer is very Afrocentric in his portrayal of pre-colonial Shona people and unhu.

The researcher asked the same question to respondent F who teaches Shona at Masvingo Teachers College and she responded thus:

Mutasa’s Nhume Yamambo corrects the distortions made by European historians such as Trevor Roper about our culture. The Shona people are portrayed as people with dignity and history.

The three respondents concur about Mutasa’s endeavour to rewrite the pre-colonial Shona history through literature and correcting the distortions made by early writers like Chakaipa. Chakaipa’s negative depiction and conceptualisation of the African communitarian worldview of unhu is shown in his portrayal of pre-colonial Shona political system in Pfumo Reropa (1961). In the novel, Chakaipa presents the pre-colonial Shona governmental system as anarchical. Chakaipa writes that:


(In this land, there were many types of chiefs. Each chief ruled in a manner that pleased him. There was nobody to question their competence).

The above excerpt is at variance with the pre-colonial Shona system of governance and ignores the significance of unhu in fostering good governance. The statement suggests that pre-colonial Shona chiefs governed their subjects according to their aspirations and
understanding. This is a distortion of pre-colonial Shona constitutional thought premised on unhu worldview as the pre-colonial Shona people were aware of the view that chieftainship is realised through subjects. This view stresses the fact that the king owes his status and the powers that go with that status to the will of his subjects. The chief’s mandate to rule rests upon the consent of his subjects and a leader who is without the consent of his subjects lacks unhu and is not a semblance of power. In a telephone interview, respondent G, a lecturer at California State University argued that:

The caricature of African people in literature and the falsification of African history serves to appreciate Europeans as the only originators, architects and makers of history.

Furthermore, Chakaipa portrays pre-colonial Shona chiefs as narcissistic, brutal and authoritarian. During a court session, Haripotse, a blacksmith asks:


(We see people having their homes burnt or having their arms cut off on being accused of theft, but we are not shown the allegedly stolen property. An alleged criminal or thief should be brought before the chief’s court so that everyone becomes a witness. Even if an alleged criminal is a servant, he or she should not be judged in his or her absence).

The subjects at the chief’s court agree with Haripotse’s sentiments and chief Ndyire responds by saying:
Nyararai vana vemakonzo! Chii chamunoti chuwe chuwe? p.113).

(Shut up offsprings of rats! What is the noise and grumbling about?).

The above two extracts show Chakaipa’s negative portrayal and conceptualisation of the African communitarian worldview of *unhu*. Chakaipa ignores a fundamental motif of traditional African constitutional thought premised on *unhu* which states that in the administration of justice, leaders were not expected to use violence or to intimidate disputants. The Shona say a case is not settled by a spear. Furthermore, the Shona know that decision making is not a one-man process hence councillors and advisers who were repositories of Shona history and culture assisted chiefs and were the main anchors in assuring that sanity prevailed in state politics. Chakaipa ignores the view that *unhu* underscores the importance of consensus and gives priority to the well-being of the community as a whole. The councillors and advisers provided the checks and balances and in the process monitored leaders whenever their actions were at variance with the Shona people’s collective aspirations and hopes.

The above discussion on Chakaipa serves to corroborate respondents’ view that Mutasa sets out to correct early writers’ negative depiction and conceptualisation of the African communitarian worldview of *unhu*. However, the respondents seem to observe Mutasa’s strengths while ignoring his weaknesses as a writer. This study contends that acknowledging writers’ weaknesses helps shape literature in a very positive way as there is a sense in which writers and readers are influenced by critical works on fiction.
This study therefore argues that Mutasa’s weakness is dehumanising pre-colonial Shona women by portraying them as people who can sacrifice their humanity in order to advance society’s projected goals. Ndomboya, Karukai and the other women who sing before Dyembeu’s army while naked in order to weaken the warriors lack the basic determinant of humanity, which is dignity. To portray mothers appearing naked before warriors is to degrade and demean women. Gwakwa (2014:144) states that:

*Ubuntu* underscores the importance of consensus and respect of one’s body. *Ubuntuism* prescribes a culture of shared meaning, community-oriented approaches to life, respect for others and insist on decent dressing.

The writer seems to undervalue the centrality of dignity in the life of every human being. There is a deep sense of decency in the Zimbabwe *unhu* worldview that the 2015 Miss World Zimbabwe, Thabiso Phiri, was stripped of her crown when images of her posturing in nude were posted on social media. She was forced to renounce her crown in order to safeguard the image of the pageantry. Mutasa seems to overlook the view that human dignity must be upheld in all situations.

*Misodzi Dikita neRopa* (1991), a sequel to *Nhume Yamambo*, is a novel which records through Chuwe Tavada, the narrator, how king Chirisamhuru’s autocracy, despotism and alienation from the *unhu* leadership and the high God *Mwari* engender the suffering of his subjects with the consequent destabilisation and fall of the Rozvi state. The writer acknowledges the full humanity of pre-colonial Shona women by portraying them as custodians of *unhu* ethos. During a ceremony convened to venerate God and ancestors for good harvests and health, women are given the platform to instil into society *unhu* values of Shona
society since the ethos are intergenerational. Marutenga, king Chirisamhuru’s first wife says:

\[
\text{Chiteereresai munzwe dudziro dzatinadzo patsika dzoupenyu. Tichakupai dudziro yechimiro chinoyemurwa nen} yikadzimu uye ruzhinji rwavanhu pamukadzi napamunhurume. Muchagopiwao dudziro yechimiro chinonyombwa pamunhukadzi napamunhurume. (p.20).}
\]

\[(\text{Listen carefully now to the answers and explanations we have about good behaviour, habits and traditions. We shall inform you about the behaviour, habits and manners advocated by our ancestors, especially expectations regarding the conduct of women and also that of men. You shall be told about both good conduct for women and for men as well as the bad conduct of women and men that is discouraged).}
\]

What Marutenga is referring to are the \textit{unhu} values as Mugumbate (2000:83) observes:

\[\text{\textit{Ubuntu} echoes the African thought of acceptable ideas and deeds...In the Shona language of Zimbabwe and related dialects, the word \textit{unhu} connotes being human or humaneness. It focuses so much on acceptable human behaviour.}\]

Harupindi, the king’s youngest wife, elaborates clearly the virtues of \textit{unhu} according to the Shona society during the ceremony. Harupindi elaborates the values that define \textit{unhu} which include caring, harmony, sharing, respect, communitarianism, industriousness, honesty, empathy, togetherness, compassion and group solidarity in her speech. She concludes by encouraging society to punish people who do not live according to \textit{unhu} worldview and whose actions threaten the survival of the Shona society:
(We appeal to you parents, community leaders, headmen, chiefs, and you the king’s court, be more firm in your judgement against women and men of reprobate behaviour. Pass tough judgements on those exhibiting rotten behaviour that is against our unhuism. Our aim is that in the near future we should have eradicated all bad behaviour and lack of unhu in our land. Be so firm in your judgements such that the whole of our land and all our descendants are rid of this scourge of lack of manners, animal behaviour).

It is part of Harupindi’s nurturing of the Shona people in order to become responsible human beings who uphold the ethos and principles of unhu in an endeavour to create harmonious relations within the Shona society. The King and his council acknowledge Harupindi’s speech, “Mambo wakarovana maoko nevedare rake”. (p.23). (The king shook hands with his courtiers in agreement).

Furthermore, the writer portrays pre-colonial Shona women as courageous and resolute, leading protests against tyrannical leaders whose rule stand inimical to the unhu values. Chirisamhuru engages in egocentric and ambitious projects such as the construction of nhururamwedzi, a tower constructed to pull the moon from the sky and to use it as his plate. The king wants to replace the ritual plate at Mabweadziva which is used to manage nature for the benefit of the people, a project also meant to humiliate Mavhudzi and the Mwari cult at
Mabweadziva. The *nhururamwedzi* project is denounced by *Mwari* through Mavhudzi who is possessed:

*Zano kunemi voruzhinji nederokuti siyanai nazvose zvinorongwa zvose izvi zviri kunze kwenzeve dza*Mwari* uye hazvina mushandirapamwe wavapenyu nemidzimu.* (p.34).

(The advice to you all people is that stop all these plans of pulling down the moon. All these activities are not sanctioned by *Mwari* because he has not been properly informed. Again there is no collective action and agreement between the people and the ancestors).

Chirisamhuru’s subjects suffer during the erection of the tower as Mutasa highlights in the excerpt below:

*Kune mikwesha mizhinji yavarume yakanga yatsakatika ropa rayo richitiswa basa rokupupira shongwe iyi. Paibatwa basa zvokuti sadza vaishamira vachipakwa uku basa richiririma kufamba. Akotoroka, kucheuka kana kukupura dikita tyava Yairira ichimumonera setsambo.* (p.70).

(Many big men, giants had perished in the process, their blood sacrificed during the construction of the tower. The tough construction was continuous with no time to rest, they received their lunch while on the job. Those who tried to rest, straighten up their backs even for a second or those who tried to look behind their backs were whipped mercilessly. The whip cracked on their backs, encircling their sweating bodies).

Karukai, Harunandima and chiefs’ wives from Chirimuhanzu, Gutu, Bhikita, Zaka, Nyashanu, Chivi, Wedza, Marange and Mberengwa organise themselves to convey their condemnation of king Chirisamhuru’s ambitious projects. Karukai, the king’s daughter and leader of the women, outlines nine reasons why pulling the moon from
the sky causes many contradictions in their society, thus demonstrating that women were not docile.

Furthermore, king Chirisamhuru embarks on another egocentric project, the construction of *ndarikure*, a citadel. He commands chiefs to order their subjects to move mountains to the construction site. People suffer during the construction of the *ndarikure* as the writer aptly captures:


(When it came to the construction of the king’s citadel everyone was involved. They did not care whether you were a woman, sick or pregnant or whether you were a small child. The hive of activity surpassed even that of the ants that build an anthill. There was jostling and stampeding. Sweat flowed profusely down the workers’ bodies. Sweat mixed with dirt and dust streamed down their bodies as if they had been swimming in a muddy pool. Oftentimes, tears fell down from their eyes and blood seeped through from their scratched and wounded bodies).

In spite of this suffering, king Chirisamhuru’s subjects seem not resolute enough to air out their grievances to their king as Mutasa writes, “*vose vaitya kuzvidudza. Vaifunga kuti ndivo vangatotanga kukuvara madzishe avo asati afira kunonoka kuenda nebwe*”. (p.55). (All were afraid to complain about it. They thought they might get the bitter punishment for not bringing the rocks even before their chiefs were punished) However, it is chief Chikwanda’s wife who responds to this autocracy by
beating Tavada with a pestle. This is a statement by the writer indicating that pre-colonial Shona women were not objects who could be oppressed without resisting.

Like in *Nhume YaMambo*, Mutasa demonstrates that women occupied important religious positions as intermediaries between God and the people at Mabweadziva. They worked as *mbonga* alongside *manyusa*. The *mbonga* and *manyusa* are believed to have rainmaking powers. They are respected and often feared by ordinary people because of their religious convictions as the writer shows in the following excerpt:


(Both male and female intermediaries were *Mwari* (God)’s chosen people. They lived by strict religious laws. People respected and feared them. Some people were actually more terrified of these intermediaries than they were of the king’s dreaded warriors. Intermediaries were not permitted to marry or to engage in sexual intercourse. Their important duty was to worship *Mwari* and to carry his messages to the people. They also carried back to *Mwari* the people’s desires and concerns ... male and female intermediaries performed their work and duties with perfection and were thus revered before the people).

Such a positive portrayal of *unhu* and pre-colonial gender roles by the writer serves to rehabilitate pre-colonial Shona past and also justifies the
author’s preoccupation with pre-colonial Shona history. Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa Jemmie and Ihechukwu Madubuike (1980:256) note that:

Since our past has been vilified by imperialism, and since an imperialist education has tried to equip us with all manner of absurd views and reactions to our past, we do need to reclaim and rehabilitate our genuine past to repossess our true and entire history in order to acquire a secure launching pad into our future. Thus a concern with our past will never be out of place.

This section has argued that Mutasa’s conception of unhu and pre-colonial gender is positive in both Nhume Yamambo and Misodzi, Dikita neRopa as he acknowledges the full humanity of pre-colonial Shona women and portraying them as custodians of unhu ethos. However, the section has contended that the author’s conceptualisation of unhu and pre-colonial gender in Nhume Yamambo is ambivalent as he depicts pre-colonial Shona women as people who can sacrifice their humanity depending on various situations.

5.3 Mutasa’s portrayal of unhu and pre-colonial Shona governance in Misodzi, Dikita neRopa

This section contends that Mutasa’s conceptualisation of pre-colonial Shona governance is rooted in the African indigenous worldview of unhu. It argues that in a society where unhu is the foundation of leadership and governance, the society realises prosperity, peace and harmony while leadership that is not premised on unhu leads to human suffering and poverty.

