

**A STUDY OF SHONA WAR FICTION: THE
WRITERS' PERSPECTIVES**

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NOVEMBER 2009

DECLARATION

Student number: 0650-426-4

I declare that **A study of Shona war fiction: The writers' perspectives** 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.



23 September 2009

SIGNATURE
(WL CHIGIDI)

DATE

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SUMMARY

This thesis is an in-depth study of Shona fiction about the liberation war in Zimbabwe. It looks at the way Zimbabwe's liberation war is portrayed in Shona fiction and focuses on the factors that shaped writers' perspectives on that war. It is argued that Shona war fiction writers romanticised the war and in the process simplified and distorted history. The researcher postulates that writers' perspectives on this liberation war were shaped by factors that include the mood of celebration and euphoria, the dominant ideology of the time, the situations of independence and freedom, and literary competitions. The thesis further raises and illustrates the point that writers produced romances of adventure because they were writing on the theme of war, and if one writes on the theme of war one ends up writing an adventure story. However, it is also acknowledged that because authors were writing on a historical event they could not ignore history completely. Some aspects of history are incorporated into the fiction, thereby retaining a semblance of historical realism. The post-independence period is also seen as a time of cultural revival and this is considered as the reason behind the authors' tendency to celebrate Shona traditional institutions and culture. The celebration of Shona traditional religion and culture introduced into the fiction the element of the supernatural that strengthened the romance aspect of the novels. Shona war fiction writers also perpetuate female stereotyping. Female characters are depicted as everything except guerrilla fighters. It is argued that there are no female characters that play roles of guerrilla fighters because during the actual war women were not visible at the war front, fighting. The thesis argues that men, who were pioneers of the guerrilla war and writers of the war stories, excluded women from liberation war discourse and ultimately from literary discourse as well. A few writers who comment on the quality of Zimbabwe's independence and freedom show the disillusionment and despair of the peasants and ex-combatants as they struggled to settle down and recover from the war.

Key terms

Writers' perspectives, Shona war fiction, romances of adventure, fictionalisation of history, cultural revival, theme of war, guerrilla war, war of liberation, collective heroism, post-independence celebration, politics of naming, female guerrillas.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PREAMBLE

Immediately after Zimbabwe's independence there emerged a novelistic tradition that focused on depicting the Second War of Liberation in Zimbabwe. The manner, nature and timing of the birth of this fiction clearly demonstrate that it was an unleashing of voices that had been stifled for too long and were yearning to be heard. Many Shona novels were published that depicted the Second War of Liberation in a manner that showed that there was a common pattern in themes and style. The novels showed a certain characteristic that is also discernible in detective fiction, that is, if you read one you have read all of them. Most of these novels are similar in that they portray an unrealistic and distorted picture of the liberation war in Zimbabwe. They depict battles that are usually won by guerrilla fighters, '*pungwes*' where people sing, dance and chant slogans, and distort casualty figures so that they do not reflect reality on the ground. Reading many of these novels leaves one with the impression that this war was a kind of picnic. One gets the impression that the war was a stroll in the park, and yet those who experienced it practically know very well that it was not fun at all. Those who were involved in it know quite well that it was a real war, and in a real war there are casualties on both sides.

The war of liberation in Zimbabwe started in earnest in 1966 with the Chinhoyi Battle and ended in 1979. Thirteen years of war should be long enough for a genre to emerge and develop significantly. Throughout the war, no Shona novels that dealt with the liberation war appeared. However, the enthusiasm and flurry with which fictional works on the Second War of Liberation in Zimbabwe appeared soon after independence raises more questions than one, and questions that call for more answers than have been given so far.

The Second War of Liberation in Zimbabwe occurred in a particular epoch in the history of the country and its events are well known and well documented in history books and in the national archives. The Shona fiction writers who wrote on this war

appear to be looking at the war from a particular perspective. They seem to be looking at the war from an angle where they cannot see things in their correct perspective. They seem to have their own perspective on the war that differs from the perspective of those who experienced it practically. Some writers of fictional works who create their works out of nothing except their creative and imaginative genius are judged on the basis of whether the events they depict are typical and whether their characters represent typical characters as found in real life. The liberation war fiction writers have the unenviable task of writing on events that took place in real life. These are events that many people know and which have had far reaching consequences for Zimbabwe, the region and the rest of the world. The names of their fictional characters are often mentioned alongside the names of historically prominent people, some of them who authored and executed the liberation war in Zimbabwe. The tendency for critics to judge these writers in relation to how accurately they depict the war that took place is always there.

Whatever their perspectives on the Second War of Liberation in Zimbabwe are, Shona war fiction writers were influenced by certain factors to portray the liberation war in the manner they do. This study is motivated by the desire to examine and understand how Shona war fiction writers portray the liberation war. It is further motivated by the desire to examine and understand those factors that shaped the authors' perspectives on the war. If the definition given by the Chambers' Concise Dictionary (1988:785) is used as a guide the word 'perspective' means,

The act of drawing objects on a surface, so as to give the picture the same appearance to the eye as the objects themselves...

If we apply this definition to the literature under study it means the war is the object and the novel is the surface on which the object is drawn. Now when one looks at the surface (the novel) one notices that the picture drawn on it does not give the same appearance to the eye as the object (the war) itself. Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary (1987:1071) defines the word 'perspective' as:

a particular way of thinking about or viewing something especially one that is influenced by your beliefs or experiences.

Bearing these definitions in mind it can be suggested that writers have their own particular ways of viewing situations or objects they depict in their works. When they depict what they see realistically, it can be because they are influenced by the truth that they see or know. However, when a number of writers write about the same situation or object and almost all of them distort it or misrepresent it, there could be common factors that influence them to do that.

In order to provide a better understanding of the nature of Shona war fiction that emerged at the end of the Second War of Liberation in Zimbabwe, the research attempts to answer such questions as: (a) How do writers of Shona war fiction portray the Second War of Liberation in Zimbabwe? (b) What historical, political, social and cultural circumstances prevailed in Zimbabwe at the time that Shona war fiction emerged that affected it directly? (c) What elements, factors or influences shaped Shona war fiction writer's perspectives on the Second War of Liberation? (d) What makes them to persist with female stereotyping in their works? (e) How do Shona war fiction writers perceive this war and its outcome? Answering such research questions leads to a better understanding of the way Shona fiction writers portray the war, and also leads to a better appreciation of the factors that played a significant role in shaping Shona authors' perspectives on it.

1.2 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

The research aims at an in depth study of Shona war fiction that discusses writer's perspectives on the Second War of liberation in Zimbabwe. It aims at establishing the authors' perspectives on the liberation war, their set of beliefs and their interpretation of the actions and events of the war. The research is motivated by the desire to highlight the various factors that influenced writers of Shona war fiction in their portrayal of the liberation war. It is hoped that the research would give new insight and add new dimensions to the existing knowledge about fiction on Zimbabwe's liberation war.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The research problem outlined above can be approached through a set of research objectives. The research hopes:

- (i) To describe Shona war fiction so as to bring out its characteristics.
- (ii) To explore Shona writer's perspectives on the Second War of Liberation in Zimbabwe.
- (iii) To explain the elements or factors that were responsible for producing Shona war fiction in the state in which it is.
- (iv) To lead to an understanding of the influences that moulded Shona war fiction writers' perception of the Second War of Liberation in Zimbabwe.

1.4 JUSTIFICATION OF THE RESEARCH

The study is significant in that it will provide possible answers to the endless and nagging questions that readers have about the quality and nature of Shona war fiction and its portrayal of the Second War of Liberation in Zimbabwe. Existing researches on the Zimbabwean war have tended to focus on the depiction of various aspects of the war. These include Mwaoneni's *The function of war myths and their portrayal in novels about the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe* (1995) Viriri's *The depiction of the Zimbabwe liberation struggle in selected Shona war novels* (1999), and Musendekwa's *Images of women in selected Shona war novels* (2001). Aspects such as the physical fighting itself, the all-night meetings called *pungwes*, the role of religion and traditions and the images of women, have all been dealt with before. However, no serious effort has been made by those who have studied Shona war fiction to explain the factors that influenced authors to depict aspects of the war in the manner they depict it. Shona war fiction represents a literary genre of its own kind that can be separated from mainstream Shona fiction. The study will therefore contribute to the understanding of the elements that gave Shona war fiction its character and quality. It is important to consider circumstances that prevailed at the time Shona war fiction emerged and to consider the role that history and cultural traditions played in shaping it. There is also need to explain whether authors could have handled the theme of war without writing adventure stories. The study will also contribute significantly to the understanding of why in Shona war fiction there is

persistent female stereotyping and why there are also different perspectives about the outcome of the war. It is significant that a new and better understanding of Shona literature about the Second War of Liberation in Zimbabwe that emerged after independence is provided.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODS

In this study the qualitative research design is used. This design is marked by essential features that include the correct choice of appropriate methods and theories, and the identification and analysis of different perspectives. In this qualitative study the Marxist and the sociological approaches were identified as the appropriate approaches to guide the researcher. Various perspectives of different liberation war fiction writers were recognised and analysed. This study is concerned with an in-depth analysis of various texts in order to develop an understanding of the way Shona fiction writers viewed Zimbabwe's war of liberation. Qualitative research is appropriate for this kind of study because, unlike the quantitative research, "it does not involve counting numbers and dealing with numbers but is based on information expressed in words-descriptions, accounts, opinions, feelings..." (Walliman, 2006:129). It uses narrative, content and discourse ((Denzin and Lincoln, 1998:5). This research deals with a well-known historical event in which various men and women were involved, and therefore the qualitative researcher "think(s) reflectively, historically and biographically" (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998:xi).

In this thesis an attempt is made to achieve an in-depth understanding of the conditions that created and shaped the Shona liberation war novel. For this reason, the qualitative research approach was adopted because it is "inherently multimethod in focus" and the "use of multiple methods is an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question" (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998:4). The phenomenon in question in the case of this study is fiction on Zimbabwe's liberation war of the 1970s.

As a means of collecting data to address the research problem therefore, the following approaches were used. Firstly, a number of primary sources that deal with the Second War of Liberation in Zimbabwe were analysed. For purposes of this research a broader view of the term fiction is adopted in order to encompass within it a wider spectrum of literary works. The intention here is to include in the study two

Shona plays that also focus on the Second War of Liberation. In addition, where necessary, English narratives that focus on the Second War of Liberation in Zimbabwe are used to provide useful cross-references. Such texts include novels such as Alexander Kanengoni's *Echoing Silences* (1997), Garikai Mutasa's *The Contact* (1985), Charles Samupindi's *Pawns* (1992), Isheunesu Mazorodze's *Silent Journey from the East* (1989), and plays like George Mujajati's *The Rain of my Blood* (1991). Secondly, secondary sources that are relevant to the topic were also used and they helped to shade or throw some light on the subject of liberation war. Secondary sources that were considered include analyses of relevant fictional works as well as researched historical accounts of the actual war itself. Many of these accounts of the actual war carry in them views of some of the people who actually fought in the war, both males and females, who were interviewed by the authors.

The other important sources of relevant information were the authors of Shona war novels themselves. The first decade of Zimbabwe's independence was the period when most Shona war novels were published. Publishing Houses such as Mambo Press, The College Press and Longman were approached for purposes of obtaining contact addresses of those authors who wrote Shona war novels. The researcher was able to conduct face-to-face interviews with those authors that he managed to reach. One of the easiest ways of gathering information is simply to ask someone who knows whatever it is you want to know (Jones, 1996:140). The researcher was particularly keen to find out why writers of Shona war fiction portrayed the war in the manner they did, and one of the best ways to do it was to seek explanations from the writers themselves as well. Most of the interview questions were of a general nature and not text specific, except in cases where follow-up to answers were made. The interview method had the advantage of flexibility. The researcher was able to adapt the questions to what individual interviewees said. What was used was therefore qualitative interview "which might appear almost conversational to an eavesdropper" (Jones, 1996:140). Those who were interviewed were able to supply useful information that primary and secondary sources were not able to provide or facts that complemented information obtained from these texts.

Many of the Shona war books that appeared soon after independence were published by Mambo Press, College Press and Longman in collaboration with the Literature Bureau. It was therefore more relevant to examine the editorial policy of the

Literature Bureau with regards to the publication of manuscripts that related to the liberation war in Zimbabwe. By the time the research was carried out the Literature Bureau had ceased to exist. However, a lengthy interview with Bisset Chitsike, who had worked for the Bureau since 1969 when it was still known as the Rhodesia Literature Bureau, supplied the researcher with valuable and insightful data.

1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW

In a work of this nature it is important to familiarise oneself with what other researchers who have done some research in the same field have already found out. Besides showing where gaps have been left out literature review gives the researcher some guidance or some direction. It inspires, educates, informs and helps one to generate his or her own ideas. This means that in research one needs to depend on existing knowledge in order to come up with new knowledge. Zina O'Leary (2004:67) sums it up well when he points out that:

Research may be done alone-but it is never done in isolation. The production of new knowledge is fundamentally dependent on past knowledge. Knowledge builds, and it is virtually impossible for researchers to add to a body of literature, if they are not conversant with it. Simply put, working with literature is an essential part of the research process.

It is in the light of the above that a number of sources are going to be reviewed.

In *Violence & Memory: One Hundred Years in the Dark Forest of Matebeleland*, Alexander, McGregor and Ranger (2000) discuss in Chapter 8 the insecurity and violence that went on in some parts of Matebeleland and the Midlands Provinces of Zimbabwe immediately after independence. Though this research is on Shona war fiction, some of the issues raised in the book are relevant, particularly the dissident issue because this study includes a discussion of perspectives on the war aftermath. The dissident problem is the 'war' fought after the war. In this chapter the authors attempt an analysis of the violence that characterised the newly formed Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) and the attendant dissident problem. They also try to provide an explanation for the outbreak of violence and the subsequent dissident activity. One

thing that emerges prominently in this study is the distrust between units of the three former armies that formed the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA), particularly that between the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) and the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA), distrust that became more pronounced during the ceasefire and life in the assembly points. The authors cite the persecution of members of the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) following disturbances at places like Entumbane in Bulawayo and Connemara near Kwekwe and the discovery of arms caches on ZIPRA farms as major reasons for the unfortunate desertions that led to the formation of the leaderless dissident group. Also of importance is the Chapter headed '*Perspectives on the 1980s Conflict*'. Authors note that the dissident problem hampered post-war efforts at reconciliation and reconstruction. Equally chronicled are the violent activities of the Fifth Brigade and the activities of the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) that was deployed to deal with the dissidents. The authors' incisive analysis of the problem is very insightful on the part of the history covered by the war fiction under study.

In the article '*Rhodesian Discourse, Rhodesian Novels and Zimbabwean Liberation War*', Anthony Chennels (1995) discusses English novels that focus on the liberation struggle. Although he discusses a number of English novels that cover the entire Rhodesian discourse starting with the nationalist struggle of the 1960s and early 1970s, for the purpose of this research the focus is on selected novels that focus on the later part of the struggle that deals largely with the intensification of the armed struggle. Chennels observes that Peter Stiff's '*The Rain Goddess*' (1973) "Attempts a far more sustained guerrilla perspective on the guerrilla war than any previous novel had provided" (Chennels, 1995:120). Peter Stiff was a Superintendent in the British South Africa Police (BSAP) and wrote from the vantage point of one who knew the seriousness of the guerrilla threat to white settler interests. Chennels observes that Stiff gives the impression that guerrillas recruited youngsters only by accident or by deceit but his narrative fails to give credence to this view. He notices that guerrillas in the narrative are depicted as mindless savages. Chennels also looks at Michael Hartmann's '*Game for Vultures*' and observes that the possibility of a guerrilla victory is hinted at on several occasions, and for the first time in a novel written by a Rhodesian, blacks who are opposed to the settler rule are not portrayed as crazy savages but human beings who fight for a just cause. This is relevant to the current

study as most writers of Shona war fiction try to justify the war in one way or another. According to Chennels, Reiner in *'The Day of Chaminuka'* (1976) usefully shows how outsiders who had little reason to be drawn to either side of the Rhodesian conflict saw things in terms of black and white. As for Giles Trippette's *'The Mercenaries'* Chennels observes that the author's every observation about blacks in the novel is inaccurate or absurd. He thinks Trippette relied on information from the Ministry of Information handouts or speculation among white farmers for the information about guerrilla tactics and recruiting methods. Trippette implies that no black ever joins the war voluntarily. Both authors were not settlers. But as for the Rhodesian settler novelists they were under the incessant Rhodesian propaganda, which shaped their perception of the war so they never saw guerrilla victory as possible. What Chennels sees contrasts sharply with what is seen in the Shona war novels under study: they also never see Rhodesian victory as having been possible. Equally politically ignorant as *'The Mercenaries'* is Robert Early's *'A Time of Madness'* (1977). Early's attitude to blacks is shaped by racism and when he creates a Hungarian national, Stanslau, as a mastermind behind the guerrillas, Chennels concludes that he is saying 'blacks cannot manage their own revolution' (Chennels, 1995:126).

Chennels also observes that the period between 1977 and 1979 had shown that the possibility of guerrilla victory was there and novelists had no more choice but to turn to fantasy. He sees Lloyd Burtons and Peter Armstrong as indulging in fantasies in *'The Yellow Mountain'* (1978) and *'Operation Zambezi'* (1979) respectively, to the extent of the latter believing that "without Chinese and Soviet backing the guerrilla threat would wither away" (Chennels, 1995:127), without their grievances withering away. C.E. Gibbs's *'Spotted Soldiers'* (1978) shows that by 1978, for some novelists at least, the horror of the war transcended and destroyed the polarities of "heroic whites" and "savage blacks". Chennels concludes that most novels depict the Rhodesians as people with a great moral authority on their side because they believed that the guerrillas wanted to wrestle from the whites land and privileges which were rightfully theirs. Equally, the Shona works under study depict the guerrillas as people with a great moral authority on their side because they believed that whites had stolen their land. Since most of the novels Chennels studied were written by Rhodesians, some of them actively involved in the British South Africa

Police and the Rhodesian army, their perspectives on the war often provide contrast with the perspectives of Shona authors writing on the war after 1980.

Emmanuel Chiwome, in '*A Comparative Analysis of Solomon Mutswairo and Yvonne Vera's Handling of the Legend Nehanda*' (2002), compares how Mutswairo and Vera handle the legend of Nehanda. Chiwome notices that in *Mweya WaNehanda* Mutswairo touches on issues of Shona nomenclature, land and the displacement of the people to create way for white institutions. He notices also that Mutswairo describes Nehanda's role in the subsequent uprising by the Shona people from a nationalist's perspective. In Vera's *Nehanda* the importance of ancestral spirits to surviving descendants is given prominence, showing that the spirits of the dead continue to have a vested interest in the lives of the living. It is also shown that Vera, like Mutswairo, pays much attention to cultural details and that in some cases Vera reverts to 'oral stylization' to show how local people perceived the invasion of their country by foreigners. Resentment at this invasion forces Nehanda and her people to go to war. The current research touches on the cultural aspects of the war and the role of the legend of Nehanda in the liberation war is discussed at various stages in the development of the thesis. Nehanda is very much part of the oral traditions of the Shona people.

Vambe in his '*African Oral Story-telling Tradition and the Zimbabwe Novel in English*' (2004) discusses Yvonne Vera's '*The Stone Virgins*' and raises pertinent points that have a bearing on the current research. Vambe observes that Vera presents a Ndebele women's version of the post-independence civil war in Zimbabwe and refuses to leave it as men's responsibility. Vera also tells the story of the war of independence from the point of view of Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army female guerrillas. The civil war fought in post-independent Zimbabwe between the government of Zimbabwe and the so-called Zimbabwe African People's Union dissidents is also relived through the memory of two Ndebele female characters. Vambe shows that remembering the war narrative from the position of women in the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) in a way undermines both the male dominated and the official versions of the liberation war as given by the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU). This is in sharp contrast to the version of the liberation war readers get from those

who write Shona war fiction, both males and females, which seem to echo the official version, and a male version for that matter. Vambe notices also that Vera refuses to explain the reasons for the civil war giving the impression that the new 'black government was extremely xenophobic and tribalistic, which might not be the whole truth about the complexity of that war' (Vambe, 2004:103). The explanation that Vera does not give would have been pertinent in this study because it would become part of the explanation for the way writers depict the liberation war. In his analysis of Vera's novel Vambe shows that women are guerrillas, narrative voices, victims and many other things that are important for our understanding of the images of women in Shona war fiction. Although Vambe analyses English novels, the 'politics' of remembering and cultural memory are relevant issues to this study, which deals with Shona novelists' perspectives on the Second War of Liberation.

In *'Images of Women in Selected Shona War Novels'* (2001) Taurai Musendekwa depicts the role of women in Zimbabwe's liberation war as that of supporting the guerrillas. The writer argues that women provided material support, information, entertainment, and spiritual and religious guidance as spirit mediums, but they are never portrayed as actual guerrilla fighters. The writer does not see trained women as cadres at the front except as *chimbwidos*. She argues that Shona novels portrayal of women as combatants contradicts with Mugabe's assertion that women also fought on the front and became exposed to the enemy bullets in the same way as men. She seems to observe that women are portrayed in Shona novels as victims, either of rape or torture from the Rhodesian forces. The study goes on to assert that the majority of women got frustrated and disappointed by what they got after independence. Any comprehensive study of Shona war fiction should interest itself with this subject of how women characters are portrayed.

Fay Chung's *'Re-living The Second Chimurenga: Memories from Zimbabwe's Liberation Struggle'* (2006) gives an insight not only of an active feminist but also of someone who was involved in the liberation war, having joined it in 1973 in Zambia. She points out in her account that forced conscription was a feature of both the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and that this is one way the parties swelled their numbers. She also discusses traditional religion as having been the main ideology of Zimbabwe African

National Union's struggle during the liberation war and that it was still very strong among the peasants. The role of traditional religion and that of Nehanda as an inspiration to the fighters are given prominent attention. Chung talks of the role of spirit mediums in winning the support of the peasants for the liberation struggle and the ethical rules they put in place to guide the guerrillas in their conduct for the successful execution of the war to take place. In a chapter titled '*Josiah Tongogara: Commander of ZANLA*' Chung raises the pertinent issue of the treatment of women as sex objects by top commanders who "felt free to enjoy sexual favours as the reward for their extraordinary role in the liberation war" (Chung, 2006:125). She contends that women played a critical part in the liberation struggle before independence and many rose to become military commanders responsible for commanding men as well as women. She then concludes that this translated into having "a number of prominent freedom fighters included in the new political leadership as parliamentarians and cabinet ministers" (Chung, 2006:290). This revelation is crucial because this perspective is not reflected in the Shona war fiction. The research seeks to find out why, if women were commanding men in the liberation war, this is not corroborated by Shona fiction writers. Chung agrees with Lyons' (2004) view that the decision to train women as guerrillas for the first time came about because of the need to transport weapons to the front. She argues that women could do this because they were better suited to do political work among other women, were used to carrying heavy loads on their heads and walk long distances and were least suspected by the Rhodesian security forces.

In a chapter titled 'The Fruits of independence' Chung raises a number of other issues that have a bearing on the topic under discussion. She discusses how the new black government nurtured the cancer of corruption, politics of patronage and the change of Zimbabwe African National Union's (Patriotic Front) ideology from socialism to that of Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) and its devastating effects on the economy and social services. She also explains how the new black government inherited the bureaucratic institutions left intact by Ian Smith and how they were used for better or worse. She also raises the issue of how the process of land redistribution has been handled since 1980, pointing out the resistance to it by various groups with vested interests, the pitfalls of it and the role of the land question in the 2000 elections and after. This chapter on 'the fruits of

independence' throws some light on the themes of disillusionment and 'protest' that characterise some of the Shona war literature that depicts the post-independence Zimbabwean scenario.

'The Presentation of Violence, the Individual, History and the Land Question in Chinodya's Harvest of Thorns and Nyamufukudza's The Non-Believer's Journey' by Jo Dandy (2002) discusses how Chinodya and Nyamufukudza represent violence in the two novels. Dandy sees the suppression of the images of violence and the portrayal of individuals who remain silent in the face of any form of suffering. Guerrillas, peasants and others caught up in the liberation war are portrayed as suffering in silence. She also observes that both novels reveal a deep preoccupation with history. Chinodya narrates the history of the nation's colonisation as an oral historical account, in the story told by the guerrilla leader Baas Die to the villagers, and Nyamufukudza shows concern with differing versions of facts in his novel, referring, for example, to the discrepancies between casualty figures cited by guerrillas and by the government. The image of land is seen as very powerful in both novels and is closely associated with local history and the war. In both novels the land is everything to the local people and is a central image in the war of liberation. Dandy's findings are important because they demonstrate the affinity that is there between these two English novels and Shona war novels. The Shona war novels also show preoccupation with history, and the issuing of misleading casualty figures and the centrality of the land question are some of its characteristic features. What Dandy does not do and which this thesis attempts to do is to explain the factors that influence writers of Shona war fiction to exaggerate things.

Eldred Jones, in an article titled *'Land, War & Literature in Zimbabwe: A Sampling'* (1996) correctly acknowledges land as the central image in the Zimbabwean liberation war discourse. Jones recognizes the fact that independence and majority rule came to Zimbabwe through a bitter war by a people dispossessed of everything against foreigners who enslaved them. He makes a pertinent remark that "Post-war Zimbabwe writing examines the meaning of the liberation achieved through the sacrifices of the combatants and the plight of the ordinary people, often caught in the middle, the inheritors of victory" (Jones, 1996:50). This study seeks to discuss the images of post-independence Zimbabwe and explain why some writers depict the

ordinary people as the inheritors of the victory as Jones implies, while others seem to have doubts about that. According to Jones, the liberation war is also central to the collection of short stories '*Effortless Tears*' by Alexander Kanengoni. Jones further makes an interesting observation that though the war was fought over the appropriation of land by invaders, blacks were, ironically, found on both sides of the conflict as government soldiers and as freedom fighters. His analysis of Kanengoni's short stories leaves him with the conclusion that the war left behind people who were physically, mentally and spiritually broken and war heroes who must have wondered what their sacrifice had brought either for them or for their country. Jones sees Kanengoni's short stories as portraying "the bloody war of liberation leaving scars of madness, heartbroken loneliness and despair" (Jones, 1996:61). Shona War fiction tends to stand in complete contrast to this. It tends to celebrate and fails to portray the reality of war trauma suffered by many returning guerrillas.

Alec J. Pongweni, in '*Songs That Won the Liberation War*' (1982), compiles and discusses the revolutionary songs that played a central role in the successful prosecution of the liberation war in Zimbabwe. He discusses the meanings, messages, thematic thrusts and purposes of the various songs sung by those outside the country and those inside. He categorises the pieces into groups but of particular interest to this study are the songs of celebration that greeted the resounding victory of Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front) in the historic election of 1980. The songs are:

Both self congratulatory on the part of those party supporters whose sacrifices had been rewarded, and ecstatic, oozing gratitude to the guardian spirits of the nation who had guided the people and their leaders through the most trying moments in our history...(Pongweni, 1982:151).

Pongweni notes that songs like *Vaparidzi vawanda* and *VaMugabe votonga* by the Green Arrows show two contrasting images of pre- and post-independent Zimbabwe. The former song shows caution and ambiguity because of the prevailing colonial situation while the latter becomes an abandoned celebration of black rule. Most of the songs of celebration that Pongweni discusses are so full of hope and optimism. However, songs like *Thando* and *Be Zimbabwe Masithandane* are about the need to be careful and avoid complacency and other pitfalls such as partisan approaches to

national affairs. Pongweni's analysis of the songs, particularly celebratory songs, is crucial as it helps to give some insight into our reading of the Shona war novels of the early 1980s. The same factors that shaped singers' perspectives on the liberation war as reflected in their songs are some of the factors that shaped war fiction writers' perspectives on the same war. Songs and fiction are both genres of art that artists use to communicate. So whatever singers were doing with their songs writers were also doing with their fiction.

Pongweni's efforts are complemented by M.T.Vambe whose article '*Popular songs & Social Reality in Post-independence Zimbabwe*' (2002) looks at factors that influence musicians who sing the so-called popular songs. Vambe notes that in the 1980s songs sung by Africans were 'popular' because they captured and celebrated the happy mood of independence. This article is particularly significant because it records the attempt by authorities to manipulate these singers so that the content, tone and theme of their songs conformed and supported ruling class ideology, though without much success in some cases. As they had always done in guerrilla camps in Mozambique and Tanzania the politicians wanted to harness the energies of the musicians into supporting and praising the political leadership. Vambe argues that the mood of independence often brought pressure on recording companies so that they could record songs that echoed the official version of the liberation war, although for economic gains the recording companies sometimes allowed songs with anti-state messages to go through. Like Pongweni, Vambe gives the factors that shaped singers perspectives of the liberation war. What informs Pongweni and Vambe's theses equally informs this research, because indications are that that same mood of independence also influenced Shona war fiction writers to support the official version of the liberation war. The last part of Vambe's article deals with images of women in the popular songs of the 1990s and shows that songs by male singers 'reveal a deep concern for society's need to harness female sexuality' while some female singers in post-independence Zimbabwe recorded songs that tended to interrogate negative images of women in life.

In the article or story '*The Long Way Home: one man's story*' (2004), Alexander Kanengoni adopts a historical as well as an artistic or literary approach to the land question. This is a very useful article for one studying Shona war fiction as the author

says, “the quest for land began in 1974 when I went to the war” (Kanengoni, 2004:47), and the war that he is referring to is the subject of this study. In typical poetic style, Kanengoni points out the pain of those who waited for years for land that they had fought and lost comrades in arms for. He talks of the invasion of the farms by villagers living in the Svosve Communal lands and the 2000 land invasions by ex-fighters that he believes were spontaneous. While Kanengoni calls it ‘a story of one man’s dream’ that was realised after many years of frustrating waiting, this thesis argues that this was a story of many Zimbabweans as illustrated by the cases of land invasions depicted in a number of Shona war novels and plays that are used in this study.

The important matter of guerrilla-civilian relations so crucial in the Second War of Liberation is the subject of analysis in Norman J. Kriger’s *Zimbabwe’s Guerrilla War: Peasant Voices*’ (1995). Kriger discusses how guerrillas organised civilian population for purposes of getting logistical support and security. The crucial role that was played by parents and youths organised into committees is given prominent attention. While Kriger does not rule out popular support he also argues strongly that sometimes support was given as a result of force or coercion. This is a point that is corroborated by Chung (2006) and Lyons (2004). Of interest is the issue Kriger raises of parents who supported the war effort by supplying the fighters with food and money and expected to be compensated at the end of the war but were not. “...they demanded that peasants contribute ‘war taxes’ payable in form of money and labour” (Kriger, 1995:42). Those who did not contribute were not made to compensate those who did after the war. Kriger also mentions the issue of guerrillas who made ‘wild promises’ to the peasants as a way of gaining support (Kriger, 1995:158) and others who issued statements contradictory to these. The disappointment emanating from this is illustrated by analysing texts like *Kuridza Ngoma Nedemo* (1985), *Njuzu* (1991) and *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985). The role of women in the war is also highlighted. Kriger states that women in the war had roles as fighters, educators in refugee camps, providers of food and shelter to the guerrillas, and *chimbwidos* or female youths.

The contentious issue of the role of women in the liberation war is given full attention by Tanya Lyons in her book, *Guns and Guerrilla Girls: Women in the Zimbabwe*

Liberation Struggle' (2004). She discusses the role played by women from 1965 to 1980 within the framework of feminist approach to the study of literature. Lyons is at pains to show that the study of the Zimbabwean liberation war has been told many times by different people. Unfortunately "it has been conducted in the language of men" (Lyons, 2004:25). She laments the absence of the discourse of women as fighters from the discourse about the war by both males and females. This is a relevant observation because the Shona war novels that are available have been written by men and they are a manifestation of patriarchal values and culture. The role of Nehanda, a female spirit medium, in inspiring young women to join the struggle is also highlighted.

Lyons also claims that before 1973 there is little evidence to suggest that women were being recruited to fight. "At first women who joined up were mainly used to carry supplies and weapons to the front" (Lyons, 2004:109), but later they demanded to be trained so they could protect themselves as the exercise was dangerous. She also thinks that most of the women who were given top government posts after independence were fighting in the 'rear' rather than at the front. She shows scarce evidence of women's activity at the front. It seems women mostly carried weapons to the men at the frontline. This picture painted by Lyons seems to support the perspective of many writers of Shona war novels on the armed struggle, especially their portrayal of women. Evidence collected by Lyons in interviews shows that ZIPRA did not send their women to the front, preferring to educate them for future roles in independent Zimbabwe. The roles of those who remained at home is summed up in Lyons' statement that 'Women are breastfeeding the Revolution', meaning that they were playing their traditional roles as providers of food and shelter to the fighters. However, some female ex-combatants interviewed by Lyons claimed to have been involved in actual fighting with the enemy. Lyons further highlights the problem of sex and marriage that plagued the guerrilla camps in Mozambique and Zambia and there is a detailed description of the film '*Flame*' that attempts to show women as victims of serious sexual abuse during the war.

Rosemary Moyana in '*Shimmer Chinodya: Harvest of Thorns*' (1996) makes socio-political liberation one of the themes she discusses. That article tells of the physical as well as the political-historical-ideological training that went on in the military

camps in Mozambique and the accompanying military raids, extreme suffering and deaths that occurred. Of particular significance is Moyana's observation that the common myth that all guerrillas who crossed to join the war were "highly motivated, conscientious and conscientised nationalist activists, can never be true" (Moyana, 1996:49). However, once one was there one could get conscientised and contribute meaningfully to the struggle. Moyana does not discuss the question of factors that shaped writers' perspectives but her contribution is helpful in this study in that it contributes to a better understanding of what happens in the lives of some characters in novels like Vitalis Nyawaranda's *Paida Mwoyo* (1987). She also shows how Chinodya depicts the memorable encounters between the guerrillas and peasants each time the combatants introduced themselves when they got to a new area and how such moments changed people's lives and marked the beginning of a new relationship characterised by hardships, frustrations, and sometimes quarrels over the role of young girls in the struggle. Moyana explores the theme of a returning freedom fighter and his reaction to 'home' and its situation, its shortcomings and its progress or lack of it. Her assessment of Chinodya's depiction of the post-war era is that nothing meaningful has changed for the ordinary man and woman, hence the title '*Harvest of Thorns*'. Indeed, for some characters in many Shona war novels and plays discussed in this thesis it is 'a harvest of thorns'. However, while, according to Moyana, Chinodya convincingly recreates events during the liberation war his counterparts who write the Shona novels do not always recreate events convincingly.

Advice Viriri in '*The Depiction of the Zimbabwe liberation Struggle in Selected Shona War Novels*' (1999), discusses the way Shona war novels depict the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe from the days of the First *Chimurenga* to the Second *Chimurenga* and independence. He correctly argues that Shona beliefs and cultural expressions such as songs and dances that colonialism marginalised and 'relegated to the back door' were revived during the liberation struggle. The present researcher wishes to argue that African culture survived colonial onslaught and played an important role in ending colonialism. Viriri also mentions some of the reasons why Shona authors romanticised the war but he does not do justice to this aspect because his focus is not on discussing factors that shaped writers' perspectives. His emphasis is on how the liberation war is depicted in the war novels. His observation that women were "endowed with virtuous qualities of courage and perseverance"

(Viriri, 1999:198) is also correct. However, he arrives at that conclusion on the basis of the depiction of female characters that acted as *chimbwidos* and ferried letters, bombs, and other war materials. He also states, correctly, that Kudzai in Aaron Moyo's *Nguwo Dzouswa* (1985) is depicted as a guerrilla but she is never seen operating in the real war "thereby rendering her heroine status into a spiritual, mental and moral idiosy" (Viriri, 1999:202). Viriri does not explain why, even when a writer depicts a female as a guerrilla fighter as Moyo does, she is not shown doing what her male guerrilla counterparts do. Finally Viriri ends with a discussion of the changing relationship between the state and the peasantry in post-independence Zimbabwe. He evaluates the achievements of the goals of the struggle and concludes that Zimbabwean independence was a betrayal of the revolutionary ideals.