Mutasa’s Misodzi, Dikita neRopa gives an account of politics, leadership and the significance of unhu in fostering good governance in the pre-colonial Shona Rozvi state. The writer shows that unhu constitutes the
heart of African traditional leadership and governance. He shows that in a society where *unhu* is the foundation of leadership and governance, the society realises prosperity, peace and harmony. Chirisamhuru is portrayed as a king whose rulership is entrenched in *unhu* precepts and as a result the Rozvi state reaches its peak during Chirisamhuru’s reign.

The king organises an annual festival where the triumphs and ethos of the Rozvi are celebrated. It is during this festival that Chirisamhuru highlights the fundamental tenets of *unhu* and the importance of respect, kinship, collective unity and group solidarity in their society. During the annual festival, Chirisamhuru advises his chiefs to embrace *unhu* in governance:

*Madzishe tongai vanhu vanogara munyika dzandakakupai zvakakanaka She vanhu uye ushe hauzvitonge. Musapamba kana kusveta upfumi nesimba muchizvikodza imi. Makangofanana navaranda venyu saka muchiyambirwa kuti ushe idova kana mhute inoparara nokukwira kwezuva...ishe vanhu uye umambo hwangu hunokura nokuwanda kwenyu. Mbiri yangu inobva muzvido zvenyu. (p.27-28).*

(You chiefs, you should rule the people in the lands I gave you with respect. A chief is only a chief because of his people and their contentment. Do not annex other people’s lands, do not misappropriate other people’s wealth to enrich yourselves. Compare yourselves to your servants, I am warning you, Chieftainship is just like morning dew which soon disappears like mist ... chieftainship wanes at daybreak, a chief is his people and my kingdom grows and increases only because of your honest prosperity, my fame depends on your desires).

Chirisamhuru highlights critical ethos of governance steeped in *unhu*. His speech during the annual festival shows that a king without the people is neither the symbol nor the reality of kingship and to be king is
to accede to that position because of the consent of the people and to remain so for as long as the people have not withdrawn their consent (Ramose, 1999:144). Mutasa thus makes the statement that leadership founded on *unhu* ethos engenders peace and prosperity as evidenced by the displays during the annual festival. Ndhlovu (2007:10) observes that:

The concept of *ubuntu* also constitutes the kernel of African Traditional Jurisprudence as well as leadership and governance. A leader who has *ubuntu* is selfless and consults widely and listens to his subjects. He or she does not adopt a lifestyle that is different from his subjects and lives among his subjects and shares what he/she owns.

Chirisamhuru further illustrates that his leadership is rooted on *unhu* ethos by encouraging his subjects to inculcate into their children those *unhu* values celebrated by the Rozvi society as this ensures peace and stability:

*Piri ndinoda kuti mudzidzise vana venyu tsika dzedu dzose kusvika vagona kudziimba senziyo. Mugovatsetsenurira muchivakurudzira kuti vatyé vabereki, vakuru, madzishe, mambo, masvikiro, vadzimu naMwari. Musatesva vana venyu mutsika dzakaipz nekuti mhedziso yavo vanozobvarura Rufaro rwenyika, zvikuru kubaya imi vabereki.p.26.*

(Secondly, I want you to teach your children the customs and traditions of our land until they memorise them like a song. You should patiently exhort them to respect and honour their parents and elders, chiefs, the king, spirit mediums, ancestors, and *Mwari*, their God. Do not lead your children along the wrong paths because in the end they will break the happiness in the country and even rebel against you, their parents).
The king further demonstrates that his governance is deeply embedded in *unhu* virtues by promoting harmonious relations and co-existence within the Rozvi state:

> China, vavariro yangu huru samambo wenyu, Chirisamhuru ari kurisa mhuru dzake imi navose vasara, ndeyekuti pave nekuwirirana kwamarudzi ose ari muno munyika. Handidi kunzwa kuti pane mutsauko pakati pavaVhenda, vaDuma, vaMhari, vaRemba, vaNgowa, vaHera, vaNjanja, vaBarwe, vaBudya, vaTonga, vaMbire kana vaNdau. Musadzvanyirire vagariri, varoora, vatorwa, varanda namabvakure. (p.26).

(Fourthly, my aim and biggest wish as your king, Chirisamhuru, the one sherperding his flock of calves— all of you here and all those who did not come—is that there should be peace among all clans and ethnic groups in our land. I do not want to hear that there is any discrimination between or among the Vhenda, the Duma, the Mhari, the Remba, the Ngowa, the Hera, the Njanja, the Barwe, the Budya, the Tonga, the Mbire, or the Ndau. Never oppress and illtreat those who have settled among us, our sit- in-sons in law, our daughters-in-law, outsiders, servants and foreigners from faraway lands).

The king, whose governance is steeped in *unhu* values, encourages his subjects to live a life which promotes prosperity, peace and harmonious co-existence. This is aptly captured by Kuene (2012:01) when he says:

> The philosophy of *ubuntu* underlies the behaviour of Africans towards one another and towards strangers. It describes a pervasive spirit of caring and community harmony, hospitality, respect and responsiveness that individuals and groups display for one another. Among its important values are group solidarity, conformity, compassion, human dignity and collective unity.
Mutasa thus demonstrates that while Chirisamhuru’s kingship is informed by *unhu*, he encourages his subjects to be guided by the same worldview in their lives in order to ensure co-operation, sharing, group solidarity and interdependence. The annual festival highlights the achievements of the Rozvi state because of Chirisamhuru’s good governance which is ingrained on *unhu* ethos.

Apart from the various displays by the subjects to show the society’s wealth, prosperity and stability during the annual festival, the king notes:

> We gave enough land to all the chiefs of this land. The lands we gave you have enough field space for everyone who wants to farm. The farmland is enough even for your unborn children. We also gave you fish and game animals for your relish. You can fish and hunt at your own pleasure without paying any tax. My warriors always patrol the land to provide you with security. They arrest invaders, bandits, rapists, murderers, thieves, dissidents and witches. Now you can enjoy yourselves in peace, feasting, celebrating, fattening yourselves and procreating in peace and serenity ... all the time we witness old men and old women, families increasing their wealth in the communities. All the time we witness young boys and girls getting married in happiness and contentment with life).
The writer is making the statement that leadership which is embedded in unhu precepts leads to prosperity, harmony and stability. King Chirisamhuru is connected to his subjects and sees himself as the guardian and promoter of people’s hopes and aspirations. Chirisamhuru’s kingship thus represents a democratic society whose societal aspirations and values are collectively expressed. Mawere (2014:03) points out that:

Traditional authorities were often seen as guardians of the African values and customs which included ubuntu...a philosophy of humanness that was meant to foster unity, peace and harmony with each other and the environment at large.

However, Mutasa shows that Chirisamhuru discards unhu as the foundation for his kingship and alienates his governance from religion, consequently weakening his state and leading to its fall. The king embarks on the nhururamwedzi (tower) and the ndarikure (citadel) projects which disconnect him from the people as he becomes authoritarian and despotic. The projects are egocentric and cause suffering to his subjects that he is supposed to protect. During the construction of the tower and the citadel people were not allowed to cultivate their fields, to bathe, to brew beer, to slaughter animals for relish, to consult traditional medical practitioners and diviners or to engage in sexual activities until the completion of the projects. Chirisamhuru lacks virtues that define a leader who is guided as Musenga (2006:139) observes:

The sense of African traditional governance was to enhance collective solidarity, respect, human dignity and the right to freedom of expression as well as collective trust and
Women from various chiefdoms consult their king to express their dissatisfaction with the *nhururamwedzi* project in line with *unhu* values of consultation, dialogue, consensus and participation. They outline nine reasons why they think the project stands inimical to the aspirations, projected goals of the people and stability of their society. The king does not give his council the opportunity to deliberate on women’s grievances but imposes his will “*Idzi hosi dzinosanganisa vakunda vedu dzichafira kunyengerwa kwadzakaitwa dzichizotura zvichemo zvamatakasvina pamberi penyu vakuru venyika*”. (p83). (These women emissaries who include our own daughters shall be punished for listening and agreeing to the grievances of troublesome rubble rousers).

As king Chirisamhuru becomes increasingly despotic, he obliterates the virtue of consensus. Ndhllovu (2007:11) points out that:

A leader who has *ubuntu* does not lead but allows the people to lead themselves and cannot impose his/her will on the people which is incompatible with *ubuntu*. A good chief listens to the group and finds the point of consensus. He would play a low key role, listen to all viewpoints, facilitate debate and in the end summarises and make a decision which is just, preserves dignity and reflects the consensus of the group.

As he alienates himself from *unhu* leadership, he ignores the sacredness of life as he declares that the women who are presenting their grievances to the council should die. The king kills any subject who does not share his vision of a tower and citadel. Chirisamhuru declares “*ava vasungwa vose vari pano vachaurawa nhasi ndivo varanda navashandi vaidarikira mhinganidziro dzebasa rangu*”. (p83). (all these prisoners to be killed here today are the servants and workers who
disobeyed and contravened my law and injunctions regarding my purpose to construct the tower/citadel).

From the Shona viewpoint, as in all other African cultures, life is a gift from God to humanity and so human beings and their lives are held sacred. It is the sanctity of human life which compels the Shona to place a high premium on the preservation of life. Regardless of their social status, gender or race people are recognised, accepted, valued and respected for their own sake and anything which may undermine, hurt, threaten or destroy human beings is considered an aberration as it affects the very foundation of society which is the human person (Munyoka and Motlhabi, 2009:66).

As Chirisamhuru dispenses with unhu leadership, he disconnects himself from his subjects and from God (Mwari), whose support he needs for his kingship to prevail. His subjects compose protest songs to register their resentment with the king’s rule:

*Tayaura tayaura vari Mabweadziva! Zame uya uzoona, zame uya uzoona kutonga kwaChirisamhuru! Kutongawe-e kutongawe-e ikoku kuchaputsa nyika ino moita madio, motidzvanyirira.* (p.57-58).

(We are in great suffering, great, great suffering. Listen to us, those in Mabweadziva! God, come and see how we suffer, oh come and see Chirisamhuru’s cruel rule. Is this how to rule, is this how to rule? This tyranny will destroy our country. He rules as he pleases, oppressing us).

Chirisamhuru’s projects fail and he is defeated by Nyamazana, a female warrior fleeing the Mfecane. The conquest and resultant death of Chirisamhuru denotes the fall of the Rozvi state. Mutasa thus demonstrates that leadership rooted on unhu leads to prosperity, peace
and stability in society. Leadership that is not premised on *unhu* and whose rulership is not sanctioned by God (*Mwari*) leads to *Misodzi* (tears), *Dikita* (sweat), *neRopa* (Blood) which symbolise human suffering. The writer chides leaders who pursue egocentric agendas while their subjects suffer.

Mutasa challenges leaders to premise their leadership on unhu in order to realise prosperity, peace and stability as part of the solutions which this research find plausible

### 5.4 Matsikiti’s portrayal of *unhu* and pre-colonial gender in *Rakava Buno Risifemberi* (1995)

This section argues that Matsikiti’s conceptualisation of *unhu* and pre-colonial gender roles in *Rakava Buno Risifemberi* is negative. The section contends that the writer devalues the humanity of pre-colonial Shona women and portrays them as peripheral and invisible in societal issues, a standpoint which is ahistorical. While Mutasa accepts the full humanity of pre-colonial Shona women, Matsikiti portrays pre-colonial Shona women as a people who, to a greater extent lack the *unhu* aptitude to decipher and expound societal issues from the vantage point of their existential location. He peripheralises women and portrays them as a people who are guided by male members of the community and not by *unhu* values since “*hunhu* or *ubuntu* as the ethical benchmark of African societies provides a guide to the African man and woman in whatever setting they are” (Mangena and Chitando, 2011:13).

While Washaya in *Misodzi Dikita neRopa* acknowledges the visibility of pre-colonial Shona women in his statement that “*Ndivo vanogara vachiita muronganapasi mazano okuriritira mhuri nenyika. Isu varume* [The women of yore were visible in matters of life and death. Their voices are absent. Let us remember them.]” (Washaya, 2017:13).
“tinokwapa kwavari mazano okuti tirame” (p.200). (Women are the ones who always plan about ways to raise the family and community, we men draw from and seek advice from them). VaSekesai, Yeukai’s aunt, warns Yeukai “Zvino iwe ukada kuramba uri pazvirongwa zvevanhukadzi uchisiya zvevarume hamheno zvako” (p.107). (Now, if you remain more preoccupied with womanly issues at the expense of those of men, you will be in trouble). Matsikiti, thus does not acknowledge the full humanity of pre-colonial women in society. His work undervalues unhu and complementary gender roles. VaBambara pledges his daughter Yeukai to Bvunzawabaya, against the wishes of his wife VaSwedzai, his sister VaSekesai and Yeukai herself. However, the women are not accorded space to explicate their position as full human beings endowed with unhu. The women resign from participating in societal issues as they consider themselves less human. VaSekesai reiterates that:

*Apa panongoonesa poga kuti vanhurume vanoziva kukunda isu vanhukadzi, chokwadi. Kubva nhasi ini handichazopikisani nezvinorongwa nemurume wako zvakare muroora.* (p.93)

(This incident proves that men know much better than us women. From today i will never challenge men’s reasoning and all that your husband, my son, plans and decides on).