Rino Zhuwarara, in an article '*Bones*' (1996), presents an incisive analysis of Chenjerai Hove's *Bones* (1988) and concludes that it is about Marita, "an underdog of history" who suffers a lot in life. Marita is a victim of rape at the hands of state soldiers but one whose spirit remains defiant. She is a long suffering mother of Africa and the suffering takes place within the context of the liberation war that is raging on. However, of greater relevance to the current study is Zhuwarara's depiction of the legendary Nehanda and her role in galvanising and inspiring African people to fight the whites in 1896 as well as her role in inspiring the African population of the 1960s and 1970s with the spirit of the revolution. There is no single work of Shona fiction about the armed struggle that does not give Nehanda a prominent place in history. While Nehanda is portrayed positively in Shona war fiction Zhuwarara is of the view that the death of Marita at the hands of the impassive and menacingly blind bureaucracy which has replaced the colonial one implies that the new neo-colonial period is a manifestation of history repeating itself where the majority of Africans, especially women, will continue to suffer. Zhuwarara sums up the position of women in literature when he says that in '*Bones*' there is nothing new as far as the role of women is concerned. The researcher intends to agree with Zhuwarara by arguing that even in the Shona war fiction there is nothing that has changed for women. They still wear the underdog's tag. However, what Zhuwarara does not do, which this study attempts to do, is to explain why there is that perspective on women in Shona fiction about the liberation war.

In an article, *'What Happened to Our Dream'* (2004), a group of disgruntled former freedom fighters, The Zimbabwe Liberation Platform, argues that the new government of Zimbabwe which came to power in 1980 inherited a resilient country and a robust economy and inspired people with the hope and prospects of stability and social integration but within a decade all sorts of things went wrong. The article chronicles the history of the early nationalist struggles, the armed struggle and the problems that beset the liberation movements. Of relevance to this study is the section that deals with the role of war veterans during and after the struggle. The article points out that during the struggle the freedom fighters had a clear vision of a new Zimbabwe: "independent, free, democratic and economically prosperous" (Zimbabwe Liberation Platform, 2004:37). They saw a society that aimed at achieving justice in the interest of the people. The article also raises the point that after independence the former freedom fighters were marginalised and offered no opportunity to articulate their vision. It sums up the problem as stemming from the ideological difference between non-belligerent nationalist leaders who were educated in the West and the field fighters who were influenced by China and the Soviet Union. The article further asserts that the demobilisation exercise was done as a way to dispose off the ex-fighters without proper measures being put in place to rehabilitate them into society. The relevance of this article lies in the fact that some of the grievances ex-fighters articulate are captured in some of the novels under study. In particular Magwa's *Njuzu* (1991) articulates the grievances of ex-fighters in and outside the Zimbabwe National Army.

In a similar article, *'The peoples' Liberation Struggle'* (2004), Duduzile Tafara, another former freedom fighter who is disillusioned by the direction the revolution has taken since 1980, explains the kind of political education fighters received during their training, which taught them to target the whites as their enemies. He also points out that promises were made that after independence the wealth of the white settlers would be taken and redistributed for the benefit of the poor blacks, and that all will be equal in a democratic Zimbabwe. Duduzile Tafara emphasises that celebration of victory and independence did not last for long and uses the metaphor of the hunter and the dog to show that leaders (hunters) took all the spoils while fighters (the dog that hunted) starved. In the current research it is argued that grievances like these influenced some writers of war fiction to take up the cause of ex-fighters in their

works. Duduzile Tafara (2004:44) sums up the whole position of the ex-fighters when he says, "They were survivors and now they had to learn to survive again". This article shows the disillusionment of ex-fighters with the discrepancies between the socialist ideology preached during the liberation war and the capitalist trappings that manifest themselves in the post-war era

The article '*The Unwritten Ethics and Moral Values: The Human Face of Chimurenga 11*' (2001) by Charles Pfukwa discusses the written rules and regulations that guerrillas were expected to follow as part of their military code. It also discusses the unwritten codes of moral values, which gave guerrillas their identity and discipline during the war. This researched article deals mainly with the set of oral rules, which complemented the military code. The unwritten code assumed the form of taboos, folklore, song, myth and legend and other things. Pfukwa discusses the written rules that regulated guerrillas' conduct with regard to what food to eat or not to eat, rules that encouraged peaceful co-existence with wild animals and plants in the bushes and caves that had become their homes for as long as the war lasted, rules that controlled sexual conduct and the songs that were used to conscientise the guerrillas about various issues pertaining to the successful execution of the war. The author also argues that the guerrillas strongly believed in the powers of the supernatural and the mystical and disregarded Christianity that they associated with colonialism and imperialism. It is significant that Pfukwa regards this as a cultural revolution when Africans were revisiting oral art forms of the past and relating them to the armed struggle, a point that Viriri raises as mentioned earlier. The present researcher can therefore argue that in the same manner writers of Shona war fiction were revisiting these same oral art forms and relate them to the armed struggle as a way of linking the present of the 1980s with the 1970s and the remote past.

Most of the references reviewed above deal with one aspect of the liberation war in Zimbabwe or another. They either deal with the findings of those who researched into the physical war itself, or with findings of those researchers who studied English or Shona literary works. While there appears to be a general agreement among those who have studied Zimbabwe's Second War of Liberation and the Shona fiction that depicts it that the war has largely been romanticised, simplified and distorted, no serious effort has been made to explain the factors responsible for such

perspectives. Examining those perspectives and discussing the factors that shaped them is what this research endeavours to do.

1.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A study of this nature requires a theory of literature to inform it. A literary theory makes an attempt to describe the principles of literature and questions are asked about the nature of literature, its genres, its techniques and its functions. Therefore, in order to handle the Shona texts on the Second War of Liberation in Zimbabwe a sociological approach will be used in this study because it attempts to explain literature according to its relationship with reality. Literary sociology allows us to pay particular attention to the author, the process of publication, the reader and the text. There is need to study the author in his social context, that is, his/her status, occupation, ideology, set of beliefs, expectations and wishes and other things. These things are bound to have a far-reaching influence on what the author writes and how he/she writes. The publishing houses play a pivotal role in shaping the kind of literature that emerges at any given time. The sociological approach also takes into account the literary market, those who read the literary products a writer produces. This may influence the writer to write with a certain perspective. Writing with a particular kind of readership in mind will influence a writer to approach his/her subject or theme with a particular thrust. The sociological approach therefore becomes appropriate in this study because the research deals with portrayal of the liberation war and the factors that influenced writers of Shona war fiction in their portrayal of history.

One fundamental facet of the sociological approach to the study of literature is the concept of social realism that developed under Marx and his disciples. For Marx and Engels, literary criticism hinges on the term 'realism'. According to this concept, a work of art must depict reality:

Despite their diversity, all Marxist theories of literature have a simple premise in common: that literature can only be properly understood within the larger framework of social reality (Forgas, 1982:167)

According to Marxists, any theory that treats literature in isolation, divorcing it from society and history, will be deficient in its ability to explain what literature really is (Forgas, 1982:167). This is precisely why formalism became a focus of Marxist criticism because it sought to deprive literature of its social and historical dimension. The present study seeks to examine the perspectives of various writers of Shona war fiction on the liberation war and the factors that shaped those perspectives. To what extent do these writers of Shona War fiction portray reality? Margaret Harkness (cited in Ngara, 1985:14) says:

Realism to my mind implies, besides truthful depiction of detail, the truthful reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances.

In the Shona war texts under study characters do not always act typically and in typical circumstances. The authors have motives for depicting the war in that manner and these are some of the factors that shape their perspectives.

For Marxists, social reality has a definite shape and that shape is found in history, which they see as a series of struggles between antagonistic social classes and the type of economic production they engage in. Here the whole question of 'reproducing characters under typical circumstances' implies the writer's awareness of history and the class nature of society. According to Ngara (1985:14), characters do not act in a vacuum:

Their actions derive from social and historical conditions and are reflective of the interests and activities of a class. It is therefore the writer's duty to see what makes a particular society in a particular historical moment tick, to see class struggles in their true perspective and depict them accurately showing how the actions of individual characters are representative of classes making their impact on history.

The writers of Shona war fiction themselves are products of their social and historical epoch. They lived through the war period and participated in the independence celebrations. Hence the characters they create in the war novels are representative of the classes they know to be 'making an impact on history'.

One other fundamental element which has a bearing on Marxist thinking about literature is the concept of ideology, a term that refers to the dominant ideas of an

epoch or class, with regards to politics, and law, morality, religion, art and science (Ngara, 1985:20). In a class society the ruling class, besides wielding enormous economic power, also controls the means of mental production and consequently controls intellectual life. Hence, its ideas become dominant. To a very large extent Shona war fiction helps us to see the nature and ideology of the war and post-war eras. This study intends to demonstrate that the dominant ideology of the epoch played a crucial role in shaping the war fiction writers' perspectives on the liberation war in Zimbabwe and its aftermath. This is done in full recognition of the fact that Ngara (1985) raises the pertinent point that at times the relations between literature and the dominant ideology are sometimes in conflict with each other.

This study is further informed by a long tradition of Marxist literary theory that is concerned with the question of how literature, along with other arts, came to develop out of social life and of what causes literary works to assume the form they do. The mode used in this approach can be called 'genetic' because it deals with origins, causes and determinations. This genetic approach to the study of literature compels us to want to find out the origins of Shona war fiction. We ask questions like, "Where lies its origin?" One exponent of this sociological approach is the sociological theorist Lucien Goldmann who correlated the structure of a work of art with what he came to regard as the "mental structure" of the author's social group (Forgas, 1982:183). He sees the structure of the literary work as 'homologous' with the mental structure of a social group. In other words, the thinking in the texts is reflective of the thinking of the social group of which the authors are part. According to Goldmann, the goal of literary theory is to find the ties between a text and its social context in the worldview which underlies the literary meaning. It is possible that 'the mental structure' of the Shona war novel can be correlated to the mental structure of the social group from which the Shona war novel writers' themselves belong.

The sociological approach helps us to come up with an interpretation, as well as an integrated account, of the relationship between people, situations, times and places associated with the Second War of Liberation in Zimbabwe and of their relevance to post war circumstances. The Marxist and sociological approaches have been lumped together because as Efurosibina Adegbiya (1996:43) puts it, they are fathered by the same set of ideas: the functionality of content.

1.8 SCOPE OF RESEARCH

A work of this magnitude requires that a number of primary sources be studied since it is from these that one is able to discern the authors' perspectives on the liberation war. In order to be able to generalise about the authors' ways of looking at the armed struggle, as many primary sources as possible should be subjected to critical analysis. Whatever views or findings the researcher arrives at must be supported by authors' accounts of the war given in their fiction. The primary texts studied include *Gukurahundi* (1985), *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985), *Kuda Muhondo* (1985), *Mutunhu Una Mago* (1985), *Nguwo Dzouswa* (1985), *Gona ReChimurenga* (1982), *Paida Mwoyo* (1987), *Vavairo* (1990), *Zvairwadza Vasara* (1984) and *Hondo YeChimurenga* (1984). In addition to this, are two plays, *Njuzu* (1991) and *Kuridza Ngoma Nedemo* (1985). It must be noted that texts selected are those that cover the phases of the Second *Chimurenga* from 1966 to 1980 and its immediate results. Those like *Mweya WaNehanda* that cover the *First Chimurenga* will only be considered for purposes of providing background information that enables readers to understand the *Second Chimurenga* better. In studying these Shona war texts no attempt will be made to achieve an exhaustive analysis of each and every one of them. A text will be analysed up to an extent to which it can be used to adequately illustrate issues raised in each and every chapter where it is used.

The research project is divided into eight chapters. Chapter One is the introduction to the research. It presents the preamble, aims of the research, objectives, justification of the research, research methods, literature review, theoretical framework, and scope of research

Chapter Two of the research discusses the prevailing circumstances that favoured the rise of Shona war fiction and gave it its character and quality. The circumstances that will be considered include the advent of political independence and freedom, dominant mood of celebration, the end of censorship, the commoditisation of the war novel and the spirit of competition.

Chapter Three looks at the Shona war story as romance fiction. It is argued that the authors of liberation war fiction in Shona largely portray the liberation war as a romance of adventure and the factors that give the authors this kind of perspective on this war are discussed. The chapter discusses the characteristics of a romance, war as an adventure, and the Shona war novel as an adventure story.

The discussion of the romance aspects of the war is followed by Chapter Four titled 'Fictional Representation of Historical Material'. In this chapter, it is argued that although the war is largely romanticised in Shona war fiction there is no way the writer can run away from history completely. This chapter considers how the various stories made the historical era come to life by selecting and recreating the physical environment, patterns of daily living, and the spirit of the times. It is argued in this chapter that war fiction is actually a fictionalisation of historical causes, events, scenes, episodes, characters and other historical material. History is therefore considered as one of the major factors that shaped writers' perspectives on this war. This chapter also presents the war as being fought on two fronts: the military front and the educational front.

Chapter Five attempts an analytical exposition of the cultural aspects of the liberation war. It looks at the relevance of various Shona cultural and traditional practices, beliefs and institutions in the context of the prosecution of the armed struggle. It is shown in this chapter that Shona authors depict Shona cultural and traditional institutions as having contributed significantly to the war effort and that there are factors that influenced these authors to look at the conduct of the war in this manner. The chapter will look at: culture as a fallback on in time of calamity, attempts by foreigners to destroy Shona culture, and Shona war fiction as a celebration of Shona cultural traditions. Aspects of culture that are considered include religion, traditional forms of authority, oral art forms such as myths, taboos, as well as Shona nomenclature.

The contentious issue of the depiction of women in Shona literature becomes the subject of investigation in Chapter Six. So much has been said about women having fought side by side with their men in the Second War of Liberation in Zimbabwe. This chapter attempts to explain the factors that influenced authors' perspectives on the

subject of female participation in the war. It discusses factors that shaped writers' attitudes towards women participants. The chapter presents images of women in Shona war fiction, focusing on images of female civilians and on the absence of images of female guerrilla fighters.

Chapter Seven, titled 'Perspectives on the War Aftermath', focuses on the events taking place at the end of the war. This chapter discusses the different scenarios that define the war aftermath. The discussion in this chapter includes analysis of works of those writers who have opted to articulate their views using literary drama. The justification for going beyond the end of the physical war is that the authors of fictional works themselves go beyond 18 April 1980, the date of independence, and also because:

A war novel is a novel, in which the primary action takes place in a field of armed combat or it is a domestic setting (at home front) where the characters are preoccupied with the preparations for, or recovering from war. (Website Wikipedia)

In the case of the contents discussed in this chapter, it is a matter of including events taking place at the 'home front', when the characters are preoccupied with recovering from war. This chapter on the war aftermath presents two perspectives: perspectives on a revolution that has gone wrong and perspectives on a revolution that is on course. Focus will be placed on writers' perspectives on land, on the military, and on various other social and political issues.

Chapter Eight presents the general conclusion that winds up the study by highlighting the main findings of the research.

In the chapters of this thesis the terms 'liberation war fighters', 'freedom fighters' and 'guerrillas' are used interchangeably to refer to the men and women who fought in Zimbabwe's liberation war of the late 1960s and the 1970s. Equally, the terms 'ex-combatants', 'ex-fighters' and 'ex-guerrillas', are used interchangeably to refer to the same men and women in their capacity as veterans of the liberation war in independent Zimbabwe.

1.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter provides a statement of the problem under investigation. In this chapter it has been argued that Shona war fiction about the Second War of Liberation did not appear while the war was raging on. It only appeared after the war had ended. When it appeared, it showed common patterns of themes, style, and characterisation. The argument in this chapter is that there are factors that influenced writers of Shona war fiction to portray the Second War of Liberation in that simplistic and unrealistic manner. The main focus of the thesis as expressed in the objectives therefore is to explain how writers of Shona war fiction portray the Second War of Liberation and why they portray it in the manner they do it. Chapter Two therefore discusses the circumstances that prevailed at the time that Shona war fiction emerged and developed. The rest of the chapters present the problem of handling the theme of war in literature, the role of history in influencing writers, cultural aspects of the war, perspectives on female participation in the liberation war, and developments in the war aftermath.

It has been recognised in this chapter that a work of this nature requires a theory of literature to guide it. A combination of a sociological and Marxist literary theory has therefore been chosen as the tool to use to explain the origin, nature, role, and function of Shona war fiction that focuses on the Second War of Liberation in Zimbabwe. However, to do this one needs to be familiar with existing literature. It is acknowledged in this chapter that the production of new knowledge depends on past knowledge. For that reason several secondary sources that deal with the Second War of Liberation in Zimbabwe have been reviewed.

CHAPTER 2

POST-INDEPENDENCE SITUATIONS AND THE BIRTH OF SHONA WAR FICTION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The Second War of Liberation that the indigenous people of Zimbabwe waged against settler occupation and colonial rule was an event of monumental proportions that had far-reaching effects for the country, the region and perhaps the rest of the world. This war became one of the biggest markers of history in Zimbabwe and in the sub-Saharan Africa. It affected and changed the lives of many people in many ways. Thousands of people died, hundreds were permanently maimed, others rose to fame, and many got rich while others got land that they could call their own for the first time. It was imperative that an event of this magnitude and influence which affected and changed people's lives in many ways should provide poets, playwrights and novelists with ready-made material which they could use to write their fiction, because there is always an intrinsic relationship between literature and society. Writers of fiction often draw their material and their inspiration from happenings in their environment. The Second War of Liberation in Zimbabwe certainly provided that kind of material and inspiration. It attracted a lot of attention from writers. Zimbabwean literature provides a window through which people can view the war of liberation. However, the picture of the liberation war in Zimbabwe that is portrayed in fiction depends on how the author views that war. This research deals with the perspectives on the war that writers of Shona war fiction had and discusses the factors that shaped these perspectives.

In pursuance of the above objective, this Chapter looks at circumstances and conditions that prevailed at the time that most of the Shona novels and short stories about Zimbabwe's liberation war were written. Most of these books were published during the first decade of Zimbabwe's independence and it is possible to look at this time and come up with a set of interdependent cultural, economic, political and ideological conditions that helped to shape writers' perspectives on the war.

However, before going into the discussion of the conditions that prevailed at the time most of the war novels were published, it is essential to look at the state of things as they were before independence. This should provide a contrast and a springboard from which to launch the discussion on the situation in the post-independence era.

2.2 WAR ACTIONS AND MEMORIES: THE UNPUBLISHED MATERIALS

During the years that the liberation war was raging on, no work of fiction written in the Shona language about the war was published. Any work of fiction that talked about a war in which blacks were killing whites, even though whites were also killing blacks, was not going to be published. Any such work would have met the same fate that many others before, that were judged to be political, had met.

The armed struggle in Zimbabwe lasted for nearly thirteen years, yet throughout that entire period no single Shona novel depicting the liberation war was published. It was not possible for any work of art that did not reflect the general colonial ideology to be published and remained unbanned. The Rhodesian Literature Bureau, a department of government under the Ministry of Information under whose supervision the development and distribution of literature in indigenous languages took place, would never have allowed such novels to be published. Headed by Walter Krog, a former District Commissioner, the role of the Rhodesia Literature Bureau was to guide the development of literature in indigenous languages along lines acceptable to the government of the day. "The resultant fiction was underdeveloped by avoiding politics, the root of the reality dealt with in fiction" (Chiwome, 2002:35). By avoiding politics therefore, writers were doing what Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1981:74) calls "avoiding big issues of the day", the "social reality or certain aspects of social reality" that literature must reflect. To write about the war of liberation at this time was tantamount to writing politics. This is not to suggest that it is wrong to write politics. In colonial Zimbabwe, it depended largely on the perspective from which one wrote about the war. White authors who wrote about the war from within the dominant colonial ideology had their works published in colonial Zimbabwe and outside the country and the books were made available in the bookshops.

Anthony Chennels (1995) gives, and comments on, a number of such books about the armed struggle that were written by whites during the liberation war. Some of the novels are listed here for purposes of demonstrating that even before independence there was widespread interest in the theme of the armed struggle. According to Chennels, Peter Stiff's *The Rain Goddess* (1973) depicts guerillas as mindless savages, Giles Tripette's *The Mercenaries* (1976) makes observations about guerillas which are inaccurate as a result of too much reliance on the Ministry of Information propaganda handouts, Robert Early's *A Time of Madness* (1977) is politically ignorant and racist, while Lloyd Burton's *The Yellow Mountain* (1978) and Peter Armstrong's *Operation Zambezi* (1979) were now fantasising, since they were now seeing the possibility of guerilla victory in Zimbabwe. Some of these white authors like Peter Stiff were members of the British South Africa Police and the Rhodesian Army. As Chennels (1995) concludes, most of their novels depict the Rhodesians as people with a great moral authority on their side because they believed that the guerillas wanted to wrestle from the whites land and privileges that were rightly theirs. This kind of thinking fitted very well within the dominant ideology of settlerism. For this reason such books were published inside or outside the country and enjoyed patronage among the white population.

The fact that an English novel (*The Rain Goddess*) based on Zimbabwe's Second War of Liberation and written by a white person appeared as early as 1973 and the fact that many more followed throughout the time that the war was raging on is a clear indication that the war was an event that attracted the attention of many writers, presumably both black and white. However, while a plethora of fictional works about Zimbabwe's guerilla war written by whites in English appeared during the liberation war itself, no single Shona war novel was published before 1980. The theme of Zimbabwe's liberation war was a political one. "Unlike the pre-independence Zimbabwean novel in English whose fate was decided in Europe, the fate of the Shona novel was determined at home" (Chiwome, 2002:34) where the theme of guerilla war was taboo. The Rhodesia Literature Bureau that received and vetted Shona manuscripts would not recommend war novels for publication. The Rhodesia Literature Bureau had become "a de facto Government Censor Board which employed editors to perform the function" (Chiwome, 2002:38). As Chiwome (2002) has shown there are several instances when manuscripts were rejected or doctored

by the Rhodesia Literature Bureau because they dealt with 'sensitive' issues. Solomon Mutswairo's *Feso* (1982) had its first Chapter removed by the Rhodesia Literature Bureau because, as the writer says, it was too political as it dealt with how blacks were dispossessed of their land. Later on, the novel was banned from use as a set-book in schools because it contained a political poem, 'O *Nehanda Nyakasikana*'. Kenneth Bepswa had his manuscript rejected because it dealt with interracial marriage, which was illegal in colonial Zimbabwe. Francis Bvindi was harassed by police for attempting to write political poetry. What E. M. Zanza eventually published as *Hunde Yorufu* (1971) started as something that was described as 'controversial' and 'political' and he was reprimanded for it. Mkandla's first Ndebele manuscript was also judged to be too political since it dealt with land dispossession in Zimbabwe, while Mordekai Hamutyinei's two manuscripts submitted in the mid 1960s were also rejected for the same reason.

If the works of authors that Chiwome gives above could not be published in their original form or could be banned because they expressed protest against colonial injustice then Shona war novels about the liberation struggle of the 1970s had no chance of being published under the supervision of the Rhodesia Literature Bureau. Fiction that depicted the guerrillas as people with a great moral authority on their side because they believed they were fighting to create democratic space that would enable them to reclaim their land and birthright would be judged to be subversive. Such works would not be published and the author would be in serious trouble with the police. Aaron Chiundura Moyo (in an interview, 19/07/07) related a story that helps to illustrate the destructive role of the Rhodesia Literature Bureau:

At one time in the early 1970s I was living on a farm. The white farmer shot and killed a friend of mine who was working on his farm. My friend fought the white man's son. He beat the boss's son and he bled. The son reported to the father. The white man came armed with a gun. We all shouted and warned my friend to run away. He fled and the white man ordered him to stop saying "Ngaimire ipapo" (Stop!). My friend did not stop and he was shot while in full flight and he fell flat on his stomach, dead. The white man reported himself to the police. Nothing happened. The same white man wanted sons of his black workers to work on his farm. My uncle influenced others not to work on the farm. He was taken to a beer party (ndari) in the back of a lorry while naked. People at the beer party were ordered to look at the naked adult black man. These incidents were captured in a manuscript that I gave the title '*Kuyeuka Bako Mvura Yagasa*' (To

think of shelter when the rain has stopped falling). In 1973 I sent the manuscript to the Rhodesia Literature Bureau. Obadiah Chiromo received the manuscript and warned me not to write those things because they would not be published. Some of us were ignorant of what the law said. We did not know that we were writing political issues. Africans who were editors at the Bureau protected us by removing offensive materials.

Aaron Chiundura Moyo, who was later (after 1980) to write and publish war novels *Nguo Dzouswa* (1985) and *Yaive Hondo* (1985) and the short story about the war, *Ndaponda Gandanga* (1984), believes that these war stories would never have been published by the Rhodesia Literature Bureau before independence. He assumes that perhaps no Shona manuscript about Zimbabwe's guerilla war was written before independence because there was fear in everyone that these sensitive materials would be found in their possession during police raids and searches and they (the authors) would go to jail. Moyo's assumption is possibly wrong because Charles Makari claims that his novel *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) was actually written during the liberation war, but it could not be published at that time. Makari explained (in an interview, 20/07/07) that:

That manuscript (*Zvaida Kushinga*) was unpublishable at that time. The government would not have allowed me to publish it. Even after the war it could not be published easily because some publishing companies were still under white management and were still anti-black government. That's why I gave it to Mambo Press that had been vocal through its *Moto* publication and so they published it in 1985.

However, what Chiundura Moyo calls 'protection' that he says black editors at the Rhodesia Literature Bureau who removed offensive materials gave them is actually what Chiwome (2002:37) calls 'external censorship', which tended to frustrate artistic creativity. Censorship is to art what lynching is to justice (Gates, 1990:137). As Izevbaye (1990:135) asserts:

...censorship is or should be, a central concern of literary criticism. It strikes at the foundation of the language and human creativity. It threatens the health of the community, undermining the bases of proper communication.

On the basis of the views from some authors of Shona war novels given above, as well as what is known of the fate of some works by Shona writers before Zimbabwe's

independence, it seems safe to argue that it was impossible to publish Shona war novels in colonial Zimbabwe. However, the fact that within the first five years of independence no less than ten works depicting the Second War of Liberation in Zimbabwe were published indicates that a new set of conditions and circumstances favoured this development. Enough has been said about the destructive images of colonialism and attention can now be focused on the circumstances in the post-independence era.

2.3 INDEPENDENCE AND FREEDOM

The activity on the literary scene, the urgency and the willingness to write Shona works about the liberation war by Shona writers in the years immediately following the attainment of independence stands in clear contrast to the inactivity and reluctance to write about the same war that characterised the liberation war years. It is clear that the attainment of independence and freedom created an enabling environment in which writers could then express the experiences of the liberation war “in a new mass of writing and publications freed from the shackles of colonial control and manipulation” (Kaarsholm, 2005:4).

Zimbabwe became independent on April 18, 1980. This is the day that the British Union Jack flag was lowered for the last time and the Zimbabwean flag was hoisted at Rufaro Stadium. Independence brought with it freedom. To many Zimbabweans, freedom meant many things. However, to Zimbabwean authors independence and freedom meant, among other things, the freedom to write what they felt they wanted to write without any restrictions. Freedom is a state of being able to, or allowed to do, what you want to do without being restricted by anything or by anyone. Ngugi wa Thiong’o (1981:73) has correctly observed that:

...whether actively involved in political struggle or not, many African writers have often found that the very subject matter of their poems and stories has placed them on the wrong side of the ruling cliques.

Now after Zimbabwe’s independence, those writers who had hitherto felt they could not write ‘politics’ felt they were now ‘free’ to write ‘politics’, this time without that subject matter “placing them on the wrong side of the ruling clique”. For some of

them writing 'politics' meant writing about the Second War of Liberation, its causes and conduct, and condemning colonialism. They felt that they were now free to write what they had been prohibited to write under the watchful eye of the Rhodesia Literature Bureau. Writers also felt that their people, the citizens of Zimbabwe for whom they were writing, were now free to choose what they wanted to read. Their readers would no longer be afraid to be discovered by authorities reading a Shona book on Zimbabwean 'politics' because they were no longer slaves. Both literature and the liberation war had emancipated and delivered both the writer and the reader from bondage.

The central proposition being made here is an interesting one where literature plunged an oppressed people into a war of liberation before that literature was stopped, and then the liberation war in turn liberated the writer so that he could write even on 'politics'. Solomon Mutsvairo's *Feso* (1982) allegorically painted a glorious picture of Zimbabwe's past while at the same time painting a grim picture of the existence of Africans under colonialism. The novel also contained a political protest poem 'O Nehanda Nyakasikana' in which the speaker appeals to the guardian spirit of Nehanda to come and rescue her people from slavery. Although the novel was banned and removed from the school syllabus the famous prayer to the spirit of Nehanda was read or recited in the late 1950s and early 1960s at the beginning of the mass nationalist rallies in the townships (Ranger, 2002:213). That famous prayer to Nehanda fired the Zimbabwean people with aggressive national feelings and inspired many young men and women to go and take up arms to free their country from colonialism. The armed struggle in turn created the necessary democratic space in which writers could feel free to write about the war that liberated them. Jean Paul Sartre (1972:384) appears to confirm this symbiotic relationship between literature and liberation war when he asserts that:

... the freedom of writing implies the freedom of the citizen. One does not write for slaves. The art of prose is bound up with the only regime in which prose has meaning, democracy. When one is threatened, the other is too. And it is not enough to defend them with the pen. A day comes when the pen is forced to stop, and the writer must then take up arms. Thus however you might have come to it, whatever the opinions you might have professed, literature throws you into battle.

Indeed, *Feso* (1982) and its allegorically political message of resistance ‘threw the writer into battle’ and that battle produced freedom in which the Shona war fiction writers could write about the war of liberation from the point of view of those who were fighting for that freedom. In the absence of political freedom the Shona war fiction writer could not hope to publish in colonial Zimbabwe works that depicted the war in the manner he wanted. It was the advent of the new political dispensation of independence and freedom that allowed the Shona war fiction writer to glorify the liberation war and present it as a historic and heroic struggle of the oppressed indigenous people against white minority rule. The frequency with which various authors use derogatory and racist terms in their liberation war novels to depict white settlers and white soldiers and their supporters shows the extent to which the writer had been liberated to express himself. If terms used by Patrick Chakaipa in *Garandichauya* (1963) such as *vasina mabvi* (those without knees), *mhuru yomuchena* (white bullock), and *giwa* (big and awesome white man) could raise concern among white Rhodesians as epitomised by the correspondence between Walter Krog, James Walker and B.B Fitz-Patrick (Chiwome, 2002:43) Shona war novels with terms like *mapuruvheya* (derogatory term for policemen) *mabhunu* (boers), *madzakutsaku* (a term used to refer to Muzorewa’s ANC army called *Pfumorevanhu*- spear of the people) had no chance of getting published. Manuscripts in which characters were given names that expressed the longing for the extermination of white settlers such *Mabhunu-muchapera* (Boers, you will be wiped out) as well as names that reflected the objectives of the armed struggle like *Tichatonga* (We will rule) could not hope to see the light of day in colonial Zimbabwe. Terms and names like *komuredhi*, Marx and Mao that are used in Shona war fiction could never have been allowed to be used in Shona literature under the watchful eye of the Rhodesian Literature Bureau.

However, the fact that novels with the kind of content depicted above were published after 1980 is indicative of the new enabling environment. Typical of Shona fiction published in independent Zimbabwe are statements like “...*kwaizosara chete kuti chigaro chaSmith chitorwe naRobert Gabriel Mugabe*” (Makata 1982:48) (... what would follow was for Smith’s position to be taken over by Robert Gabriel Mugabe). Or statements like,

Chinangwa chehondo ndechekuti kuve neblack majority rule. But there is resistance from this white minority government (Choto, 1990:92).

(The aim of our struggle is to install a black majority rule government. But there is resistance from this white minority government.)

Also pronouncements such as the following, which express the ideals of the revolution, would never have been tolerated:

Masoja aSmith ndiwo anorwira mari. Isu tinorwira Zimbabwe. Nyika haitengwi nemari. Tichaitenga neropa redu richadeurwa kuti tiisunungure... Pamberi nehondo! Pamberi neruzhinji rweZimbabwe. (Nyawaranda, 1985:52)

(Smith's soldiers are the ones who fight for money. We fight for Zimbabwe. This country is not bought with money. We will pay for it with our blood, which shall be shed in order to free it... Forward with the war! Forward with the masses of Zimbabwe.)

This kind of fiction that was written entirely at the service of the armed struggle and which seemed to endorse everything that Rhodesians found to be particularly revolting belongs to the era of African independence and freedom. It does not belong to the era of white rule when the likes of Smith could declare:

If in my lifetime we have an African nationalist government in power in Southern Rhodesia then we will have failed in the policy that I believe in (Martin and Johnson, 1981:58).

The publication of so many Shona novels that were sympathetic to the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and its army is clear testimony that indeed Smith's policy that 'whites' believed in had failed. The manner and ferocity with which novels about the armed struggle were published after independence, shows that writers had for a long time been stifled and choked. With independence and freedom came an influx of novels and stories that depicted various facets of the liberation war. In the first five years alone no less than ten Shona novels about the liberation war were published. Two more came in 1987 and 1990. Thereafter the zeal died down, leaving Samupindi and Kanengoni to publish *Pawns* (1992) and *Echoing Silences* (1997) in English, respectively.

However, the question of independence and freedom just discussed cannot be concluded without qualifying the statement 'freedom to write what one wants'. The statement needs to be qualified because there is no intention to give the impression that there was no harassment of artists in Zimbabwe after independence. Fiona Lloyd (1992:1) notes the arrest of Dambudzo Marechera during the 1984 Zimbabwe International Book Fair for giving an 'unauthorised interview' to two Dutch journalists. There is also the case of Cont Mhlanga of Amakhosi whose play *Workshop Negative* (1992) ruffled the feathers of the 'chefs' (ruling elite) because it interrogated their commitment to socialist ideology. Despite the fact that *Workshop Negative* (1992) disturbed the consciences of the ruling elites the play was not banned and the author was not treated in the same manner as Salman Rushdie in Iran, Ken Saro Wiwa in Nigeria or Jack Mapanje in Malawi; nor was he treated as Ngugi wa Thiongo, Ngugi wa Mirii and Micere Mugo were treated in post-independence Kenya. Cont Mhlanga was not treated like the great Kenyan poet Abdilatif Abdalla, [who] was jailed for three years at Kamiti Maximum Security Prison (between 1969 and 1972) for writing a pamphlet simply asking: *Kenya: Twendapi?* (Kenya, where are we heading to?) (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1983:65). Official harassment was there in Zimbabwe but it was subtle. For example, when Amakhosi were invited to perform *Workshop Negative* (1992) in the region and when later on they were invited by the Spanish Government to perform the play at the World Expo with all the expenses paid for, the Zimbabwe Ministry of Culture did not issue the letters to sanction the trips. In fact, the application letter for permission to undertake the trip sponsored by the Spanish Government went 'missing' in the Culture Ministry. Amakhosi became a victim of what Justice MacNally once memorably termed "the tyranny of inefficiency" (Lloyd, 1992:2). However, despite official discomfort with the play, *Workshop Negative* went on to be published in Zimbabwe in 1992, notwithstanding the fact that by the time of the Zimbabwe International Bookfair that year reports of official harassment of writers and journalists had become widespread. This shows that although at that time there was a bit of official harassment it never really harmed anyone. It must be remembered, as Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (1990:137) once pointed out in his comments about the plight of Salman Rushdie and Wole Soyinka, that elsewhere "From Chile to Czechoslovakia, men and women languish in prison for a dissidence not of deeds but of words". This is the context in which it has been argued that in Zimbabwe there was freedom to write.

If in the 1990s therefore, Cont Mhlanga's play that was deemed to be 'ideologically unsound', was published and has remained unbanned and relevant to this day then Shona liberation war fiction could be published without any hitches. After all, unlike *Workshop Negative* (1992), Shona liberation war novels were 'ideologically correct' since they tended to endorse the official Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front) (ZANU (PF)) version of the war of liberation. The fate of *Workshop Negative* (1992) has been used here as a yardstick to measure the degree of artistic freedom in Zimbabwe during the first decade or so of its independence.

2.4 EUPHORIA AND CELEBRATION

Most of the Shona war novels were written and published during the first few years of independence when the Zimbabwean nation was still steeped in the mood of euphoria and celebration. The Shona war novels are therefore part and parcel of that euphoric and celebratory mood as can be seen in the discussion that follows.

It has been pointed out that most, if not all, the Shona novels depicting the Second War of Liberation in Zimbabwe were published during the first decade of independence. Of these only two, Nyawaranda's *Paida Mwoyo* and Choto's *Vavairo*, were published in 1987 and 1990, respectively. The rest were published early between 1982 and 1985 as follows: *Gona ReChimurenga* in 1982, *Hondo yeChimurenga* and *Zvairwadza Vasara* in 1984, *Mutunhu Une Mago*, *Nguo Dzouswa*, *Zvaida Kushinga*, *Kuda Muhondo*, *Gukurahundi* and the play *Kuridza Ngoma Nedemo* all in 1985. It is interesting to note that Garikai Mutasa also published his liberation war romance in English, *The Contact*, in 1985. The purpose of giving the above statistics is to illustrate that the majority of the war novels written by black Zimbabweans, especially those written in the Shona language, were written between 1980 and 1985, perhaps with the exception of *Zvaida Kushinga*, which the author claims was written during the war. The relevance and significance of these statistics is to show that these works were published at the height of euphoria and celebration, 1980 to 1985. A war that had claimed so many lives had ended and those who survived had a reason to celebrate life. The war that had been fought to remove oppression and racism had brought political independence. The freedom

fighters that had promised so much during the war were now in power and people were full of expectations that they would now deliver. Everywhere in the cities, provinces and districts in the countryside people were celebrating. There was so much euphoria and celebration as Zimbabweans watched thousands of guerillas being bused into the country from neighbouring countries. Some of the people in the urban areas were seeing these 'comrades' for the first time in their lives and they were naturally overawed by this unusual and exciting spectacle. They had heard so much about the guerillas and now they were elated to see them in flesh. Official independence celebration was held at Rufaro Stadium in Harare and was witnessed by thousands of jubilant people who were present. Loud clapping and ululating greeted the lowering of the Union Jack flag and the hoisting of the new Zimbabwean flag. Millions more watched or listened as the event was broadcast live on national television and radio.

The euphoria and celebratory mood that gripped the nation was reflected in the songs that were popular at this time. For the first time liberation war songs and other revolutionary songs were aired on national radio and television. They were sung in pubs, on public transport, at rallies and everywhere else. The whole environment resonated with songs that celebrated the armed struggle, independence and freedom. Before independence one had to withdraw into some private place in order to listen to revolutionary songs beamed from capitals of neighbouring countries. People feared arrest. Now these songs, as Vambe (2002:79) points out, became popular in the early 1980s because of the way they captured and celebrated independence. One song sung by the Harare Mambo Band and which was given regular slots on national radio and television welcomed the guerilla fighters back home, saying:

*Mauya, mauya komuredhi
Zvamauya hamuchadzokeri.
Mauya, mauya komuredhi
Zvamauya tongai Zimbabwe.*

(Welcome, welcome comrade
Now that you have come, you have come for good.
Welcome, welcome comrade
Now that you have come, rule Zimbabwe.)

This was an emotional welcome extended to the freedom fighters. The song has a sense of finality in it. It is a seal of approval to the returned guerrillas. They had come for good. The song gives the returned guerrillas the unqualified mandate to rule Zimbabwe. Equally, the song "*VaMugabe Votonga* by the Green Arrows celebrates the landslide victory of ZANU (PF) in the hotly contested elections" of 1980 (Pongweni, 1982:188).

The brief discussion on songs has been included here just to show that Zimbabweans were indeed celebrating. This is meant to show that celebration in Shona life is not quite complete unless singing, clapping, ululating and dancing are part of it. It is in this situation of abandoned celebration that the Shona novel about the liberation war was born. Everywhere people were singing songs of triumph and self-congratulation. The writer of Shona war fiction wrote his works in an environment that was alive with great happiness, elation and excitement. The songs that were sung made the noises of celebration and euphoria even more audible and the writer could not afford to contribute the voice of dissent and discord. Whether it was by choice or lack of it, the writer marched in harmony with the celebrating nation.

In a competition with a singer to produce art the musician has a greater chance of reaching the audience first. A song is shorter, often consisting of a few verses. A song takes a shorter time to compose and produce while a novel, and even a short story, is longer and may take weeks or months or even years to compose and publish. Therefore, by the time writers of fiction completed their manuscripts depicting the armed struggle three or five years after independence a plethora of revolutionary songs were already being beamed on air and were sung at rallies and other gatherings. Moreover, the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army choir came back in 1980 with ready-made songs, which they had composed and had been singing during the war while in Mozambique. These are some of the songs that filled the air during the early years of independence. The writer of Shona war fiction therefore wrote his war manuscript amidst the loud noises of revolutionary songs sung with great happiness and elation. The writer and his Shona war novel became very much part of that celebration and praise singing.

The Shona war fiction writers' perspectives on the Second War of Liberation were therefore shaped by the prevailing situation in the country after independence. Because the nation was euphoric and in a mood of celebration, the Shona war novel was turned into another arena for celebrating both military and electoral victories. ZANU (PF) won a clear majority with 57 seats in parliament. On the military side, victory was measured by the ultimate readiness of Ian Smith to go to the negotiating table while there was still something to salvage. As Michael Raeburn (1981:181) says:

In a gradual escalation of war from 1973 the forces of liberation were attacking the enemy but disappearing among the people and the forests throughout the country from north to south and east to west. By the end of the last decade the enemy existed in these areas almost exclusively in the form of military presence. Their headquarters became the cities to which they retreated like Boers to the 'Laager' until they were surrounded, and forced to return, heads bowed and with no more cards in hand, to the international conference table.

The writer had presumably supported the liberation armies during the armed struggle. To stop supporting the fruits of that struggle now would not make sense. The writer therefore joined the rest of the nation to celebrate the victory and the fruits of that armed struggle. This explains why most writers portray the liberation war in very simplistic terms, often focusing on its causes. Munashe Pesanai's *Gukurahundi* (1985) has a very simple plot in which the events are presented in a chronological order showing series of encounters between Rhodesian forces and nationalist guerrillas. In each encounter the main protagonists are guerrillas who engage the enemy and easily come out the winners. The guerrillas in there do not lose battles and they rarely lose their comrades at the hands of the Rhodesian army. The guerrillas are portrayed as being well-trained military strategists. While it is known that "the first demand in warfare is efficiency" (Mason, 1979:96) the Rhodesian army is often portrayed as careless and lacking even the basic military skills, let alone survival instincts. For example, on some occasions after a fierce encounter with guerrillas the Rhodesian soldiers light their cigarettes while hiding in the dark. This makes it easy for guerrillas to spot them (Makari, p.63) and destroy them. In *Gukurahundi* (1985) statements like "*Hapana kana mumwe wavo* (the guerillas) *akambonzi pferenyu*" (Not even one of them was scratched), "*Hamheno kana pane musoja akararama pahondo iyi*". (No soldier is likely to have survived this battle) are

very common. In Makari's *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985), Tinotonga is able to count twelve Rhodesian soldiers at night because there was enough light after the soldiers switched on a torch (Makari, p.63). They were all wiped out.

Instances in which all guerrilla fighters are also wiped out by Rhodesian forces in a battle are unknown or very rare. To portray guerrilla fighters in that light would be regarded as retrogressive. This means that the writer did "not first accept to liberate himself from certain inhibiting angles of vision" (Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1983:58). His vision of the war of liberation was blurred by the mood of celebration that he was steeped in. However, portraying guerrillas as also getting killed is portraying reality of what happens in a real war situation. People die on both sides. Kuda Hondo, the main character in Sungano's *Kuda Muhondo* (1985), puts it precisely when he says:

Pfuti ipfuti. Muvengi anenge aine yake iwe uine yako asi dzose dzinouraya. Saka pakurwa pangangofa iwe kana muvengi (p.91).

(A gun is a gun, the enemy has his own and you have your own but both kill. So in a battle it may be you who dies or it may be the enemy.)

This is the reality that the Shona war novel fails to portray because it is part of the independence celebrations. We immediately see the relevance of the question that Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1983:58) asks when he wonders whether the artist has equipped himself with a world view which enables him to see as much of the world as it is possible for him to see and make us see. The authors are not equipped to do this and that is why they are not objective at all in their reporting. Wayne Boothe (1972:566) defines objectivity in an author as "an attitude of neutrality towards all values, an attempt at disinterested reporting of all things good and evil". "An attitude of neutrality towards all values" implies being critical. However, Shona war fiction is not critical because as Chiweshe (Sunday Mail, 2004:E2) points out, "any literature born out of a celebratory period is never critical". Shona liberation war fiction simplifies history to the level of rendering it very superficial. The 'born frees' who were born after 1979 and others who did not experience the liberation war would read this Shona war fiction and think that the war was a lot of fun. If one considers that when at 7pm on 26 December 1979, Rex Nhongo and forty-one ZANLA commanders flew into Salisbury in a Chartered Air Botswana Viscount many

thousands of delirious supporters jammed the airport oblivious of tear gas and police dogs (Martin and Johnson, 1981:320) one understands why Shona war fiction portrays the liberation war as if it was a picnic or an entertaining game. The authors may not have been physically present at the airport on that day but the euphoria and mood of celebration were quite infectious. It is not surprising therefore that instead of being critical the Shona war fiction is one-sidedly sympathetic towards the guerrilla army. The fiction portrays guerrillas that win in nearly all situations, guerrillas that do not get killed even where it is obvious that they should, and guerrillas that appear from nowhere and 'dissolve' into nothingness. In short, the guerrilla fighters are portrayed as super humans who belong to the supernatural world. In fact, the myth of a superhuman guerrilla finds a great deal of direct expression in these Shona war stories. For example, VaMberikwazvo is surprised by the behaviour of the guerrillas:

Eheka ko, munhu mumwe chete aigotaura savanhu vazhinji sei?
(Makari, 1985:12)

(How can one person speak like so many people?)

And VaCharira in Choto's *Vavairo* (1990) expresses the myth surrounding the guerrillas:

Zvakanzi izvo vanhu vacho vanonyungudika, vanofembera kana kuziva zvose zvinoitika munzvimbo yavanenge vari: (Choto, 1990:9).

(It is said these people dissolve; they foresee or know everything that happens in an area they operate in.)

Another characteristic that shows that the writer of Shona War fiction is euphoric and celebrating victory and independence is the way he seems to endorse the use of violence. The writer shows this by using the device of celebrating the destruction of life and property. He seems to enjoy inflicting pain on his fictional characters and killing them. Perhaps Rouse (Swift, 1951:11) is therefore correct in asserting that:

Man is the most predatory and aggressive of animals-with the possible exception of great cats, tiger, and panther. Most animals kill for food or self-protection, for survival, man will kill for pleasure or for fun.

There is also a new source of triumph that grips the Zimbabwean society in the aftermath of the war that makes the author to trivialise war and make it look like a joke. Makata's *Gona ReChimurenga* (1982), perhaps the first novel about the war to be published in 1982, captures that new sense of triumph that makes one to celebrate death and destruction. He depicts the war as if it was an enjoyable experience. Makata describes a fierce encounter between the guerrillas and the Rhodesian forces in a melodramatic fashion. For while guns are exploding and people are dying, Mabhunu Muchapera is portrayed as thoroughly enjoying himself. He (Mabhunu) says:

Panzvimbo pokuti ndiridze ndakatanga hangu kuseka. (Makata, 1982:30)

(Instead of firing, I started to laugh.)

Ndakateerera ndikabva ndanyemwerera. Kuridzwa kwadzo kwaindinakidza. Ipapo vanaMasango vaiita sevaiseka havo.... Yakambopopota ndokubva ndainyaradza ndokubva ndaseka ndega. Chokwadi neimwe nguva hondo inodadisa, inonakidza. (Makata, 1982:30- 31).

(I listened and then smiled. I enjoyed their sounds. At that time Masango and others appeared to be laughing... I fired (the gun) fiercely then I stopped and I started to laugh alone. Honestly at times war makes you proud, it's a sweet experience.)

Depicting the same battle Mabhunu goes on to say:

Ndakaitsehurazve ndokumboizorodza. Ndakatarisa Shamwariyeropa ndokubva tasanganidza maziso. Takasekererana ndokurwusimudzira. (Makata, 1982:31).

(I fired and then rested it. I looked at Shamwariyeropa and our eyes met. We smiled and started firing again.)

While Makata's *Gona ReChimurenga* (1982) is probably the first Shona novel about the liberation war to be published, and therefore captured the mood of celebration at its earliest and at its wildest, Raymond Choto's *Vavairo* (1990) comes at the end of the first decade of independence and demonstrates that the euphoria and mood of celebration still prevailed. Although Choto shows that some disillusionment was

creeping in still the best part of the population retained positive images of the years of the armed struggle. From the 1990s' perspective Choto continues to celebrate victories won more than a decade earlier. His diction and tone show that he writes for a nation still in celebration. He demonstrates this by the manner in which he depicts the sounds of guns fired by guerrillas. The author (using the omniscient narrator) says: Tumirai "*Akabva aridza pfuti yake sango rose ndokubva radavira*" (p.50), (He fired his gun and the whole veldt answered back); "*Tumirai akatepfenyura bazooka gomo rose ndokubva radavira*" (p.50), (Tumirai fired his bazooka and there were echoes from the mountain); "*Akatumirazve rimwe bara ndokubva gomo rose radavira*" (p.81), (He released another bullet and the whole mountain responded). There is something special about the way guerrillas in Choto's novel do their thing; something that makes war such a simple matter. Their guns always reverberate in a manner that makes war sound like sweet music. However, those who were physically fighting in that war know that each echo from the mountain brought with it news of death.

Perhaps the reason why these authors of Shona liberation war fiction tended "to romanticize and deodorize the liberation struggle" (Chiweshe, Sunday Mail, 2004:E2) is that they did not physically take part in the actual fighting itself. They did not cross the border into neighbouring countries to train as fighters and come back into the country to engage the Rhodesian soldiers in armed combat. They 'participated' in the war in various other capacities other than the capacity of armed guerrilla fighters. Many of them were supporting the war from a reasonable 'distance'. Charles Makari wrote his novel from the perspective of an adult male collaborator (*mujibha*) in the Zaka area where he was a headmaster of a school; Habakuk Gonzo Musengezi wrote *Zvairwadza Vasara (1984)* from the perspective of an 'A' Level student at St Augustines School, Penhalonga. Some of the events he depicts in the novel, happened while he was an Upper 6th student at the school and were witnessed by this researcher. Vitalis Nyawaranda's experiences of the war were obtained while he was a secondary school teacher at Kriste Mambo in the Tanda area of Makoni District, and Munashe Pesanai was also observing the war from secondary school classrooms in the Zvishavane area. Aaron Chiundura Moyo (in an interview, 19/07/07) says he knew about the war from Harare's suburbs, his attempt to join the struggle having aborted into a 'non-believers journey', to borrow Nyamufukudza's

coinage. None of those writers who supplied information in interviews indicated that they were ever involved in the actual fighting. That is why they are not able to examine the emotional and psychological impact of prolonged exposure to war, suffering and death. Those who were involved in the armed struggle itself, like Alexander Kanengoni, Isheunesu Valentine Mazorodze and Freedom Nyamubaya, capture the war more realistically in *Echoing Silences* (1997), *Silent Journey From the East* (1989), and *On the Road Again* (1986), respectively. Mazorodze depicts the Nyadzonia massacre in *Silent Journey from the East* (1989) in a manner that brings out the ugliness of it all:

The armoured cars ran over the tired comrades. The large and heavy wheels ran over many comrades, crushing their heads. There were sickening sounds of people's skulls breaking open everywhere. The eyes shot out of the splashed skulls and white brains splashed onto the ground and blood gushed out of the broken arteries and yet someone could be heard shouting, "Crush them! Crush them!" (p.112)

There is no attempt whatsoever to cushion comrades from the crushing wheels of the armoured cars. Kanengoni in *Echoing Silences* (1997) also shows the ugly face of war in his depiction of some of the things that happened during Zimbabwe's liberation war:

The woman fell down with the first vicious blow and the sound of Munashe's jarred and violent cry mingled with that of the dying baby as the hoe fell again and again and again until Munashe was splattered all over with dark brown blood and the base commander held him back and he refused, shouting that he wished that someone had killed him because he could not live with such memory and the security officer pulled the base commander away, threatening that he would personally deal with him now that the wife and child of one of Badza's chief lieutenants had been taken care of. Then Munashe threw away the blood-smeared hoe and walked away blindly, past the huge baobab, past the earth mound where the other three rebels had been hurriedly buried, towards nowhere. (p.21).

One cannot experience such horrors, either as a witness or as a perpetrator, and hope to emerge out of it unscathed emotionally or psychologically, as most of the Shona war novelists want to make their readers believe. These are the negatives that Makari (in an interview, 20/07/07) admits he chose to ignore, preferring to leave them to another time in the future. Freedom Nyamubaya who participated in the liberation

war as a female guerrilla fighter tells it all in *On The Road Again* (1986:49) when she says:

We should accept
We have been fucked
left, right and centre.
We will work our arses up
till sweat turned into blood.

We have been fucked
We all know by who.

Nyamubaya is revealing "...sexual, mental and physical harassment for women, mothers, in the liberation wars" (Nyamubaya, 1986:67). Like Kanengoni and Mazorodze, Nyamubaya shows too that "The war did not create angels out of all its participants" (Mazorodze, 1989:148). These are the horrors that the late commander of the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA), Joshua Nkomo, acknowledged when explaining to his guerilla army the importance of forming the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) comprising of units from ZIPRA, ZANLA and The Rhodesian army. Nkomo, in a video clip played on Zimbabwe television, said:

I know a lot of things happened during the war, very unpleasant things.

The Shona war novelists largely choose to overlook these 'very unpleasant things' and portray the war as if it was an enjoyable experience.

2.5 DOMINANT IDEOLOGY OF POST-INDEPENDENCE ERA

Literature, any literature, has the potential to show us the dominant mood of its epoch. Shona war fiction is no exception. Shona war fiction writers' perspectives on the liberation struggle were shaped by the dominant ideology of post-independence Zimbabwe. This fiction shows the harmonious relationships that exist between literature and ideology. "Literature is socially conditioned and makes us see the ideology from which it is born" (Ngara, 1985:21).

The discussion of this aspect will proceed by adopting Ngara's (1985:20) position of defining ideology as "referring to the dominant ideas of an epoch or class..." It will also be guided by Marx and Engels thinking that "the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the prevailing ideas" (Ngara, 1985:21). This therefore means that the dominant ideas of the post-independent epoch in Zimbabwe are considered to be the ideas of the ruling class.

Shona war fiction in content and form seems to be an expression of the thinking of the original ZANU (PF). The ideas projected by the novels endorse the dominant ideology that places Robert Gabriel Mugabe at the centre of the new political dispensation. Robert Mugabe is seen as the one who will replace Ian Smith. In *Gona ReChimurenga* (1982), Moses Makata says that "... *kwaizosara chete kuti chigaro chaSmith chitorwe naRobert Gabriel Mugabe*" (p.48) (...what would remain is for Smith's position to be taken over by Mugabe). In Sungano's *Kuda Muhondo* (1985), Kuda Hondo in his slogan says:

Pamberi neZANLA Forces, Pamberi nehondo. Pamberi naCde Mugabe, pamberi noruzhinji rwavanhu (p.115).

(Forward with ZANLA Forces. Forward with the war. Forward with Cde Mugabe. Forward with the generality of the people.)

Writers like Sungano and Makata had the advantage of hindsight in that they wrote at a time that a new black government was in power. Robert Gabriel Mugabe was already the Prime Minister of independent Zimbabwe. For these writers it was a matter of confirming the status quo. While ZANU and ZANLA were fighting the war mainly from the east ZAPU and ZIPRA were also fighting from the western side. All Shona war novels make no mention of ZAPU and its leadership. This silence on any other party or leader agrees with the ideology of one party state. One can go so far as to argue that the Shona liberation war novel is actually in harmony with the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army choir's song that mischievously tells the nation that only ZANU (PF) waged the armed struggle. In fact the song takes the form of a question and answer in which the leader asks "*Chimurenga chakarwiwa naniko?*" and the rest of the choir members respond by saying "*NeZANU (PF)*" (Leader: Who waged the armed struggle? Answer: It was ZANU (PF)). ZAPU and its

Zimbabwe Peoples' Revolutionary Army are of no consequence in this equation. This is in line with the ideology of one-party state.

The Shona war novel also seems to endorse the philosophy of socialism that the new black government expounded. Speaking at Seke No. 4 Secondary School on 22 October 1984, the then Prime Minister Robert Mugabe (ZIMFEP, 1987:18) expounded the new socialist vision saying:

‘...the new person we need must be an active force for production and development, not just for himself but for society as a whole.

And Deputy Prime Minister Simon Vengai Muzenda (ZIMFEP, 1987:19) in a speech given at a prize-giving ceremony at Allan Wilson School in Harare, on October 20, 1983, also said:

The fundamental and ultimate goal and aspiration of the people of Zimbabwe is the establishment and development of a democratic, egalitarian and socialist society.

The dominant socialist ideology that ZANU (PF) brought with it from the war and which was meant to be its guiding principle in the first decade of independence affected the contents of Shona war fiction and determined its scope and direction. One may go so far as to argue that the writers used Shona war fiction as part of a wider programme of political acceptance of the new dispensation and endorsement of the liberation war and its conduct. The concept of co-operatives and self-reliance is given prominent place in the novels. Tumirai explains to VaChoto that:

Iye zvino hurumende iri kutenga mapurazi kuti vanhu vaende kunoita mushandirapamwe vachirima. Ndosaka taiti mapurazi evarungu achava edu. (Choto, 1990:157)

(Right now government is buying white farms so people can go and form co-operatives; that is why we used to say we would take farms.)

However, the best passage that captures ZANU's ideology with regards to socialism and self-reliance comes from Comrade Josiah who advocates that:

Tinoda kurwisana noumbimbindoga kuti vanhu vakwanise kugovana upfumi hwenyika yavo. Vanhu ngavazive kuti nyika vanhu, uyezve kuti munhu ndiyo hurumende. Kushora hurumende kuzvituka iwe pachako. Zivai kuti mauto, vashandi zvose noupfumi hwenyika ndezvevanhu....Naizvozvo kubva nhasi ngatichiregai kubvunza kuti hurumende ichatiitirei? Zvinotova nani tizvibvunze kuti tichaitirei nyika yedu'. (Choto, 1990:81)

(We want to fight against individualism so that people can share the wealth of their country. People must know that a country is a country because of people and also that people are the government. To blame government is to blame ourselves. Know that the army, workers and the wealth of the country belong to the people...therefore starting from today let us not ask what the government can do for us? It is better to ask ourselves what we can do for our country.)

This perspective is shaped by the dominant ideology of the epoch that influences writers to try and conscientise the masses and rally them behind the political, social and economic programmes of one of the parties that spearheaded the armed struggle against colonialism. These programmes are centred on the ideals of one-party state, egalitarianism and unity and comradeship. The circumstances prevailing in the post-independence period were different from those of the 1970s. The nation was now facing new challenges and it could only prosper if its people shared a common vision, and that vision was guided by the philosophy of socialism.

It has been argued and demonstrated that post-independence euphoria, mood of independence as well as the dominant ideology of the epoch immensely influenced Shona writers' perspectives on the armed struggle in Zimbabwe. The Shona war novel reflects the mood, the spirit and the thinking of its time. Ngugi wa Thiongo (1981:72) aptly puts it when he says that:

...literature has often given us more insights into the moving spirit of an era than all the historical and political documents treating the same moments in a society's development.

If the writers themselves were lying about what was happening during the war, their art was telling the truth about what was happening during the first ten or so years of independence. This is what D.H. Lawrence (1972:123) means when he postulates that:

Art-speech is the only truth. An artist is usually a damned liar, but his art, if it be art, will tell the truth of his day and that is all that matters.

Every writer is a product of his historical epoch and as Pearce (1974:360) points out:

We must, therefore, consider the literary work as it is a kind of statement which can never be dissociated from either the time in which it was made or the time in which it was known.

Literature in Elizabethan England was placed at the service of religion because the Catholic Church provided the dominant religion, and William Shakespeare was a child of his time who was influenced by the dominant ideology of his age which believed in the doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings (Ngara, 1985:22). Chirikure Chirikure's poetry in *Rukuvhute* (1989) sees the independence of Zimbabwe in terms of symbols of motherhood, childbearing and childhood. In the poem '*Chava Chimombe Chava Chigondora*' (Once born one takes care of himself), the liberation war is depicted as "*mhou ichitsegaira nezamu*" (pregnant cow) and the new independent state of Zimbabwe as "*ngarakata yemhuru*" (a strong bullock). This choice of linguistic terms is determined by history. Chirikure was writing at a time of independence and he captured the mood of celebration and expectation. The same applies to Shona war fiction. Its content and style were telling the story of its own time. So, Chiweshe (Sunday Mail, 2004:E2) is correct in saying that:

Just like how everyone supported the nationalist ideology in their respective fields, so did the writers use the pen in support of this popular ideology. It brought them satisfaction and self-gratification to know that they are in support of the fruits of independence.

2.6 LITERARY COMPETITIONS

Competitions, whether in class, in business, in farming, beauty, sport or any other aspect of human endeavour, will always encourage people to bring out their best and to do more. Sometimes competition encourages people to do things they were not thinking of doing in the hope of winning and get reward or recognition.

For many years competitions have been a feature of Zimbabwean literary life. Organisations like the Literature Bureau, the National Theatre Organisation, Zimbabwe Book Publishers' Association and the National Arts Council have at various stages organised literary competitions. A sizeable number of plays, novels and poetry books have been subjected to one kind of literary competition or another. Among the novels and short stories that were published after the manuscripts were entered for a literary competition organised by the Literature Bureau are those works that deal with the theme of The Second War of Liberation in Zimbabwe. The Literature Bureau had its own budget to fund the literary competitions and winners got monetary rewards, in addition to being published.

During the first few years of Zimbabwe's independence the Literature Bureau launched literary competitions in which writers were required to write on the theme of Zimbabwe's liberation war. What this means is that the Literature Bureau made a direct and deliberate intervention into the literary life of the nation in order to influence its direction and growth. The Literature Bureau launched the competitions specifically for those who were interested in writing about the armed struggle. Or conversely, it was the Literature Bureau that was interested in the theme of liberation war since, according to Chitsike (in an interview, 19/07/07), there was a vacuum in that area. Chitsike says that the response was overwhelming. Manuscripts came in what he calls "large numbers". Moyo confirmed (in an interview, 19/07/07) that it was the introduction of literary competitions that created the stampede that resulted in the concentration of published war novels and short stories in the years between 1982 and 1985. Some manuscripts were acknowledged but not published. In fact, according to Moyo, these were the years when the Literature Bureau invited manuscripts on 'dictated themes'. Moyo entered the competition with *Nguo Dzouswa* (1985), Nyawaranda with *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) and Sungano, who went on to win the first prize, entered with *Kuda Muhondo* (1985).

Hondo yeChimurenga (1985), a collection of short stories, is an epitome of a product of a literary competition. It cannot possibly be an accident or coincidence that twenty short stories written by nineteen different authors should appear together under one cover. These stories about Zimbabwe's liberation war happened to be there in the form of an anthology because there was an organising hand that put them together

through the medium of a competition. On the cover blurb it is stated that “*vanyori ava vakahwina mumakwikwi eHondo-Impi Experiences, akaitwa neveLiterature Bureau muna 1982*” (These writers won in the *Hondo-Impi Experiences* competition organized by the Literature Bureau in 1982). Some of the writers who featured in this competition like Aaron Chiundura Moyo and Vitalis Nyawaranda confirmed in interviews that they contributed their stories in response to a call for manuscripts for a literary competition.

Elsewhere in this Chapter it has been argued that literature that is born at a time of celebration is hardly critical. Equally, literature that is born out of a competition may also be affected by the situation of competition, either positively or negatively. In the case of the literature under study, the competitions were launched in a moment of euphoria and celebration. If “competition brings out the best in products and the worst in people” (David Sarnoff – Wikipedia), then this competition that was held at a moment of great happiness and elation produced the best in glorifying the armed struggle. The standard practice in most competitions is that a panel of judges whose decision is final assesses the manuscripts. Hence, there is always the likelihood that the competitor, who is motivated largely by the desire to win, will make every effort to court the judges. Robert Collier (Wikipedia) has said that in a competition “You must set in operation a process of competition, from which one must emerge a victor and the other set be defeated”.

This is precisely what some war fiction writers who joined the competitions did. Bisset Chitsike, who joined the Bureau in 1969 and rose through the ranks to become the Chief Publications Officer in 1986, charges (in an interview, 19/07/07) that “some wrote to impress us because they wanted to win the competition”. Chitsike used the term ‘impress’ to imply that the writers made extra effort to glorify the armed struggle in order to please the judges and influence the verdict in their favour. He elaborated further:

People were afraid to write anything that was good. People were biased. Most of the manuscripts were not balanced. We announced on radio that authors should be balanced. We told authors that most people knew about the liberation war and readers would know falsehoods from truths. We also held workshops where we told people to be balanced (Chitsike, interview, 19/07/07).

However, if the majority of Shona war stories that were published are a measure of the effectiveness of this appeal then the appeal was a total failure. When Chitsike talks of people fearing to write ‘anything that was good’ there is a body of Marxist thinking there. He implies that there is no realism that Angels defines as “typical characters in typical situation” (Williams, 1972:583). The point being made here is that the competitors must have reasoned that judges were part of that euphoric and celebrating population, so if one hoped to win the competition the best one could do was to celebrate with the judges themselves. Vitalis Nyawaranda (in an interview, 20/07/07) confirms that thinking when he says:

It is possible to think that judges wanted a certain position. Anything that was anti-guerillas would possibly not win at that time. We thought that the judges wanted the kind of stories that we were sending them.

Winning a competition carries with it an additional incentive in the form of a prize, be it money or commendation or something else. In the case of literary competitions organised by the Literature Bureau the prizes were in the form of money, and that is precisely what Vitalis Nyawaranda targeted. Nyawaranda admits (in an interview, 20/07/07) that money was his prime motive for joining these competitions:

My prime motive was money. I was not even targeting royalties. That would come later. I was targeting prize money for the first position, which was \$600. \$600 was a lot of money at that time, and that is what I wanted. The manuscripts that came first and second would then get published. Those that got third prize would be revised accordingly and get published later.

As already indicated earlier, Nyawaranda did not get first prize for *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) although that was his major intention when he joined the competition. However, he got first prize for his short story *Tamba Wakachenjera* and Chiundura Moyo won second prize for the short story *Ndaponda Gandanga*, both of which appear in *Hondo YeChimurenga* (1984).

Moreover, the winning manuscripts were sent to publishing houses like Mambo Press, College Press, Longman and Zimbabwe Publishing House where they were published ‘in Association with the Literature Bureau’. Once published the author was

guaranteed to get some royalties from the sales. Government guaranteed to buy a certain number of copies of each published book to put in school and public libraries, and other copies would hopefully be bought by the reading public and by the schools themselves.

This commoditisation of art was bound to affect the writer's perception of the liberation war. The writers tended to portray the war in a manner that they thought would please the consumers of the literature. This accounts for the idealisation of the war as opposed to realism. Writers must have imagined too that if they endorsed the official ZANU (PF) version of the war their published works stood a good chance of being prescribed as set books for schools and hence gain a ready market that would guarantee them 'good' money. This confirms Lloyd's (1992:3) assertion that "If you want funds and official approval it's still a good idea to avoid rocking political boats".

If authors wrote negative things about the guerillas there would be no ready market for their novels. Makari (in an interview, 20/07/07) seems to agree with this when he says:

I self censored my book. For instance, many girls were raped during the war. But I was targeting school going age in my book. I wanted to write things that were readable. I wanted to write things that were forward-looking and positive. The negative will have its time in the future.

This approach resulted in the publication of fiction that supported the popular version of the war that publishers would sell fast to the people while they were still drunk with euphoria and celebration. However, best sellers are not the best books in developmental terms. They aim at mindless entertainment (Chiwome, 2002:73), which is what most of the Shona war novels and short stories turned out to be.

2.7 CONCLUSION

It has been shown that the Second War of Liberation in Zimbabwe was an event that attracted the attention of many writers while it raged on. However, while some whites were able to publish their works especially outside Zimbabwe no blacks were able to write and publish Shona fiction that depicted the liberation war before 1980. A

number of Shona stories about the armed struggle were only published soon after independence. The chapter has argued that war can be a political theme and in colonial Zimbabwe writing on political themes was taboo.

It has been argued in the chapter that several war stories were published soon after independence and that this was largely due to political independence and freedom that created sufficient democratic space in which writers could express themselves with minimum restrictions. However, the Shona literature that emerged was one-sided. This one-sidedness is a result of a number of factors that shaped writers' perspectives on the liberation war. It has been argued that writers' perspectives were shaped by euphoria, mood of celebration, the dominant ideology of the post-independence epoch, as well as the literary competitions that were held by the Literature Bureau. These conditions produced Shona literature that was one-sidedly sympathetic to the guerrilla movement and its supporters. The writers take every opportunity to project the Rhodesian soldiers as poor strategists who easily walk into traps where they get wiped out. The devices that Shona war fiction writers use to convey this sympathy for the guerrilla army are very similar to the techniques used by those writers who sympathise with the Mau Mau cause in Kenya. Maughan-Brown (1985:167) shows that Reid's sympathy for Mau Mau cause is clearly and repeatedly indicated throughout his novel '*The Leopard*'. Reid conveys this sympathy for the Mau Mau cause by taking for granted the justice of the Gikuyu land claims and making a forest fighter (Nebu) his main protagonist (Maughan-Brown, 1985:167). Equally, Shona war fiction writers also convey their sympathy for ZANLA by also taking for granted the justice for African land and other claims and making guerrillas their heroes and the Rhodesian soldiers the antagonists. It is not easy to see the consciousness of the other side in the conflict. The consciousness of the white man is hardly ever explored.

CHAPTER 3

WAR FICTION AS ROMANCE OF ADVENTURE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous Chapter attempts have been made to argue that writers of Shona war fiction tended to romanticise the war largely because they were influenced by the advent of independence and freedom, the dominant mood of euphoria and celebration, the dominant ideology at the time, as well as the situation of literary competitions. The war novel gives an accurate picture of the surface life and shows the dominant interests of post-independent Zimbabwe. It is an expression of the meaning or the spirit of the time. This means that Shona war fiction writers represented more than themselves. They were spokespersons of an epoch and of their country. The war novel was written at a time of celebration and self-congratulations. It gave its approval to the spirit of the time by idealising and romanticising the war. While the argument that Shona war fiction is a product of its historical and social epoch is plausible, its pitfall lies in the fact that it does not consider the nature of the theme that writers were writing on. This chapter turns to the question of theme with the intention of presenting the argument that writers' perspectives are often shaped by the type of theme they write on, and in this case the theme is that of war.