Such resignation is not in line with the expectations of an Africana woman. According to Hudson-Weems (2004:53) an Africana womanist places high premium on family centrality, does not disconnect her survival from that of her entire family and she stays connected to her family and participates in the common struggle assuming leadership when required. Furthermore, such a defeatist attitude does not tally with unhu worldview which recognises the full humanity of men and women.
working in complementarity in order to uphold community harmony and cohesion. Munyaka and Motlhabi (2009:75) point out that:

*Ubuntu* is a call to participation. It demands service to humanity in a practical way. Through positive acts within the community, one is connected, linked and bound to others.

The writer further devalues the humanity of pre-colonial Shona women through VaSwedzai who says “Ko, *tingagozvidii isu tiri vanhukadzi. Tinongotongwa tisina mhikiso*” (p.62). (What can we do as womenfolk? We are there only to be ruled without questioning). VaSekesai echoes this in her statement to Yeukai “*Unongozvizivawo kuti isu vanhukadzi hatina simba rokopikisa vanhurume. Kurudzi rwedu hakuna vanhukadzi vanopikisa vanhurume*”. (p.63). (You are also aware that as women we do not have the power to oppose or disagree with men. In our clan, no women ever oppose men).

The issue is not about simply proffering dissenting voices but *unhu* demands positive participation and contribution in societal issues in an environment that recognises the dignity of each person in order to cultivate and preserve mutually affirming relationships. Muwati, Gwekwerere and Gambahaya (2011:06) argue that “Neither male nor female is peripheral in the Shona scheme of things - both are co-architects in the making and remaking of their society”.

In Shona tradition of Zimbabwe *unhu* finds meaning in recognising the centrality of women in the household and society at large. Rukuni (2007:53) notes that:

In Afrikan traditional systems, a man cannot be allocated land or a home, if there is no wife because it is the mother that is central to the household.
To the extent that Matsikiti distorts pre-colonial gender and unhu worldview, his work does not explicate unhu as a basis of solutions to challenges bedeveling Africa and Zimbabwe in particular. By conceptualising unhu and pre-colonial gender roles in a negative way, Matsikiti’s *Rakava Buno Risifemberi* does not promote Shona fiction which is utilitarian because:

Good literature projects African people, both men and women in a way that actually reflects the reality of the relationships and roles in society. It portrays women as full human beings who take up their rightful places in society and thus provides role models for its readers. (Furusa, 2002:51).

By peripherising women, Matsikiti seems not to confer on women the full status of being human and being African. This is ahistorical as evidence shows that African culture provides space, support, protection, motivation and collective guidance to women and they were not discriminated against on the basis of their sex. History shows that Lady Tiy of Nubia, the wife of Amenhotop 111, led early African women to discover make-up and other beauty enhancing processes, Queen Nzingha viciously fought the Portuguese in Angola, Yaa Asantewa of Ghana led an insurrection against the British, Mbuya Nehanda inspired the liberation movements in Zimbabwe, all-female battalions of Dahomey and the women of Nigeria who in their different ways fought colonial forces to protect African people and their resources from invasion (Furusa, 2002:48).

When Gorerenhamo’s wife, Maingeni, gives birth to triplets, a challenge arises as custom demands that twins or triplets be killed. Gorerenhamo consults his wife on the way forward in view of that challenge. Maingeni responds thus “Nyakudirwa, zviri kwamuri. Imi ndimi munhu womurume”. (p. 17). (Your honour, it is up to you. You are the man).
When asked to comment on Matsikiti’s portrayal of pre-colonial gender roles in *Rakava Buno Risifemberi*, respondent H, a lecturer at the University of Zimbabwe, reiterated that Matsikiti peripheralises pre-colonial Shona women and such a representation defeats the implications of the Igbo aphorism “mother is supreme” or the Shona maxim “*musha mukadzi*” (A home is a home because of a wife) which recognise the centrality of African women in family and societal issues. This research shares respondent H’s sentiments and further argues that Matsikiti’s depiction of pre-colonial gender roles defeats the *unhu* tenet of mutual responsibilities and participation.

Interviewee I, a former Great Zimbabwe University Shona student argues that some men like VaMbambara who do not give space to women to realise their full potential are found in Shona society. In support of interviewee I’s observations, interviewee J, a former headmaster contends that some men oppress women and discriminate them on the basis of sex, while interviewee K, a student at Zimbabwe Open University argues that women often oppress themselves.

This research observes that characters like VaMbambara cannot be projected to represent pre-colonial Shona men as the pre-colonial Shona culture provided support, protection and space to women to participate as full human beings in society. Furthermore, this study is guided by the Africana Womanist theoretical standpoint which contends that long before Africa’s colonisation strong African women stood as equal partners with their male counterparts and functioned within a co-operative, collective, communal system and contrary to the white feminists’ need to be equal to men as human beings. Black women have always been equal to their male counterparts in spite of some Africana
men’s endeavours to subdue them on some levels (Hudson-Weems, 2004:48).

5.5 Matsikiti’s depiction of unhu and the nhimbe (work-party) concept

While Matsikiti does not depict convincing images of unhu and pre-colonial gender roles, his portrayal of other unhu virtues that include kinship links, hospitality, co-operation, unhu and governance, industriousness, collaboration, respect, reciprocity, unhu and religion is positive.

Matsikiti demonstrates the importance of cooperation, collaboration, interdependence and collective solidarity which are unhu virtues celebrated in Shona society. The writer illustrates these virtues by dwelling at length on how Bvunzawabaya organises a successful nhimbe (work-party) for the Mbambara family.

In the context of unhu, a person is incomplete without the community. The value of dignity is realised in relationships with members of the community. An African individual is a communal being who cannot be separated from the community. Many people from Mbambara’s community and neighbours from Marufu, Masvinyange and Muhwati villages come to assist VaMbambara as the writer states “mushi wenhimbe, vanhu vakafushunuka samasvosve kuuya kwaVaMbambara” (p.140). (On the day of the work-party, people streamed from all directions like ants, coming to help with the work at VaMbambara’s place). The writer thus demonstrates that unhu emphasises the
interconnectedness and interdependence that exists between individuals and society. Through the *nhimbe*, Matsikiti shows that:

The individual’s whole existence is relative to that of the group. This is manifested in anti-individualistic conduct, ensuring the survival of the group and concomitantly the individual. *Ubuntu* strongly discourages people from living in isolation. It inspires us to expose ourselves to others, to encounter the difference of their humanness so as to inform and enrich our own. *Ubuntu* suggests clearly that a person can’t exist as a human being in isolation (Kuene, 2012:03).

The *unhu* tenets of cooperation, collaboration, interdependence and collective solidarity which Matsikiti explores through the *nhimbe* concept find expression in the Shona proverbs:

*imbwa mbiri hadzitorerwi nyama.*

(Two dogs cannot have their meat taken away).

*mombe haipingudzwi nomunhu mumwe.*

(an ox cannot be tamed by one person).

*zano moto rinogokwa kuna vamwe.*

(advice is like fire, it has to be obtained from others).

*kuwanda huuya kwakatorambwa nomuroyi.*

(To be many is good it is only disliked by a witch).

Furthermore, to illustrate the benefits of the *unhu* tenet of communitarianism, Matsikiti states “*nokuda kwekuti vanhu vainge vakawanda, munda wose uyu wakabva wangobatwa kamwe chete*”
(p.145). (because the people who had come for work were so many the field was ploughed at once) and “Nenguva isipi, munda wokutanga uyu wakapera wose kurimwa” (p.146). (In no time, they had finished ploughing the first field). The nhimbe concept as depicted by the writer shows the Shona people’s interconnectedness, their common humanity and the value they place on group solidarity which also finds expression in Tambulasi and Kayuni ’s (2005:148) Malawian proverbs:

Mutu umodzi susenza denga.
(To successfully accomplish a task one needs the help of others).

Lende kukankhana.
(One prospers with the help of others).

Ali awiri ndi anthu ali ekha chinyama.
(Those that are more than one are people and he who is alone is an animal).

This section has argued that Matsikiti’s conception of unhu and the nhimbe (work-party) in pre-colonial Shona society is positive. He demonstrates the importance of communitarianism through the nhimbe concept.

5.6 Matsikiti ’s portrayal of unhu and Shona religion

This section contends that Matsikiti’s conceptualisation of unhu and Shona religion is ambivalent. While he demonstrates that unhu, Shona religion and life are inseparable, his portrayal of Gurameno, a traditional medical practitioner whom he strips of his humanity, is negative. Matsikiti
shows that one cannot separate *unhu*, religion and the Shona community. He demonstrates that *unhu* is the focal point around which Shona life and religion radiates and this is why Eklund (2008:18) notes:

> In the traditional socio-centric African society religion is ever present and cannot be separated from other spheres in the society. Therefore *ubuntu* has a religious meaning and the community and the communal life are attached to religion.

Some Western scholars such as Ludwig believe that Africa was a spiritual vacuum and regarded Africans as a people who had no idea of God as demonstrated by Ludwig who asked “how can the untutored Africans comprehend God?” (Awolalu,1976:3). Such utterances exude racial arrogance of some Western scholars which Matsikiti seems to right in his depiction of *unhu* worldview and Shona religion.

In the African worldview, *unhu* manifests itself in the society. A person needs members of the community to be complete and to find fulfilment. The people consider themselves integral parts of the whole community. *Unhu* celebrates harmonious co-existence and interdependence in the society. One of the ways in which the community maintains harmony is through religion. Community harmony is maintained between people in the society and also between them and the ‘living dead’. Matsikiti shows that such harmonious relationships are preserved through prayer and offerings.

Maingeni and Gorerenhamo embark on a journey from Warikandwa village to seek refuge in neighbouring communities after Maingeni gives birth to triplets which are regarded as taboo in the society. Maingeni gets seriously ill in the middle of the forests and Gorerenhamo prays to his ancestors for deliverance:
Imi midzimu yangu neyaMaingeni
Chigumbuiko chamava nacho mumwoyo
Muri kuita semusakasiya budzi panyika pano
Chamakatadzirwa chii chamusingataure?
Imi ndimi mune simba, ndimi munoziva, ndimi munoona
Ndinoiwanepi n’anga musango muno ingarape chirwewe ichi
N’anga yangu ndimi, chirapai muzukuru wenyu
Chiitai basa renyu ndisekerere
Maingeni ndamupa kwamuri, ngaapone tifambe rwendo. (p25).

(You, my ancestors and Maingeni’s ancestors, what anger and bitterness do you harbour in your hearts. You behave as if you did not leave a descendant (behind) on this earth. What wrong did we do you, speak it up. You are the all powerful, you know everything, you see everything. Where can I find the traditional doctor to cure this disease? You are my doctor, cure your granddaughter now. Perform your job so that I can smile. I put Maingeni before you, heal her so that we continue on our journey).

After Gorerenhamo invokes his ancestors in prayer, Maingeni recovers from the illness. Matsikiti demonstrates that the Shona religion is a practical one which offers solutions to adherents of the religion. Ulvestad (2012:39) notes that:

Prayer is a common way of communicating with ancestors, spirits, or the Supreme Being where it is most common to petition those forces relevant for something that is needed for harmony in the homestead or the community.

The writer shows that harmony which *unhu* celebrates is restored and the family resumes its journey. Gorerenhamo’s prayers further
demonstrate that there is an ontological balance which should be maintained between the living and the ‘living dead’. If that balance is not observed, community harmony is disturbed leading to instability. Matsikiti thus shows that unhu virtues of respect and caring that prevail between human beings should also be maintained between the living and the departed. Kazembe (2009:56) notes that:

Appropriate behaviour and observance of obligations and rites are important and required to maintain social harmony, longevity and contentment of spirits. The spirits are believed to constitute an invisible community within the community of the living, always around their descendants, caring for them and participating in their joys and sorrows.

VaMbambara organises a nhimbe (work party) and the community comes to assist him in cultivating his fields. Before commencing the work, VaMbambara prays to his ancestors for guidance:

\[\begin{align*}
E-e, \text{ mazvionaka imi madzitateguru edu} \\
Tatizve mutitungamirire, nhai madzitateguru edu \\
Tiri pamafaro okurima minda yedu isu vana venyu \\
Mbesa tichakanda mvhu \\
Mdzivirirawo hudyi tigokohwa \\
Ndimo munobva chimera chehwahwa hwenyu (p.142).
\end{align*}\]

(Ee, you have seen it all, you our ancestors. We pray that you lead us, you our ancestors. We are gathered here in happiness and joy preparing our fields for planting. We shall throw our seed in the soil. May you protect them from any harm so that they will grow and we will harvest. It is from this soil that rapoko for your beer is harvested).
Through VaMbambara’s prayer, Matsikiti demonstrates that “ubuntu represents a religio-cultural unity” (Kazembe, 2009:29). The prayer invokes ancestors to prevent probable calamitous situations such as droughts which may be caused by locusts. The prayer further highlights the unhu values of interdependence. The individual’s whole existence is relative to that of the group ensuring the survival of the group and concomitantly the individual (Kuene, 2012:03). The effect of this belief on African community is the constant awareness of the need for others to complement or even to complete one’s life. Unhu strongly discourages people from living in isolation. It highlights and emphasises the interconnectedness of humankind. (ibid).

Through the prayer the writer shows that interdependence is not only found among the people but also extended to encompass the spiritual forces. He shows that reciprocity, participation and harmony as unhu ethos are vital. VaMbambara pleads with the ancestors to protect crops from natural disasters as it is from the crops that the people are able to brew beer for the ancestors. Ulvestad (2012:45) notes that:

Prayer connecting the visible and the invisible world enhances the mutual interdependent relationships. It is a communication, a petition between the visible and the invisible world. The main goal is the maintenance of harmony between persons in the visible world and between them and the invisible world.

Mudziwepasi leads an assemblage of twelve men from Warikandwa village to the Hwedza area to extract iron ore which is of great value in the Shona society. It is a very long journey which involves passing through forests and mountains infested with dangerous animals. Furthermore, the process of extracting the iron ore is long and involves people staying in foreign lands for a very long time. Moreover, there are
thieves who loot people’s iron and other valuables on their way from Hwedza area. According to Matsikiti such an adventure compels the Shona people to establish and maintain harmony with the spiritual world. Before embarking on the journey, Mudziwepasi and his group pray to their ancestors seeking guidance and protection against potential disasters in the forests and valleys. Mudziwepasi stresses this salient point:

Varume ndinofunga kuti mumwe nemumwe wedu takambopira lumidzimu yedu kuti tava kubuda mudzimba tofamba rwendo rwemunoshava. Zvino ino ndiyo nguva yekuti mumwe nemumwe wedu achizivasazve midzimu yake kuti abuda zvino ava munzira achengetwe. (p.173).

(Fellow men, I think everyone of us knows how to worship his ancestors and has petitioned them before embarking on a journey in search of wealth. Now is the time for everyone of us to inform his ancestors that he has left the homestead in search of prosperity and thus seeks their protection).

This shows the holistic nature of the Shona religion as it permeates every department of Shona life. Matsikiti thus shows that in Shona religion God is an omnipotent and omnipresent Supreme Being who sustains the universe.

Matsikiti further demonstrates that unhu, Shona religion and life are inseparable in his detailed description of the place of the Mutiusinazita (nameless) tree in Shona religion. The writer depicts the Mutiusinazita as a sacrosanct tree which links humans and the spiritual world. In the middle of the forests, Mudziwepasi and his delegation solicit for food under the Mutiusinazita tree after fulfilling certain religious imperatives. According to Mudziwepasi, it is not only the tree which is venerated but
the whole area is sacred. Matsikiti writes that people without *unhu* like witches, those who possess harmful charms and those who violate societal norms are not allowed near the *Mutiusinazita* tree. The belief is that if they go near the tree the spiritual world punishes them as they wander into the forests. According to the writer it is only those endowed with *unhu* ethos or those whose behaviour is commensurate with *unhu* worldview who are allowed near the venerated tree. Mudziwepasi prays under the tree:

_Ndisuwo vana venyu tasvikawo pano_

_Munzira mese umu tangopona nemichero yenyu_

_Chinobata ura ndicho chotochema nacho_

_Tozoia nenzara zame, tinotsvakawo kuraramiswa nemi_

_Tongotarisa nokunzwa kwamuri imi_

_Muchengeti wevari parwendo_

_Ndicho chikumbiro chedu ichi isu_

_Vana venyu mudzimu mukuru. (p.177)._

(We are only your children, who have reached your sacred abode. All along in our sojourn we have eaten of the fruit you provide alone. Now we pray that you provide us with more substantial food, our stomachs are light. We might die of hunger *Mwari*, we seek to be fed by you generous one, we look up to you and listen in silence, you, the keeper of those on a journey, this is our petition we are your children Great Ancestor).

Immediately after reciting out the prayers, they are provided with different types of food including milk, meat, vegetables, sadza, rice and water. It is important to note that they perform some thanksgiving rituals
after feeding. Matsikiti’s detailed illustration of the *Mutiusinazita* religious cult demonstrates that the tree signifies God’s immanence.

The *Mutiusinazita* tree which is accorded sacred veneration among the Shona shows the close link between the Shona people the tree and the spiritual world. Through the sacred tree Matsikiti demonstrates that *unhu* entails respect for religious beliefs as Nafukho (2006:409) notes:

> **Ubuntu** was decidedly religious. Dying was considered an ultimate homecoming. Thus not only must the living and the dead share with and care for one another but the living and the dead depended on one another. In African societies there was an inextricable bond between humans, ancestors and the Supreme Being. **Ubuntu** therefore implies a deep respect and regard for religious beliefs and practices that were supposed to guide all human life endeavours including learning and working.

However, Matsikiti’s portrayal of *unhu* and religion is ambivalent as illustrated by his depiction of Gurameno, a traditional medical practitioner in Warikandwa village. Bearing triplets in the village is considered taboo and evil which may bring misfortune to the society. Giving birth to triplets thus engender disharmony. *Unhu* celebrates harmonious relationships and when relationships are broken in society diviners are responsible for restoring harmony.

The Shona believe that God dispenses the gift of healing through the agency of religious experts who include herbalists, traditional medicine men and women, divinities, ancestors and other supernatural agents who have connection with the practice of medicine. It is their duty to discover the reasons for the disharmony in the universe and to provide solutions for the problems (Govere, 2005:49).
People in the Warikandwa village consult Gurameno in order to restore harmony in their society. In the spirit of *unhu*, Matsikiti positively shows that the issue of triplets becomes a community issue and not Gorerenhamo and his family alone since in the *unhu* worldview every human being is viewed both in his or her collective identity as a member of the community and in his or her personal identity as a unique individual (Govere, 2005:49). Warikandwa community consults Gurameno because they believe that ancestors have power to influence the affairs of the living in a positive or negative way. Govere (ibid) asseverates that:

In the *ubuntu-unhu* worldview, the involvement of the community as a whole is very important. Accordingly, when a widespread misfortune hits the community or society such as floods, drought, famine, and pandemic like HIV/AIDS these calamities are attributed to disharmony or broken relationships which must be restored before the community can regain its harmony.

However, Gurameno who is responsible for restoring harmony in the community is depicted as an incompetent cheat. Matsikiti thus does not portray traditional medical practitioners in their correct socio-historical and cultural perspective and in the process dehumanises Gurameno. He strips the diviner of his humanity by not respecting the community which he lies to.

To depict Gurameno who lacks sympathy, empathy, compassion, respect, humanness, conformity and human dignity as an epitome of Shona traditional diviners is to advance the colonial myth that methods of traditional knowledge are primitive and backward while the traditional diviners are pagan and superstitious. Such a negative portrayal of
Shona traditional diviners justifies the colonialists move to outlaw traditional diviners and the introduction of Western medicinal practices.

This section has argued that Matsikiti’s conceptualisation of unhu and Shona religion in pre-colonial Shona life is ambivalent. While the writer demonstrates that unhu meant deep respect and regard for religious beliefs and practices, his portrayal of Gurameno, as an epitome of pre-colonial Shona traditional medical practitioners is negative and unconvincing.

5.7 Unhu and the proletarianisation of the African peasantry in Chidzero’s Nzvengamutsvairo (1957)

Chidzero’s Nzvengamutsvairo (dodge the broom) is the second novel to be published in Shona. It was first published in 1957 after Feso which was published in 1956. The writer sets his novel in Chitehwe village in the 1950s, chronicling the agrarian and lifestyle changes in colonial Zimbabwe as a result of the dehumanising racial dominance of the white settlers in the colonial period. This section argues that Chidzero’s conceptualisation of unhu and the proletarianisation of the African peasantry in Nzvengamutsvairo is not rooted in the African communitarian worldview of unhu and it does not promote Shona literature which is utilitarian. Chidzero employs the unhu value of harmonious co-existence in order to persuade Africans to supply labour to white farmers and also to accept their condition since unhu celebrates harmony and peaceful co-existence. The author writes that:

Nyika ndeyedu tose vachena navatema, daiwo ruwandzano ruri rweduwo tose vachena navatema. Ganda rina mavara akapatsanuka unhu hwedu tose humwe chete.(p.54)
(This country belongs to both of us blacks and whites accordingly, peace and harmony should also be among us both whites and blacks. The skin can assume different colours but our humanism is all the same).

The harmony that Chidzero advocates between the blacks and the whites during this period benefits the whites who are experiencing labour shortages. It is not harmony whose interest in the African sense is the building and maintenance of societies with justice and mutual caring as Mugumbate and Nyanguru (2000:84) note:

*Ubuntu* is the capacity in African culture to express compassion, reciprocity, dignity, harmony and humanity in the interests of building and maintaining community with justice and mutual caring.

The presence of white settlers in colonial Zimbabwe led to inevitable conflicts and clashes of interest with indigenous African people such that harmonious relationships which the author advocates for lead to further exploitation of the people of Chitehwe village. Direct violence was supported by structural violence in the form of colonial laws which were crafted to discriminate Africans, for example the Masters and Servants Act of 1901, which clearly entrenched the servants status of blacks and the masters status class of whites, the Land Apportionment Act of 1930, African Accommodation and Registration Act of 1946, the Unlawful Organisations Act of 1959, the Law and Order Maintenance Act of 1960 and the Emergence Powers Act of 1960 which all buttressed the inferiority status of blacks while advancing the interests of the whites (Muchemwa, 2015:77). *Ubuntu* is “a way of life that seeks to promote and manifest itself and is best realised or, made evident in harmonious relations within society” (Munyaka and Motlhabi, 2009:65).
Given the unequal socio-economic relations between the whites and the blacks, Chidzero’s advocation of harmony and peace between blacks and whites in his novel does not serve the interests of the Africans who are exploited by the colonial system. Furthermore, his statement that *unhu hwedu tose humwe chete* is not a conceptualisation of *unhu* from an African vantagepoint and it serves to obliterate the view that Western cultures and African traditional systems such as *unhu* do not align. Sibanda (2014: 26) points out that:

According to Africanism, a white man can only have *hunhu* over and above his perpetual humanness if and only if he measures up to African traditional expectations.

The proletarianisation of the Africans actually led to humiliation and dehumanisation of the blacks in the farms, mines and towns, actions which stand inimical to the African worldview of *unhu*. African labourers were harassed, beaten and reduced to a level less than that of human beings. Vengeyi (2013:206) observes that:

White farmers throughout the country did not regard the native servants as real human beings who get tired, thirsty or with rationality. In all farms, mines and homes black labourers were treated like domestic animals if not really wild animals. In fact white men’s animals such as horses, cattle, dogs, cats and others had by far better status than black people in general and labourers in particular.

Chidzero’s observation that the blacks and whites subscribe to the *unhu* worldview of togetherness, brotherhood, equality, caring, sharing, harmony, collective unity and group solidarity is therefore superficial. It seems it is a statement by the author meant to convince the African villagers of Chitehwe to supply farmer Davies with cheap labour. Moreover, the artist’s conceptualisation of the *unhu* tenet of interdependence and mutual reciprocity in society is not Afrocentric as it
does not portray the situation obtaining in colonial Zimbabwe. Chidzero writes that:

*Tinosevenzerana, tinotengerana, tinoisayamurana, tiri hama kunyangwe tine ndimi dzakasiyana-siyana.*
(p.54).

(We work, each for the other, trade and assist each other, despite the fact that we speak different languages and originate from different places).

The Shona proverb *munhu munhu navanhu* (a person is a person through other people) expresses a profound sense of interdependence extending from the extended family to the entire community. Muyaka and Motlhabi (2009:71) state that:

*Ubuntu* points to the interdependence that exists among people. Within the context of *ubuntu*, people are a family. They are expected to be in solidarity with one another. Individualistic and self-centered acts are seen not just as a failure to contribute to the well-being of both the person and the community, but as bringing about harm, misery and pain to others. Such acts are disapproved of as manifestations of dangerous elements disruptive to society and undesirable for its functioning and well-being.