3.2 THE THEME OF WAR

Writers of Shona war fiction were writing on the theme of war. If one writes on the theme of war the chances of him or her writing a romance of adventure are very high, because more often than not war tales tend to stress its romance rather than its tragedy. This is their nature. Romances are stories of marvel and adventures written with little regard for probability and with no sense of history. Usually romances show no knowledge of and no feeling for historical accuracy (Boas and Smith, 1925). Because the writer is writing about war, he is keenly aware that his readers love to read about people like themselves in everyday scenes, and about the marvellous, the

fantastic, the adventure that passes beyond bounds of reality in time, place and psychology (Spearman, 1966:144). Although he is drawing his material from a historical event, the writer is not a passive instrument like a mirror that reflects what its face captures. Rather, he is a selective instrument, like a computer, that selects what he knows his readers like.

It must be borne in mind that these war novels should be recognised, “not as original creations, but as the re-fashioning of ready-made and familiar materials. Even here, the writer keeps a certain amount of independence, which can express itself in the choice of material and in changes in it which are often quite extensive” (Freud, 1972:41). The events of the war depicted in these Shona war stories are the familiar materials that writers were re-fashioning. Their novels are a re-organisation of the mythical and legendary stories that they heard told during the liberation war and most of these stories were stories of courage, peril and marvel. Therefore, in so far as the material is already at hand it is derived from the popular treasure-house of myths, legends and fairytales (Freud, 1972:41). One can therefore conclude that these myths, legends and fairytales are the raw material of which Shona war romances of adventure are made.

This chapter sets out to postulate that whether writers liked it or not as long as they were writing about war they were likely to produce romances because by its very nature war always provides an opportunity for adventure and adventure is an essential ingredient of a romance. It is argued that writers would most probably have come up with romances notwithstanding the factors discussed in Chapter 2 that helped to give the Shona war novel its character, quality and shape. As long as they were writing about a war, especially a guerrilla war such as the one that liberated Zimbabwe and a war they did not participate in, they were bound to fantasise. It has been pointed out in Chapter 2 that all the Shona war fiction writers were non-participants in the war they were now fantasising about. They were depending on what they saw from a distance and on the numerous stories told about the war which they heard, some of it reaching them as second hand information. There were numerous mythical stories about the guerrillas. For example, there were stories told about guerrillas that they could disappear into thin air, that if captured by Rhodesian soldiers the guerrillas would turn into cabbages by the time they got to the police

stations, and that when Rhodesian soldiers fired at guerrillas their guns would only spit water and not bullets. What this means is that the material which the writers used as the basis of their stories was derived from the popular treasure-house of myths, legends and fantasies coming from the war zones as oral art forms. It is now possible to argue that their war stories are “distorted vestiges of the wishful fantasies” (Freud, 1972:41) and dreams of Zimbabweans during the war of liberation. There were myths that were told in order to reject certain images about blacks that were entrenched by whites (Mwaoneni, 1995:18), there were also legendary stories told about the heroic exploits of certain guerrilla fighters as part of war propaganda, and there were straightforward fairytales coming from the war zones. In the same way that literature in general is informed by pre-literary categories such as ritual, myth and folktale (Frye, 1972:426) so too Shona war literature is partially informed by myths, legends and fairytales emerging from the liberation war. Whoever set out to write novels depicting the Second War of Liberation in Zimbabwe was bound to use these legends, myths and fairytales as literary material because, like the British Empire and American frontier, the liberation war zone was “a space for legend, and lived legend about it” (Green, 1984:235).

The argument being presented here is that those legends, myths and fairytales, the material from which romances are crafted, were an integral part of the liberation war in Zimbabwe and those who wrote fiction about this war had their perspectives on the war shaped by them. These genres brought into the Shona war fiction romance qualities such as the wonderful, the miraculous, the exaggerated and the ideal.

3.3 WAR AS ADVENTURE

By its very nature war provides an opportunity for adventure. An adventure, according to *Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary* (1987:21) is something you do or a situation you become involved in that is unusual, exciting, and rather dangerous. Kahari (1990:80-81) has elaborated on it and points out that:

Adventure, with its possible sequel, war, and opportunity it provides of heroic achievements have always been central to human endeavour. Man has always felt he should leave the ‘no-exit’ situation and the confines of his native village milieu and go to places he has not visited before, fighting, risking and endangering his life for personal or

national aims. This spirit of bravado and adventure is universal and is magnificently and artistically presented in world literature.

War always carries an element of adventure because it always involves risking one's life. It involves encountering and fighting with hostile enemies sometimes in distant and strange lands, encountering dangerous animals and encountering hostile people in unfamiliar terrains. It involves wandering among mountains, valleys, plains, crossing rivers and valleys, forests and even arid lands. War often involves suffering and perhaps dying from hunger and thirst and strange diseases. War often involves conquests of remote and inaccessible lands; it involves killing and getting killed. It involves ambushes, narrow escapes, and sometimes expectations of rescue from tight situations. In short, action and peril are ingredients of war. War involves fighting in battles and battle provides the greatest testing grounds of human courage and stamina. If a writer chooses to write on the theme of war then these are some of the elements that will help to shape his approach and his perspective.

Perhaps examples of Alexander the Great of Macedonia, Napoleon Bonaparte of France, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe and Yoweri Museveni of Uganda can be used to add clarity to this concept of war as an adventure. This will help to throw some light on the Shona war novels about the liberation war in Zimbabwe as romances of adventure. Alexander the Great of Macedonia was the son of Phillip of Macedon, and his favourite horse was called Bucephalus; he conquered a large part of the known world of his day, and wept because there were no more worlds to conquer. This last 'fact', which apparently derives from a statement by Plutach that Alexander became downcast because those who had gone before him left him less to conquer, is possibly the most important clue to the kind of person he was (Rattigan, 1961:1). This is the right kind of stuff that produces what Cohen (1960:219) calls "adventure romance novels" if one chooses to write on the wars of Alexander the Great. No wonder Terence Rattigan (1961) wrote a play on the wars of Alexander the Great and gave it the title '*Adventure Story (A play in three acts)*'. War is indeed an adventure.

Another example is that of Napoleon Bonaparte of France. His continental campaign shows that action and peril are ingredients of war. When in 1812 Napoleon decided to attack Russia the event assumed the proportion of a romance of adventure. He

marched to Moscow with an army of 610 000 men but the Russian armies withdrew, burning everything in their wake. They set the city on fire to deprive Napoleon's armies of shelter and food. His armies could not be fed thousands of kilometres away from home. Napoleon was forced to retreat along a route that had been deprived of everything. His army was reduced by desertion and death from hunger, before the Russian winter set in to complete the catastrophe. In the end "of the 610 000 men who started on the great campaign, a tattered, starving, disorganised, delirious, and shell-shocked remnant of 20 000 re-crossed the Niemen. Not more than a thousand were of any further military use. The largest army in history had been completely wiped out" (Richards, 1977:53). When you read of Napoleon's Russian campaign it sounds like a romance of adventure. As he thought about the campaign Napoleon was quite excited like a pirate at the prospect of plunder in Russia. "People would want to know where we are going", he said, "we are going to make an end of Europe, and then to throw ourselves like robbers on other robbers less daring than ourselves and become masters of India" (Fisher, 1913:197). Here is an example of a war that provided an opportunity for adventure. When a commander remains with 20 000 out of 610 000 men then it becomes clear that he had, in the first instance, embarked on an adventure with all its perils.

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) conflict, dubbed "Africa's first continental war" (Didier Gondola, 2003) and "characterised with grim irony as 'Africa's World War I'" (Edouard Bustin, 2002) provides further perceptions of war as an adventure. Commenting on Mugabe's military intervention in the DRC civil war Katharina Pichler Coleman (2007) remarked that "---what was initially seen as a short military **adventure** [was] increasingly becoming a substantial military exercise". Thomas Madondoro (1998) also viewed Zimbabwe's involvement in the DRC as an adventure when he said that "Unconfirmed independent report estimates that Zimbabwe sank in excess of Z\$10 billion in its DRC **adventure** to save Kabila, who was under siege from invading rebels supported by Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda", while Clark (2002:194), in his study of Uganda's involvement in the DRC war, depicted Yoweri Museveni's role as "Museveni's **Adventure** in the Congo War".

It is not the intention of this thesis to delve into the debate about the DRC war. The relevance of the DRC war is to show that the perception of war as an adventure is

very common. It is especially so if one considers that for a country like Zimbabwe intervention in the DRC war involved conquest of remote and inaccessible lands. DRC is several hundreds of kilometres away, and the Zimbabwean army and air force were not only up against a hostile, difficult and elusive enemy. They were also up against nature in a country with inaccessible roads, thick equatorial type of forests, wide rivers and disease. The DRC conflict carried with it all the ingredients of an adventure-peril, heroic actions and glory; stories of marooned soldiers, of captured soldiers, of fighters or jetfighters lost in the jungles where they could not be recovered, stories of plane crashes and even stories of soldiers lost in the dense forest with very little chances, if any, of being located. This was the DRC land, a canvas for hair raising and marvellous incidents. It is for these reasons that the likes of Madondoro, Bustin, and Coleman depict any foreign country's involvement in the DRC conflict as an adventure. Of course, in war there are always other risks such as financial risk but the focus in this study is on military adventurism. The focus is on men and women fighting in a war, and this is what the Shona war novel is all about.

The above examples have been given in an attempt to illustrate that indeed war always provides an opportunity for adventure. It is hoped that these examples can be used as a launch pad from which one can approach the analysis of Shona war novels. The land of Zimbabwe and Mozambique on which the guerrilla war was fought, is like the land of the DRC, Russia and Eastern Europe, a canvas for hair raising and marvellous incidents. Those who wrote on the theme of liberation war in Zimbabwe wrote romances of adventure where their stories were close to or actually across the boundary of the incredible, like Terence Rattigan (1961) who wrote an adventure story based on Alexander the Great's wars. The point being made here is that going to Mozambique to join the liberation war was to embark on an adventure just as much as going into the DRC or into Russia or Eastern Europe was for Zimbabwe, Napoleon and Alexander, respectively. The Shona novels under study deal with this liberation war. They deal with these journeys of adventure. At this point then, it is time to turn to Shona war fiction and demonstrate how writers zeroed down to writing romances of adventure because they were writing on the theme of war.

3.4 SPRIT OF BRAVADO AND ADVENTURE

It has already been noted that war always provides an opportunity for adventure. When writers opt to write on the theme of war it means they are giving themselves an opportunity to write an adventure story because tales of war, as already noted, tend to stress its romance rather than its tragedy. The theme itself is a factor that helped to influence writers of Shona war fiction to romanticise the liberation war. The spirit of bravado and adventure is artistically presented in Shona war fiction, just as much as it is “magnificently and artistically presented in [other] world literature” (Kahari, 1990:81). The epicentre of a romance of adventure is the quest undertaken by the hero and that quest must be achieved. The story is deemed to be complete when the quest is successful. Indeed, as Frye (1972:432) implies, the quest must not fail.

It may not be very easy, however, to single out a hero in a Shona war novel. The standard plot in a traditional romance written in the romance languages such as French and Spanish “is that of a quest undertaken by a single knight in order to gain a lady’s favour” (Abrams, 1988:25). Equally, the standard plot in a Shona folktale is that of a quest undertaken by a single hero, usually an underprivileged social outcast like Chinyamapezi (the leper) or an orphaned boy. However, the nearest there is in Shona fiction to this kind of a ‘single knight’ who undertakes a quest is Karikoga Gumiremiseve, Jekanyika, or Murovasango (the main character in *Gonawapotera*, 1978). In Shona war novels, it becomes rather difficult to single out a hero who undertakes the quest. The war depicted in Shona war fiction is a guerrilla war and because of its guerrilla nature it is fought by people who move, live and fight in groups and with the masses. With the exception of a few cases like Sungano’s *Kuda Muhondo* (1985) and Choto’s *Vavairo* (1990) where individual fighters like Kuda Hondo and Tinotonga feature as heroes in those respective novels (but by no means the only ones), the general trend is for authors to present the reader with groups of heroes. These are not stories of single ‘knights’ like Ivanhoe, Robin Hood or Karikoga Gumiremiseve. They are stories in which the heroism assumes a collective character that the authors identify simply as *magamba edu* (our heroes), *vakomana* (boys), *magandanga* (terrorists), *masoja erusununguko* (soldiers of freedom), *varwiri vorusununguko* (freedom fighters), or simply *macomrades/makomuredzi* (comrades).

The Second War of Liberation in Zimbabwe was not only fought by those who were later interred at the national, provincial or district heroes' acres in the post-independence era. Everyone, including those represented at the National Heroes Acre in Harare by The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and those who, during the war, were dubbed as 'the man in the middle' fought it. This probably explains why the writers of Shona war fiction have shifted from the use of the Karikoga Gumiremiseve type of single hero to the 'group hero' often identified simply as *magamba edu* (our heroes). As Mason (1979:94) says when talking about heroism in modern war novels, "Writers of war novels are bound to assume some potential for collective heroism in their characters...." In some cases an individual from the group may die, but the truth, as Mason (1979:94) notes, is that "Though the individual may die, the collective survives to be meaningful by virtue of his death." The phrase 'collective heroism' is used in this study in the context that all guerrillas in a war novel have one collective quest. Generally the 'comrades' move together, fight together, survive heavy bombardment together, and retreat together if possible, giving the reader this concept of collective heroism. Even when there are leading characters like Kuda Hondo and Tichatonga as seeming heroes in the respective novels in which they appear, the concept of the collective hero is ever present. The group is bonded together by the blood of those who have already died for the same quest, for the ideal of the revolution.

It is the hero in the war novel who undertakes a quest. The quest implies a goal to be achieved or a dream to be realised at any cost. In the Shona war novel the hero undertakes a quest to liberate his country. The hero undertakes a journey to go and take up arms in order to fight the settler government and restore the dignity of the African people of Zimbabwe as a sovereign nation. It is a quest for national liberation and independence. This means that heroes of Shona war fiction go on a mission of national importance and the mission must be accomplished. When individuals or groups of young people leave "the confines of their native village milieu and go to places they have not visited or heard about before" (Kahari, 1990:81) it is because they want to achieve that national goal, that quest, and get glory.

Kahari (1990) has divided the journey of adventure undertaken by the hero to achieve fame into four stages. It has been found useful in this thesis to adopt this

structure in analysing Shona war novels as romances of adventure. Some of the Shona war novels can be fitted into this structure, which is divided into the call, the test, the crisis and the exaltation. Kahari's structure has been adopted in the full knowledge that some Shona war novels may not quite fit into that structure. Kahari's structure has only been adopted as a guide, but it will not be used to disqualify any other war novel from the family of romances of adventure. There are, certainly, some Shona war novels that meet some, but not all, of Kahari's criteria but that does not diminish their importance as romances.

3.5 THE CALL

The call involves the hero experiencing a call that his enemies attempt to prevent him from obeying (Kahari, 1990). The Shona war novel is about people who are called to go and take up arms and fight for freedom. The Shona war novels can be divided roughly into two types. There are those novels in which the story opens when the guerrillas have already returned from Mozambique and are already in Zimbabwe and fighting the war. These novels are written by authors who opt to ignore the onward journey and concentrate on the return journey or on the actual fighting. The other category is that of novels in which the stories begin at home with the onward journey into the unknown. The former have already answered the call. However, the reader does not see them experiencing the call but their presence in the war is a clear indication that they experienced the call and answered positively. It is sufficient that in the course of the story the heroes themselves tell the readers how they were called.

These liberation war narratives show that what was important was not how the individual was called. What was important was the degree of commitment to the struggle once the individual had answered the call positively. "Some young girls and boys were press ganged or 'abducted' from their schools and forced to join the fighters" (Lyons, 2004:109), but once they were there they embraced the ideals of the revolution, sometimes after thorough indoctrination or political education. In Makari's *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) Tintonga tells VaMberikwazvo how he and others were duped by a certain man in Masvingo into believing that he was sending them to school abroad, only for them to turn up in a military training camp in Mozambique.

This is how Tinotonga and others were called. They came via the path of cruel force and coercion. Tinotonga tells the reader that “*takachengetedzwa zvakasimba chaizvo. Zvechokwadi, tainge vasungwa chaiwo.*” (p.45) (We were heavily guarded. The truth is that we were like prisoners). He further elaborates on the manner of his call:

Isu takanyatsozvionera kuti zviya zvokuti tinoenda kukosi zvaiva zvimwewo izvo. Ko, zvakanga zvirizvokuvanza here? Takaudzwa kuti kurwira nyika raiva basa romunhu wose womuZimbabwe. (p.46)

(We realised that the talk of going to school and do a course was something else. It was not a secret. We were told openly that it was the responsibility of every Zimbabwean to fight for freedom.)

The enemies that attempted to prevent the heroes from obeying the call came in many shapes. They came in the shape of wild animals like lions, elephants and rhinos that attacked them at times. At one time the element of enmity came in the form of a rhinoceros that nearly killed them as they were travelling to Mozambique to answer the ‘call’. On another occasion it presented itself in the form of Rhodesian air force that spotted them. On this occasion they survived a fierce battle between the Rhodesian forces and the guerrillas who were escorting them to Mozambique.

The worst enemy however, was in themselves, in their inner souls. Deep down in their hearts abductees felt the need to go to school. The war was not part of their programme. Hence, deep down in their hearts there was the strong urge to want to run away from it all. Tinotonga says, “*Tose takarangana zvokutiza bva, taichengetedzwa samabhanditi chaiwo*” (p.46). (We all planned to run away, but we were guarded like prisoners). Ultimately with the passage of time, they became part of the revolutionary war:

Nokufamba kwenguva, ndakazviona kuti kutiza kuparadza nguva, nokudaro shungu yokusunungura nyika yangu muubatwa yakapinda mandiri pashoma napashoma ndikasara ndadhakwa nayo. Ndakatsidzira kuva murwiri wokusununguko. (p.46)

(With the passage of time, I realised that it was a waste of time trying to run away, and therefore the determination to free my country from oppression got into me bit by bit until I became drunk with it. I committed myself to be a freedom fighter.)

The moment of making the commitment to fight for freedom constitutes the defining moment of making a positive response to the 'call'.

Makata and Nyawaranda demonstrate how some people joined the struggle, not because they 'heard the voice' calling them to go and fight for freedom, but because they were running away from various personal social problems. For them this is the form the 'call' took. Joining the liberation war became a convenient way of avoiding problems such as unwanted pregnancies, arrests and prison terms for all sorts of crimes such as murder, rape or theft. Joining the liberation war became a way of escaping from drab existence and possible death by suicide. Reference is being made here to people who would normally not 'hear the voice' calling them to go and fight for freedom and people who, even if they had 'heard the voice', would normally not have responded. These are people who were prompted by personal social problems to take advantage of the 'voice' calling on all Zimbabweans to go and join the liberation war. In Makata's *Gona ReChimurenga* (1982) Mabhunu Muchapera makes it clear that it was the thought of Priscilla, his girlfriend who died after she was bitten by a snake, that landed him in the liberation war. He joined the war after several suicide attempts (p8). Mabhunu says:

Ndosaka nhasi ndiri muno musango. Hapana upenyu hwakandinakidza afa. Ndakashaya chekuita ndokuzofunga zvekuyambuka, nemari yandaishanda. (p.61-62)

(That is why I am in this bush war. Life was no longer enjoyable after her death. Life ceased to be meaningful so I decided to cross the border, with the money I had served.)

This is how Mabhunu was 'called' and how he answered the 'call'. In *Paida Mwoyo* (1987) Vitalis Nyawaranda's two main characters, Chipo and Tapera, focus on educational pursuits and the war is not on their agenda. However, Chipo ends up deciding to join the liberation war, not because she 'hears the voice' of freedom calling, but because it is the only way to escape from mounting social problems. Her own words are illuminating:

Kana ndichinge ndadzingwa chikoro chacho, ndokirosa zvangu kuMoza. Kuti ndidzoke kumusha kundogara nasekuru, mukadzi

wacho haandifaririba. Haadi kuti ndiende kuchikoro kwacho. Ndiye saka ndichida kuti ndiende zvangu Mozambiki kundobata pfuti. Nyangwe ndife zvangu ndichirwa nemasoja aSmith, ndiko ndizorore zvangu. Ko, kusiri kufa ndokupi? (p.12)

(If I am forced out of school, I will cross into Mozambique. I cannot go home to stay with my uncle because his wife does not like me. She does not want me to attend school. That is why I want to go to Mozambique to take up arms. Even if it means that I die fighting with Smith's soldiers that is the only way to end my troubles. Either way, there is no option except to die.)

Though she does not succeed to cross the border into Mozambique, this is how the decision to join the war comes about. To a discerning reader, Chipo is in a suicidal mood. Joining the war is her preferred way of physically ending her miserable life. She will not hang herself. It is possible to argue that in fighting Smith's soldiers (if she had succeeded to cross the border) Chipo would, symbolically, be fighting her own personal enemies at home, enemies like VaManyimo, her Headmaster, and her uncle's wife. Each blow she would inflict on Smith's army would, symbolically, be a fatal blow inflicted on her personal tormentors at school and in her family back home. However, in the process of doing that she would be making her own contribution to the armed struggle that liberated Zimbabwe. As it turns out she dies before crossing the Zimbabwe-Mozambique border, but this is, nevertheless, the way she is 'called'.

This phenomenon of people who join the war (and end up being committed cadres), not because they have been 'called' but because the war provides a kind of refuge for those running away from personal problems, is not only confined to war novels written in the Shona language. It is also found in war novels written in the English language. For example, In Isheunesu Valentine Mazorodze's *Silent Journey From the East* (1989) three major characters, Donald, Alexio and Charles join the liberation war after running away from the police. This is after Donald has, under the influence of liquor, murdered two innocent people, his girlfriend Jane and her father. As the author says, "...the girl plunged them into the war" (p.10). This is how the three experienced their 'call' to join the armed struggle. They were running away from the illegal murder that one of them had committed to join what Mason (1979:96) refers to as another "legalised murder called war". However, once they were in the war they became committed cadres.

In Sungano's novel *Kuda Muhondo* (1985), the hero of the story Kuda Hondo (real name Kudakwashe Zaranyika) first receives the 'call' while studying for a degree at the University of Rhodesia. The injustice and racial discrimination he encounters at what Gelfand (1978) calls a "non-racial island of learning" make him think of crossing the border into Mozambique to join the armed struggle. He experiences the 'call' in the form of a dream (p12). He dreamt that he was at his rural home in Chipinge where he witnessed settler soldiers burning peoples' villages. In the dream he finds himself having gone to take up arms to fight colonial oppression. When he goes home to Chipinge for the holidays he continues to experience the 'call'. He says, "*Ini pachangu mweya wangu wakanga wapindwa nepfungwa yokuda kuenda.*" (p.22) (Personally I was filled with the thought of going to war). Kuda answers the call to liberate his country. He is not pushed by personal interests. He is informed by dreams and concerns that transcend family, tribe, clan and self to include national goals and aspirations. There is this feeling within an individual that is difficult to define, a feeling that at some point visits the hearts and minds of individuals and make them answer to the 'call of a voice' inviting them to go and die fighting for freedom. This is a voice that calls upon people to fight for a national cause:

Mhinduro yakanga yangosara imwe chete yoga. Kuenda Mozambique kundotorawo pfuti. Ndakanga ndofunga zvokutsividza zvese zvandakanga ndaitirwa, zvakanga zvaitirwa vabereki vangu uye mutema wose womuZimbabwe. (p.23-24)

(There was only one choice left, going to Mozambique to take up arms. I had decided to avenge all the wrongs done to me, all the wrongs done to my parents, and the wrongs done to all the people of Zimbabwe.)

As is the norm with adventure stories there are enemies who attempt to prevent the hero from obeying the 'call'. His father is one such 'enemy'. Before the University of Rhodesia closed for the holidays Kuda's father wrote him a letter instructing him to go to Kwekwe and spend the holiday there with his brother because of the worsening security situation at home where the war was raging on. Kuda ignores his father's instruction to go to Kwekwe and goes home, and when he indicates his intention to assist with carrying out tasks given to *mujibhas* by the comrades in his home area the father objects. He insists that Kuda should leave for Kwekwe immediately. The father knows that war kills and he does not want to lose the money he has invested

in his son's education if he dies in the war. This is a spirited attempt by the 'enemy' to prevent the hero from obeying the 'call'. Nevertheless, despite this spirited attempt to stop him from obeying the 'call', Kuda goes to war.

However, some of the war fiction writers omit this step where the hero experiences the call and rush on to the third phase where they show the hero in action and peril. Such novels open with the 'heroes' already fighting. How they were called is not explained. However, this does not in any way diminish the quality of the war novel as a romance of adventure. Although the reader does not see the 'heroes' experiencing personal 'calls' to join the war the fact that they are fighting the war which other people did not join is ample evidence of the fact that somehow they experienced the 'call' and were tested outside the covers of the book. If one considers the concept of collective heroism discussed earlier in this chapter one can argue that all the heroes of the war novels experienced a 'call' in one way or the other. That is why they are in the war. All the heroes in the war have one quest, and that quest is to liberate Zimbabwe. This means that they have answered to the same 'call' even though the reader may not see them experiencing it.

Perhaps the 'call' in these stories can be understood better if headman Mberikwazvo's stream of consciousness and dream in Makari's *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) is considered here. After being used, abused and ill-treated by his former employers, Mazhindu and his son, Mberikwazvo reflects on the injustices Zimbabweans have been subjected to over the years; he reflects over the role of Nehanda and others in the First Chimurenga, and of the Second Chimurenga that is raging on and concludes that:

Chokwadi, dai makore aidzokerwa sure, ini ndaibva ndaita jaya ndikatetereka nenyika. Ndaindoguma Mozambique kwakaenda vamwe kundobata gidi. (p.8)

(Honestly, if it were possible to turn back the clock of time, I would wander away and go to Mozambique to take up arms and fight.)

This is old Mberikwazvo experiencing the 'call', which he is unable to respond to positively because of his age. However, for the rest of the heroes whose experience of personal 'calls' the reader is not given in the novels such as Pesanai's

Gukurahundi (1985), Choto's *Vavairo* (1990) and Nyawaranda's *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985), the way they are 'called' is represented in headman Mberikwazvo's dream. In his dream Mberikwazvo sees a new beginning for Zimbabwe. He dreams of a new and prosperous Zimbabwe and people were stampeding into it. For effective communication of the dream to the reader it is important that part of it be given here as it is in the text. As people stampede into the new prosperous Zimbabwe full of milk and honey the hefty men who guard the entrance gate say:

"Musapinda musati manzwa mutemo wapano. MuZimbabwe itsva munopindwa nemunhu akabata muguri webarwe mumaoko. Tichakupai mbeu dzacho kuti mugondodzidyara apo. Kutu chibarwe chacho chimere nokukura zvakanaka, zviri kwamuri kuti munenge muchidzichengeta zvakadii". Varume vaya vakatozopedza kutaura vanhu vava kudhumhana nokupingana ndare kuti vatore mbeu dzacho nokukurumidza. Ko, kutora mbeu chete kwaigozha here?

"Ndaona kuti mose mave nadzo," akadaro mumwe wavarume vaya.

"Maita zvakanaka. Asika chionai kuti pamakamira ipapo pagwenga. Hapana mvura uye mupfudze. Saka munotofanira kudiridza mbeu dzacho neropa renyu. Mupfudze mitezo yenhengo dzemiviri yenyu." Vanhu vose vakatanga kutarisana vachikahadzika. Ruzhinji rwakadududza.

"Izvi zvinoreva kuti..." (Makari, p.10)

("Do not enter before you have heard the rules governing this place. Only a person holding a maize cob in his hand enters the new Zimbabwe. We will give you the seeds so that you can plant them over there. But for the maize seed to germinate and grow well it will depend on how you care for it." By the time the men had finished talking people were already stampeding and getting into each other's way so as to get the seed quickly. Is it difficult just to collect seed?

"I see that all of you now have the seed," said one of the men.

"You have done well. But note that the place on which you are standing is dry. There is no water and there is no manure. That means you must water the seeds with your blood. Your body limbs are the manure." All the people were shocked and they looked at each other. The majority backtracked.

"This means that...")

The dream ends before its meaning is given. The reader should interpret the dream and see it as a 'call'. The majority of the people withdrew but the few guerrillas that feature in the novels are the ones that answered such a 'call'. The new Zimbabwe comes at a great prize and very few are prepared to make the sacrifice. The few are characters like Shingirai Tinotonga, Henry Muchena, Gabarinocheka, Simukai,

Dhorobha Maonde, Shelton Chidoro and Joe Chimurenga in Makari's *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985); Max Tavapedza and Gulliver Tinovakunda in Pesanai's *Gukurahundi* (1985); Tumirai and Tafirenyika in Choto's *Vavairo* (1990); Muchaparara and Pasindepedu in Nyawaranda's *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985); and Bazooka, Mao, Godwin Hondoinopisa, and Tichatora in Mutasa's *The Contact* (1985).

While these characters are heroes in several different war novels they are also, in a way, heroes in a single story: the story of Zimbabwe's war of liberation. In fact if you read one Shona war novel you have read all of them because they are the same. Although the heroes may appear in several different novels their journey is one, a journey of adventure. Their quest is also one, the quest to liberate Zimbabwe. Even though the readers do not see some of these heroes being 'called' they should know that all of them are 'called' by, and are responding to, a voice. This is the voice that Alexio in Mazorodze's *Silent Journey from the East* (1989) refers to when he says:

It is this truth about our past which is the power behind our people. Remember what Mbuya Nehanda said. "You can kill me if you like, throw my flesh to the vultures, leave my bones in the wilderness, but one day my bones will rise against you." (Narrator) Alexio remembers that his friends had looked at him with frightened eyes. "Shall we not respond to the call within us?" (p.14)

None had answered Alexio then but the many heroes that feature in the various novels who go on journeys of adventure are an indication of the collective heroism that answered the call. The best way to conclude this section therefore is to use the definition of the 'call' given by Nhongo-Simbanegavi (2000:168) who says:

As news of the war became common knowledge, many young people, including children, left home in search of adventure. "Bad wind" or "bad spirit" which when it blew in one's direction one would 'just go and see what it was all about.'

What Nhongo-Simbanegavi calls 'bad wind' or 'bad spirit' is what in this chapter has been characterised as the 'voice' that individuals 'heard calling' them to go and risk death, fighting.

3.6 TEST OF ADEQUACY

The call is the first step in the adventure story. The Shona novels under study are war novels and as such the heroes in them are called upon to lay down their lives for a national cause. In the process of doing that the heroes are called upon to go on a journey of adventure. So for them to undertake this journey of adventure, with all its risks and perils, the heroes need to pass a test of adequacy. In other words, they have to prove that they are adequate to the task they are about to undertake. However, war is serious business. It is not a game. In war people kill and people die. War requires one to have the courage and the will to kill and the will to survive. The second stage in the adventure story therefore involves the hero in minor bouts to “test his determination, prowess and manhood” (Kahari, 1990). The hero must pass the test of adequacy. In other words, is he adequate to the task he is about to undertake in order to achieve the quest and gain fame? The writer is writing on the theme of war, and hence his character necessarily undertakes an adventure and an adventure entails action, risk and peril so the hero must be tested for mental and physical preparedness and fitness. The theme of war that the writer is writing on involves a hero who goes on an adventure and as such the hero will meet what appear to be insurmountable obstacles that he must overcome. The man-against nature theme is common in adventures. The hero will have to overcome extreme hardships and conditions such as bad terrain, bad weather, hunger or thirst. He will have to overcome heat or cold. He will encounter wild animals and other hostile enemies. For that reason he must be involved in some minor bouts to test his preparedness for the rough ride ahead.

Karikoga Gumiremiseve (1958), *Pfumo Reropa* (1961) and *Jekanyika* (1968) can be used to illustrate how the hero may be tested. Before he undertakes his lone journey to Matebeleland to bring back his wife who has been taken by the fearsome Ndebele warriors in a raid Karikoga Gumiremiseve is involved in bouts to test his preparedness. He conquers extreme conditions of hunger, rejection and loneliness. He beats up the big bully Benyumundiro in a fight and subsequently, he kills a lion single-handedly. In an attempt to divert Karikoga Gumiremiseve’s attention from his quest the chief offers Karikoga an opportunity to choose a girl he likes from among all

the girls who had been gathered at the chief's homestead. As Karikoga is about to point at a girl he finds to be very attractive the thought of his wife enters his mind and he declares, "*Ndiri kuda mukadzi wangu Marunjeya*" (I want my wife Marunjeya). In other words, he chooses to risk his life going to Matebeleland alone to take his wife back. He proves that he is physically and mentally prepared for the journey of adventure.

Another example is that of Tanganeropa. Before he qualifies to undertake the perilous journey to Portuguese East Africa (now Mozambique) to trade with the Portuguese for beads and gold Tanganeropa is involved in some bouts to test his fitness for the hazardous journey. Firstly, he encounters a lion while he is accompanying his girlfriend Munjai to her home towards sunset. The lion and Tanganeropa look at each other squarely in the eyes until the lion gets scared and decides to go away, having realised that "*pano paipa*" (There is trouble here). Secondly, Tanganeropa cuts a spear handle from a thorny thicket where no other man had succeeded to cut one before. Thirdly, he kills a lion with a spear in a manner that leaves even the octogenarian Haripotse green with envy. Equally, in the novel *Jekanyika* (1968) the hero Jekanyika undergoes military training under the guidance of a military expert and graduates with flying colours. Secondly, an image of his clan totem (a crocodile) is imprinted on his chest using a red-hot iron and he is the only one who does not flinch. Thirdly, he is given an opportunity to choose any girl he wants from all the girls in his land as a way of persuading him to abandon his quest to look for his father. Jekanyika resists the temptation to fall in love. He chooses to go and look for his father even though he does not know what he looks like. Jekanyika passes the test of adequacy. He is determined and fit to undertake the journey of adventure with all its risks and perils.

The above examples have been given to illustrate that in a romance of adventure the hero is involved in a series of bouts in order to test his determination, prowess and manhood (Kahari, 1990:81). The three were determined and strong willed. Equally, the hero in the Shona war novel is also involved in some bouts to test his determination, prowess and manhood. It is essential for the hero to be tested for fitness and determination because he too, like Karikoga, Tanganeropa and Jekanyika, will also go on a perilous journey of adventure.

In Vitalis Nyawaranda's *Paida Mwoyo* (1987) the would-be hero Chipo is involved in a minor bout to test her adequacy and she fails to pass it when she is shot and dies from excessive bleeding while attempting to run away from Rhodesian soldiers. In Sungano's *Kuda Muhondo* (1985) the hero undergoes some minor tests. Of course the world in which Kuda lives is no longer the world of lions that get scared at seeing the sight of a brave man's eyes. It is no longer the world in which people attempt to divert the attention of the hero from his quest by gathering all the beautiful girls in the land and ask him to choose one. The challenges that the hero of the war novel faces are different. When the news of Hebert Chitepo's death is announced black students at the University of Rhodesia resolve to show their grief and solidarity with those fighting the liberation war. They resolve that on the following day all black students would not attend lectures, that no one would eat and drink anything, that they would all walk on foot from campus to Highfield to attend the 'funeral' and back. This is a way of mourning Chitepo. Although, as expected, not everyone adhered to these principles Kuda is one of those committed young men who did. He did not attend lectures, he did not drink nor eat, and he walked all the way from Mount Pleasant to Highfield and back on foot. These trials give him an opportunity to demonstrate his determination, strength and character. He would need these qualities in the war. Other students ate, drank and used buses to and from Highfield. Others attended lectures in defiance of black opinion, while others disappeared into thin air only to reappear at supper time. Secondly, Kuda saw several soldiers who died in a landmine incident. He also saw guerrillas who were killed in a contact with Rhodesian soldiers and he participated in their burial. When he says that on that day he did not get frightened by the sight of dead bodies (Sungano, p.24) it means that he has passed the test of adequacy. He is ready for the war. These are minor bouts to test his determination, prowess and strength.

3.7 THE CRISIS (THE HERO MUST NOT DIE)

It has already been pointed out earlier that war has always provided an opportunity for adventure. Real wars fought in this world have already been given in an attempt to project war as adventure. It has also been noted that anyone who writes fiction on the theme of war is therefore likely to come up with a romance story. A war novel is

basically an account of men and women at war. As a result the theme of men in battle runs through all these war narratives, and as noted earlier on battle presents one of the greatest testing grounds of human courage and stamina.