However, the artist assumes that the interdependence and mutual reciprocity that exist in the context of *unhu* is what is obtaining between farmer Davies and the Africans of Chitehwe village. While the statement that “*tinosevenzerana*” (we work for each other) is not true since there is no reciprocity, it is fundamental to note that it is only the Africans who supply cheap labour to white farmers and under conditions that strip Africans of their *unhu*. Vengeyi (2013:199) posits that:

As Africans were forced to work on these farms, they were constantly harassed and beaten thoroughly. The conditions of labour were generally appalling and always dehumanising.
Moreover, the view that “tinoyamurana” (we assist each other) applies within the context of unhu in a fair and just society and not in the context of unequal socio-economic conditions. Colonialism was never meant to benefit the indigenous people. Boahen (1985:805) argues that:

It is precisely because colonial rulers not only did not see the development of Africans as their first priority but did not see it as a priority at all that they stand condemned. The colonial era will go down in history as a period of growth without development, one of the ruthless exploitation of the resources of Africa and on balance of the pauperisation and humiliation of the people of Africa.

The voice of the author, Samere, is a mission educated character who is portrayed as someone who is endowed with unhu values. With particular reference to Samere, amai Pedzisai (Pedzisai’s mother), one of the village women remarks:

*Ndiye anenge munhu kwaye pakati pavo vari vatatu* (p.70).

(He looks the best person among the three boys)

In agreement amai Zvapano (Zvapano ’s mother) notes that:

*Vamabharani vane tsika dzinofadza madzimai oga oga ane tsarukano.* (p70).

(The clerk has manners that please all women who are upright).

Matigimu, a village boy remarks that:

*Samere munhu kwaye.* (p.79).

(Samere is a good, honest boy)

With reference to Samere, Matirasa, one of the village girls says:
The author writes that:

Nyemwerai naSamere vakanga vadana kare nekuti Samere aiva netsika tsvene (p.51).

(Nyemwererai and Samere had already fallen in love because Samere was a well mannered boy)

Samere himself proves that he is endowed with unhu ethos. When Matigimu and Tikana are about to fight, he reiterates that:

Ko unhu hwedu huri kupi kana shamwari neshamwari dzichisvipirana mumeso (p.16).

(Where is our humanity when close friends fight each other?)

Furthermore, when Samere and Tikana engage in an argument over their girlfriends, Samere is quick to remind Tikana that:

Kana usina unhu mauri, kana usina pfungwa, kana usina mwoyo, kana usingagone kuzvibata somunhu-zvakanaka ita maitiro asina tsarukano. (p42-43).

(If you lack humanness, if you do not reflect on your deeds, if you lack a good heart and you are not able to control yourself properly-then, you can behave in that ill-mannered way).
Dai ndakaziva ndingadai ndisina kushamwaridzana nemhuka dzesango dzakadai. (p.17).

(If only I had known I would never have befriended such wild animals).

The effect of the depiction of Samere as endowed with unhu and his friends as lacking unhu is that the Africans residing in Chitehwe village listen to Samere’s call to supply labour to Davies’ farm as a way of humanising them. Samere who is endowed with unhu convinces Matigimu and Tikana to work at Davies’ farm. The author depicts Matigimu and Tikana as full human beings with unhu only after working at Davies’ farm. He writes that:

Matigimu akanga ava munhu ane pfungwa, anogona kuzvibata. Tiri vanhu vazhinji pasi pose, asi tiri vashoma vane unhu. (p.83).

(Matigimu had become an improved person who could reason well and he was now well behaved. There are so many people in the world but very few have complete humaneness).

Matigimu who had initially resisted to work for Davies boasts to his girlfriend Mhangwa that:

Ndiri kusevenza, ndiri kutambira mari, ndini Matigimu chaiye. (p.83).

(I now have a job, I earn a salary, I am the Matigimu you know).

Tikana who had also vowed never to work for farmer Davies is also happy to be a wage labourer. He says to his girlfriend Matirasa:

Ndiri kubata basa rakanaka kwazvo, pamhiri pedu apo. Ndava munhu ane zano, Matirasa. (83-84).
(I am now in a good job I found at the nearby farm. My behaviour and manners have improved as a result, Matirasa).

Above all, Tikana thanks Samere for finding him a job at Davies’ farm which has made him a full human being with unhu ethos. He says:

 Ndinotenda Samere akandipinzisa basa.Dai pasina uyu mufana akanaka, ndinofunga kuti ndingadai ndiri mhuka yesango.(p.84).

(I would like to thank Samere who got me the job. If it was not for the good young man who got me this job, I could have turned into a wild animal).

Chidzero’s statement is that those Africans who resist to supply labour at Davies farm remain less than human and ignorant, and can only be full human beings after working at Davies’ farm. Tikana confesses that before joining farm labourers at Davies’ farm he was a wild animal. According to the Shona understanding of unhu, a person without unhu is like an animal. The Shona say hauna unhu, uri mhuka yesango. (you lack humaneness, you are a wild animal). The writer seems to be advancing the view that Africans should supply labour to the settler farmers in order to be civilised and to be accorded the status of a full human being that will enable them to participate fully in societal issues.

However, it is important to note that the writer does not seem to acknowledge that it is through colonialism and the proletarianisation of the Africans that many indigenous people lost their unhu. Dolamo (2013:05) posits that:

After the arrival of colonialists, traders and missionaries in Africa, the sense of botho/ubunto or African humanness became altered or distorted. Colonialism has also
contributed to the dehumanisation of Africans. Whites regarded themselves as superior to the other races, with blacks at the bottom of the ladder. Africans believed that to be fully human they had to model themselves after the colonisers and reject everything that was African.

However, it is vital to note that the writer acknowledges that the working conditions in the farms were appalling and dehumanising. The writer acknowledges the prevalence of forced labour (chibharo) on the farms. Samere says to Matigimu and Tikana:

\[ Ndakanzwa kunzi kuna mapurisa ari kutsvaga vanhu vechibharo. \]

(I heard that the police are hunting down people to be recruited into forced labour).

Chidzero's description of farm labourers highlights the dehumanising working conditions at Davies' farm. He writes that:

\[ Vasevenzi vapapurazi iyoyo vakati vodzoka kubasa vachimhanyira kundobika sadza. Vamwe vakatakura mapadza kana matemo pamapfudzi, vamwe vaina masvinga ehuni, vamwe vakapfeka masaka, mamvemve, shangu dzendudzi nendudzi, vamwe vakapfeka midhabha, nezvikokorani zvinenge zvmasoja. \]

(When the workers at the farm dismissed from work, they rushed to cook sadza. Some carried hoes or axes on their shoulders, others carried piles of firewood on the heads, some wore sacks, tattered clothes and rags, different shapes and colours of shoes, others wore trousers and ragged coats like old soldiers'uniform).

When Matigimu sees Davies' farm labourers he remarks:

\[ Zvipuka zvekupi zvine tsvina yakadai? Zvinosevenza pano izvozvi? Baba wanguwe! 'vanhu ava! Pasi papinduka. Mukati vachiri vanhu ava!' \]
What kind of animals are these? So dirty! Do they work here? Oh father! Are these human beings? The earth has turned upside down. Do you say these are still human beings or animals?)

The author artistically reflects the conditions of farm labourers in colonial Zimbabwe. Through Matigimu’s remarks the author shows that Africans lost their unhu through proletarianisation. However, after reflecting on workers’ conditions that reduced them to sub-humans, the author does not explore further on the subject and even dismisses Matigimu’s observations through Samere, his mouthpiece. Samere even advances the thesis that Europeans are Africa’s benefactors and so Africa should be grateful. Samere pontificates that:

(What amazes me, boys, is that what you eat, wear, travel on, what gives you peace and satisfaction all belong to whites. Whites are our benefactors. Truly every African who thinks properly and whose heart beats should know that there are many white people in Africa and abroad, many white people who are our friends and our benefactors. They like Africans and our progress. I think the best thing for us Africans is to thank these benefactors of ours).

Chidzero’s approach thus diverts the attention of readers from the real exploitation that Africans are facing in the proletarianisation process, as observed by Matigimu. The contention is that the colonialists never
intended to be Africa’s benefactors and never engaged in projects meant to benefit indigenous people. On the impact of colonialism in Africa, Ali Mazrui in Boahen (1985:784) argues that the positive effects were “by default, by the iron law of unintended consequences” while Boahen (ibid) suggests that:

It should be emphasised right from the beginning that most of the positive effects were not deliberately calculated. They were by and large rather accidental by products of activities or measures intended to promote the interests of the colonisers.

While Chidzero engages the *unhu* values of interdependence, mutual reciprocit, brotherhood, co-operation and harmonious relationships to prevail between blacks and whites during the proletarianisation of the African peasantry, he does not extend the same to exist between Africans of different ethnic groups. He uses derogatory discourse such as *madzviti* (violent strangers) in his novel. In his description of Davies’ farm labourers, the author writes that:

*Rumwe runotaura, rumwe runoimba, rumwe runyerere-haungati madzviti! Haungati ihondo* (p.54).

(There is so much noise of many people talking and shouting together. Some spoke so loudly, others sang and some were quiet like an uproar of Ndebele warriors).

The author’s use of derogatory terms is likely to further polarise the Shona and Ndebele at a time when these two main ethnic groups are expected to form a common front against the colonisers. The artist does not realise that by applying emphasis on the Shona-Ndebele antagonisms, he is actually serving British colonial interests. The misrepresentation and distortion of Ndebele-Shona relations serve to justify the British colonisation of Zimbabwe (Mandova and Wasosa,
Ndebele raids were used by the British and Rhodes to excuse Rhodes’ conquest in 1893 and the subsequent entrenchment of white rule (Beach, 1986:14). The writer’s perception of the Ndebele through anthropological and European eyeglasses serves European aspirations and not African interests as Ndlovu in Muchemwa (2015:77) argues that:

Colonialism never wanted to create nations in Africa based on common national identity because this was going to fuel African nationalism. Colonialism wanted to create colonial states as ‘neo-Europe’ that served metropolitan material needs while maintaining Africans fragmented into numerous tribes and unable to unite against colonial oppression and domination.

Chidzero’s work is less likely to inspire the Ndebele people that he attacks. Zimbabwean writers writing during the colonial era therefore should have helped to deconstruct the myth created by the colonisers on the Shona-Ndebele relations and to forge unity among all ethnic groups in Zimbabwe. Unhu emphasises cohesion and not fragmentation.

In short, Chidzero’s work records agrarian and lifestyle change in colonial Zimbabwe as a result of the colonial encounter. Although the writer highlights critical issues related to the proletarianisation of the African peasantry such as dehumanisation of Africans, he highlights these through Matigimu, a character he ridicules and whom he depicts as lacking unhu, hence readers do not take his observations seriously. Moreover, after Matigimu highlights the precarious working conditions at Davies’ farm, Samere, the writer’s mouthpiece who is endowed with unhu, quickly dismisses Matigimu’s critical observations albeit unconvincingly, leaving them hanging.
The writer’s understanding of *unhu* is the existence of harmonious relationships between blacks and whites during the proletarianisation of the African peasantry in light of the unequal socio-economic relations between the two races, a view that does not promote Shona fiction which is utilitarian. He advocates ‘humane colonialism’ which shows a compromised social vision. Chiwome (1996:88). The writer emphasises mutually affirming and enhancing relationships between blacks and whites and not between blacks of different ethnic backgrounds, a position that renders his work of art oppressive and not liberating. It is also a position which demonstrates that his work of art is not rooted in the African communitarian worldview of *unhu*.

Chidzero’s solution to the predicament of Africans living in Chitehwe reserve lies in co-operating with white farmers who ironically impoverished them by alienating the Africans from their land engendering a process of proletarianisation which dehumanised them and stripped them of their humanity. The study contends that the writer does not conceptualise and contextualise *unhu* in a way that produces Shona fiction which is utilitarian and which liberates Africans in the face of a harsh, exploitative, oppressive and dehumanising colonial regime.

**5.8 Mabasa’s conceptualisation of *unhu* in *Mapenzi***

Mabasa’s conceptualisation of *unhu* can be summed up in Ticha Hamundigone (an ex-combatant and the author’s voice of reason)’s comment that “Ndakarwa kuti tese tiwane, tese tidye, tese tigute-kuti kana toziya, toziya tese, kwete kuti munhu mumwe chete ndiye anenge achitambura nekudzvova tsvi” (p.140). (I fought so that all of us get contented, all of us have something to eat and be happy-so that when
we get into trouble, we share the problems together, not that only one person benefits and accumulates resources at the expense of all of us).

5.9 Debilitating ills of corruption and the emergence of an ‘ubuntuless’ society in Mapenzi

Mapenzi reflects on the failure by the national leadership in Zimbabwe to curb corruption, a costly cancer which is hurting the economy and creating a society of people without unhu. Bribery, nepotism and embezzlement are signs of a sick nation which according to Mabasa needs ethical national leadership. The author blames corruption in Mapenzi to a lack of political commitment and inadequate anti-corruption measures by the national leadership which partly demeans the people. This is why Mutasa and Muhwati (2008:162) write that:

Mabasa’s literature is a literature that engages the oppressor in the trenches of intellectual warfare while fighting running literary battles with those in positions of unearned privilege. It is a literature that shoots bullets.

Through Ticha Hamundigone, the author’s voice of reason, Mabasa shows how the war victims compensation fund was looted and how this caused the impoverishment of some of the war veterans of the second Chimurenga war in Zimbabwe. Asked by a passenger in a kombi whether he had been given his share of money from the war victims compensation fund, Ticha Hamundigone replies:

*Ipi yacho amai? Yekurwa hondo here? Handisati, ndakangomirirawo nanhazi. Vamwe vakatopiwa katatu katatu. Vari kuti ndakanga ndisiri kuhondo, saka vari kumbotarisa mumazipepa kuti vatsvage zita rangu. (p.27).*
(Which one, mother? The money for the compensation for my fighting in the liberation struggle? Some have even been paid for the third time, yet I am still to be paid. They say I did not participate in the war so they are looking into the records files again to establish whether my name is on the lists).

The War Victims Compensation Fund was established under the 1980 War Victims Compensation Act to compensate victims who had suffered during the second Chimurenga war of liberation in Zimbabwe. The whole process of compensating the victims of war shows a society that is losing unhu as revealed by Ticha Hamundigone and also by the judicial commission of enquiry which was set up to investigate abuse of the fund.

According to an anti-corruption report of (2012:06) the judicial commission of enquiry discovered a plethora of false claims and irregularities that included false affidavits, falsification of dates when injuries were sustained and exaggerated percentages of disability. The corruption in compensating victims who suffered during the second Chimurenga war prompted Margaret Dongo, a former independent member of parliament and an ex-combatant to remark that:

There are so many cabinet members, civil servants, army officers and police officers who are claiming funds for serious disabilities that it is a wonder the government can function at all...most of the real war veterans are living in abject poverty. This is Zimbabwe's worst scandal (Carver, 2000:11).

What bothers Magi and exposes the level of corruption is that some of the people who were compensated under the War Victims Compensation Fund are not genuine war veterans of the Zimbabwe liberation war:
Iwe, it’s sad kani because vamwe vacho havana kana nekutomboenda kuhondo kwacho, kana pfuti dzacho havadzizivi. (p.106).

(My friend it’s so sad because some of them never participated in the struggle, they do not even know a gun)

Magi’s sentiments are also captured by Carve (2000:10) who contends that:

Many of those claiming to be veterans are not and are patently too young to have fought in the liberation war. A number of senior officials had been plundering the compensation fund established under the 1980 War Victims Compensation Act. The key figure was a physician Chenjerai Hunzvi who signed medical certificates stating that those he examined had serious and previously unimagined disabilities that entitled them to massive compensation payments.

Mabasa seems to be making a statement that while corruption at the War Victims Compensation Fund has benefited some political elite, it has impoverished some genuine war veterans, reducing them to the level of subhumans. Mabasa portrays Ticha Hamundigone scavenging for food, an act that demeans him as scavenging is for lower animals. He writes that:

Ndakasvika pakaTake Away muroad inonzi Inez Terrace ndokungosvikonyudza musoro wangu mubhini raivepo ndisina kumbotarisa mativi ese kuti ndione kana paine andiziva...ndichifushunura mapepa, ndakawana chibhanzi chepamahamburger. Ndakangozvibata-bata nemaoko aibvundirira kuti ndinzwe kana zvaive zvisina kuviga mabhodhoro, ndichibva ndangozvisaidzira mumukanwa.p.26

(I got to a Take Away shop along Inez Terrace road and immediately sunk my head into the rubbish bin. I did not even look around to see if anybody I knew was watching. I rummaged through the paper and rubbish
and I found a crumb of humburger. I used my shaking fingers to inspect for any broken glass on the dirty crumb and I shoved it hungrily into my mouth).

According to the author, Ticha Hamundigone no longer has *unhu* as he now exudes the traits of animals which partly distinguish human beings from other animals. Scavenging strips Ticha Hamundigone of his *unhu*.

The author seems to suggest that it is the economic environment, corruption and lack of ethical leadership that have dehumanised the former guerrilla. Makumbe in Moyo (2014:25) argues that the problem of corruption in Zimbabwe is related to the climate of unethical leadership and bad governance which in turn have generated a situation in which corruption has flourished.

Mabasa further demonstrates that the Zimbabwe Republic Police who are supposed to be custodians of *unhu* in guarding against ‘anti-*unhu*’, unethical and criminal activities are also losing the values of *unhu viz* honesty, dignity, respect and humanness as they fuel corruption.

The attainment of Zimbabwean independence in 1980 led to the dismantling of the British South Africa Police (B.S.A.P) and the establishment of the Zimbabwe Republic Police comprising of the Traffic Branch, the Police Protection Unit, the Police Constabulary, the Staff Branch, the Technicians Branch, the Criminal Investigation Department and the Support Unit. According to Makwerere, Chinzete and Musorowegomo (2012:132) Commissioner General Chihuri has highlighted the core business of the Zimbabwe Republic Police as identifying criminal offenders and criminal activity and where appropriate apprehending offenders and participating in subsequent court procedures, preventing crime, preserving peace, suppressing all forms
of civil commotion or disorder that may occur in any part of Zimbabwe and protecting property from malicious injury.

Bunny warns his younger brother Vincent against drug peddling and Vincent says:

*Ndinotozosungwa kana mapurisa ese macustomer angu apera kuchinjwa kubva kuno achiendeswa kuBeitbridge kana kuMutorashanga blaz.* (p.67).

(I will only be arrested if all my police friends and customers are transferred to either Beitbridge post or Mutorashanga).

Mabasa thus shows that it is only after the leadership embraces *unhu* as the ethical yardstick for governance that corruption can be curbed. It stands to reason therefore that, the fact that law enforcement officers whose mandate includes apprehending offenders and preventing crime are actually fuelling crime is indicative of the pathology of a society whose people are losing *unhu* values and whose intentions to combat corruption are superficial. Achebe (1983:38) asseverates that:

*A Nigerian does not need corruption, neither is corruption necessary nourishment for Nigerians. It is totally false to suggest, as we are apt to do, that Nigerians are different fundamentally from any other people in the world. Nigerians are corrupt because the system under which they live today makes corruption easy and profitable, they will cease to be corrupt when corruption is made difficult and inconvenient.*

The author shows that like in the Nigerian situation, the Zimbabwe Republic Police is facilitating corruption as the organisation is manned by some officers who are corrupt and this stifles efforts to combat the cancer. Vincent says to his girlfriend Joy:

*N dakaudzwa nemapurisa mafesi angu kuti waive wanonditengesa ndiwe!* (p.65).
(My connections in the police force told me that it was you who had informed on me!).

Interviewee M, a taxi driver who plies Rujeko-Pick n Pay route in Masvingo stated that “Things are difficult for me my brother. In order to operate my taxi i have to pay something at the bridge. I can then operate the whole day or else I park it". The moral decadence with regards to some corrupt Zimbabwe Republic Police officers which the writer reflects on, helps to promote Shona literature which is utilitarian. Corruption is calamitous as it weakens and destroys national institutions, as it leads to misallocation of resources through diversion to non-core and non-productive purposes, as it prevents economic growth and above all as it erodes the socio-political and economic fabric of the society (Mapuva, 2014:164). Mabasa’s novel, which mirrors corruption is therefore liberating as it conscientises society on some of the causes of the people’s poverty and the impediments towards the eradication of the cancer.

Ticha Hamundigone goes to sleep at Harare charge office and discovers policemen scrambling for mbanje (dagga) which they had looted from a person they had apprehended:

Ndakazonorara kucharge office kwandakaona mapurisa achibvitirana mbanje yavaive vatorera munhu wavaive vasunga. (p. 27).

(I went to sleep at the charge office where I witnessed policemen scuffling over the marijuana they had confiscated from an offender).

Mai Jazz stops shouting at her maid because “vakanyara mapurisa maviri akazonoerekana asvika kuzotenga mbanje kuna VC” (P.95). (She stopped shouting because she had seen two policemen who had come to buy marijuana from VC). Mabasa blames the law
enforcement agents for creating an environment which makes drug peddling easy and lucrative. The police officers are corrupt partly because of poor remuneration in a dysfunctional society experiencing economic decline headed by national leaders whose governance does not gyrate around unhu ethos.

Mabasa further portrays people who get employed through corrupt means. He writes that married women are losing their unhu and risk destroying their marriages by getting employment though corrupt means. Magi remarks that nepotism is rampant at various work places. Bunny highlights that:


(There is a girl named Kundai Mahachi who was deployed to our department for induction. A person who specialised in English Honours being assigned to auditing? Had she done Accounts or Business Studies it would have been better).

Mabasa thus demonstrates that loss of unhu through corrupt practices stagnates development as incompetent people are employed to spearhead development projects. Mangena (2011:117) rightly observes that:

In Zimbabwe we have seen leaders who, once they are given the mandate to lead, turn their back on those who will have given them that mandate. They begin lining up their pockets by engaging in looting, corruption and nepotism while the majority of the population remains poor.
In this section, Mabasa demonstrates that corruption is calamitous and leads to a society of people who do not respect unhu virtues of accountability and honesty. His portrayal of corruption is rooted in the African worldview of unhu as he castigates the system which breeds people who are corrupt. His solutions which include that leaders should revisit their unhu values of transparency, integrity, honesty and accountability in order to combat corruption which is paralysing the economy are relevant in finding an emancipative and sustainable solution to Zimbabwe’s contemporary nation building conundrum.

5.10 Homosexuality and unhu in Mabasa’s Mapenzi

Mabasa conceptualises homosexuality as loss of unhu from a Shona vantage point. He views homosexuality as unAfrican and anathema to the African celebrated ethos of procreation and clan continuity. Homosexuality is a controversial area of inquiry which is legal in countries such as Belgium, Canada, Spain, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and South Africa and criminalised in thirty eight African countries. There are many movements of activists across Africa who are fighting for the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people which include the Coalition of African Lesbians (CAL), Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (GALZ), Centre for the Development of People (CEDEP) in Malawi, Lesbian and Gay Equality Project, The Mozambican Association for sexual minority rights, Sexual Minorities of Uganda (SMUG), Friends of Rainka in Zambia, Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya, Centre for Popular Education and Human Rights(CEPEHRG) in Ghana (Boll, 2010:30).

Ticha Hamundigone comments that:
Let me tell you Bunny, Harare is a strange place. It is so full of mad people. Where have you seen a man having sex with a dog? Or a man having a sexual relationship with another man. It is shocking, Bunny. It is just like saying a banana fruit has seeds inside)

The author regards same-sex relationships as lack of *unhu* and an aberration in Zimbabwe because the Shona view sex as an act that should lead to procreation and since homosexuality does not lead to production of children who ensure that there is nexus between the living and the “living dead”, it is therefore regarded as an indication of moral degeneration.

Referring to the Karanga people, a Shona dialect, Makamure(2015:56) contends that:

The Karanga concept of *ubuntu* (*unhu*) disqualified homosexual practices from the moral realms of their perceptions. The Karanga people had high regards towards rectitude or uprightness (*ururami*). Karanga religion and sexuality did not tolerate homosexuality hence the Karanga had negative attitudes towards homosexuality. For the Karanga, homosexuality is un-African, unethical and is not a right.

Ticha Hamundigone regards homosexuals as fools. This is because they do not value the importance of procreation and the need to maintain harmony and balance between the human and the spiritual world. The argument is that homosexuality could have been there in the Shona society but because the Shona people have always regarded it as an abomination and an indication of moral decadence, it could have been
practised secretly. Ticha Hamundigone is thus surprised to see people parading their homosexual orientation.

In support of the author’s conceptualisation of homosexuality as un-Zimbabwean from an *unhu* perspective, Chemhuru (2012:01) contends that:

Despite almost growing consensus on the tolerance of homosexuality among globalising, democratising and libertarian societies of the world, same-sex relationships remain alien, travesty, unthinkable and difficult to justify from a Zimbabwean perspective where generally value systems are sacrosanct to the philosophies of communitarianism and *unhuism* among other values that formed the mainstay of traditional Zimbabwean and African communities at large.

In the same vein, in 1995, the Zimbabwean Government shut down a book exhibition by the Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (GALZ) at the Harare International Bookfair after which President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe declared:

Homosexuals are worse than dogs and pigs, dogs and pigs will never engage in homosexual madness, even insects won’t do it. (Zhangazha, 2015: 06).