Although the world that the writers create is a new one in the geographical sense, it is the same old world of the folktale or of the medieval romance where the impossible becomes possible. It is the same old world adapted to modern warfare and environments; an old world adapted to suit the consciousness of contemporary society. The Shona war novel is a modern story of adventure in which the hero is no longer the single knight in armour as was the case with the hero of the medieval romance, but he is a modern guerrilla fighter armed with an AK 47 rifle, a bazooka, an RPG 7, or an SKS rifle. Since it is a romance of adventure the hero of the modern Shona war novel, like the hero of the medieval romances, goes on a mission, albeit a noble one. It is a noble mission to rescue the 'damsel in distress' and that 'damsel in distress' is, metaphorically, the land of Zimbabwe. The authors are writing about the war of liberation, and a 'bush war' for that matter, hence the theme of man against nature is very common, and this turns their narratives into adventure stories. The heroes' journeys to Mozambique involve long marches on foot, often crossing mountains and valleys and walking through the jungle. They often endure extreme difficulties walking through thorny bushes, pathways with sharp stones, crossing crocodile infested rivers, and crossing borders lined with numerous and treacherous landmines planted with such precision that one could not detect them with naked and inexperienced eyes. In many cases, these heroes have to endure hunger, thirst, cold, heat, disease and exposure to rain. Dangerous reptiles and animals such as snakes, elephants, lions, hyenas and rhinos also inhabit their world.

When a writer puts or places his character (the hero) in a war situation and in a hostile, dangerous and hell-like terrain he may have no choice but to equip him with super ordinary, almost magical powers, otherwise he will not last a mile. In order for the hero to last a mile the author will have to come to his rescue now and then. The war theme demands that the author places the hero "under the protection of a special Providence" (Freud, 1972:40) or provides him with what Demers (1983:16) calls "divine protection" and this is why the war zone becomes the convenient location for picturesque and marvellous incidents. As Cohen (1960:327) says:

Because of these trials, the hero gets ample opportunity to demonstrate his superhuman strength of body and character and to perform feats.

A number of examples will be given to demonstrate the concept of the hero who never dies.

3.7.1 Choto's *Vavairo*: A place for the marvellous

It is the war theme that shapes the writer's approach and perspective on the liberation war. For instance, in Choto's *Vavairo* (1990), Tumirai is provided with ample opportunity to demonstrate his strength of body and character. He performs feats of courage and bravery. He shows that he has a lot of stamina to last in this terrible war. He covers long distances on foot between Kamureza, Katsvuku and Dende areas, fights off enemy attacks, and protects the vulnerable against overwhelming odds. He downs one plane and a chopper (p.50) before rushing off to assist war collaborators who are under heavy enemy attack. On the way to Dende with Tsitsi he is once again subjected to heavy enemy attack. This time he does not only have to deal with enemy planes that are trying to bomb him. He also has to deal simultaneously with Tsitsi who is making it impossible for him to shoot at the enemy planes. In the end the super hero holds Tsitsi between his legs, thus subduing her and giving himself the opportunity to shoot at the planes that are bombarding him. All this is done by a hungry, thirsty and weary freedom fighter. The war novel is indeed a place for the marvellous.

3.7.2 Sungano's *Kuda Muhondo*: the hero's perilous journey of fame

The theme of a hero who undertakes an adventure in order to rescue his country from the jaws of imperialism is well represented in Sungano's *Kuda Muhondo* (1985). The hero of the novel, Kuda Hondo, goes on a journey of fame. What makes the journey an adventure is that it is long, risky and full of danger, and carries with it the possibility of war. Crossing from Zimbabwe into Mozambique entails risk because of landmines planted along the entire border. As it turns out eight people in Kuda's group detonate landmines and perish. Kuda is one of the survivors because he is, according to the constitution of the adventure story, supposed to continue on his perilous journey. After their military training Kuda Hondo is made the leader of his

group, thereby confirming his hero status. The journey of adventure is always littered with perils but he must survive. Kuda Hondo survives a Rhodesian air raid on their training camp in which at least eleven of their people are lost. Kuda Hondo further survives landmine explosions and an attack by the Rhodesian forces when he and his group cross the border and return to Mozambique with food supplies, cattle and vehicles. The Rhodesian air strikes claim the lives of eight guerrillas. Kuda Hondo reveals that in guerrilla warfare losing such a big number of cadres is not allowed. Kuda Hondo undertakes the final leg of his journey of adventure when he leads a battalion of newly trained recruits to Zimbabwe to execute the war. The perilous journey takes him as far as Buhera where it ends with a few military skirmishes. The novel, *Kuda Muhondo* (1985), is basically a story of a hero on a journey of adventure that is divided into two parts: the hazardous journey into Mozambique to receive military training and the hazardous journey to Buhera (Zimbabwe) to fight the war. Kuda Hondo survives all hazards because the hero should not die.

3.7.3 Makata's *Gona ReChimurenga* and Pesanai's *Gukurahundi*: Placing the hero under 'divine protection'

In *Gona ReChimurenga* (1982) readers get an example of a 'hero who never dies'. Makata protects his hero so much that "The feeling of security with which I follow the hero through his perilous adventures is the same as the feeling with which a hero in real life throws himself into the water to save a drowning man" (Freud, 1972:40). Makata's hero enjoys 'divine protection'. The hero gets "a true heroic feeling that 'Nothing will happen to me'" (Freud, 1972:40). For example, encounters with snakes often occur in Shona literature. Mabhunu and his comrades encounter a harrowing experience with 'the mother of all snakes' (*amai venyoka*, p.8). Mabhunu and his friends were asleep when suddenly they were awakened by the sharp hissing of a snake that wanted to bite Shamwariyerope. At one moment the snake was actually above Shamwariyerope threatening to strike but somehow it did not. The snake decided to leave Shamwariyerope and chase Masango and once again Masango was down and the snake was above him threatening to strike but it never did until Mabhunu cut its head off with a bayonet. What happens in this incident points to the fact that Mabhunu or one of his friends should have been bitten by the snake but for some reason the "hero alike of every daydream and every story" (Freud, 1972:40)

emerges intact though badly shaken. No harm happens to him. There is no other purpose of including this incident in the story except to demonstrate that the 'hero never dies'. The worst that the reader hears from the hero is that "*Ndanga ndaenda nhasi*" (p.31) (I almost died today) but he does not die even when it is obvious that he should.

In another incident Mabhunu and his friends are attacked by choppers. The attack causes a fierce fire that could have burnt the guerrillas to death. It is hard to imagine how Mabhunu survived in this raging fire. He was totally engulfed by the fire that he should have perished in it. The bag with his clothes and blanket was burnt. He fell on a tree stump that was burning with huge flames. The shirt he was wearing caught fire but he managed to remove it. There was fire everywhere around him and he could not even see where it ended (p.35). In those circumstances the hero emerged badly burnt but able to continue on his perilous journey of adventure. The reader is convinced that the circumstances of his situation should have led him to die in the raging fires. However, the hero never dies. He appears to have been placed 'under the protection of a special Providence'. From then on the reader feels that the hero is safe and that nothing will happen to him. Mabhunu survives up to the end of the story. Of the three only Masango and Shamwariyero die on the last two pages of the novel. However, the reader gets the feeling that the two had done everything that had to be done, so the author could allow them to die at this point. One also gets the feeling that the two die at the end because the author wants to show that he has not forgotten that in war people die. At any rate Mabhunu is there to represent the concept of the collective hero that survives.

Pesanai's *Gukurahundi* (1985) is constructed along more or less the same lines as Makata's *Gona ReChimurenga* (1982). Once the main character is introduced the reader gets the feeling that he will have him up to the end of the story. Gulliver Tinovakunda, like the heroes in Makata's *Gona ReChimurenga* (1982), appears to be firmly placed under "divine protection" (Demers, 1983:16). Once Gulliver has performed the tradition ritual of offering snuff to the ancestors and has appealed to Sekuru Chaminuka and Mbuya Nehanda for 'divine protection' his "nothing will happen to me" (Freud, 1972:40) heroic feeling returns to remind the reader that the hero 'never dies'. At no time in the entire story are the guerrillas in real danger of

getting wiped out. It is them who do most of the killing. The ZANLA juggernaut appears to be unstoppable as it rolls on crushing everything in its wake.

Initially Gulliver's group of guerrillas lose Chris but thereafter the hero is never threatened. The group stops a coca-cola van and robs it of all its contents. In the battle fought on the Chigwikwi Hill there are three army trucks with thirty Rhodesian soldiers. All the reader is told is that on the side of the guerrillas "*hapana kana mumwe wavo akanzi pferenyu*" (p.32) (None of them got even a slight scratch), but on the side of the Rhodesian soldiers readers are told that "*Hamheno kana pane akararama pahondo iyi*" (p.32) (It is not known whether there were any survivors). In another battle in which Gulliver is involved only two comrades perish but Gulliver survives. On the side of the Rhodesian soldiers "*kwakauya rori mbiri dzamasoja dzaiva dzakavharwa netende kuzotakura zvitunha*" (p.37) (Two lorries covered with tents came to collect dead bodies). There are several other incidents that begin and end in this way. Pesanai's novel makes boring reading. It is a chronicle of events in which Gulliver's group encounters Rhodesian soldiers several times and always comes out on top of the situation. This happens throughout the novel until the end. The life of Gulliver, the hero of the story is never threatened. His survival appears to be guaranteed.

3.7.4 Makari's *Zvaida Kushinga*: Wandering in the land of the ideal.

Makari's *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) provides a typical example of the hero who never dies. Makari is writing a war novel. He writes on the theme of war and for that reason he provides an adventure or adventures in which the heroes never die. We refer to adventures and heroes because Makari uses the technique of stories within a story. Each story within the main story attempts to "adhere to a set of principles which clearly are derived from the chivalric tradition" (Rice, 1985:67) at least in as far as it delights in wonders and marvels. Makari abdicates his role of an omniscient narrator and allows his characters to tell stories of their own adventures using the first person narrative technique.

Story 1

In the first story (within the main story) Makari invites readers to pay attention to Khomuredhi Tinotonga as he narrates the story of his adventures. Makari says, "*kana*

zviri zvakazoitika mugomo macho zvinonetsa kutsanangura. Regai tisiyire kuna Komuredhi Tinotonga anova ndiye akanga arimo mugomo macho.” (p.58) (As for what happened in the mountain it is difficult to explain. Let us leave it to Comrade Tinotonga who was there in the mountain to tell the story himself.). The story that Tinotonga goes on to tell is a story that has all the elements of the wonderful, the miraculous and the exaggerated. It has elements of action and peril. Tinotonga and Gabarinocheka and their colleagues were involved in a fierce night battle with the Rhodesian air force. The Rhodesian air force used search lights to illuminate the mountain and the whole place was subjected to incessant bombing. Tinotonga and Gabarinocheka ended up in a small cave where they found that they were sharing their hideout with a human skeleton and a python that appeared to be swallowing an animal. They were actually in a grave in which was buried an ancestor. Since it was not possible to leave the cave because of the bombing going on outside all they had to do was to push the ancestor’s remains aside and live peacefully with the python, each one minding their own business. These are incredible events that can curdle the blood of any reader of an adventure story. Gabarinocheka who has been badly injured in the bombing dies in that grave from excessive bleeding. However, Mason’s (1979:94) interpretation of the heroic ideal is quite insightful when he points out that “Though the individual may die, the collective survives to be more meaningful by virtue of his death.” The concept of collective heroism mentioned earlier in this chapter is given eloquent expression in Gabarinocheka’s parting words to the hero, Tinotonga:

Chionaika, mukoma Shingirai, in ndava kukusiyirai basa rakakosha kwazvo. Basa rokusunungura Zimbabwe.... (p.60)

(Look, Comrade Shingirai, I am leaving you with a big responsibility. The responsibility to liberate Zimbabwe.)

In a war novel there is always the potential for collective heroism. If one part of the collective heroism drops dead the collective survives to continue with the adventure. This is a fundamental point of difference with a ‘single knight’ type of hero, because if Karikoga Gumiremiseve or Jekanyika dies it becomes impossible to create a new hero half way through the story. In a war novel if Comrade Gabarinocheka dies the collective survives to carry on with the struggle. This underlies the concept of the

hero who never dies. Also, when Tinotonga finally left the cave and moved away groping in the dark he fell and tripped and his metal weapons hit against rocks and made some noise that raised the suspicions of soldiers who were nearby. The hero never dies, and Tinotonga was saved by the presence of a donkey. When soldiers lit a torch to investigate the cause of the noise all they saw was a donkey and this is what saved the hero and he continued on his marvellous but perilous journey. The same character, Tinotonga (together with Dhorobha Maonde), was saved from the Rhodesian soldiers by members of the Apostolic Faith church who were holding their church service. The 'apostles' acted fast and in no time the guerrillas were dressed in church regalia and their weapons wrapped in napkins by the church women. Tinotonga commends the masses for their vigilance when he says "*Zvamunoona zvakadai kana povo yoziva hondo inodadisa kushanda nayo*" (p.65) (When the masses understand the objectives of the revolution they are a pleasure to work with). Not only were the two guerrillas dressed as members of the Apostolic Church, Tinotonga was given an apostle's long hooked stick and was asked to preach, while Dhorobha Maonde read Bible verses for him. The two guerrillas stole the show and that was good enough to fool and confuse the Rhodesian soldiers who were pursuing them. The Rhodesian soldiers proceeded on their own 'adventure' leaving behind the very people they were pursuing with the intention of killing.

Story 2

Makari's second story is narrated by Shelton Chidoro who operated in the Matibi area. Shelton explains that Matibi is an extremely hot area and water is not easily available except for one borehole. He narrates how he and his colleagues came under heavy enemy fire one day while they were fetching water from the borehole. They got scattered as they ran for dear life. However, the most important thing about the story is how Shelton nearly died from thirst. He had to do the unthinkable. He cut his arm and drank the blood that oozed out to quench his burning thirst. This is how he quenched the thirst but he also bled profusely and ended up fainting. All along he was alone, the others having got scattered during the attack. By the time his fellow comrades discovered him he was already unconscious, but they were able to save his life. This is another story of miraculous survival of the hero.

Story 3

Makari's third story is narrated by Comrade Tichatonga who was operating in the Nyajena area. This story illustrates one of the basic principles of the adventure story- the principle of the hero who never dies. The story told is that Tichatonga was chewing and enjoying sweet canes in Mai Nyevero's maize field when he dozed off and slept. He could have been killed by the Rhodesian soldiers was it not for Mai Nyevero's quick thinking that saved his life. As the soldiers were approaching the place where Tichatonga was sleeping Mai Nyevero sensed danger. She 'pulled a fast' one on the soldiers and whipped 'John' with a stick 'for neglecting his duty of looking after the cattle' and the soldiers watched sympathetically as the guerrilla ran away to safety under their very nose. They thought 'John' was just an irresponsible herd boy who had dozed off while herding cattle and yet he was a guerrilla fighter having a good time. Once again the hero escaped death by a whisker.

Story 4

Makari's fourth story is narrated by Comrade Hondo who was operating in the Jichidza area. This is a story of a freedom fighter that was relaxing in a certain house with some girls (civilians) when Rhodesian soldiers surrounded the house. Under normal circumstances Hondo should have been captured and possibly killed. However, the quick thinking of girls who dressed him like a woman saved him. This is how the guerrilla fighter was saved from certain death. As it turned out one of the soldiers actually craved to have 'her' because of his female looks. Once again this shows that the hero of the adventure story never dies. He must survive so that he can continue on his perilous journey.

Makari depicts war as an adventure and he uses each of his major characters to tell the story of his own exploits, of his close shaves with death, and of the narrow escapes and perils he experienced. Because characters are telling their own stories of bravery in war and in battles the elements of exaggeration, idealisation and fantasy are ever present. Each story focuses on the ideal and wonderful. Because Makari is writing on war, which, as stated earlier, provides an opportunity for

adventure, he presents life as “we would have liked it to be, more picturesque, more adventurous, more heroic than actual” (Abrams, 1988:152). One needs to remember that Makari wants to glorify the war and those who participated in it. He finds no better way of doing it than to ask the freedom fighters themselves to tell their own story and in the process they endear themselves with the readers. They tell stories that win the love, admiration and sympathy of readers to their side.

Perhaps the best example that can be used to throw more light on how the theme of war influences one to write an adventure story comes from William Shakespeare’s tragedy, *Othello* (Harrison, 1948). In this play the reader is shown the “conjuration” and the “mighty magic” that Othello, the Black Moor from North Africa, used to win the love of Desdemona, the ‘fair’ lady from Venice in Italy. Othello used no real magic to “woe Desdemona to ‘fall in love with what she feared to look on!’”. He used the art of story telling, just as Makari does, and the story that he told Brabatio, Desdemona’s father, in the presence of his daughter, is a story of war, a romance of adventure, his own adventure. The story he told Brabatio captivated and touched Desdemona (who was also there and listening) and when Othello observed that he “Took once a pliant hour and found good means to draw from her a prayer of earnest heart.” Othello’s case shows that if you give a soldier an opportunity to tell stories of his war experiences as Makari does you give him artistic tools he can use to move your heart and touch your feelings. Part of what Othello told Brabatio will be given here to give weight to my thesis:

I ran it through, even from boyish days
To the very moment he bade me tell.
Wherein I spake of most disastrous chances,
Of moving accidents by flood and field,
Of hairbreath 'scapes i' the imminent deadly breach,
Of being taken by the insolent foe
And sold to slavery, of my redemption thence,
And potence in my travel's history.
Wherein I antres vast and deserts idle,
Rough quarries, rocks, and hills whose heads touched
Heaven,
It was my hint to speak-such was the process.
And of the cannibals that each other eat,
The anthropophagi, and men whose heads
Do grow beneath their shoulders---

She loved me for the dangers I had passed,
And I loved her that she did pity them. (Harrison, 1948:708-709)

Like Makari, Shakespeare is depicting a war situation in fiction. Othello's story is full of exaggeration, idealisation and fantasy. It is a story that tells of peril and the marvellous, which are ingredients of an adventure. He makes it sound more strange, more picturesque, and more adventurous. His aim is to win the love, pity and admiration of his listeners, and in this case the target of his narrative style is Desdemona. Equally, Makari's stories are made more picturesque, more strange and more adventurous. The underlying motive that shapes Makari's perspective is the need to win sympathy and admiration for the guerrillas. This leads to the romanticisation of the liberation war. Makari's characters, like Othello, paint themselves in brighter colours and are sketched in broader outlines than characters in realistic novels. As Boas and Smith (1925:210) point out, "we should not assume that romantic fiction is not true to life. It is life idealised, raised to the nth power. It is indeed often improbable." Indeed there is no realism when you have "hills whose heads touched heaven" and "men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders."

There is also no realism when well-trained Rhodesian soldiers almost always miss their targets while the guerrillas almost always hit theirs, as is the case in most Shona war novels such as those by Pesanai, Makari, Choto, Makata and Sungano. On several occasions when the Rhodesian air force comes to bomb guerrilla positions they are never allowed by the authors to hit their targets accurately. It is always a case of them missing or a case of the guerrillas shifting their positions in time to avoid being bombed. The bombs almost always hit rocks or trees next to where the guerrilla may be positioned but rarely hit the guerrilla himself. We can take for instance the events that Makata depicts in *Gona ReChimurenga* (1982:68-69). Makata describes in typical romance fashion how the heroes are attacked by two choppers and how they miraculously escape death. According to the description of the incident given, bullets are fired from the two choppers and they hit the rock that is in front of Mabhunu and he is only hit by fragments breaking from the rock. Immediately after that miss, the choppers drop a bomb and it only hits the position Mabhunu has just moved from and it leaves a huge crater. He then rolls back into the huge crater just on the nick of time and the rock he has just rolled from explodes and

'is reduced to ashes'. This is obviously another bomb that misses him. However, when he fires his bazooka from his position in the 'crater' the hero does not miss. He hits one of the two choppers and both become 'dizzy' and they collide in the air. There are several explosions in the skies. This is action and peril and the hero still survives to continue on his journey of perilous adventure.

There is no attempt here to give the impression that guerrillas could not survive such situations. What is being said here is that this is life magnified. It is life magnified in the same way that Patrick Chakaipa magnifies life in his romance novel *Karikoga Gumiremiseve* (1958). Karikoga Gumiremiseve takes his position in a plain at the bottom of a hill and tens of Ndebele warriors armed with spears face him. The Ndebele warriors are depicted as expects at throwing spears and hitting their targets but Karikoga Gumiremiseve is equally good at dodging. Patrick Chakaipa wants to convince the reader to believe that all the tens of Ndebele warriors threw their spears at the same time and all missed their target, Karikoga Gumiremiseve. However, when Karikoga releases his own ten arrows each one of them, hits a human target. Worse still when Karikoga has used all his ten arrows to kill ten Ndebele warriors he runs to pull them out and is allowed to go back to take his position at the bottom of the hill and start to shoot again with greater precision. Meanwhile the Ndebele warriors would be throwing their spears and would be missing Karikoga. Incredible events indeed, but this is a romance of adventure and so such things are allowed to happen.

Rhodesian soldiers in Shona war fiction, just like the Ndebele warriors in *Karikoga Gumiremiseve* (1958), miss because the hero in the adventure story must not die. He must survive so that he can continue with his perilous journey. The Shona war fiction writer seems to provide his hero with magical powers in the same manner that Chakaipa does with Karikoga Gumiremiseve and the way the storyteller does with the folktale hero. As Freud (1972:40) says in his article 'Creative Writing and Daydreaming',

One feature above all that cannot fail to strike us about the creations of these storywriters: each one of them has a hero who is the centre of interest, for whom the writer tries to win our sympathy by every possible means and whom he seems to place under the protection of special Providence.

This is the reason why it seems possible that the Rhodesian air force always bombs the rocks around the human target but never hit the target itself; why the reader is persuaded to accept that the guerrillas can share the little space there is in the cave with bones of an ancestor and a python without being harmed; that even donkeys and worshippers too should come to the rescue of the heroes. The hero must be saved or else the story cannot proceed. It seems, as Freud points out, that through this revealing characteristic of invulnerability we can immediately recognise His Majesty the Ego, the hero alike of every day-dream and every story (Freud, 1972:40).

3.8 THE FOLKTALE MOTIF

The Shona war novelists write on the theme of war and the result is that they produce romances of adventure. Yet the romance exists primarily for entertainment. Most of the incidents depicted by the Shona war fiction writers appear to be aimed at providing entertainment out of a tragic war. This is what shapes the writers' perspectives on the liberation war. Because they also want to entertain the depiction of some of the incidents degenerates into foolishness and intelligent, mature and sophisticated readers dismiss them off as childish stuff that lacks seriousness. The serious business of war is depicted as a stroll in the park. Once again Makari's *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) can be considered here as a typical example. The stories within the main story given above provide a pattern of imagery that shows lack of seriousness and at worst foolishness. Makari resorts to the folktale motif in his novel when he makes his heroes tell stories of their exploits and adventures and this also affects the way he looks at the liberation war. He resorts to the folktale motif because as Frye (1974: 499) says:

Writers are interested in folk-tales for the same reason that painters are interested in still-life arrangements because they illustrate essential elements of story-telling. The writer who uses them then has the technical problem of making them sufficiently plausible or creditable to a sophisticated audience. When he succeeds he produces, not realism, but a distortion of realism in the interest of structure.

When Tinotonga finishes telling his story he gives a sigh of relief: "*Paakanga apedza kutaura izvi Tinotonga akatura mafemo nokuti akanga apedza nyaya yake*" (p.65) (When Tinotonga finished telling his story, he gave a sigh of relief because his story was done), reminding readers of the folktale narrative which often ends with the words '*Ndipo pakafira sarungano*' (This is where the story-teller died, referring to the end of the narration). Shelton Chidoro opens his story with the statement "*Hapana asingazivi kuti Matibi inzvimbo inopisa zvakadii?*" (Everyone knows that Matibi is a very hot place) thereby creating suspense and arousing interest. Tichatonga opens his with "*Rimwe zuva ava masikati...*" (One day in the afternoon...), a formulaic expression that is typical of '*kare kare*' (Long, long ago) used in the opening of folktales. It is this folkloric tradition that partly explains the writers' tendency to fantasise and romanticise the liberation war.

In *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) Nyawaranda also uses the folktale motif in order to achieve two things: he wants to use the romance to entertain but at the same time he wants to teach a moral. He makes use of the folktale motif in order to explain why the people of Zimbabwe had to go to war. Nyawaranda wants to show that when whites came to Zimbabwe they employed all sorts of tactics and methods to deprive Africans of their land. They took advantage of the hospitality of the African people to deprive them of their possessions. In the end the black people no longer had enough land for themselves. To drive this point home Nyawaranda makes Komuredhi Chatambudza, one of his fictional characters, tell the story of a man and a donkey. Komuredhi Chatambudza steps into the shoes of the traditional *sarungano* (story-teller) and tells his audience a folktale that entertains and teaches after the fashion of Jesus' biblical parables. Like Makari's fictional character, Tichatonga, Komuredhi Chatambudza opens his story with "*Kare kare kwazvo, kune imwe nyika iri kure kure kwazvo, kwaiva nomumwe murume akanga aine dhongi rake*" (p.53) (A long long time ago, in a far far away country, there was a man who had his own donkey).

According to Komuredhi Chatambudza the man lived in a tent while his donkey stayed outside. One day it became so cold that the donkey cried and pleaded with the man to allow it to put at least its nose alone into the tent since it was the part of its body that felt much of the cold. The man felt pity and agreed to let the donkey's nose into the tent. After putting its nose into the tent the donkey started to cry again,

and pleaded with the man to allow it to put its front legs into the tent as well. The man felt pity and agreed. However, the donkey's demands did not end there. It requested and was allowed to bring in the remaining parts of its body one after another until the whole donkey was inside the tent. Once inside the warm tent the donkey decided to own the whole space and so it kicked the man out and remained there alone. The man went out and brought his relatives to help him reclaim his tent from the donkey. The man and his relatives returned heavily armed with spears and axes ready to fight the donkey. They found the donkey soundly sleeping in a new warm environment. The man killed the donkey and, in the typical fashion of the folktale plot, lived in his tent 'happily ever after'. This is a good and entertaining story. Komuredhi Chatambudza concludes his story with "*Ndipo pakaperera sarungano*" (p.53-54) (This is where the story-teller ceased to exist).

In Komuredhi Chatambudza's story the white man is the donkey and the black people of Zimbabwe are the man. The white people dispossessed the black people of their land, and so, according to Chatambudza, the black people were justified to take up arms and fight the invaders. Nyawaranda finds room to include this folktale in his war narrative because he is writing a romance and entertaining the reader is part of its purpose. There is nothing unusual or out of the ordinary about this story within a story. Chatambudza's story fits in very well with the rest of the narrative in which Nyawaranda tends to fantasise and romanticise. Chatambudza's story is a donkey's adventure within a romance of adventure.

However, while Nyawaranda aimed at entertaining and teaching, Makari has yet another reason why he resorts to the folktale motif. Makari resorts to the folktale motif in his depiction of the liberation war because he himself often spent time listening to stories from the war zone that he was told by guerrillas who were operating in the area where he was a senior *mujibha* (war collaborator) and a headmaster. Makari himself revealed in an interview (20/07/07) that he wrote *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985):

As a result of my experiences and as a result of the stories I heard from comrades, especially from Henry Muchena with whom I used to discuss the war. I took it as a challenge to collect data.

Henry Muchena, who is one of Makari's major characters in the novel, is a real guerrilla fighter who later became Air Vice Marshal in the Air Force of Zimbabwe, deputising Air Marshall Perence Shiri. Makari uses the stories he heard during moments of relaxation with guerrillas to entertain his readers and this partly explains the romantic rather than the realistic point of view that prevails. According to Makari, Henry Muchena, one of the commanders in the Nyajena/Zaka area during the liberation war, was a disciplined young cadre and a good disciplinarian too who changed Makari's own attitude towards the war (interview with Makari, 20/07/07). It is therefore possible to assume that the cordial relationship he had with the guerrillas and the high regard he had for Henry Muchena might have influenced Makari to idealise the liberation war in his book in which Henry Muchena now appears as a major character.

In the same vein it can also be argued that the likes of Makari, Pesanai, Makata, Sungano, Nyawaranda and Choto were writing about war in which sons and daughters of Zimbabwe had taken part. In these stories appear names of the great heroes such as Hebert Chitepo and Josiah Tongogara who did not survive the war, as well as names of war heroes who survived the war such as Robert Mugabe, Josiah Tungamirai, Rex Nhongo, and others with lesser profiles. These are heroes whom the writers of war fiction revered and held in high esteem. When authors write stories of war in which their own people were involved they tend to glorify their roles. This is what Gold-Schmidt, Forster and Essene (1939:152) points to when they assert that:

...All peoples love to relate stories of the bravery in war of their ancestors, and it is but natural that the glorified elements come to take precedence over the less creditable ones. The further removed the narrator is from first-hand acquaintance with the event, the fewer qualms he has in substituting fiction for fact.

The writers of Shona war fiction did not have any problems substituting fiction for facts because they were writing about the theme of war, a war which none of them participated in. The theme of war they were writing about provided them with an opportunity to write romances of adventure.

3.9 FIGHTING A DUEL

Sometimes heroic action, misunderstanding, and mistaken identities become the stuff of popular romance that has often been depicted in some popular films and romance novels in many literatures of the world. While this is not a regular occurrence in Shona war fiction Choto gives us one such enduring characteristic that heroes of romance fiction can display. When Tapera escapes from Chikurubi prison he goes back to the bush to look for the guerrillas and fellow *mijibhas* (war collaborators). While he is walking through the bush he sees someone wearing coumaflouge who whistles at him and he runs as fast as he can in the direction of Katsvuku. However, the whistler follows him, running at an even greater speed. When Tapera realises that his 'pursuer' is about to catch up with him he turns round and they lock hands in an embrace. The two fall to the ground together and struggle to subdue each other. They have no time to scrutinise each other's face. They struggle on like that till both of them get tired. What gives Tapera extra strength is the round of ammunition that his 'opponent' has on his waist. When Tapera eventually looks into the face of the person he is struggling with he realises that it is his brother, Jeri. For the first time, Tapera speaks and identifies himself to Jeri who immediately recognises the voice as that of his young brother, Tapera. Jeri is devastated. They disengage and look at each other in the eyes. Jeri realises that it is indeed Tapera, his blood brother, whom he thought had died. Jeri sits up and Tapera kneels. For a while no one says anything. They are both silent but weeping pathetically. After sometime they embrace and start to enquire after each other's well-being.

It is not very often that you come across a scene like this in Shona literature. It is nonetheless a scene that shows the stuff of which romances are made. The two characters given above are not even the main protagonists in the story. They are just *mijibha* chosen by the author to feature in this most enduring scene. The author is writing on the theme of war and that theme tends to make writers drift towards writing adventures. The scene takes the readers mind off the war that he is reading about to focus on a duel between these two.

To support the fact that what Choto gives readers here is the stuff of which popular romances are made, cross-reference can be made with a similar scene in *Jekanyika* (1968), one of the best romances in Shona literature. Like Tapera and Jeri's scene in Choto's *Vavairo* (1990), Jekanyika and Dendera's scene in Mugugu's *Jekanyika* (1968) is one of the most moving scenes in Shona romantic literature, reminiscent of some of the scenes that film watchers have seen in films featuring Red Indians. Jekanyika goes on a journey into the unknown looking for his father whose face he does not know because he has never seen him. When Jekanyika was born eighteen years ago his father, Chief Dendera, had already gone away to fight his endless wars with other chiefs. As a result, when father and son meet for the first time without knowing each other the reader is presented with one of the most enduring scenes in Shona romance literature. Jekanyika and Dendera meet on a one to one situation in a clear valley with their armies watching from the top of two hills standing on each side of the valley. There is dead silence as the two heroes engage in a war of words first before they embrace and struggle with each other in another case of mistaken identity and confusion. The fight of the two in the valley below, and watched by their respective armies, takes the whole day from sunrise to sunset. It is towards sunset that father and son identify each other by the crocodile tattoo, their totem animal, that is imprinted on their chests according to tradition. However, by that time Dendera has already fatally stabbed his one and only son whom he has now known for the first time since he was born eighteen years ago. As the two armies watch the two in dead silence Dendera rests his head on his fatally wounded son's chest weeping, while the son looks straight into his father's eyes and delivers a eulogy to his ancestors in a speech coloured with some poetic beauty. This is how the story of Jekanyika's adventure ends.

Mugugu's *Jekanyika* (1968) is known and clearly understood to be a romance of adventure. Dendera and Jekanyika's duel is therefore accepted as part of action expected in a romance. Choto's *Vavairo* (1990) is a liberation war novel but one that tends to romanticise the war. The point emphasised in this chapter is that when one writes on the theme of war one is likely to produce a romance of adventure. That is why Choto in *Vavairo* (1990), like Mugugu in *Jekanyika* (1968), presents readers with Tapera and Jeri fighting a duel that adds little value to their understanding of the realities of Zimbabwe's liberation war. Choto allows his mind to wander into the land

of the ideal and provides readers with “some of the stuff of which popular romances are sometimes made of-heroic action, misunderstandings, mistaken identities and a dedicated belief in the power of love and self-sacrifice” (Rice, 1985:73).

3.10 EXALTATION AND FULFILMENT OF THE QUEST-MYTH

The romance of adventure ends with the hero achieving his quest. The journey has been arduous and difficult. Yet the hero struggles on even though at times with the help of the *Deus ex Machina*. The quest must be accomplished successfully. It should not be allowed to fail. As Frye (1972: 43) points out “if we look at the quest-myth as a pattern of imagery, we see the hero’s quest first of all in terms of its fulfilment.” The heroes of the Shona war novels go on a journey of adventure aimed at rescuing Zimbabwe from the jaws of colonialism and the goal is achieved after years of suffering. Most Shona war novels end with the announcement of the end of the war following agreement reached at Lancaster in Britain. In Pesanai’s *Gukurahundi* (1985) it is Rex Nhongo who announces the end of the war and the beginning of ceasefire (p.60). In Sungano’s *Kuda Muhondo* (1985), although the hero loses his leg the quest is successfully accomplished. The hero, Kuda Hondo, tells the reader that “*Ndakanga ndave kuchema asi mumwoyo ndichifara kuti gumbo rangu rainge raendera chiripo*” (p.131) (I was crying but inwardly I was rejoicing because I did not lose my leg in vain). Indeed, the loss of human life during the war was not in vain because Zimbabwe became independent as a result. Choto’s *Vavairo* (1990) ends with the quest successfully accomplished. The author goes as far as to announce the results of the historic elections that ZANU PF won with 57 parliamentary seats out of 80 allocated to blacks.