President Robert Mugabe vowed to continue criminalising homosexuality and declared that Zimbabwe would never accept homosexuality under whatever condition:

If you take men and lock them in a house for five years, and tell them to come up with two children and they fail to do that, then we will chop off their heads. We need continuity of our culture. This culture comes from the norm that women carry pregnancies for nine months. If there is anyone who disputes that, he should lift up his hands to say no, I fell from heaven. (Manayiti, 2013: 07).
In 2013, the Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe blasted President Barack Obama of America accusing him of wanting to impose gay rights in Zimbabwe:

Then we have this American President, Obama, born of an African father, who is saying we will not give you aid if you don’t embrace homosexuality. We ask, was he born out of homosexuality? We need continuity in our race, and that comes from the woman, and no to homosexuality, John and John, no, Maria and Maria, no. (Zhangazha, 2015:07).

In September 2015, at the United General Assembly meeting in New York, President Mugabe rejected pressure from Western countries to adopt what he called “new rights” by forcing Africans to accept gays and lesbians:

We equally reject attempts to prescribe new rights that are contrary to our norms, values, traditions and beliefs. We are not gays. Co-operation and respect for each other will advance the cause of human rights worldwide. Confrontation, vilification and double standards will not. (Zhangazha, 2015: 06).

Writing during a period when gay and lesbian movements like the Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe and some human rights activists are lobbying for the legalisation of same-sex marriages in Zimbabwe, one may contend that Mabasa’s conceptualisation of unhu with regards to homosexuality is compatible with the promotion of Shona fiction which is utilitarian since it serves to uphold the moral fabric of the Zimbabwean society.
5.11 Street children and adults, fragmentation of the family and community institutions and the erosion of *unhu* in Mabasa’s *Mapenzi*

Mabasa conceptualises the street children and adults verity as a societal conundrum representing the loss of *unhu*. The street children and adults reality is a manifestation of the erosion of ethos that define *unhu* which include group solidarity, caring, brotherhood, communitarianism, kinship, togetherness, sharing and human dignity. Ticha Hamundigone says:

> Ndakanonoka kusimuka kuti ndinonhonga hamburger yakanga yarasa. Ndakasara ndosvika pabhini patosvikwa kare netuvakomana twechidiki, tumastreet kids. (p.25).

(I was too slow to rise and pick the piece of hamburger that had been thrown away. When I got to the bin, I found that some young boys living on the streets had already rummaged the bin).

Scavenging for food from bins is expected of some lower animals and not from people who are fully human. The author artistically captures the magnitude of the dehumanisation of street children highlighting that children are even scrambling for the food from the bins. The author views this as a semblance of loss of *unhu*.

The causes of street children and adults in Zimbabwe are multidimensional, for example, family disintegration through deaths and divorce, child abuse, neglect and abandonment. Rukuni (2007:41-42) views the erosion of the capacity of the families and communities to address challenges that were initially handled by the family and the community as the general quandary confronting Africa today:

> The basic paradigm of *unhu-ubuntu-botho* and how our ancestors used that framework to craft institutions such as
family and community was one of the most powerful paradigms in all of human civilisation ... my own ancestors over the years had created a system that would ensure that even in situations of extreme poverty there would be no need for a single destitute, orphan or child. Even in situations of extreme poverty orphans would share that situation with their brothers and sisters in their greater family.

It is the family and community institutions that used to provide safety nets for children confronted with realities like family disintegration which is partly responsible for street children and adults. The author seems to highlight that street children and adults have created their own society whose values are anathema to *unhu* worldview. The street children live in areas that demean their humanity, for example bus ranks, drainage pipes, river banks, shop corners, abandoned buildings and under bridges. They face problems such as drug abuse, sexual harassment, food poisoning from bins and mental health challenges. The author thus shows that lack of *unhu* leadership breeds a society of unemployed and pauperised people which partly explains the prevalence of street children who have established a society whose ethics mortify them and do not tally with the celebrated *unhu* values.

**5.12 Ruralisation of urban life and the loss of *unhu* in Mabasa’s *Mapenzi***

Mabasa highlights accommodation crisis in the urban areas and portrays characters who are living under degrading and dehumanising conditions. He depicts how ruralisation of urban life has stripped people of their *unhu* as they strive to survive under a dysfunctional society characterised by poverty, unhappiness, diseases and deaths. Magumbate, Maushe and Nyoni (2013:16) define ruralisation as:
The wholesale decay in the quality of life of people in urban areas to a level that their quality of life will be more akin to rural areas and sometimes inferior than that of their rural counterparts. Ruralisation is evidenced by very poor urban social services, inadequate infrastructure and unsustainable livelihoods.

Mabasa describes squatter camps in unit D Chitungwiza where mai Tanya lives as unsuitable for human habitation:

_Chitangwena chacho chainzi vanodzingwa chaive chakatoora zvacho. Yaingovewo imba nekuti vanhu vanoshaya, asi kune vaye vane mari yekuchengeta imbwa, havaimbobvuma kuti imbwa dzavo dzirare munhu makadaro. Zvaive zvimidhadhadha zvichingoenda kunge matiroko echitima._ (p.111-112).

(The shack from which they were to be removed was unlivable and dirty. It was in a squalid and dilapidated state, not even fit for a dog to stay. It was a line of collapsing shacks like abandoned train compartments).

The author’s statement shows that accommodation in the urban areas has reduced people to the level of subhumans. In the Shona society, when one says _uri imbwa yemunhu_ (you are a dog) it shows that the person lacks _unhu_ and is not fully human. This shows the extent to which mai Tanya and her family have been dehumanised as the author suggests that their habitat is even unsuitable for dogs.

Generally, urban areas rely on modern forms of livelihoods and modern social amenities, are distinctive by using chlorinated tapped water while water in rural areas comes from wells, boreholes and rivers; urban areas have tarmac roads and pavements, rely on cleaner energy sources, people are employed in a money economy, people live in beautiful houses and they use fastest modes of transport. (ibid). Mabasa’s
One might contend that the author engages the ruralisation of urban life in Chitungwiza to expose the deteriorating livelihoods, inadequate service delivery, poor sewer services, unhygienic toileting, poor roads, use of unsustainable energy sources, inadequate and poor housing which have disconnected people from life of human dignity, happiness and kinship. Jonga and Munzwa (2010:139) corroborate the author’s portrayal of life in Chitungwiza:

Urban centres in Zimbabwe can best be described now as marked by sickening misery due to increased urban
poverty. These hardships explain the increased rate in crime, the resort by urbanites to the ventures of the informal sector and in the case of housing, the manifestations of alternatives like multi-habitation, squatter camps and informal land subdivisions. Many urban dwellers still live under conditions that are offensive, demeaning, demoralising and debilitating.

The loss of unhu in urban centres due to accommodation crisis is aptly captured by Mabasa’s observation that “Ah, handiti vazhinji vaiwana baba, mai, vana, muzukuru, hanzvadzi, navamwene mumba mumwe chete?” (p.110). (In most cases, father, mother, children, brothers and sisters, nephews slept in same room). This statement shows that urban life and poverty are eroding unhu which used to act as the ethical and cultural compass that direct and guide the Shona people’s conduct. It seems the author blames lack of ethical leadership for the ruralisation of urban life which is stripping people of their humanity. Achebe (1983:01) points out that:

The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land, or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership.

The economic decline which has impoverished people leading to the ruralisation of urban life is squarely a result of failed policies and lack of leadership which exude unhu values of accountability, transparency, honesty and integrity. Mabasa’s Mapenzi which demonstrates the nexus between Shona fiction, accommodation crisis and unhu is compatible with the promotion of Shona fiction which is utilitarian as it challenges leaders to embrace unhu as their guiding precept in formulating and implementing policies which are people oriented and which promote
collective unity, happiness, equality, caring and group solidarity which are *unhu* virtues.

5.13 Conclusion

This chapter has defined *unhu* as patterns of behaviour acceptable to the Shona people which embodies virtues that celebrate mutual social responsibility, empathy, collective unity, conformity, tolerance, humanness, harmony, obedience, group solidarity, mutual assistance, togetherness, brotherhood, equality, compassion, sympathy, trust, sharing, unselfishness, self-reliance, caring and respect for others. It has noted that the concept of *unhu* in Zimbabwe among the Shona is similar to that of other African cultures. The chapter has therefore proffered a conceptual analysis of *unhu* by applying the Zimbabwean perspective and situating it within the broader African location.

The chapter discussed and analysed how the concept of *unhu* is portrayed and applied in selected Shona novels, engaging Afrocentricity and Africana Womanist theories. The chapter has argued that Mutasa’s conception of *unhu* and pre-colonial gender in *Nhume Yamambo* is ambivalent. He portrays pre-colonial Shona women as people who are endowed with *unhu* values, very visible and active in society and contributing significantly to the rhythm of pre-colonial Shona life. Mutasa depicts pre-colonial Shona women as crucial war strategists, occupying important socio-political and religious statuses and as people whose existence is connected with that of their society. Such a conceptualisation of *unhu* and precolonial Shona women is rooted in the Africana Womanist theory and it promotes Shona fiction which is utilitarian. However, the chapter argues that Mutasa’s weakness in
Nhume Yamambo is that he demeans pre-colonial Shona women by depicting them as people who can sacrifice their humanity depending on situations. He undervalues the centrality of dignity in people’s lives which must be upheld in all situations. To that extent the negative portrayal of unhu and pre-colonial Shona women does not promote the moral fabric of the Zimbabwean society through fiction.

The chapter has also argued that Mutasa’s conceptualisation and depiction of unhu worldview in Misodzi, Dikita, neRopa is positive. The chapter has argued that Mutasa acknowledges the full humanity of pre-colonial Shona women by portraying them as custodians of unhu. Furthermore, this chapter has argued that Mutasa’s conception of pre-colonial Shona governance is rooted in the African indigenous worldview of unhu. It has argued that in a society where unhu is the foundation of leadership and governance, the society realises peace, prosperity, stability and harmony while leadership that does not embrace unhu values leads to human suffering and poverty. Such a conceptualisation of unhu and pre-colonial Shona governance and leadership provides solutions that are relevant to Zimbabwe’s contemporary nation building challenges.

This chapter has also argued that Matsikiti’s conceptualisation and depiction of unhu and pre-colonial Shona life in Rakava Buno Risifemberi is ambivalent. While the writer demonstrates that unhu meant a deep respect and regard for religious beliefs and practices, his portrayal of Gurameno as an epitome of pre-colonial Shona traditional medical practitioner is negative and unconvincing. Matsikiti further degrades the humanity of pre-colonial Shona women by portraying them as peripheral and invisible in society. The chapter has argued that
Matsikiti’s strength is his conceptualisation of *unhu* and the *nhimbe* (work-party) in precolonial Shona society which is positive.

The chapter has also argued that Chidzero’s conceptualisation of *unhu* in *Nzvengamutsvairo* is oppressive and not rooted in the *unhu* worldview. It has argued that the writer employs *unhu* tenets in order to coerce Africans to supply cheap labour at Davies’ farm. Chidzero’s solutions to the predicament of Africans lies in co-operating with white farmers who ironically impoverished them by alienating the Africans from their land and stripping them of their humanity in the process.

This chapter has also argued that Mabasa’s *Mapenzi* which demonstrates the nexus between *unhu*, Shona fiction, accommodation crisis, corruption, homosexuality and the street children phenomena is compatible with the promotion of Shona fiction which is utilitarian as it challenges leaders to embrace *unhu* as their guiding precept in their leadership in order to promote equality, integrity, stability, happiness, honesty and collective unity.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a brief summary of the major findings of the study whose focus is critical perspectives on Shona novelists’ conceptualisation and depiction of the African communitarian worldview of unhu. The chapter also gives recommendations for future research into this area of inquiry.

6.1 Research Findings

The study has established that the concept of unhu in Zimbabwe is similar to that of other African cultures. The concept has no direct translation into foreign languages and is not easily definable in those languages. Based on correspondents’ views, the research has shown that unhu embodies virtues that celebrate sharing, unselfishness, accountability, respect for others, caring, trust, sympathy, compassion, equality, brotherhood, togetherness, group solidarity, mutual assistance, obedience, harmony, humanness, tolerance, conformity, empathy, collective unity and mutual social responsibility.

The study has established that it is unhu which generates ethos that inform, govern and direct Shona people’s institutions viz political, economic, social and religious. It is unhu which regulates and directs
action and approaches to life and its challenges thus setting a premium on Shona people’s behaviour and relations.

The study has also shown that relationships among the Shona are sustained through the maintenance of ethos such as participation, harmony, hospitality and reciprocity. These relationships are not only found among the people but also exist between the people and their natural environment and are also extended to encompass the spiritual forces.