Besides showing that the hero’s quest is successfully accomplished some of the authors go as far as to show the exaltation of the heroes. In doing that the author of Shona war novels seems to be saying that the old folktale tradition of exalting the hero at the end of a tale is still very much alive. In Makari’s *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) Mberikwazvo throws a big party to celebrate the return of his son Joe Chimurenga (war name), confirming the happy resolution, after many trials and manifold dangers, as the theme that has left the deepest impression on romance (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1982:1023). The welcome ceremony marks the exaltation of the

triumphant guerrilla fighter. However, the best example of how a hero is exalted is in Choto's *Vavariro* (1990). Comrade Tumirai becomes, first and foremost, the man in charge of Dendera Assembly Point, and following ZANU PF victory in the 1980 election he becomes Member of Parliament (MP) for Dande and Mandava. As pointed out earlier, the concept of a single knight hero popular with medieval romances or the single type hero of the Shona folktale is replaced by the concept of the collective heroism. Hence, besides Comrade Tumirai there are other heroes of the same story who are also exalted in varying degrees. Jeri and Tapera (brothers) built a big and beautiful house at their home; Jeri, Tapera and Tsitsi join the Zimbabwe National Army, with Jeri further becoming a major and receiving numerous medals, and acquiring considerable wealth and a home in Christon Bank. VaChimoto becomes the chosen person to lead in conducting ceremonies on occasions such as the *kurova guva* (appeasing spirits of the dead), and he is chosen as mediator between Tsitsi and Tapera's families during their marriage transactions. To be asked to mediate between would-be in-laws is an honour. It raises one's profile in the community. The pain that Choto takes to tell the reader how each of these characters' life and role in society has changed for the better is clear indication of how those who played heroic roles in the liberation war are rewarded. This is similar to what happens to Karikoga Gumiremiseve in Chakaipa's romance novel, *Karikoga Gumiremiseve* (1958). After his journey of adventure into Matebeleland he is exalted when he becomes king and wealthy. Equally, heroes of folktales are exalted at the end of the stories in which they are characters. They usually become kings with untold riches.

3.11 CONCLUSION

Richard Hurd (cited in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1982:1024) once described romance not as a truth but a delightful and necessary holiday from common sense. Indeed a lot of the things that happen in the Shona War novels defy logic. Many of the incidents belong to the world of make-believe where the impossible become possible, like it is in the folktale. In this chapter attempts have been made to demonstrate that one of the major factors that influenced writers to fantasise and romanticise about the liberation war is the nature of the theme itself. It has been shown that war, any war, has all the ingredients of an adventure and any attempt to

write on it is most likely going to produce a romance of adventure. The Second War of Liberation in Zimbabwe that the novelists depict was fought by guerrillas who needed first and foremost to travel long journeys from Zimbabwe to Mozambique or Zambia and beyond to be trained before they could travel back to Zimbabwe to fight. For those who undertook those journeys there was always the attendant spirit of adventure, the danger of the unknown and the romantic features of strange places and unusual happenings. The chapter has shown that one of the principles of adventure is that the hero never dies and therefore in those 'remote' and strange regions and places picturesque and marvellous incidents do occur. The most important thing that this chapter sets out to achieve therefore is to demonstrate that writers of war fiction did not romanticise the war only because they were writing at a time of celebration and euphoria but also because the theme of war they were writing on restricted them to writing romances of adventure. Writers of these war novels tend to wander into the land of the ideal, what Chiwome (2002:14) calls "vagrancy of imagination", where they can place their heroes under special divine protection. The romance of adventure is a genre in which characters can display great heroism, perhaps more than in the standard novels. Any reader, who loves incident for its own sake, can perhaps turn to the Shona war novel. Mason (1979:104) has lent credence to this thinking in his assertion that:

...Even if great heroism may also be found in times of pestilence, earthquakes, air crash, or other disaster, it bears less lustre in public remembrance because the enemy, however destructive, is always impersonal and mindless. Accordingly, we look to the war novels for the most modern illustrations of the heroic tradition.

Shona war novels are indeed illustrations of the heroic tradition. It is most unlikely that these writers would have achieved the same level of heroic tradition if they were not writing about war. Even if the readers pause for a moment to reflect and make a comparison with the heroism in the Shona romance novels *Karikoga Gumiremiseve* (1958), *Jekanyika* (1968) or *Pfumo Reropa* (1961) they find that their most memorable and heroic actions are those done in battle or in war. Although *Karikoga Gumiremiseve* (1958), *Jekanyika* (1968) and *Pfumo Reropa* (1961) are not war novels like those under study, one finds that the heroes in them become more heroic when they are involved in battle. The theme of war indeed helped to shape writers' perspectives on the Second War of Liberation in Zimbabwe.

CHAPTER 4

FICTIONAL REPRESENTATION OF HISTORICAL MATERIAL

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter attempts to show the relationship between fiction and history. It shows that there is always an overlap between history and fiction, which makes it rather difficult for the Shona war novelists to ignore history completely. The chapter takes a closer look at the way historical material is adopted and adapted by the Shona war novelists. It shows that the Second War of Liberation in Zimbabwe provides a well-defined structure into which war novelists fit their stories. It is possible for the reader to notice that boundaries between fiction and history are sometimes blurred. The main point emphasised in this chapter therefore is that authors of Shona war fiction are preoccupied with the Zimbabwean past and that Zimbabwean past has also helped to shape the approach they adopt in their war narratives.

4.2 THE HISTORY FACTOR

One of the major factors that shaped Shona war fiction writer's perspectives on the Second War of Liberation in Zimbabwe is history. Although, as it has been shown in Chapter 3, it is clear that writers were writing fiction and were romanticising about the war, it is also clear that there was no way they could have run away from history completely. The Shona war novels differ from the other novels in the mainstream in that they are informed by a big event that actually took place in real life, the war of liberation in Zimbabwe. It is not mere coincidence that between 1980 and 1985 no less than ten Shona war novels were published. The writers of these novels were attracted by a historical event of great proportions, the liberation war, and that event helped to shape their perspectives on it. All the Shona war novelists fictionalise about the events of a terrible war that was fought in Zimbabwe between the years 1966 and 1979 and they often make reference to historical events that took place even earlier. An analysis of the novels shows the writers' keen awareness of history that results directly from historical experience or from direct confrontation with facts. The known

historical facts or data tend to influence the way authors depict the war. As Saverberg (1991: 58) points out:

The facts or data are felt to be stored without interference in a kind of master file in some rational part of the mind. Once there, of course, the historical data (may in Coleridgean fashion) become raw material for the imagination to work on....

Writers of Shona war fiction had a keen awareness of this history of Zimbabwe's liberation war. There were even direct calls from the Literature Bureau for authors of indigenous languages' literature to write novels that depicted the war of liberation in Zimbabwe. Writers therefore approached fiction knowing that they were writing about Zimbabwe's liberation war of the 1970s. So what is actually contained in these novels is a fictional re-creation of certain wartime historical events. In other words, there is need for the reader to recognise the historical orientation of the Shona war novel. As Chidi Amuta (1984:51) argues:

...critical discourse of modern African literature must delve deeper into the ontological configurations of the very literary works in order to decipher the truth value of the texts as systems of aesthetic signification of meanings that ultimately derive from history. This need becomes even more compelling in the realm of the African novel, for the novel in particular is generically amenable to historical conditioning.

What Amuta says also becomes even more compelling in the realm of the Shona war novel that, as the descriptive term 'war' indicates, deals with a war that took place and is now part of Zimbabwean history. Amuta sees a relationship between the novel and history. This relationship is what Connor (2002:128) talks about when he postulates that:

...There is always overlap between novels and history as forms of narrative. To study the meanings, functions and pleasures of the novels across different periods is always to be concerned at least in part with the ways in which those periods imagine and narrate their own histories and the histories of others. Novels are, undoubtedly, part of history of social life.... Novels are therefore, in both senses, ways of making history; they belong to the history of events and they contribute to the historical narrative of these events.

The Shona war novels belong to the history of events of the liberation war and they definitely contribute to the historical narrative of that war. There is no way one can read those novels and come out ignorant of how that war was fought and ignorant of the pattern of life during this period.

4.3 THE TITLES

A casual look at some of the titles of Shona war novels shows that there is influence from the history of the liberation war. One author, Makata, gives his novel the title *Gona ReChimurenga* (1982) (Champion of the revolution), while Mambo Press's collection of short stories about the war is entitled *Hondo YeChimurenga* (1984) (The Liberation War). The term '*chimurenga*' derives from the name of one of the early ancestors, Murenga, and the term came to be associated mainly with two historical events in Zimbabwe, the First *Chimurenga* (1896-7) and the Second *Chimurenga* (1966-1979), which were both struggles against foreign invasion and domination. Kaguvi, who organised and led the Shona Rising of 1896-7 together with Mbuya Nehanda, and was a great inspiration to the nationalist movement during Zimbabwe's liberation struggle of the 1970s, "was often called Murenga (resister) from which comes the word Chimurenga which is used to describe both the 19th and 20th century liberation struggles" (*Tabex Encyclopedia Zimbabwe*, 1989:196). According to *Tabex Encyclopedia Zimbabwe* (1989:277) "the word chimurenga is a Shona word meaning 'war of liberation'; literary, *murenga* means 'resister.'" Sibanda and Moyana (1984:33) also say "'Chimurenga' is a Shona word meaning 'war of liberation'". The word Chimurenga has also been linked to the highly controversial land reform programme dubbed the Third *Chimurenga* of 2000. Therefore the use of titles that carry the name 'chimurenga' shows the historical orientation of the Shona war novel.

Some of the individual stories in *Hondo YeChimurenga* (1984) have titles that are derived directly from the history of the liberation war. Aaron Chiundura Moyo's story is titled *Ndaponda Gandanga* (I have killed a terrorist); Munikwa gives his/her story the title *Hondo Pabhiriji* (Battle at the bridge). *Maokizirari* (Auxiliary forces) by Mlambo is a title derived from the Auxiliary forces used by the ill-fated Muzorewa regime against the guerrilla fighters. The Auxiliary Forces took over the role of guarding the so-called 'protected villages' when the Guard Force left to go and guard

economically important instillations, farming areas, key economic instillations, and lines of communication early in 1978 (Kriger, 1995:112), and Chikore counters that with *Vanamukoma KwaMutoko* (Comrades at Mtoko), an obvious reference to ZANU's ZANLA forces who operated in the Mutoko area during the war. The titles of Gukuta's story *Hondo Yorusununguko* (War of liberation) and Kanjanda's story *Hondo Yandakapona* (The battle I survived) both refer to the liberation war. Chimhanda's short story and Munashe Pesanai's romance novel share the title *Gukurahundi* (1985) (the storm). *Gukurahundi* derives from the name given by ZANU and ZANLA forces to the year 1978 during the liberation war, which meant, according to Martin and Johnson (1981:292), "the Year of the People's Storm'-Gore ReGukurahundi-which would spread *chimurenga* across most of the country". The year 1978 was referred to as the 'Year of the People's Storm' when the guerrilla armies were committed to carrying out the final push or onslaught on Ian Smith's settler government. In the 'Year of the People's Storm' the guerrillas were supposed to attack with devastating power, hence Pesanai fictionalises about this and that is why his novel presents the reader with a platoon that attacks and sweeps everything in its wake. One can easily appreciate why in his novel there are hardly any casualties on the guerrilla side.

There are other titles that, though not quite explicit, do show that they too derive from one aspect of the war or another. Vitalis Nyawaranda's *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) (Impregnable fortress) derives from the alleged invincibility of the guerrilla armies, while his other novel *Paida Mwoyo* (1987) (My heart's desire) share similar sentiments with Ray Choto's *Vavairo* (1990) (Desires). Even Makari's title *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) (It required courage) and Musengezi's *Zvairwadza Vasara* (1984) (It pained the survivors) are titles that derive from war experience. Makari refers to the courage of those who sacrificed their lives to liberate Zimbabwe, while Musengezi is saying that in war people die and it is those who survive who will live to endure the pain of loss. Indeed there are people who had courage. There are people who survived to endure the pain of losing loved ones.

All these are fictional titles or put in another way, titles of fictional works. However, they all fictionalise, albeit in very brief forms, history of the liberation war in Zimbabwe.

When Shona war fiction writers romanticised the liberation war it was because they were celebrating and were euphoric. They romanticised the war because they were writing on the theme of war that compelled them to write adventures. However, they were romanticising and fictionalising about events that actually took place, hence they could not run away from history. If we take Francis Mugugu's *Jekanyika* (1968), for example, Chief Dendera has been away from home for eighteen years fighting wars with other chiefs. This is outright fiction that bears no relationship to history because the novel does not depict any known historical event. Dendera's wars are not historical wars because there are no such wars known in history. Equally, what is contained in David Chiguvare's *Kutonhodzwa KwaChauruka* (1968) or in Ngwaraingwe's *Ndoitawo Zvakaita Vamwe* (1984) are just pieces of the writers' imagination. There is no relationship with history. However, what is contained in the Shona war novels are incidents that have their origins in an actual guerrilla war, just as much as Terrence Rattigan's *Adventure Story (A play in two acts)* (1961) has its origin in the actual wars of Alexander the Great.

4.4 USE OF DATES

In this chapter, Shona war fiction is examined from the perspective of historicism of the works by Shona authors who wrote about the liberation war in Zimbabwe. The historicity of these novels is seen in the use that authors make of dates.

Examples to illustrate this can be drawn from various Shona novels under study. It must be pointed out at this juncture that there is no Shona war novelist in this study who overuses dates in the way that Ike overuses them in his Nigerian war fiction as noted by Nwahunanya (1991: 428-429). However, even though that is the case the few dates that are used are indicative enough of the period in history when the events of the story took place. Sungano's novel *Kuda Muhondo* (1985) opens with the provision of a date that helps the reader to place the events of the novel at the height of the liberation war in the mid-seventies. "*Mugore ra1975 ndaifunda pachikoro chikuru chomuno muZimbabwe, paUniversity*" (In 1975 I was learning at the highest institution of learning in Zimbabwe, the University). Then Zimbabwe had only one university, the University of Rhodesia. The reference to racial discrimination against black students by white lecturers at the university places the story in the

1960s and 1970s. Equally, the mention of the name of Professor George Fortune as the Head of the Shona Department at the University of Rhodesia (p.5) places the events of the story in the 1970s. Professor Fortune was still a well-known teacher of African Languages (Shona) at the University of Rhodesia at this time and author of several Shona works. Also Sungano links the date 1975 with the death of Herbert Chitepo, which helps the reader to place the events of the novel within the context of the history of the armed struggle. On 18 March 1975, Herbert Chitepo, the national chairman of ZANU, was killed by a bomb outside his house in Lusaka (Birmingham and Martin, 1983:376).

Munashe Pesanai places his story between 1977 and 1979. The story begins with the arrival of a group of guerrilla fighters in the Chivi area and it ends with the announcement of the ceasefire in 1979. This helps the reader to place the events of this novel during the period when the liberation war was at its height between 1977 and 1979. Although the day and month given by Pesanai may not necessarily be accurate, there are other aspects of the date given that help to give the event historical authenticity. The year is 1979 when the war ended. The voice coming out of the radio is that of Rex Nhongo instructing the ZANLA forces to stop the fighting and go to designated Assembly Points. An agreement has been signed at Lancaster in Britain that ends the war and gives way to an electoral process (Pesanai, p.60). The events that Pesanai gives the reader between the two dates 1977 and 1979 may not necessarily be authentic but the two dates given suggest that this is a war novel that is born out of Zimbabwe's guerrilla warfare that ended in 1979. Further, the historicity of this novel, though limited, is reinforced by the use of the name of an actual and prominent guerrilla leader, Rex Nhongo. It is a historical fact that Rex Nhongo became "the acting commander of ZANLA" (Martin and Johnson, 1981:320) following the tragic death of Josiah Tongogara on 26 December 1979. What it means is that Pesanai is using a piece of historical information in his attempt to give his narrative a semblance of historical realism. He is romanticising historical material.

Charles Makari in *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) uses the date 1896 in his recreation of the First Chimurenga War when he says "*Mugore ra1896 ivo vachiri jaya, mudzimai ainzi Nehanda akatanga hondo yeChimurenga*" (p.8) (In 1896 when he was still a young man a woman called Nehanda started the First Chimurenga). This important date,

1896, is given during Mberikwazvo's retrospection of Zimbabwe's past. Almost immediately Makari also uses the date 1975 as the year that the story takes place. He presents his main character Mberikwazvo as saying that "*Kana tatora nyika vose vatema vangava mumutambaratede*" (p.9) (When we eventually take over the country all blacks will live a good life). This implies that in 1975 the people of Zimbabwe are still fighting for their freedom. The use of such dates places the events that take place in the novels in 'known' historical times. These events are not taking place in a vacuum. As Nwahunanya (1991:430) points out:

The net effect of all these dates is that they add a tone of historical realism to the novels in which they occur. The events are not made to occur in 'vacuo' but are located in 'known' historical time.

4.5 RECREATING ACTUAL HISTORICAL EVENTS AND INCIDENTS

The historicity of these Shona war novels is further manifested in the recounting of actual historical events and incidents in a manner that shows that writers were writing their fiction from a historical perspective. The Shona war novelists invoked a stock of familiar historical knowledge in an attempt to give their works a historical dimension. In *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985), Charles Makari, as Saverberg (1991:60) would say, "steps into history". He makes reference to the Chinhoyi Battle of 1966. Reference is also made to the Patriotic Front Alliance between ZAPU and ZANU during the Second Chimurenga, thus adhering to the historical fact noted by Birmingham and Martin (1983:377) that "From the end of 1976 they worked together in the Patriotic Alliance". Makari goes further to give a fairly detailed account of the First Chimurenga of 1896 and some of the heroes of that war. So much historical detail is given such that that section of the novel looks like paragraphs taken from a history textbook about the First Chimurenga written in the Shona language. He celebrates the heroism of historical figures such as Gumboreshumba (Kagubi), Mbuya Nehanda and Chaminuka (Makari, p.8). He describes how in 1896 Nehanda started the First Chimurenga among the Shona that was, according to Sibanda and Moyana (1984:36), "a great surprise to the settlers". Makari gives details of how blacks fought with their traditional weapons while the whites used guns and dynamite to dislodge Africans from the caves where they were hiding. Later, Mbuya Nehanda and Kagubi

were captured, tried and sentenced to death. It must be pointed out that this historical data is not part of the Second Chimurenga discourse, yet it is given in the novel as part of the reminiscences of Makari's main character, Mberikwazvo. This shows that Makari's approach to the depiction of the Second Chimurenga is influenced by history. There are certain favoured historical incidents that the author selects for use in his fiction such as the capture and execution of Nehanda and Kagubi that, as Sibanda and Moyana (1984) show, took place on 27 April 1898. In this instance Makari adheres to the factual information about the history of the First Chimurenga, giving readers reasonably accurate details about what happened at this time. Historical material is being used to write fiction since, as Zhuwarara (1996:39) confirms, "In historical terms Mbuya Nehanda is the woman who galvanized and inspired African forces to fight against white settlers during the 1896 and 1897 uprisings". In the words of Muchemwa (2005:196), Makari is "collapsing the boundaries of discipline and genre that separate history and fiction". He is using both his imagination and historical data.

From the history of the First Chimurenga Makari steps into the history of the Second Chimurenga. He uses fictional characters to revisit and recreate selected historical events such as the Nyadzonja Massacre of 9 August 1976 and the Chimoio massacre of 23 November 1977 (Makari, p.40). Makari is actually fictionalising about historical material related to air raids into neighbouring countries carried out by Rhodesians during the liberation war, when, according to the *Tabex Encyclopedia Zimbabwe* (1989:279):

On 9 August 1976 a Rhodesian attack on Nyadzonja camp resulted in the death or injury of over 1000 people. On 23 November 1977 the Rhodesian forces attacked Chimoio; over the following three days 1000 people were killed....

These incidents were widely publicised in local and foreign print and electronic media. For example, following the Nyadzonja massacre in August 1976 the Washington Post of August 10 carried the headline "Rhodesia Cross Border: 300 Guerrillas Reported Slain in Mozambique"; the Guardian of August 10 had the headline "Smith Troops Kill 300 in pursuit", while in The Guardian of August 17 Tony Avirgan reported that "Mozambique reports 1,000 dead in refugee camp", and The New York Times of August 21 said "Rhodesian Ruse in Raid Reported" (Frederikse,

1982:173). This was history being recorded. Such events of the war that attracted so much attention including that of the international media are easily remembered by literary artists like Makari and they are captured in their works. When Makari refers to sell-outs in his narrative he is referring to betrayers like one time security officer Morrison Nyathi “who later defected and led the Selous Scouts to Nyadzonja” (Martin and Johnson, 1981:173) and guided them to attack the refugee camp:

Nyadzonja had been invaded by enemy troops. Some survivors reported that although their faces were black, their hands were white. Their guide was Nyathi, who had until recently been camp commander at Nyadzonja (Chung, 2006: 142).

When Makari states clearly that a sell-out was involved in the Nyadzonja massacre he is actually being influenced by history, for he is referring to Morrison Nyathi.

Sungano in his novel *Kuda Muhondo* (1985) also steps into history when he adopts and adapts historical material related to Herbert Chitepo’s assassination in Zambia on March 18, 1975 “when a bomb attached to his car exploded, killing him” (Martin and Johnson, 1981:158). Sungano adopts bits of historical information that he uses to construct his story. He refers to Chitepo’s death and points out correctly that he did not die a natural death but was killed by “a bomb which was placed under the seat of his car” (Sibanda and Moyana, 2002:82) that blew up the car. The extra detail he gives about the arrangements for all black students of the University of Rhodesia to walk to Highfield to mourn Chitepo and the rules put in place to govern everyone’s conduct during that event are not just a creation of his own imagination. Rather, this is a recreation of an event that actually happened and in which this researcher participated. The author describes it almost in the way it happened. Even the house in Highfield where the students converged and assembled which he says belonged to a leading nationalist was Robert Mugabe’s house, which “can be seen in Old Highfield, where it stands” (Wikipedia) to this day:

Takabvumirana kufamba netsoka kuenda Highfield kwaiva kumba kwomumwe mukurumukuru wezvamatongerwo enyika (Sungano, p.13).

(We agreed to walk to Highfield to the house of one of the nationalist leaders.)

Sungano constructs this part of his novel using bits of information adopted from history. The writer is “sticking to the general lines of historical ‘truth’ to maintain probability” (Saverberg, 1991:62).

In *Gukurahundi* (1985), Pesanai invokes images of the Internal Settlement, “when a new effort had to be made to end the war, and an ‘Internal Settlement’ exercise was launched in 1978 and 1979” (Birmingham and Martin, 1983:377) between Ian Smith and certain chiefs and black nationalists based inside Rhodesia at the time. The mention of the date March 3 and the reference to the United African National Congress (UANC) (p.39) as a major player in the botched ‘ceasefire’ is a clear indication of the writer’s perception being shaped by history of the internal agreement of 1978 that led to the ill-fated “hyphenated state of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia” (Martin and Johnson, 1981:293) that saw the emergence of the Auxiliary Forces of Bishop Muzorewa of the UANC (p.53). This shows that no matter how the author of a war novel tries to romanticise and fantasise, the demands of historicity are always with him. Pesanai is one writer of war fiction who fantasises a lot yet once in a while he too looks back to the past for inspiration from history. Hence, he openly links Bishop Muzorewa of the UANC and his Auxiliary Forces (*Madzakutsaku*) with one phase of Zimbabwean history. Even Choto in *Vavariro* (1990) makes reference to this bit of historical information (p.106) when his fictional comrades react to a radio announcement calling on all comrades to ‘come home’ because the war is over. The whole business of ‘sky shouts’, ‘leaflets’ and ‘guerrillas’ who are said to have surrendered at this time that Choto fictionalises about in his novel was a wartime experience of the late 1970s. This part of Zimbabwe-Rhodesian history is recorded by Cate (1983:269) who notes that there was “prominent coverage in the press and on television of Muzorewa holding an AK rifle while visiting auxiliaries in Msana and chatting with their leader ‘Comrade Marx’”.

4.6 ‘RUBBING SHOULDERS’ WITH HISTORICALLY PROMINENT PEOPLE

The historicity of these Shona war narratives is also manifested in the use of names of actual historical persons and places associated with the liberation war. Most of the “main characters are generally fictional, though often they will rub shoulders with historically prominent people from their own time and place” (Jacobs and Tunnell,

1996:104). Most Shona war novelists use names of actual persons in their narratives. The use of names of actual persons, most of who were known to mature readers who survived the war, adds weight to the historicity of these narratives. Trilling (1974:368) “suppose that a large part of literature is properly historical, recording and interpreting of personal, national, and cosmological events”. Indeed, personal names are used in the Shona war narratives. In Makata’s *Gona ReChimurenga* (1982) names used include those of Nehanda, Herbert Chitepo, Ian Smith, Robert Mugabe, Nkomo and Muzorewa, Comrade Rex Nhongo and The High Command, Tongogara and Takawira. Makari in *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) mentions Mugabe and Nkomo in the context of the mutual military cooperation, possibly the Patriotic Front alliance. They are mentioned again later (p.15) in the context of settler propaganda against communism. Gumboreshumba (Kaguvi), Nehanda and Chaminuka are also mentioned in connection with the 1896-7 Shona Uprising. In addition to that, Makari’s six fictional characters who feature in *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) rub shoulders with Henry Muchena who was prominent as a guerrilla commander in the Zaka/Nyajena area during the liberation war (Makari, interview 20/07/07) and who, up to the time of writing this chapter, was still prominent as Air Vice Marshal in the Air Force of Zimbabwe, second in command to the Air Force Commander. In Pesanai’s *Gukurahundi* (1985) the name of Rex Nhongo is used in connection with the announcement to the guerrillas that an agreement to end the war had been signed at Lancaster in Britain and that the guerrillas should proceed to move to the designated Assembly Points (p.60). Ian Smith’s name is also mentioned several times in Sungano’s *Kuda Muhondo* (1985) while the name of General Peter Walls who was commander of the Rhodesian army during the 1970s is used once.

However, on the face of it, it would appear difficult to pursue the proposition that fictional characters rub shoulders with historical persons. Other than Henry Muchena who is made one of the main characters and was a real prominent person as a guerrilla in the actual war and as Air Vice Marshal in post-independence Zimbabwe, the rest of the persons whose names are used in the narratives are not ‘active’ at all. Their names are used just to try and give historical orientation to the stories. The persons who own these names are not seen interacting with the rest of the fictional characters as Henry Muchena does. In the majority of cases, readers are told by other characters about what they did or said but they do not see them doing or

saying anything themselves. So other than Henry Muchena, the rest of the real prominent persons are not characters in the narratives at all. They are part of the content talked about by the omniscient narrators and by the fictional characters. Their names are mentioned in the context of the roles they played in the struggles for or against Zimbabwe. For example, in *Gukurahundi* (1985) the reader is told that it was on 29 November 1979 that Rex Nhongo's voice was heard on radio announcing the Lancaster House agreement and the ceasefire, but Rex Nhongo himself is not made to interact with the guerrilla fighters he leads and make the announcement personally. This is the case with most of the people whose names have been given above. They are there in the narratives but they are, as it were, frozen. The authors refuse to breathe life into them. The writers of Shona war fiction appear to be unsure or reluctant to make these historical persons interact fully with their fictional characters, yet in the interest of giving their stories a shred of historicity they plant these names here and there in their narratives. For this reason, Fleishman (cited in Saverberg, 1991:62) would regard these narratives simply as novels rather than as historical novels. For him when life is seen in the context of history, we have a novel; when the novel's characters live in the same world with historical persons, we have a historical novel.

What Fleishman has in mind is a historical novel such as Solomon Mutsware's *Mweya WaNehanda* (1988), Samupindi's *Pawns* (1992) and perhaps Alexander Kanengoni's *Echoing Silences* (1997) in which the fictional characters live in the same world as, and above all interact with, historical persons. In *Mweya WaNehanda* (1988) fictional characters interact with Nehanda, Kaguvi, Chaminuka, Hwata, Chiweshe, Mkwati, and Father E. Biehler, to mention just but a few. In Samupindi's *Pawns* (1992) not only do historical persons interact with fictional characters. Historical characters like Edgar Tekere, Moven Mahachi, Robert Mugabe, Rekayi Tangwena, Enos Nkala, Maurice Nyagumbo, Sister Mary Aquina and others also interact among themselves. Some of these historical ZANU leaders are seen meeting in Mushandirapamwe Hotel, also a historical meeting place for them, talking about sending Tekere and Mugabe to Mozambique to lead the struggle. Mugabe, Tekere and Mahachi are then seen being driven by the Catholic Sisters to Nyafaru where they are also seen being assisted by Chief Rekayi Tangwena to cross the border into Mozambique. Even Alexander Kanengoni's *Echoing Silences* (1997) "ended with a

ghostly *pungwe* at which the dead heroes, Chitepo, Takawira and Jason Moyo, mourned the betrayal of the revolution” (Ranger, 2005:225).

If Shona war fiction is compared with *Mweya WaNehanda* (1988), *Pawns* (1992) and *Echoing Silences* (1997) then it is understood why Fleishman may not quite like to regard the Shona war novels as historical novels but would certainly accept them as simple novels that see life in its historical context. It is true that the historical persons in the Shona war novels as noted above do not walk side by side with the fictional characters. However, the authors see life in its historical context because these historical persons are in there since their names are used in their narratives. These historical persons are sources of inspiration to the fictional characters. Fictional characters do what they do because they are inspired by historical persons such as Nehanda, Chitepo or Mugabe whose names are mentioned in the narratives. In *Gona ReChimurenga* (1982), for example, Mabhunu says, “*Kana ivo vaNehanda navanaChitepo vaiziva kuti vakafira nyika vaizonditungamirira*” (p.20) (If Nehanda and Chitepo died for this country they would inspire and guide me’.) “It must be remembered that it was Mbuya Nehanda who gave the people the will to die for the cause of freedom” (Moyana and Sibanda, 1984:37). In *Gukurahundi* (1985), Max and other fictional characters move to the Assembly Points because they heard Rex Nhongo’s voice on radio instructing them to stop fighting because a peace agreement has been concluded at Lancaster House in Britain. The reader becomes aware that the names, the spirits and in some cases the voices of historical persons are present and they influence events. It is only for this reason that the argument about fictional characters ‘rubbing shoulders’ with historically prominent persons can be pursued and sustained.

4.7 WARS HAVE CAUSES

Though all the Shona war fiction writers wander into the land of the ideal in their narratives there is no doubt that they are keenly aware of the historical causes of Zimbabwe’s liberation war. The prime cause of the war is not left in doubt. Even the most idealistic of these authors is very much aware of the land issue as an underlying cause of the liberation war in Zimbabwe that he depicts. In Chapter 3 it has been shown that most of these stories are actually romances of adventure. That

as it may be, the fictional characters that the authors create embark on those journeys of adventure, and endangering their lives, in order to take up arms to fight in a bitter war against the “alien invader who had expropriated their land” (Jones, 1996:50). The centrality of the land question as a cause of the Second War of Liberation in Zimbabwe is amply demonstrated in these narratives. The authors of these works step into history as they allow their fictional characters to use the land issue as a rallying point of the struggle. The land question was central in the First Chimurenga of 1896-7. One finds the centrality of this land question in Selous’ prophetic warning to Rhodes. According to Hill (2003:44),

Selous, who had led the original column to Salisbury warned Rhodes and Jameson that, given the rate at which the country was being carved by white settlers, there would soon be nothing left for either the Shona or the Matebele, and that war would be inevitable.

The land question was also central in the Second Chimurenga that started with the Chinhoyi Battle in 1966 and ended with the Lancaster House Conference in 1979. According to Sibanda and Moyana (1984:46), during colonial rule in Rhodesia the question of land was a major cause of bitterness between races, and Josiah Tungamirai (1995:37) also points out correctly that the unequal distribution of land was the reason why the African people fought the settler regime.

Wars do not just happen. Wars have causes. The Shona writers of war novels write about a war that actually happened in history and hence they find themselves in a situation in which they have to tell the reader why it was necessary at all for that generation of Zimbabweans to fight a war that cost thousands of lives. Their narratives are romances of adventure but the subject of those adventures is Zimbabwe’s guerrilla war of the 1970s. The writer therefore feels compelled to give his story a historical orientation. The writers seem to want to give a moral justification for the nationalist guerrilla cause in the conflict. They were conscious of the fact that the causes of the guerrilla war they were fictionalising about were grounded in real history. It is this consciousness that shaped their approach to the war they were depicting. Writers were aware that alongside with education, the distribution of land contributed the two major aims of the liberation struggle (Chung, 2006:10). Even before the settlers and their imperial troops had put down the uprising of 1896-7 some 15,000,000 acres of the country’s total of 96,000,000 acres had been

expropriated from the Africans without any compensation (Riddell, cited in Martin and Johnson, 1981:51). Europeans who were fewer took most of the arable land to themselves. According to Mason (1958:257), even Missions which applied for land on which to build a church and school and start a station were often given 6,000 acres and there were grants of 18,000 or 24,000 acres for ranching. An Order-in-Council of 1918 issued somewhere 10 000 kilometres away from Zimbabwe legalised the expropriation of the fertile lands by settlers and the Africans were 'legally' deprived of the land in their own country (Martin and Johnson, 1981). The Land Apportionment Act of 1930 institutionalised the racial division of land in Zimbabwe, with 50 000 Africans moved to the reserves in the next ten years, another 85 000 moved between 1945 and 1959, and at least 88 000 more moved from 1964 to 1978 (Riddell, cited in Martin and Johnson, 1981:53). The 1930 Land Apportionment Act was subject to about sixty amendments without ever affecting the principles applying to African land and in 1970 under the Land Tenure Act the division of land between Europeans and Africans was finalised "for all time" (Martin and Johnson, 1981:55).

It was by a series of such acts that Africans in Zimbabwe were deprived of their land and were not compensated. Africans became frustrated and bitter that they became landless squatters in their own country while foreigners got adequate land for themselves and even for their unborn children. In fact, as Sibanda and Moyana (1984:47) point out, the Land Apportionment Act came about because settlers wanted land to be divided between black and white so that it could be kept for unborn white children. Worse still, some of the land was owned by absentee landlords. Sibanda and Moyana (1984:47) also note that "Even friends and relatives who were still in South Africa were given farms". The Land Tenure Act (1969) had two significant results in that the ecological zones, which were most favourable to cultivation, were now almost all in the European area and that the land set aside for Africans was insufficient for their numbers (*Tabex Encyclopedia Zimbabwe*, 1989:207). As Martin and Johnson (1981: 52) put it "It is little wonder that land was to become the central issue in nationalist politics leading to the second war of liberation". This bitterness is aptly expressed by Josiah Tongogara, the ZANLA commander, who sums up his views as follows:

My grievances were based on the question of oppression that I had seen myself, from my parents or from my own people, particularly the

deprivation of land. You know our people are farmers. They like soil. They know everything is soil, and yet they are deprived of the rich soil in Zimbabwe. This and education (Martin and Johnson, 1981:50).

In the novel *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) therefore, Makari shows that he is aware of the centrality of the land question as a root cause of Zimbabwe's guerrilla war of the 1970s. He makes reference to the crowdedness of Africans in the so-called reserves and the impoverished nature of the sandy soils into which they were pushed by successive colonial legislations. The Africans and their cattle were crowded in the reserves where they were made to live. VaMberikwazvo laments:

Imo mumusha macho ndimo muchawanikwa chiiko? Ivhu rakasakadzwa zvino kwangosara jecha rogaroga. Matoro avairima zhezha achaonekwa kupi, handiti ndiwo ave mapurazi avaRungu? Ivhu racho ringasachembera nepi ivo vanhu takasvinana kudaro sembeva (Makari, p.6).

(What do you get from the village? The soil is exhausted, what has remained is sand. The rich wet soil that used to give them good crops was converted into white farms. There is no way the soil can remain rich when people are crowded like mice.)

What Mberikwazvo says here is not factual but it reveals the author's preoccupation with history. He refers to over crowdedness in the reserves, the impoverished soils, and the rich soils expropriated by whites. Mberikwazvo makes reference to land deprivation as a cause of African discontent. The loss for Africans is the gain for Europeans and that kind of arrangement where one race gained at the expense of another accounts for the costly war that is fictionalised about in Shona war fiction.