It has been demonstrated that traditional Shona society celebrates connectedness and cohesion. The individual is not seen as solitary and unbound. The Shona people believe that social fragmentation is detrimental to the realisation of societal goals. The essence is to view one’s interests within the framework of societal aspirations. An individual is not analysed apart from his problems because his challenges are also the challenges of his society. However, communalism does not necessarily make the individual a mere victim of inflexible demands on the part of society with neither individual freedom of action nor personal responsibility. Individualism has to be pursued within the matrix of the welfare of society and consequently brings honour and pride to society. (Mandova, 2013:360).

Based on respondents views from questionnaires administered, interviews held and the primary texts selected for the study, the research has established that the African communitarian worldview of unhu is portrayed and applied in selected Shona novels in ways that are both oppressive and liberating.
It has been shown that Chidzero employs the *unhu* tenet of harmonious co-existence in a way that persuades Africans to supply cheap labour to white farmers since *unhu* celebrates harmony and peaceful co-existence. The harmony that Chidzero advocates for between the blacks and the whites during this period benefits the whites who are experiencing labour shortages. The presence of white settlers in colonial Zimbabwe led to inevitable conflicts and clashes of interests with indigenous African people such that harmonious relationships which the author advocates for lead to further exploitation of the African people of Chitehwe village.

Given the unequal socio-economic relations between the whites and the blacks, Chidzero’s advocation of harmony and peace between blacks and whites in his novel does not serve the interests of Africans who are exploited by the colonial system. To that extent, his *Nzvengamutsvairo* is not rooted in the African indigenous worldview of *unhu* and it does not promote Shona fiction which is utilitarian. The proletarianisation of Africans led to humiliation and dehumanisation of blacks in the farms, mines and towns, actions which are anathema to the African worldview of *unhu*. Africans were harassed, beaten and reduced to a level less than that of human beings. His work is therefore not progressive and liberating but oppressive as Thelwell (1987:227) observes:

> Any black writer who writes about black peoples, societies, and cultures but who addresses his work not to the people who are his subjects but to the Western literati is nothing but an exploiter of his own. Such a writer accepts and perpetuates the colonial mission in literature begun by the Kiplings and Conrads of the imperial age.

Thelwell’s observations corroborate this study’s establishment that Chidzero’s view that blacks and whites subscribe to the *unhu* worldview
of togetherness, brotherhood, equality, caring, sharing, harmony, collective unity and group solidarity is superficial and oppressive.

This research has also shown that Chidzero’s conceptualisation of the unhu tenets of interdependence and mutual reciprocity in society is not Afrocentric as it does not portray the situation obtaining in colonial Zimbabwe. The artist assumes that the interdependence and mutual reciprocity that exist in the African concept of unhu is what is obtaining between farmer Davies and the Africans of Chitehwe village. The study has shown that such an assumption distorts reality since there is no mutual reciprocity as it is only Africans who supply cheap labour to white farmers under conditions that strip Africans of their unhu.

The study has also established that Chidzero’s solution to the predicament of Africans living in Chitehwe village lies in co-operating with white farmers who ironically impoverished them by alienating the Africans from their land and engendering a process of proletarianisation which dehumanised them and stripped them of their humanity. The study has shown that such an approach does not provide solutions to politico-economic and socio-cultural problems.

The research has also established that Mabasa’s Mapenzi is rooted in the African worldview of unhu and it promotes Shona fiction which is utilitarian. It has shown that Mabasa’s Mapenzi challenges leaders to embrace unhu as their guiding precept in formulating and implementing policies which are people oriented and which promote peace, stability, accountability, harmony, happiness, equality and honesty, a standpoint which renders his solutions relevant to Zimbabwe’s current nation building challenges.
The study has also established that Mabasa demonstrates that corruption is calamitous and leads to a diseased society of fools who do not respect *unhu* virtues of honesty and accountability. Corruption remains a topical issue in Zimbabwe’s contemporary dispensation and it has weakened and destroyed national institutions. The writer’s solution that leaders should revisit their *unhu* values of transparency, integrity, honesty and accountability in order to combat corruption which is paralysing the economy is relevant in finding an emancipative and sustainable solution to Zimbabwe’s current nation building challenges.

The research has also established that Mabasa views homosexuality as unAfrican and inimical to the African celebrated ethos of procreation and clan continuity. Writing during an epoch when gay and lesbian movements like the Gay and Lesbians of Zimbabwe and some human rights activists are lobbying for the legalisation of same-sex marriages in Zimbabwe, the study has ascertained that Mabasa’s conceptualisation of *unhu* with regards to homosexuality is compatible with the promotion of Shona fiction which is utilitarian since it serves to uphold the moral fabric of the Zimbabwean society.

The study has also shown that Mabasa engages the ruralisation of urban life in Chitungwiza to highlight the degrading and dehumanising living conditions which have stripped people of their *unhu* as they strive to survive under a dysfunctional society of lunatics characterised by poverty, unhappiness, diseases and deaths. The economic decline which has impoverished people leading to the ruralisation of urban life is squarely a result of failed policies and lack of leadership which exude *unhu* ethos of accountability, transparency, honesty and integrity. Mabasa’s *Mapenzi* which demonstrates the nexus between Shona
fiction, accommodation crisis and unhu is compatible with the promotion of Shona fiction which is utilitarian as it challenges leaders to embrace unhu as their guiding precept in formulating and implementing policies which are people oriented and which promote collective unity, equality, happiness, caring and group solidarity which are unhu virtues.

The research has also established that Matsikiti’s portrayal of unhu and pre-colonial Shona life is ambivalent. It has been argued that the writer devalues the humanity of pre-colonial Shona women by portraying them as peripheral and invisible in societal issues. His work undervalues unhu and complementary gender roles and stands inimical to the Africana Womanist theoretical perspective which recognises an Africana woman as one who places high premium on family centrality and as one who does not disconnect her survival from that of her entire family. The study has shown that Matsikiti’s approach does not produce a good work of art because:

It is the quality of morals that make African literature beautiful. Good literature is therefore literature that supports the rehabilitation and restoration of African people’s well-being and self respect. (Furusa, 2002:46).

In line with Furusa’s observation, this study has established that to the extent that Matsikiti distorts pre-colonial gender relations, his work does not explicate unhu as a basis of solutions to challenges bedeveling Africa and Zimbabwe in particular.

The research has also shown that Matsikiti’s conceptualisation of unhu and Shona religion in pre-colonial Shona life is ambivalent. While the writer demonstrates that unhu meant a deep respect and regard for religious beliefs and practices, his portrayal of Gurameno as an epitome
of pre-colonial Shona traditional medical practitioners is negative and unconvincing.

The study has established that Matsikiti’s portrayal of unhu and the nhimbe (work-party) concept is rooted in the African indigenous worldview of unhu. The writer demonstrates the importance of cooperation, collaboration, interdependence and collective solidarity which are unhu virtues celebrated in Shona society.

This study has established that Mutasa’s conceptualisation of unhu and pre-colonial gender in Nhume Yamambo is ambivalent. While the writer depicts pre-colonial women as people who are endowed with unhu values and occupying influential socio-political and religious statuses, Mutasa demeans pre-colonial Shona women by portraying them as people who can sacrifice their humanity in some situations. The research has also established that Mutasa’s conception of unhu and pre-colonial gender in Misodzi, Dikita neRopa is positive as the writer acknowledges the full humanity of pre-colonial Shona women.

This study has also established that Mutasa’s conceptualisation of unhu and pre-colonial Shona governance in Misodzi, Dikita neRopa is rooted in the African indigenous worldview of unhu. Mutasa challenges leaders to premise their leadership on unhu in order to realise prosperity, peace and stability as part of the solutions which this research has found plausible.

6.2 Recommendations
This study has identified the following as points of departure for future research:
1. This research was a discourse on Shona novelists’ conceptualisation and depiction of the African communitarian worldview of *unhu*. The study selected some Shona novels which served the aim and objectives of this research. However, it would be interesting if researchers select novels from some other indigenous African languages or those novels written in English portraying African realities and assess how the *unhu* worldview is portrayed and applied in literature. Furthermore, researchers may also look at other literary genres such as drama, poetry and the short story in order to ascertain the relationship between literature and the *unhu* worldview.

2. It is fundamental to note that critical works contribute in shaping the development of African literature and the attitude of readers towards certain works of art because writers and readers of fictional works also read critical works. As interpreters of fictional works and African realities, scholars on *unhu* worldview must research widely about various facets of the *unhu* worldview and why these were valued. Such an approach helps writers and consumers who may have approached these various facets of *unhu* from general assumptions.

3. Furthermore, scholars who intend to research on this area of inquiry should necessarily view writer’s works using a mirror from the writer’s community and not to view the writer’s conceptualisation of *unhu* worldview using a mirror from outside the writer’s community. This allows researchers to arrive at fair judgements since this is an African communitarian worldview. Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa Jemmie and Ihechukwu Madubuike
(1980:287) observe that “whereas the artist creates cultural artifacts, critics evaluate them. Where the artist is maker of well-made things, the critic is a maker of judgements.”

4. The African writers should also research widely on issues they dissect in their fictional works in order to perform a role similar to that of a traditional African artist who spoke for and to his community. This substantial research allows the writers to produce works that are compatible with the promotion of African fiction which is utilitarian. It allows the writers to proffer solutions that are relevant in finding emancipative and sustainable solutions to Africa’s contemporary myriad of challenges.

5. The unhu worldview is a broad area with various facets that include education, environmental conservation, health, homosexual debates, governance, HIV and AIDS, gender and conflict resolution. This research has dissected some of these facets which were adequate to serve the aim and objectives of this study. Researchers may want to look at how some of these aspects not tackled in this study are portrayed and applied in literature.
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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Questionnaire for academics and students

1. What do you consider to be the African writer’s social responsibilities?

2. In your view, what is the role of African critics?

3. Do you think there is a nexus between the African communitarian worldview of unhu and Shona fiction? There is a link/ there is no link

4. Justify your answer above
5. How have Zimbabwean writers writing in the Shona language portrayed the African traditional worldview of *unhu* in their novels?

6. To what extent is the depiction of the African worldview of *unhu* by Zimbabwean writers writing in the Shona language compatible with the promotion of Shona fiction which is utilitarian? Very large extent, large extent, lesser extent.

7. Justify your response to 6

8. What are the strengths and weaknesses of selected Shona fiction in their depiction of the *unhu* worldview?

   **Strengths**
   
   **Weaknesses**
9. How have writers of Shona fiction promoted the moral fabric of the Zimbabwean society?

10. How competent are Shona writers writing in the Shona language in explicating *unhu* as a basis of solutions to politico-economic and socio-cultural challenges bedevilling Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular?
Appendix B: Focus group interview guide

1. What is *unhu*?

2. Explain the Shona aphorism ‘*munhu munhu navanhu*’ (A person is a person through other people)

3. Describe the principles of *unhu* that you know

4. What are the importance of *unhu* ethics?

5. What do you consider to be the factors behind the erosion of *unhu* in contemporary Africa

6. In your view is the indigenous worldview of *unhu* relevant in contemporary Africa?

7. Can *unhu* provide ethical basis for leadership in Africa today?

8. Do you know any other African culture with the same concept? If yes, explain
Appendix C: Interview guide for readers and citizens

1. What do you think is the justification for the legality of homosexuality in some countries?

2. In your view, is homosexuality unAfrican? Yes/no
   If yes, explain

3. What do you consider to be the effects of corruption in Zimbabwe?

4. State cases of corruption that you know in Zimbabwe

5. In your view what are the causes of corruption in Zimbabwe?

6. From your observation, what steps are being taken by the Zimbabwean government to combat corruption

7. What is unhu?

8. Do you think there is a nexus between the African communitarian worldview of unhu and Shona fiction? There is a link/ there is no link
   If yes, explain

9. What are street children?

10. What are the causes of street children?

11. What are the effects of street children?
12. In your view, what are the solutions for street children?

13. How has the street children phenomena been portrayed in Shona literature?

14. What are the causes of gender inequality in Zimbabwe?

15. How do you respond to the view that tradition hinders gender equality in Zimbabwe?

16. How have gender issues been depicted in Shona literature?

17. What is ruralisation of urban life?

18. What forms does ruralisation take?

19. What are the effects of ruralisation of urban life?

20. How has ruralisation of urban life been portrayed in Shona literature?
Appendix D: Interview guide for authors

1. What do you consider to be the African writer’s social responsibilities?

2. In your view, what is the role of African critics?

3. What are the major concerns of your works?

4. What theoretical perspective/s if any, informs your works?

5. Who do you consider to be your intended audience?

6. Do you think there is a nexus between the African communitarian worldview of *unhu* and Shona fiction? Explain

7. Do you consider *unhu* a basis for solutions to politico-economic and socio-cultural challenges in Zimbabwe’s current dispensation?

8. Do you face any challenges today in articulating your social vision?
   If yes explain