Bitterness about loss of land and its resources is also referred to in Makata's *Gona ReChimurenga* (1982) where his fictional character, Mabhunu, says "*Nyika yakange yapambwa upfumi hwedu neivhu*" (p.20) (The land and our wealth had been expropriated). Makata also makes allusion to the complicity of Christianity in the general deception that led to the African land being stolen as shown by Mabhunu's statement that "*Ndonzi pfugama tinamate ndavhara maziso iye onditorera pfuma nenyika...*" (p.20) (I was invited to join them in prayer, and my country and its wealth were taken while I closed my eyes.) The historicity of this complicity in the deception is expressed by Bourdillon (1993:86) who points out that the missionaries who

brought Christianity to Zimbabwe were associated with the conquering colonists, even if they did not always agree with the colonial government. The complicity of Christianity is even more eloquently explained by Mashingaidze (cited in Zvobgo, 1996:2-3) who points out that:

Missionaries needed the support of a secular power if evangelisation of Matebeleland was to succeed-this power was provided by the BSA Company which was preparing to colonise 'Zimbabwe'. An informal alliance between the missionaries and the company was 'built on the basis of a community of interests'. Rhodes needed the moral support of the missionaries and deliberately involved them in his scheme in order to head off humanitarian and philanthropic suspicion and criticism of his plans in England and South Africa.

Choto's *Vavariro* (1990) also makes reference to the land question. Addressing a large crowd of peasants Tumirai refers to "*Ivhu ratakatsika iri, ndiro ratiri kuda kutorera muvengi.*" (p.32) (The soil we stand on is what we want to repossess from the enemy). Later on VaKanyuchi corroborates VaMberikwazvo's statement on the land issue:

Minda ine ivhu chairo vakatitorera vakaita mapurazi, isu vachitirasira kujecha kuno. Tinokohwei mujecha rakadai? Hwani dhei vachamhanya vakabatira mabhurugwa mumaoko (Choto, p.145).

(They took away land with good soils and turned it into farms, while they pushed us into the sandy areas. What can we harvest from this sand? One day they will leave this land in a hurry.)

Choto shows that historically land has always been an emotive issue and that the African people were prepared to die for it. Kanyuchi's last statement in the above quotation was tantamount to a declaration of war on the settlers.

On his part Vitalis Nyawaranda in *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) merely takes note of the extent and size of individual white farms in a manner that demonstrates the injustice of the colonial land distribution. Zuvarigere's farm is so big that, "*Raitoda rwendo rukuru kwazvo kuti uipedze purazi yacho kuidimbura napakati. Chaitova chinyika pachayo asi iri yomunhu mumweyo.*" (p.7) (It required a lot of effort to walk across the farm through its middle. It was like one man owning a whole country by himself alone). It is not surprising that Nyawaranda expresses these sentiments if

one considers that some of these farms were obtained under the BSAP Company's cheap land policies. In 1908 for example, ranching land was 8 1/2d and potential arable land 3s. 9d. an acre, and Lieberg bought a massive 1,200,000 acres of ranch land in 1911 for less than £45,000 (Martin and Johnson, 1981:51). Kriger (1995) also notes the BSA Company's habit of selling land cheaply and quickly in order to attract settlers and revenue.

Most of these Shona war novelists show their awareness of the land issue as a historical cause of the liberation war in Zimbabwe. They recognise the importance of land to Africans. The African and his soil are one. The people of Zimbabwe cannot be separated from the land because they "have a spiritual relationship with the land which was profoundly disrupted by settler colonialism" (Herbst, 1990:41). The African gets everything from this soil. He gets his food and water from it; he builds his house on the land using mud, trees and grass from it; he feeds his animals on it; and if he thought he came from the soil he and his kinsmen will be buried in graves dug in that same soil. So the writer is showing that to deprive the Zimbabwean black people of their land is to deprive them of their livelihood and their final resting place-their everything. Herbst (1990:41) describes this as "a profound challenge to the very foundation of Shona society". Authors of Shona war novels show that the black people of Zimbabwe were not prepared to accept this for ever, and the result, ultimately, was war because, as Cauter (1983:59) asserts:

No black chief, neither the Ndebele king Lobengula nor the Mashona paramounts over whom he (spuriously) claimed suzerainty, ever made a genuine grant of land to Cecil Rhodes's British South Africa Company.

Closely related to the question of land deprivation is the issue of cattle. The coming of colonialism in 1890 led to what is described by Roberts (1980:88) as "widespread seizures of African cattle...in Mashonaland in lieu of cash for the Hut Tax" and by Zvobgo (1996:411) as "massive confiscation of Ndebele cattle by the British South Africa Company and individuals...". Hence, Vitalis Nyawaranda's *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) is centred on the issue of Zuvarigere's bull, Finiyasi. The *povo* kill Finiyasi and distribute the meat among themselves. Finiyasi is an epitome of the white man's wealth that was 'stolen from the African people of Zimbabwe' as Roberts and Zvobgo show. Nyawaranda is revisiting a longstanding African grievance about confiscation

of cattle. The less land Africans could occupy in colonial Zimbabwe the less cattle they could own because there was not enough space for grazing. The Land Husbandry Act (1951) "limited cattle grazing in specified areas and provided for the de-stocking of African herds" and it also "prohibited grazing without permit" (Wikipedia). Africans were therefore compelled to sell some of their cattle to white settlers. According to Martin and Johnson (1981:54),

Africans were entitled to five herd of cattle and eight acres of land...Families were forced to sell off cattle in excess of five at artificially low prices...and the Land Husbandry Act generated more bitterness against the settler government than any previous legislation.

In Nyawaranda's *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) the peasants kill white farmers' cattle to feed themselves and their freedom fighters, and they refer to the meat as *mavheji* (vegetables) in order to avoid detection. Nyawaranda is saying the African people were simply recovering their wealth that had been stolen from them by the settlers. For example, in October 1893 the BSA Company "confiscated Ndebele land and cattle" (Bowman, 1973:10). As Edward Watungwa (cited in Frederikse, 1982:89) once said during Parliamentary debate on the security situation on 28 March 1973 "If you want to touch the African from the bottom of his heart, go and take one of his animals. Then you will never get cooperation from him." Nyawaranda is therefore constructing his story using bits of historical information.

One of the major causes of dissatisfaction with colonial rule in Zimbabwe that led to war was white oppression and ill-treatment of blacks that manifested itself in many facets of life, especially in places of employment. For example, African labourers on the white farms were paid abysmally and some were paid only every third or fourth month (Martin and Johnson, 1981:3) and a Rhodesian officer who worked in Combined Operations during the war expressed the situation tersely and more incisively when he pointed out that "They (Africans) were being treated like absolute animals and the SB told Smith the area was ripe for revolution" (Martin and Johnson, 1981:3). It is the knowledge of such ill-treatment that Makari in *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) allows the mind of his fictional character Mberikwazvo to wander into the past to retrieve historical information which he fictionalises about. Using the dream-story technique, Makari shows Mberikwazvo remembering how in Rhodesia the white

person was born master over an African (pikanini bhasa-baas) and died a master over a black man (bhasi-baas). Mason (1958:215) depicts this relationship between settlers and blacks as that between 'master and servant' that was given legal expression in the Master and Servant Act of 1891. Mberikwazvo's dream-story further shows how the black man was made to labour for the white man's comfort without being properly remunerated, only to retire in his old and useless state to an equally old, exhausted and useless dry and sandy piece of land that was also tired, overgrazed and unproductive. The use of terms like 'bobjaan', and 'gugo' (*gudo-baboon*) is seen in the dialogue that goes on in Mberikwazvo's dream-story (Makari, p.6-7). Mason (1958:15) notes that in European eyes the domination of the African population "was seen as beneficial, mandatory, and timeless." It was also assumed that "all Africans would always be hewers of wood and drawers of water" (Mason, 1958:264). These matters show that Makari's perspective is shaped by history, the history of a country where, as Cauter (1983:61) expresses it, the African was a second-class man, without civil rights, without property rights, without the right of appeal, entirely subject to the command, or whim, of the white masters.

In the same way that Makari shows the ill-treatment of blacks in Rhodesia, Makata also does the same in *Gona ReChimurenga* (1982) (p.20-21). Makata's fictional character that is also the narrative voice of the story refers to scolding, beating and slavery in his motherland (p.20). He also complains about being prohibited to trespass into white men's farms, restrictions on the number of cattle one could own, and the requirement to always carry an identity card that made one a citizen of a small rural area like Wedza and not a citizen of Zimbabwe (p.21). Indeed, as Cauter (1983:57) correctly observes:

[The] African had to carry a certificate of registration which allocated him to an African rural area under the Land Apportionment Act, even if he had been born in town.

So, although Makari and Makata are fictionalising they nevertheless talk about things they know happened during the historical period covered by their novels. As pointed out earlier these events are not happening in a vacuum but they are located in known historical time. Perhaps this is where Connor (2002:28) sees a relationship between novel and history when he says that "The attraction between novel and history may

be unavoidable, given the close association between narrative and time.” The Shona war novels are undoubtedly part of the history of colonial times. They contribute to the narrative of the events of that time, and they are also very much a component of the social life of that time.

4.8 ECHOES FROM THE PAST

Writers of Shona war fiction also often stepped into history to retrieve some historical statements that were made in the past that had serious repercussions for Zimbabwe. For instance, despite all the ill-treatment and the unhappiness of the African people of Zimbabwe about loss of land, cattle and freedoms, and despite the Special Branch warnings about African discontent Ian Smith continued to believe that he was ruling over a happy lot of Africans. In Vitalis Nyawaranda’s *Paida Mwoyo* (1987) the commander of the Rhodesian forces that visit Gonoguru School after school children have absconded and crossed into Mozambique to join the armed struggle reminds those children who remained that:

Munyika ino yose yeAfrica, hapana rudzi rwevatema rwakagarika semi muno muRhodesia (p.63)

(On the whole continent of Africa there are no Africans who are as happy as you are here in Rhodesia.)

What Nyawaranda is presenting here is an echo of a famous but misinformed statement from history. Nyawaranda’s fictional character is echoing the Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Smith’s statement he made to the Rotary Club lunch in Salisbury on 21 December 1972 that:

I have been taken to task in certain quarters for describing our Africans as the happiest Africans in the world, but nobody has as yet been able to tell me where there are Africans who are happier- or, for that matter, better off- than in Rhodesia (Martin and Johnson, 1981:1).

Smith went on to rumble about the many reasons on which he based his assertion. In the same manner Nyawaranda makes his fictional soldier rumble on about the many reasons why he thought his audience of Rhodesian Africans were the happiest in Africa. He talks of the schools and hospitals that he says government have built for

them and jobs in town where he says there is electricity. He even reminds them that they are well fed, that some of them are respected members of society like those who sit in parliament and that many Africans drive cars, and either own buses or shops. The African, according to him, has no reason to want to fight (Nyawaranda, p.63). However, what he fails to appreciate is that Africans did not want to be fed well; they wanted to feed themselves well. Neither Smith nor his disciple talks about racism and the land issue. The important point being raised here is that Nyawaranda's approach to fiction in this case is shaped by a historical event. In fictionalising about Ian Smith's statement Nyawaranda is exploiting "the possibilities of ready-made historical drama" (Saverberg, 1991:63) to achieve artistic purpose.

There are also attempts to recreate the thinking of the time in an effort to make readers understand "the motivating factors that led individuals and groups of people to make decisions that altered the pattern of life or the course of political history" (Jacobs and Tunnel, 1996:106). Smith and his supporters resisted the black nationalists' revolution because they strongly believed that Rhodesia was the last bastion of white civilisation against what they saw as communist threat in the region. That is why the Rhodesian Christian Group was founded by Father Lewis and others:

...to try and counter the Marxists take-over of churches, to try and stop the flow of communism at the Zambezi, beyond which it could not spread to destroy Western Christian civilisation' (Frederikse, 1982:189).

For this reason Makari's fictional Rhodesian soldiers in *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) take pains to portray guerrillas as senseless communist thugs, the 'barbarism' that the warriors were holding at bay (Caute, 1983:51):

Gandanga mwana womutema anenge apanduka. Akanyengedzwa naMugabe naNkomo. Akadzidziswa pfuti namacommunists kuti arwise runyararo rwuri muno munyika yedu. Akandodzidza pfungwa dzedzimwe nhunzvatunzva dzinonzi Max, Lenin naMao. Hatidi kuti magandanga atore nyika ino nokuti zvikangodaro chete nyika ino yose inobva yan'ora. Panenge pasisina nechimwe chose chakanaka. Minda yenyu inotorwa. Pfuma yose inotorwa naGavhurumende. Vanasikana zvose navakadzi venyu munotorerwa voiswa muwaya kwotsvagwa mabhuru anopota achivazvarisa vana. (p.15)

(A terrorist is an African who has rebelled. He was misled by Mugabe and Nkomo. He was trained to use the gun by communists in order to disturb the peace in our country. He studied the ideas of certain upstarts like Max, Lenin and Mao. We do not want terrorists to take over this country because if that happens the country will be ruined. That will not be good for anyone at all. Your land will be taken away. All your wealth will be nationalised. All girls and women will be put into fenced areas and selected bulls will from time to time go in and impregnate them.)

The same thinking is recreated again in Nyawaranda's *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985). Nyawaranda's fictional character Zuvarigere talks about the same communist threat in an attempt to dissuade blacks from supporting the freedom fighters:

Tororo rinotumwa namakomunisiti kuzopedzera vanhu muno zvokudya. Tororo rakashata kwazvo. Usazomboteerera zvarinoreva. Chikominisiti chinoti chako ndechanguwo, sokuti mukadzi navana vaunavo havasi vako woga. Kana ini ndichidawo, ndinotora ndichisevenzisa ndozodzora ndada kana kugara zvachose nacho. (p.43)

(A terrorist is sent by Communists to plunder people's wealth. A terrorist is very bad. Never listen to what he says. Communism says that what belongs to you belongs to me as well, for example, your wife and children are not yours alone. If I need them I will take and use and return if I want, or can keep for good.)

Nyawaranda and Makari's characters are fictional but their thinking is a recreation of the prevailing thinking among many whites and their leader Ian Smith. This is historical to the extent that it is literature that shows awareness of its past. What is depicted here is a recreation of history that shows the nature of Rhodesian propaganda war against ZANLA and ZIPRA forces. What Makari and Nyawaranda's fictional characters say is in fact a dramatisation of the speeches contained in some of the statements uttered by white politicians and what was written on propaganda leaflets prepared by the Rhodesian Psychological Operations Unit in the 1970s and distributed by Rhodesian forces to the rural areas. One such pamphlet complete with a picture of a crying and distraught woman sitting outside a clinic read:

See the woman crying. She has just learned that the communist terrorists have infected her with VD. The mad dog communists of ZANU/ZANLA have infected many women in Rhodesia with this terrible sickness. The children of such women may be born mad or

blind or crippled. The women's husbands will catch VD and spread it to their other wives whose children too will be diseased. So the sickness which the communist terrorists bring from Mozambique is destroying the people... (Frederikse, 1982:122).

It must be noted that Makari and Nyawaranda's texts touch on the sensitive issue of one's wives and children being shared with other men. This shows definite influence from history. The authors are invoking familiar knowledge from the past. They are 'rewriting' these leaflets and other familiar statements uttered during the war period.

4.9 PRESERVING 'THE FABRIC OF THE TIMES'

In some cases authors of Shona war fiction strive to preserve what Lasky (Jacobs and Tunnell, 1996:104) calls "fabric of the times" by remaining faithful to the historical context in which the story is set. They try to remain faithful and accountable to the practices of the period being depicted in the novels. Authors of Shona war novels create conversations between ordinary people and guerrillas such as the one between Headman Charira and Comrade Tumirai (Choto, 1990:14) who had just arrived in the headman's area, or conversations between Rhodesian soldiers and ordinary people who had been arrested for collaborating with the guerrillas such as the one between Sajeni Johane and VaMberikwazvo (Makari, p.26-27). In these examples Choto and Makari created conversations between fictional characters in their respective novels. What is said in the conversations may not be factual but it nonetheless reflects what Choto and Makari knew about the relationships between the Rhodesian forces and civilians, and what they knew about the relationship between the guerrillas and the ordinary villagers.

Two examples will be given here in greater detail just to illustrate more clearly the Shona war fiction's preoccupation with history. Take this conversation between a guerrilla and a civilian from Choto's *Vavariro* (1990) (The authors words have been omitted in order to economise on words):

*Ndimi Sabhuku Charira?
Ho-hongu mwanangu.
Baba, musatya zvenyu. Taurai makatsigisa hana yenyu. Ko ava vana
venyu here?
Hongu vana vangu.*

*Ini ndinonzi Comrade Tumirai, ndiri uto reMusangano. Ko, mati mamboona mauto emusangano here kana kuanzwa?
 Kwete vanangu, hatisati tavaona.
 Ko kumbonzwa nezvedu?
 Hatisati zvakare.
 Saka munongoziva masoja bedzi?
 Hongu, ndivo tinoziva chete.
 Masoja anokubatai zvakana here?
 Kuno handisati ndaona zvavanoita, asi kuPfungwe uku ndiko ndakanzwa kuti kuri kurohwa vanhu nemasoja uyezve vasikana vari kubatwa repukesi.
 Zvino zvinhu zvakana here izvozvi nhai baba?
 Hapana anofanira kurohwa, mwanangu.
 Ko, vanenge vachiroverwei vanhu ava?
 Ndakanzwa zvichinzi vanenge vachipa magandanga chikafu.
 Magandanga?
 Ndiwo mutauriro unoita vanhu vacho. (Choto, p.14)*

(Are you Headman Charira?
 Ye-yes my son.
 Father, do not be afraid. Relax as you talk. Are these your children?
 Yes, they are my children.
 My name is Comrade Tumirai. I am a freedom fighter. Have you ever seen freedom fighters?
 No my son, we have never seen them.
 Have you not even heard anything about us?
 Not at all.
 Does it mean that you only know (Rhodesian) soldiers?
 Yes, they are the only ones we know.
 Do soldiers treat you well?
 I have not seen anything they do here, but I heard that in Pfungwe people are being beaten by soldiers and girls raped.
 Is that good, father?
 No one should be beaten, my son.
 But, why do they beat up these people?
 I heard that it is because they give food to terrorists.
 Terrorists?
 That is what the people themselves say.)

This conversation is certainly not factual but it certainly reflects what Choto knows about what happened in Zimbabwe's guerrilla war. It reflects what he knows about the content, the tone, the mood, feeling and diction that prevailed in such encounters. Choto is fixing his fiction in its historical context.

Similarly, in Makari's *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) we have this encounter between Sabhuku Mberikwazvo and Comrade Shingirirai Tichatonga and his group:

Nguva Zhinji vaMberikwazvo vakanga vasiri munhu anovhundutswa notunhu twenhando-nhando. Asi apa vakatanga kurohwa nehana. Ko, vaisatya sei ivo vasangana nomunhu akagukuchira twakawanda zvakadaro. (p.11)

(In most cases Mberikwazvo was not the kind of person who got easily frightened. But this time he got scared. How could he not get frightened, when he had met someone who was carrying an assortment of things?)

For purposes of economising on words much of what the omniscient narrator says will be left out. Only relevant words spoken by Comrade Tinotonga will be given. What we quote Tinotonga saying is enough to show the impact of his words and physical appearance on his victim, Headman Mberikwazvo. These are the words that Tinotonga utters in this situation:

*Ko zvaita sei, nhai baba? Musatya zvenyu. Hapana chakaipa chatinokuitai. Tiri vana venyu. Dzikamisai zvenyu hana yenyu...
Tambirai mabhanzi nebhotoro rokunwa, baba...
Asi isu matiziva here, nhai baba?
(Kwete mwanangu)*

*Zvitsvene baba, isu tinonzi makomuredzi. Vamwe vanotidaidza kuti vanamukoma kana kuti vakomana. Tiri varwiri vorusununguko. Vavengi vanotiti magandanga. Tiri vana venyu vakauya kuzokupokonyorai kubva kuvavengi Zimbabwe yavakatibvutira...
(p.12)*

(What is the problem, father? Do not be afraid. We do not mean to harm you. We are your children. Relax...
Have these buns and this drink, father!
But have you recognised who we are, father?
(No, my sons)

(It's alright father, we are called comrades. Others call us boys or brothers. We are freedom fighters. Our enemies call us terrorists. We are your children who came to rescue Zimbabwe from the enemy who took it from us by brute force.)

Once again this conversation between Makari's fictional characters may not be factual, but it tells us something about what the author knows about how guerrillas

related with the masses during the liberation war. Makari, like Choto, is putting fiction into its historical context.

This conversation is not something originating from the author's mind. There is influence from somewhere in Zimbabwean history, something from the past. It must also be noted that *Vavairo* (1990) and *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) are two different war novels written by two different authors. Their stories though about the same war are completely different, and yet they meet at the level of history, especially when it comes to the preservation of the fabric of the times. Both passages show that the relationship between the two respective pairs of speakers is not quite normal, that the questioner is assertive and knows the impact of his power and dominance over his victim, the answerer. The answerer is completely overwhelmed and subdued. For example, in the first passage Sabhuku Charira is overwhelmed by fear when he first meets an armed guerrilla. In the second passage (written by a different author) Sabhuku Mberikwazvo is also overwhelmed by fear on his first time to meet an armed guerrilla. While this is happening in fiction it nevertheless agrees with what the historian Kriger (1995:152) records as something that actually happened during the liberation war. The historian (Kriger) agrees with the novelists in that she talks of respondents who, when they described their initial meetings with guerrillas, reminisced about their fear of being in the presence of armed men. This shows that the novelists are fictionalising history. The dominant atmosphere, mood, tone, and feeling that we find in the discourses show that the authors meet at some point somewhere in history. They meet at a certain point in history when things were so lopsided that 'children' asserted their authority over their elders and the elders submitted themselves to the intimidating authority of their young. Kriger (1995:151) makes a correct observation when she says that "Real gains in status were won by youth who enjoyed the authority their war roles gave them over their elders." There was that time in Zimbabwean liberation war history when children's authority over their elders was apparent in their habit of asking the question "*Matiziva here vabereki? Or Makamboona vanhu vakaita sesu? Or Makambotiona here vabereki?*" (Do you know who we are? Or have you ever seen people like us? Or have you ever seen us, parents?) There was something unusual about people who asked questions like that, especially when the questions were directed at elderly men and women who had known people all their lives. When the creative imaginations of writers of fiction

converge at the same point in the past we have history shaping literature. This thinking finds further theoretical reinforcement in Trilling's (1974:68) postulation that:

Then literature is historical in the sense that it is necessarily aware of its own past. It is not always consciously aware of this past, but it is always practically aware of it.

Indeed literature is aware of its own past. Earlier in this chapter the influence of history on Makari's work has been shown by the amount of detail of the First Chimurenga of 1896-7 that is given. Makari lists an array of weapons he says were used by blacks and those he says were used by whites during that First Chimurenga war. The mention of spears, axes, bows and arrows, stones, sticks and cooking sticks used by blacks and the dynamite used by the whites show that this is literature that is aware of its own past. Equally, influence of the history of the Second Chimurenga is apparent in the way most of the authors of Shona war fiction love to display how historically informed they are about the types of weapons that are associated with the Second Chimurenga War. Pesanai and Sungano list AK 47, Morotero, RPD, Tokarev pistol, Bazooka, RPG 7, SKS Rifles that were used by guerrillas as well as the FN, G3, and NATO that were used by the Rhodesian forces. Most of the weapons used by guerrillas were obtained from socialist countries like China and Russia. The primitive weapons and the modern weapons stand for two different levels of technological development in history.

Because Shona war fiction is rooted in history of the Chimurenga war there is obviously the sprinkling in of certain terms that are associated with the history of that time. Terms like *mujibha*, *chimbwido*, *chimbambaira*, *comrades*, *vakomana*, *vanamukoma*, *povho*, *mapuruvheya*, *madzakutsaku* and others came into use. Most of these terms emerged either to give new meaning to existing phenomena or to give meaning to new concepts associated with new style of guerrilla warfare.

Authors of Shona war fiction recreate the patterns of daily living and the spirit of the times in order to make the historical period come to life. In other words, their works attempt to give a rough estimate of what it was like to live in Zimbabwe during the liberation war, particularly what it was like to live in Zimbabwe's rural areas. The works show what it was like to survive from day to day in war-torn Zimbabwe, without

knowing whether you would live to see the next day, especially for the people caught between Rhodesian soldiers and guerrillas that Caute (1983:59) refers to as the “man-in-the-middle”. The works show us the daily killings, the betrayals, the rapes, the beatings, the head bashing, the burning of homes and grain storages, tortures, deaths, the keeps (protected villages) and endless night *pungwes* (political education and singing). All the war novels reflect these things in varying degrees and combinations. One passage from Sungano’s *Kuda Muhondo* (1985) shows how various authors bring to life the historical period by re-creating the patterns of daily living as follows:

Kuno hakuna chakanaka mwanangu, Kudakwashe. Saka ndakanga ndati usauye. Iko zvino kune runyerekupe rwokuti tava kuda kuiswa muwaya. Vakomana vari kuti anopinda muwaya pasi naye. Masoja ari kuti anoramba tinopfura. Tangova parumananzombe. Hapana achaziva kwokuenda. Kana vasvika vanamukoma zera renyu iri hamuchagari pasi nokutumwa kunosora. Kana vadarika masoja ouya kuzatora vese vezera renyu iri hunzi tiratidzei kwavakaenda. Asi kana vari kuno masoja haasviki, kana vaenda ndipo vouya kuzorova nokushupa vanhu. Ndizvo ndakanga ndati usauye. Ukaramba kutumwa naanamukoma hunzi uri mutenges, pasi newe. Ndiko kuoma kwaita zvinhu uku. (p.18)

(The situation is bad here my son, Kudakwashe. That is why I said you should not come. Right now it is rumoured that we will soon be put into ‘protected villages’. The guerrillas are saying that they will deal with those who go into those ‘keeps’. We are in a dilemma. We do not know where to go. When the boys come you young people are sent on errands to reconnaissance. After they have gone the soldiers come and ask you where they have gone. Yet they dare not come here when the boys are here, but when they have gone that is when they come and harass the people. That is why I had said you should not come here. If you do not comply with the boy’s orders you are branded a sell-out, and they kill you. This is how bad the situation is.)

This is a typical example of how the pattern of daily living during the war in rural Rhodesia is captured. People had to do the unthinkable and live with unburied corpses like that of Samson (Sungano, 1985:18) and that of Headmaster Manyimo (Nyawaranda, 1987:86) which was buried long after it had decomposed and much of it having been eaten by dogs. Things like this did happen in the liberation war. Caute (1983:59) gives us an example of what happened in 1976 at Chikore mission, 230 kilometres south of Mutare:

when on three occasions pupils were shown bodies which the security forces had brought to the school and dumped in the parking lot—genitals exposed, fingers cut off from the knuckles, horrifying.

In Nyawaranda's *Paida Mwoyo* (1987) Majesa sums up the hopelessness of the situation in most parts of Rhodesia when he says to Tapera:

Ko, ndokupi kwaungaende, mwanangu, nehondo ino? Hauone here kuti nemabhazi nzvimbo dzose haachafambi? (p.79)

(Where do you think you can go, my son, with the war raging on? Do you not see that even buses have stopped moving in all areas?)

Makari captures the torture of those who were deemed to be sympathising with freedom fighters by submerging their heads into buckets of water, and by subjecting their private parts to electric shocks (Makari, 1985:28-29). Though these stories cannot be accepted as true history, there is no doubt that they do illustrate the general style of warfare and its underlying concepts (Goldschmidt, Foster and Essene, 1939:53). What Goldschmidt et al say about '*War stories from Two Enemy Tribes*' (1939) is also true of Shona war fiction. These stories cannot be accepted as truthful accounts of exactly what happened but they illustrate how things were done. What they say is compatible with what is known to have happened and this is the historical 'truth' that helps the writers to maintain probability. What is known to have happened is that victims of torture were given what Cate (1983:139) calls "water treatment", that is:

...a shirt is wrapped around the victim's head before water is poured over the nose and mouth—until they passed out or a case in which a wire was tied to his (torture victim) genitals and his daughter was forced to pull on it, partially mutilating him.

The torture depicted by Makari is not factual but it is compatible with what is known to have happened during the war. To consolidate the argument proffered here, this section is concluded by quoting an explanation given by ZIMFEP (1992:89), which is quite insightful:

Fiction is different from history because it does not attempt to reconstruct in accurate detail what happened to actual people. Fiction writers create characters who may combine characteristics of several

real people...Or they may be completely imaginary characters. But often the writers of novels or stories are able, in their creations, to tell us more about the feelings of people than are historians, because they are not limited to actual facts: they know the situation and the people who lived through similar events, and are able to describe the events using their imagination. In a sense, then, they are able to portray the 'truth' just as well as the historian who sticks strictly with 'the facts' based on evidence.

So the 'truth' of what happened during the liberation war that is found in Shona war fiction comes from the description of what the authors know to have happened to characters that lived at the time. Whatever it is that the novelist is saying he is saying something about the liberation war of the 1970s, how it was fought and how it affected people represented by the fictional characters.

4.10 GUNS, COOKING STICKS AND PENS

The way the war was 'fought' influences writers' perception of the guerrilla war. It was not only fought by those who were carrying guns. It was fought by 'everyone'-the masses and the armed guerrillas. Sungano's fictional character, Komuredhi Kadiki, calls this 'division of labour'. In his elaboration he says that not everyone will fight with the gun. Others are instructors; others provide food, while others do the farming in order for the food to be there. All these, according to Kadiki, constitute one thing-the ZANU party fighting the war of liberation (Sungano, 1985:52). The writer is influenced in his perception by what was generally happening during the 1970s guerrilla war in Zimbabwe. ZANLA political commissar, Ridzai Gidi (Frederiske, 1982:74), sums it up in the words:

You see, the people played a greater part in the struggle, even more than our forces. The people are the owners of the country; the comrades were only a military wing. In our operations, most of the spade work was done by the people.

Indeed, the author shows that while others were wielding the gun, the others were wielding the hoe, and others the cooking stick. This Shona war novel reflects the 'division of labour' that characterised the guerrilla war of the 1970s.

This perspective on the war is shared by many other writers of Shona war fiction. However, Nyawaranda goes a step further to show that this 'division of labour' was not only between those wielding the gun and those providing support services like farmers, those who cooked the food and those who carried out other errands, but was also there between those wielding the gun and those wielding the pen. By this, it is meant 'division of labour' between those in education and those in armed combat. In a rather powerful speech Nyawaranda's fictional character in *Paida Mwoyo* (1987) only identified as the Commander, explains this 'division of labour' saying:

Vazhinji venyu ndivo vanotinyepera. Hunzi regai ndimbopedza chikoro changu ndozoti ndouya tochirwira Zimbabwe! Asi ndiani angatendere nhemadzo? Ndiani wavo watakazoono kudzoka mudondo muno? Chete hazvineiba. Enda zvako kuchikoro, komuredhi. Ini kungotaura chete kwandinoita. Handirevi kuti dzidzo hayakarurama. Yakanaka chaizvo. Tose hatingabati pfuti kudai. Vamwe ndevepenzura chete. Ndidzowo pfuti dzavanogona. Iyi Zimbabwe ichashevedza vanhu vakawanda nemabasawo akawanda (p.81).

(Many of you tell us lies. They say they will come and fight for Zimbabwe after completing their education! But who can believe such lies? Which one of them did we see coming to the bush? Anyway, it does not matter. You go to school, comrade. This is just plain talk. I am not saying there is anything wrong with getting educated. Education is a very useful thing. We cannot all take up arms like this. Others will use the pen. Those are the guns they can use better. Zimbabwe will require many people offering different skills. That is why I said you can go to school.)

Nyawaranda perceives the liberation war as a multifaceted struggle. At least he sees it as being fought on two fronts, the military front and the educational front. Alongside those who are fighting with guns there are those who are fighting with the pen. What Nyawaranda is saying here is that Zimbabwe will require many people offering different skills. He is saying that the military have their role to play now but time for peace will come and the war for economic development will come. His perception is that Zimbabwe will require the military to protect its sovereignty, but it will also require teachers, nurses, engineers, doctors, accountants, administrators and many other professionals. Nare (1995:134) gives credence to this view when he points out that through an arrangement made with the Zambian Ministry of Education ZAPU "produced and brought home a substantial number of certified teachers, nurses, secretaries, plumbers etc upon repatriation in 1980."

Nyawaranda's perspective here is also shaped by history in the sense that during the liberation war there were many people who opted to remain in the universities teaching or studying and acquiring their degrees in the hope that come independence, they would come home to fill up the posts in the civil service and other areas that would be left vacant by departing whites. Chung (1995:141) records that "1975-1976 saw a flood of university lecturers joining the ranks as fulltime ZANU cadres". As Chung (1995:141) observes, these groups found an opportunity to take a more direct role in the struggle by filling up the leadership vacuum left by the assassination of Herbert Chitepo and the arrest of several of the guerrilla leaders. It is not accidental that the first Zimbabwe government at independence was full of highly educated individuals, a good number of them with doctoral degrees. Chung (1995:140) also notes that many young men who travelled by way of Botswana and Zambia in search of educational opportunities were diverted to ZAPU and ZANU training camps. Some escaped at the earliest opportunity while others escaped after training because they never intended to fight in the first place. "Some who were either wiser or cynical, regarded the ordinary guerrillas as cannon fodder and the educated as the future rulers of Zimbabwe" (Chung, 1995:140). Hill (2003:71) noted that many of Mugabe's first cabinet members were better educated than their white predecessors who had run the country until the middle of 1979. Some of these had been studying or teaching in universities and representing ZANU and ZAPU elsewhere in Africa, Europe or America during the liberation war, while the others are those who came to fill in the leadership vacuum created following Chitepo's death. Those who were fighting with the pen, like Tapera in Nyawaranda's *Paida Mwoyo* (1987), are those that Father Prosser (cited in Caute, 1983:315) referred to in a letter he wrote in September 1979 when he said that:

I have feared all along that when peace comes those who were really idealists and went and did the uncomfortable things may find themselves supplanted by those who sat comfortably at home or in London.

The 'students' whom Father Prosser says "sat at home or in London" are the ones Nyawaranda, himself a teacher at the time, regards as fighting the war with the pen.

4.11 CONCLUSION

An analysis of the Shona novels about the war of liberation in Zimbabwe shows that authors were constructing their stories with a historical perspective. Although they were writing fiction using their imagination they were not completely independent of history. To a very large extent, to study Shona war fiction is to grapple with the history of the guerrilla warfare in Zimbabwe. As Trilling (1874:368) would say, literature must in some sense always be an historical study, for literature is an historical art. As stated elsewhere in this chapter there is no way readers can emerge out of an encounter with Shona liberation war fiction and claim that they are not fairly informed about the general style of the guerrilla war that was waged in Zimbabwe in the 1970s. Writers rely on some historical information to construct their stories.

Even if they knew the truth, writers of these works are not interested in telling it. Theirs is a fictional representation of historical material. It is the historian who is interested in facts. The literary artist is interested in the imaginative recreation of historical events. History, it is conventionally claimed, deals with things as they were; fiction with things as they might, or even, should have been (Connor, 2002:130). For that reason, in the Shona war novel we have a hyperbolic rendering of certain historical incidents (Nwahuranya, 1991:431). So writers fantasise and fictionalise about such events as the Chimoio and the Nyadzonia Massacres, the March 3 Internal Settlement, or the Lancaster House agreement, to mention just those few which are often repeated. Because these events are imaginatively recreated one is not worried about whether the details given are true, but is worried about whether the fictional narrative is good (Connor, 2002:130).

It has been further argued that because writers of Shona war fiction write about a war that actually took place at a certain point in history they often try to give authenticity to their stories, for, example, by making reference to some causes of the war, by using dates when events occurred, and by using names of some historical persons who were prominent on both sides of the 1970s guerrilla war. However, it has been noted too that the dates are not overused and the historical persons are not quite 'active' in the stories in which they appear in the same way that Mutswairo,

Samupindi and Kanengoni's historical persons are in their works, *Mweya WaNehanda* (1988), *Pawns* (1992) and *Echoing Silences* (1997).

Fictionalising about statements uttered some time in the past is a way of stepping into history. Anyone familiar with Zimbabwean history who encounters in the novel the statement about Africans of Zimbabwe being the happiest in the world knows that this is something from past history. It has also been generally observed that writers of Shona war fiction place their narratives within a historical context. What happens between their fictional characters may not be factual but it reflects what the authors knew about the way the war was conducted. The works attempt to make the historical period covering the liberation war come to life by recreating the patterns of daily living. In many ways the novels try to remain faithful to the historical context in which the stories are set.

Even though writers were writing fiction they were compelled by historicism to discuss some of the causes of the war particularly land dispossession and general racial discrimination. The moment the land question is brought in, as is the case in most of these novels history is also brought in because the image of land "is closely associated with local history, above all with the war" (Dandy, 2002:95).

CHAPTER 5

CULTURAL ASPECTS OF THE WAR

5.1 INTRODUCTION

It has been shown in Chapter 4 that Shona war fiction writers could not run away from the influence of history. Since this is the case, it also means that they could not avoid issues of culture because culture is a subject of history. As man evolves a culture he will be making history. "With man we enter history" (Engels, 1966:52). Shona war fiction writers therefore placed their war fiction into its cultural context just as much as they placed it into its historical context. It has also been pointed out earlier in Chapter 3 of this study that a war novel is about men and women at war. Men and women are people who belong to certain cultures and when they get involved in a war situation their culture is also involved. In his definition of culture Mpondi (1998:45) says:

Culture includes the society's system of values, ideological social codes of behaviour, its technology and modes of consumption, social structure, political system and decision-making process. A society's culture is expressed in its literature, art, architecture, dress, food, entertainment and many other forms.

Although Mpondi attempts a comprehensive definition of culture it is still not exhaustive. Indeed, as he points out, it includes 'many other forms'. This means that culture contains more items than those enumerated above. One helpful way in attempting to define this complex concept therefore is to look at the way sociologists use the word. Schafer and Lamm (1998:66) see culture as the totality of learned, socially transmitted behaviour that includes the ideas, values, customs and the artifacts of groups of people. Giddens (2001:22) defines culture as a word that refers to the way of life of the members of a society, or of groups within a society that include how they dress, their marriage customs and family life, their patterns of work, religious ceremonies and leisure pursuits. Another sociologist, O'Donnell (1992:4), says that culture is the way of life of a particular society and that it refers to all aspects of human behaviour that are learnt rather than genetically transmitted; and

Linton (cited in Haralambos, Holborn and Heald, 2004:viii) considers the culture of a society as the way of life of its members that includes the collection of ideas and habits which they learn, share and transmit from generation to generation. What all these sociologists are saying brings us closer to Bourdillon's (1993:7) definition of culture that says:

Culture includes everything that we learn in our society: the language we speak, how to behave, music and dancing, knowledge and ways of thinking, values, beliefs, the technology we use at work and at leisure...everything.

It is the word 'everything' that is interesting here. If it is accepted that culture includes 'everything' then perhaps culture should be defined simply as "the whole way of life found in a particular society" (Haralambos, Holborn and Heald, 2004:790). The 'whole way of life' means 'everything'. What this means therefore is that when men and women go to war they carry with them into the war the 'everything' that Bourdillon talks about and the 'whole way of life' that sociologists referred to above have in their minds. The war may be fought in distant and foreign lands and the individual may interact with strange people but as long as he carries along his culture it will provide him with a familiar cultural environment in which to operate. It is this culture, "the totality of learned, socially transmitted behaviour", that enables him to interpret events and situations; it is that culture that will inform some of the decisions he will make and shape his perception of the world and the war he is involved in. His behaviour will depend largely on his cultural outlook. In other words, his military training alone may no longer be sufficient to guarantee success and survival in the war. It will have to be complemented by the cultural information he has at his disposal. This is what Gelfand (1973:101) implies when he says:

The end of Shona culture is survival. The means towards that end hinge on the complexus of beliefs, practices, taboos, social conventions and so on...

Gelfand's point is supported by Phillip Mazambara (1996) who refers to "aspects of Shona religious practices, fellowship with ancestors and magic (meant) to ensure security and success..." It is in consideration of this point that this chapter turns to look at how cultural aspects helped to shape writers' perspectives on the Second War of Liberation in Zimbabwe.

5.2 IDENTIFYING THE CULTURE

Before going into the discussion of the cultural aspects of the war it is essential to first establish whose culture it is that is being talked about. Broadly speaking, the conflict of the 1970s in Zimbabwe involved two sides, namely, the white settlers on one side and the indigenous black people on the other side. So it is essential to know whether the culture that is being talked about is that of blacks or that of the whites or whether it is the cultures of both races.

The Rhodesian army was made up of white soldiers and some blacks that, for one reason or another, fought on their side. Even though the Rhodesian army had blacks within its ranks people's perception of it was that it was a white army. The guerrilla army on the other hand was made up of black people. The culture that is going to be looked at in this chapter therefore is the culture of the black people who constituted the nationalist guerrilla army, ZANLA. This is the culture that is going to be considered because first and foremost that is the culture that is depicted in the novels under study. The stance adopted by the Shona war novelists is that the war is a Zimbabwean African people's war against a white settler government that oppressed them, notwithstanding the fact that there were some blacks fighting on the side of the settlers. The dominant ideology of the Shona war novel maintains that this was a black people's war and not a white man's war. This theory is supported by the various ways in which the war has been named. It has been popularly called the 'second war of liberation', the 'second Chimurenga', and the 'armed struggle', implying that this was a revolutionary war waged by blacks to liberate themselves from oppressive colonial rule. The white settlers were not fighting to liberate themselves, so it was not their liberation war. The whites were fighting to defend their privileged positions in an unjust system. It is the ideology of those who were fighting to remove the unjust system that is defined by such terms as '*chimurenga*' and 'liberation'. The Rhodesian whites 'liberated' themselves from Britain, the colonial power, when they declared their Unilateral Declaration of Independence on November 11, 1965, and if Britain had attacked her rebellious colony then that war would have been called the Rhodesian War of Independence, just as much as the American War of Independence was so called because it was an American war to free themselves from Britain, the colonial power.

The Zimbabwean conflict has also been known as Zimbabwe's 'guerrilla war', implying that this was a war waged by Zimbabweans who were trained in guerrilla warfare to dislodge colonialism. This makes it a Zimbabwean people's war to liberate themselves from colonialism. The Rhodesian army was trained in conventional warfare, and not in guerrilla warfare. Of course some have often called it the 'Rhodesian war', implying that this was a civil war in which some citizens of the state of Rhodesia fought other citizens and the government of the same state. Yet others like Henrik Ellert (1993) have used the term 'Rhodesian Front war' and may have done so with the intention of showing that it was the Rhodesian Front government that caused the war by its declaration of UDI. The terms 'Rhodesian war' or 'Rhodesian Front war' therefore attempt to apportion blame to the Rhodesian whites for the war. Otherwise the war that the Shona war novelists depict in their works is variously known as the liberation war, the liberation struggle, the Chimurenga war, the armed struggle or the guerrilla war. All these terms imply that it was a war fought by a people who wanted to liberate themselves from some evil system and those people who wanted to liberate themselves were blacks.

It is these people who wanted to liberate themselves whose culture is depicted in Shona war fiction and not the culture of the people they were fighting against. As noted elsewhere in this study the dominant thinking of the Shona war novelists is that this was a black man's war to liberate himself from the white man's oppression. That is why the novels carry titles such as *Hondo YeChimurenga* (1984) (War of liberation), *Gona ReChimurenga* (1982) (Champion of the liberation), *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) (It required courage), *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) (Impregnable fortress), *Paida Mwoyo* (1987) (My heart's desire), and *Vavairo* (1990) (Ambition). These titles sum up the black man's struggles, hopes, aspirations, and dreams during the war, and not the white man's. There are no white protagonists in these narratives. It is the life and struggles of the black fighters that is celebrated in these stories and not that of the white soldiers. Even the white author, Michael Raeburn (1981), in his account of the guerrilla war in Zimbabwe, calls the war '*Black Fire*' (Title of the book) and not 'White Fire'. Since the Shona war fiction writers depict the liberation war as an African people's war against an oppressive white system the protagonists of their adventures are mainly black characters. Aspects of the culture

that will be discussed in this chapter are therefore those that are related to black Zimbabweans, and particularly those of the Shona people who made up the majority of ZANLA cadres.

5.3 CULTURAL GENOCIDE

The culture that is depicted in Shona war fiction has been identified. It is pertinent now to consider the attitude adopted by colonialism and Christianity towards this culture so as to have a better understanding of the role and place of culture in Zimbabwe's liberation war.

Shona war fiction writers look at the war period as a time when there was a rebirth of African culture. However, prior to that and for a long time since Europeans colonised Zimbabwe, there had been concerted efforts on the part of the whites and missionaries to marginalise, if not to destroy, African culture in Zimbabwe. Zinyemba (1986:17) has observed that the same zeal that the Belgians showed in the Congo, to "wean those ignorant millions from their horrid ways" characterised European activities in Zimbabwe. Zinyemba (1986:17) asserts that:

One of the major tasks European missionaries set for themselves was to stop the observance of the various facets of African religion: ancestor worship, rituals and ceremonies at birth, marriage and death, and the practice of African medicine. A missionary referred to the practice of African medicine as "a sinister shadow in sunny Rhodesia". The missionaries therefore preached, not a modification of African rituals and ceremonies, but a complete uprooting.

Zinyemba's assertion is corroborated by Phillip Mazambara (1996) who talks about the "Western missionaries' urgent program aimed at uprooting African religious traditions." Hill (2003:47) makes the same observation and reminds the reader that at Kutama Mission in the 1920s under Father Loubiere spirit mediums, which had played such an important role in the Shona rebellion and would again come to prominence in the guerrilla war of the 1970s, were either hounded out of the parish or made to recant their beliefs. Zinyemba (1986:18) further observes that one prominent Christian called for a "purging of the African way of life." 'Uprooting' or 'purging' the African way of life meant uprooting or purging African culture, if we go by the definitions of culture given above. The African was pressured into believing that he

was sub-human and that there was something wrong “with his history, his way of life, and even his own person” (Nandwa and Bukenya, 1983:27). He was always made to believe that he was an inferior being. As Nandwa and Bukenya (1983:27) further point out:

The African was constantly forced to believe that everything about him was ‘savage, uncivilised, primitive, pagan and heathen’. In short, the African was gradually forced by this psychological pressure into being ashamed of himself, including the colour of his skin, and of all his culture, and into desperately trying to embrace and adopt the culture and values of the foreign colonizer.

This explains why many Zimbabwean men and women in the 1960s and 1970s tried to stretch their hair so that it could look like that of the white person, and why many Zimbabwean women used all sorts of skin-lightening creams like Ambi and Bu-tone so as to change the colour of their skin and make it look like that of white people. Psychologically they were made to feel that there was something wrong with their race that needed to be righted, and yet there was nothing wrong with being African. It also partially explains the beginning of the tradition of visiting traditional healers at night under the cover of darkness and yet Africans attended church services in broad daylight. This shows two things: that Zimbabwean Africans were now ashamed of their religion, but at the same time it showed that the practice would not die. It would only go underground. It is also true as Nandwa and Bukenya (1983:28) further observe that colonial administrators and their agents took steps to suppress African ways of life which they regarded as contrary to colonial interests. They took steps to marginalise African oral literature, which they knew was being used as a weapon of propaganda as well as an instrument that was used to arouse political emotions and promote unity. This explains why Solomon Mutswairo’s novel *Feso* (1982) was banned and removed from circulation in schools. Colonial administration could not allow that novel to circulate because it contained the poem ‘O, *Nehanda Nyakasikana*’ which had almost assumed a life of its own almost independent of the novel of which it is a component part. The poem had assumed the proportion of an oral art form capable of being recited orally and passed on from one generation to another by word of mouth. Many knew of this poem without even knowing the book of which it was part and from which it was taken. As it has been pointed out earlier in

this study it was being recited at political rallies and had become an important arouser of political emotions and aggressive national feelings.

Legislation was also passed in order to terrorise the African ways of life. For example, the Suppression of Witchcraft Act of 1894 in Zimbabwe, like the Suppression of the Witchcraft Act in Uganda (1912), was issued against traditional activities. As Nandwa and Bukeya (1983:28) note “missionaries, too, banned from their churches, hospitals and schools people who participated in traditional activities”. The performance of traditional songs and dances was often referred to as the devil’s work. Things like polygamy, sex before marriage and elopement were regarded as heathen behaviour and would lead to withdrawal of religious favour and privileges. As Mushoma (1932:27) correctly puts it “From the time Europeans came to South Africa they have hammered at the very foundation of native institutions with little result”. Indeed, suppression of African tradition did occur but results were minimal as the discussion that follows shows.

5.4 CULTURAL REVIVAL

The suppression of African institutions has been discussed above in order to justify a discussion of cultural revival in the subsequent sections of this chapter. That there was some cultural revival during the liberation war and after independence there is no doubt, and this has been acknowledged by other scholars like Chinyowa (2001), Pfukwa (2001), Roberts (1983) and Hadebe (2001).

The ‘native institutions’ that Mushoma (1932) talks about above are the ones that are found alive in the 1970’s liberation war and Shona war fiction writers’ capture that development in their narratives. The Shona war fiction writers’ perspective seems to be congruent with Mushoma’s prediction of 1932 that:

As with most tribes, the whole social structure of the natives rests on their religious beliefs.... As far as I can see the native religion will live for many hundred years to come...(Mushoma, 1932:27)

This prediction was made in 1932. Forty-five years down the line time is in the 1970s that the Shona war fiction writers talk about and African religious institutions are once again alive and vibrant. ‘Native religion’, upon which the whole social structure of the Shona people rests, was very much alive and vibrant at this time. In a way the Shona

liberation war novelists seem to be celebrating African culture. They seem to be celebrating the strength of Shona cultural institutions and the Shona way of life. Most of these war novels were written at a time of euphoria and celebration. Zimbabwe had regained her independence after almost a century of colonial rule during which her cultural institutions and way of life were terrorised. Alongside celebrating military victory and political independence writers were also celebrating the victory of their cultural institutions in the war. They were celebrating and acknowledging the role that various aspects of their culture had played in order to bring about military victory and political independence.

In Africa, the attainment of independence in any country tends to be accompanied, at least initially, by emotional attempts to reject everything that colonialism stood for and to reject Western ways of life imposed on Africans. The nationalist struggle to attain independence also implies the struggle to regain cultural independence and restore African dignity and ways of life. There is always an implied return to African traditions in the African concept of political and national independence from Western colonial domination. Zhuwarara (1996:29) takes note of the cultural awakening which accompanied moves towards the attainment of independence in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In the case of Zimbabwe, culture has always been given some relative, if not dubious, prominence in the new political dispensation. Since independence in 1980 the culture component has been conspicuous by its presence in the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture and the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture. This was in an attempt to reject the imposed European values and practices, and to assert the beauty of, dignity and the purposefulness of African culture (Nandwa and Bukenya, 1983:32). Attempts were also made to change names of towns, streets, places and institutions and replace them with African names that reflected the culture and history of the people of Zimbabwe. For example, Fort Victoria was named Nyanda and later changed to Masvingo; Melsetter was first named Mandidzudzure and later changed to Chimanimani. Even at an individual level some people dropped their English names and remained with their African names, or if they only had English names they dropped them and picked up African names for themselves. This was noticeable even among university academics. All this was part of rejecting the colonial past and celebrating political and cultural independence.

As has been pointed out earlier in this study the writer of Shona war fiction, by choice or lack of it, became part of national celebration. He could not add a voice of dissent and so like everyone else he celebrated the role of African cultural institutions during the liberation war. While politicians and museum officials negotiated the return of the historic sculpture of Zimbabwe's national bird from Germany (Maposa, 2003) and while musicians were singing songs of praises, praising the ancestors for their role in liberating Zimbabwe, the writer used his pen to write war fiction that also shows the superiority of African cultural practices over Western cultural and technological advancement as evidenced by the 'military victory' of a guerrilla army that had no vehicular transport or military hardware to talk of.

5.5 THE ROLE OF RELIGION

If colonialism had hoped to 'completely uproot' Shona religious practices as one missionary had advised, that strategy failed because the liberation war in Zimbabwe witnessed widespread adherence to African traditional religious practices and rituals. Chung (2006:62) who is of Chinese descent and who was a ZANLA cadre from 1973 and worked in ZANU's education department throughout the liberation war asserts that:

The liberation war saw the revitalization of traditional religion.... With the liberation struggle, traditional religion, still very powerful among the peasantry, became the main ideology of ZANU's struggle.

That during the liberation war traditional religion became the main ideology of ZANU's struggle is evidenced by the reliance of ZANLA cadres on Shona spirit mediums and on ancestral spirits. Indeed, traditional religion was being revitalised to serve the needs of a people at war. Shona liberation war novelists depict this dependence on spirit mediums and on the 'living dead' in their works. The writers show the dependence of guerrillas on Shona culture and Shona religion by showing that whenever a new group of guerrillas arrived in an area they would first seek to see the headman or some elder, who would then take them or show them the way to the spirit medium of the area. The ancestors and the spirit mediums are the only ones whom the guerrillas feared. Guerrillas did not fear the elders nor the chiefs, let alone the headmen and the Rhodesian soldiers. They showed it in word and deed that they had a lot of respect for the traditional religious leaders and they always

consulted them. The spirit mediums in turn are the only ones that are depicted as having the necessary traditional authority to control, censure or reprimand the guerrillas. For as long as the war lasted in Zimbabwe the guerrillas in the operational zones were all powerful and could exercise their authority over everyone with the exception of the ancestors and the spirit mediums. Almost all the Shona war fiction writers celebrate this power of Shona traditional religion in one way or the other.

In Choto's *Vavairo* (1990) when Tumirai and his group of guerrilla fighters arrived in headman Charira's area Tumirai requested headman Charira to take him to meet the spirit medium of the area (p.30). On approaching the spirit medium Tumirai explained the purpose of his visit saying:

Tauyawo kuna mbuya kuzovazivisa kuti tasvika mumusha mavo. Tati hatingashandi tisina kuvazivisa. (p.33)

(We have come to the spirit medium to inform her that we are now in her area. We thought it is not proper for us to start work here without informing her.)

In this manner a good rapport or working relationship was established with the medium and through her the rest of the community. The author shows that it was always essential to recognise the authority of the mediums if the guerrillas expected to get the cooperation of the people in any given area. What follows the above formalities is a dramatisation of the reverend, religious and solemn atmosphere that prevailed as the guerrillas, the community and the national spirit established their working relationship. Choto celebrates Shona traditional religion showing that even guerrillas who, in their circumstances, would only feel safe holding their guns, felt safe and secure in the presence of the spirit medium. For this reason, Tumirai and his fellow guerrillas obeyed the orders of the spirit medium to put away their weapons while they attended the ritual. They were also required to go into the house without their weapons and with no one left outside to watch out for the enemy and to provide cover in case of danger. It must be emphasised that the gun was the guerrilla's best friend in the operational zone but on this occasion they had to put their guns away and rely on the power of traditional religion. The writer tells us that they all felt safe after being given assurance by headman Chimoto that:

*Kana pane chinenge chava kusvika ambuya vaiva nesimba rekuona
zvose zvisati zvasvika mumusha mavo (p.32)*

(If there is any danger the spirit had the power to see anything before it reached her home.)

This is a commendation for Shona traditional religion that the guerrillas should feel safe in the presence of the possessed woman but without their guns. The African way of life that some prominent Christian decades earlier had called for its uprooting was serving a useful purpose for a people who were struggling to liberate themselves from an oppressive system which that prominent Christian represented and probably had helped to establish. The spirit medium granted the guerrillas permission to operate in the area under her religious jurisdiction, but on condition that no blood would be shed in there. Her instruction was that if the enemy attacked them they should retreat and only fight back and spill blood once they were at a distance from her area. The spirit medium also claimed that she knew that the guerrillas were in the area because she had 'seen' them before she saw them. To show their respect for and fear of the spirit medium Tumirai and his group moved out to Mukuruanopamaenza Mountain to engage the enemy soldiers there before they had entered the area under the medium's jurisdiction.

In another show of the strength of Shona traditional religion when headman Charira and his wife consulted the spirit medium to ask about the fate of their son Jeri, the spirit medium saw correctly that the young man was living under very difficult conditions. Jeri was in prison at Chikurubi in Harare. Not only did the spirit medium explain Jeri's circumstances correctly, she also foretold of the tragic events that would befall Charira's household, and sure enough headman Charira and his wife were shot and killed a few days later by Derek as revenge for the economic sabotage carried out on his farm by the *mujibhas*. Traditional religion is never presented in Shona war fiction as fake. However, the irony is that the spirit medium knew of, but was not able to forestall, the demise of Charira and his wife.

To further illustrate his celebration of Shona traditional religion Choto shows that Shona spirit mediums have the power to cause rain to fall or not to fall. Because Jeri killed Pita and because there has been more bloodshed in the area with the killing of headman Charira and his wife as well as the death of the soldiers who hit a landmine

Sekesai, Chimoto's wife, believes that this is what has caused a prolonged drought. There has not been rain for some time. However, a rainmaking ceremony is conducted under the direction of Chimoto. The ceremony is graced by a large number of grey-haired old men and women, and officiated by a ten-year-old girl who has not yet started to menstruate. It was an awe-inspiring occasion in which the *mbira* players' performance was marked by special gravity. The spirit medium was there sitting among the people. The people were appealing to the spirit for rain because the land was dry. The spirit expressed displeasure saying too much blood had been shed in her area and that that was the reason why she was withholding rains back. Yet she also expressed concern that her 'children' were dying every day, to which Chimoto pleaded, "*Zvino mati toita sei nhai ambuya? Tauya kuzochema nemi. Ndimi muchengeti wedu*" (p.66). (Now what do you think we can do, our ancestor? We have come to plead with you. You are our protector.)

The above statement shows complete faith by the people in the power of the spirit medium and its ability to protect, deliver, and provide. The novelist acknowledges complete rapport between the people and their traditional spiritual leaders. The spirit medium will be too happy to protect and provide for her people as long as they observe her laws and the laws of *mhondoro* of the land. The spirit medium promises to answer the people's prayers:

Vavengi zvavari ivo vari kudeura ropa ndichakupai mvura. Dai manga muri imi muri kudeura ropa iri chokwadi ndanga ndasunga mwoyo negavi. Ndinoviziva kuti vana vangu vari musango vari kuda kuti titore nyika yedu. Ndinofara kuti vari kuchengeta mashoko angu andakavaudza. Ropa vari kudeurira kunze kwemusha . Ndizvo chaizvo zvendinoda. Ava vavengi vasiyei vakadaro. Mvura iri kuuya. Chipararai iye zvino. Vabva kure garai muhama dzenyu dziri pedyo sezvo mvura iri kuuya isina kunaka. Ndinoda kugeza ropa rose rakazara mumusha mangu. (p.66)

(Since it is the enemy who is spilling blood I will give you rain. If it were you I would have hardened my heart. I know that my children who are in the forests want us to liberate our country. I am glad that they remember my words that I told them. They only spill blood when they are outside this village. That is what I want. Leave the enemy alone. Rain is coming, so you should disperse now. Those who have come from far away stay with your relatives who live near because rain that is coming is heavy. I want to wash away the blood that is everywhere in my land.)

What follows this instruction is ample testimony of the author's celebration of traditional Shona culture. What a few moments ago was a clear sky was immediately covered by dark clouds and soon heavy rain started to fall. The author is saying African traditional culture is powerful, spirit mediums can make rain, and that rainmaking ceremonies work. One is immediately reminded of stories told of the rainmaking spirit medium called Mahiza who lived in Chief Musikavanhu area in Chipinge. Oral traditions say after *doro remvura* (rain-making ceremony) envoys of the people would be sent to go and ask for rain from Mahiza. After performing his rituals Mahiza would warn the envoys of the people to leave with haste and cross the big river ahead of them. Meanwhile dark clouds would begin to gather above the land, and as soon as the envoys had crossed the big river heavy rains would fall and flood the rivers. Oral traditions also say that it used to happen that if people at a beer party complained of excessive heat within Mahiza's earshot a small cloud would gather above them and raindrops would fall and people would scurry for shelter. Such awe-inspiring stories cannot be proved or disproved, but they do make their rounds in some Ndaou communities of Zimbabwe. Such stories serve to show the audience that African traditional religion is powerful and can always be relied upon to provide. Unlike the God of the colonialists of whom musician Mtukudzi says "*mhinduro yake inonoka*" (His response is slow) the God of the Shona of whom the ancestors are the intermediaries, is quick to respond to his people's prayers. Even reward and punishment are here and now. There is no waiting for the day of judgement. The withholding back of rain is in itself a punishment here on earth for some misdeed, such as the shedding of human blood. This is what Choto and Mahiza's stories show. As Hastings (1983:5) says, "mediums are crucial to Shona culture".

What Choto depicts in *Vavairo* (1990) shows what used to happen during the liberation war. Bourdillon (1984) carried out some research in the Chiruja, a chiefdom somewhere in the extreme north-east of Zimbabwe and notes that the first group of guerrillas who came to this area, like Tumirai's group in Choto's novel, asked to be taken to the spirits of the country, and he concludes that:

Such a policy was widely operated by the liberation forces, and had served them in acquiring the secret cooperation of the rural population

when the war started in earnest about a hundred miles to the west of Chiruja (Bourdillon, 1984:42).

Bourdillon (1984:42) also notes that “that territorial spirits dislike bloodshed is a tradition widespread in Shona country and beyond.” This explains why the spirit medium in Choto’s *Vavariro* (1990) is quite supportive of the liberation war. That is why she says “*Ndinoziva kuti vana vangu vari musango vari kuda kuti titore nyika yedu*” (p.66) (I know that my children who are in the forests want us to take back our country). The spirit medium has a clear understanding of the objectives of the revolution, and the use of the plural of the first person subject concord /*ti-/* in ‘*titore nyika yedu*’ (so **we** can take our country) means that the spirit medium too is very much part of the struggle. So when she provides rain it is because she too must play her part. That is part of her contribution to the struggle to liberate Zimbabwe. Jeri says, “*Mbuya vatinzwa vakomana, mvura yauya zvino*” (p.68) (The spirit has answered our prayers, rain has come). The rain she brings will help in food production, which will provide nourishment for the party soldiers, and will also provide necessary cover in the form of tall grass, bushes and leafy trees. According to Lan (1985:3-5), in the Zambezi Valley alone guerrillas met and worked with spirit mediums like Kanzaruwa, Chiwawa, Musuma, Mutota, Madzomba, Chipfene, Chiodzamamera and Chidyamauyu, among many others. Lan (1985:6) further points out that (after the death of the spirit medium of Nehanda):

Throughout the war the surviving mediums were joined by others and continued to work hand in hand with the guerrillas, either in the camps in Mozambique or guiding insurgents into Zimbabwe and leading new recruits out.

Mugabe and Tekere were assisted by a spirit medium (Mrs Tangwena) on their way to Mozambique (Lan, 1985:xvii). So when Choto makes a spirit medium play such a crucial role in his novel it is an indication of his awareness of the role of traditional religion in Zimbabwe’s liberation war of the 1970’s.

What Choto depicts in his novel with regards to Shona culture is a dramatisation of what he captured during those years of euphoria and celebration. Following independence people talked of the need to conduct *biras* (cleansing ceremonies) to appease the spirits of those who had died during the war. Such appeals culminated

in the *kurova guva* ceremony held at Chimoio in Mozambique to commemorate those who died there during the 1977 Rhodesian air raid. Choto is also trying to capture the events of the early years of independence when heavy rains were often interpreted to mean that they were induced by the spirits who wanted to wash away the blood that was shed during the war. As it is pointed out in *Moto* (August 1994, no. 139) traditionally, in our culture, after the war, there would follow the *kupfupira* (the cleansing ritual) ceremony to appease the souls of those who perished in the war. Beer would be brewed in various parts of the country. Then leaders-paramount chiefs, tribal, clan, and national spirit mediums, chiefs and sub-chiefs, and all the people- would assemble around the country to perform the *kupfupira* ceremony. When there was drought, such as the worst drought in living memory of 1992, word had it that it was the ancestors who were holding back rain because the nation had not held *biras* (ceremonies) to appease the spirits of those who had died in the war. This was all speculation, which assumed the proportions of oral tradition. Such oral tradition influenced writers like Choto and that is why his fictional spirit medium is reported as saying that the heavy rains are meant to wash away the blood that was shed in her land.

Nyawaranda in *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) gives us another dimension of the cooperation between guerrillas and the spirit mediums. Before a major offensive against Rhodesian soldiers Comrade Muchaparara, Comrade Mhindudzapasi and Comrade Bvunzawabaya consulted a spirit medium. Their aim was to enlist the support of the medium in that battle. They consulted Nyetu, the same medium they had visited when they first arrived in the area. The medium was putting on black and white pieces of clothes sewn together into one, and was sitting on a mat and taking snuff presented to him in a wooden plate by the guerrillas. Everything about the ritual was traditional. As is the case with what happens in Choto's *Vavariro* (1990) there is spirit possession, presentation of a request, an undertaking by the medium to provide, and the issuing of interdictions. The guerrillas requested and prayed for success in an imminent battle saying:

Sekuru, ndimi varidzi vapasi. Tioneiwo isu vana venyu nhasi patinonga tiri mumasango imomu. Tibatsireiwo tisarega mhuka dzichingopunyuka mumambure. Vharai meso ebhunu tirione chete isu! Onai, vanasekuru, umu musango taneta namo. Todawo

kudzokera kumba. Uku ndokunga matitungamirira muhondo yedu iyoyi. (Nyawaranda, p.111)

(Ancestor, you are the owners of the land. Protect us your children today while we will be in the wilderness. Help us so that we do not allow animals to escape from the nets. Blind the Boers so that only us see them! Look, ancestors, we are tired of this life in the bush. We want to go back home. But this is possible only if you lead us in this our war.)

The request to the spirit medium is presented in the form of a metaphor of hunters hunting animals. The request itself is not different from a prayer by people going out to hunt in a traditional set-up. They pray to the ancestors for guidance, success and for protection against any form of harm. As if to confirm that the ancestors have answered the guerrillas' prayer, the battle against Zuvarigere and the Rhodesian forces is a big success. As Pfukwa (cited in Bourdillon, 1993:77) asserts "even committed Christians may resort to traditional rituals in times of crisis", and indeed the war situation constituted a situation of crisis for the guerrillas. As Bourdillon (1993:72) also points out, rituals are performed when people feel threatened by something.

Wherever the guerrillas are in these Shona war narratives they are ever grateful to the ancestors and the spirits of the land for protecting them against danger and for guiding them. They show in practical ways their faith, appreciation and belief in the role played by the spirits of the land in the struggle. In Pesanai's *Gukurahundi* (1985) as soon a Gulliver and his group re-enter Zimbabwe from their training in Mozambique, the first thing Gulliver does is to inform the spirits of the land that they are back and to perform a religious ritual that seals the relationship between his group of fighters and the 'living dead' of Zimbabwe. Gulliver says:

Vakomana tatova kumusha izvozvi. Saka chinhu chokutanga ndechokupira pamwe nokutenda midzimu yedu yakatitungamirira kwose kwatakaenda pamwe nokutidzosa. (p.4)

(Boys we are already home right now. So the first thing is to thank our ancestors who guided us everywhere we went and who brought us back here.)

His words were accompanied by the practical act of sprinkling some snuff onto the ground while appealing to the spirits of Chaminuka, Nehanda and all the others who fought in the First Chimurenga to provide guidance and protection. Gulliver emphasised that the group should be protected so that no harm comes to them. According to the author, this became a daily routine. It was done once in the morning and once at sun set. This was not an easy task to do twice every day when one did not even know how long the war was going to take. It required remembering to do it and to make sure there was constant supply of snuff. If indeed it was done with this kind of frequency then the author wants to show the seriousness with which the guerrillas took religion during the liberation war. Weeds is also seen in Mafuranhunzi Gumbo's *Guerrilla Snuff* (1995:136) turning to his horn of snuff and appealing to the ancestors for support, and as Pfukwa (2001:34) says, this was widely practised in the bush by the fighters. Bourdillon (1984:42) found out that the guerrillas who visited spirit medium Nemuru in the north-east Zimbabwe "asked for power to defeat the enemy, and Nemuru gave them snuff and other charms". The author is making the statement that attempts by colonialism and its agents to 'uproot' African culture did not succeed. As Chinyowa (2001:12) argues, the Shona people have continued, in the face of adversity, to believe in the experience of ancestral possession...African believers derive a profound sense of comfort, security and belonging as they commune with their 'living dead'.

In Shona war fiction, authors make an effort to uphold the reputation and esteem of traditional religion. They seem to confirm Morkell's (1930:11) postulation that the *mhondoro* spirit "continues to be the father, advisor, guardian and protector of its people, who regard it with veneration and fear". In the novels under study many a guerrilla has acknowledged the omnipresence of the spirits of the land in the lives of the liberation war fighters. Even the ZANLA High Command in Maputo encourages guerrillas once they are in the field to participate in traditional rituals associated with ancestor veneration. Kuda Hondo and other commanders are instructed by the High Command before they lead their battalions back to Zimbabwe from Mozambique that:

Munofanirwa kupota muchibikisa doro vanonwa vachinwa muchifara navo. Ndiko kuti midzimu ifarewo sezvo hondo yedu iri yemidzimu (Sungano, p.88)

(You should often make people brew beer and those who want can drink while you relax with them. This is the way to please the ancestors because our war is the ancestors' war.)

In Pesanai's *Gukurahundi* (1985) guerrillas based at Matenda were invited to a beer party associated with a ritual ceremony to appease the ancestors. The guerrillas were excited about this because "*vaiwana nguva yokupira vadzimu navamwe uye kuvaratidza kuti vaiva vakabatana navanhu uye nemidzimu*" (p.33) (They got a chance to communicate with the ancestors together with the others and to show them that they were united with the people and with the ancestors). In Makari's *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) Mberikwazvo wanted to thank his ancestors who had saved his son from so many dangers during the war (p.77). In Choto's *Vavariro* (1990) Tumurai acknowledges that "*Midzimu yenyika yakatichengeta*" (p.11) (The national spirits protected us). Tumurai "*Aidada nemhondoro. Aidada nemidzimu yose yaimirira hondo yairwiwa nemo auto emusangano*" (p.86) (Tumurai was proud of the national spirits. He was proud of all the spirits who stood for the war that was being fought by the soldiers of the party). Tumurai also reassures the young cadre, Danai, that "*Chete usatya hako Danai, midzimu yenyika yakatichengeta chaizvo*" (p.11) (Do not be afraid Danai, the spirits of this country are protecting us very well). When Jeri survives air bombing by hiding in a cave he acknowledges that "*Midzimu yakandiratidza bako rino*" (p.101) (The ancestors showed me this cave). In *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) Comrade Muchaparara reveals that "*Isu tinoshanda naanasekuru*" (p.37/26) (We work in collaboration with the "living dead") and even has the cheek to swear by "*Ambuya Nehanda chaivo* (I swear by Mbuya Nehanda) and all the ancestors of this country" (p.36).

What this all shows is that authors of Shona war fiction recognise that "everywhere and in all circumstances peasants and guerrillas felt themselves in the presence of and under the protection of their ancestors" (Lan, 1985:134). At this point one is persuaded to cross-reference with Valentine Mazorodze's English war novel *Silent Journey from the East* (1989). Mazorodze is depicting the tragic event at Nyadzonja when more than 700 people, largely women and children, were massacred by Rhodesian forces guided by Morrison Nyathi in August 1977. Mazorodze, through his fictional character, seems to be of the opinion that were it not for the powerful and timely intervention of the 'living dead' a lot more than 700 people would have

perished at Nyadzonia on this occasion. One of his fictional guerrillas whose name is not given narrates the tragic and mysterious event of the Nyadzonia massacre in these words:

The few comrades who survived will always tell about the gigantic whirlwind which arose from nowhere and enveloped the comrades screaming for life and the blood-thirsty Rhodesian soldiers. The whirlwind hailed enormous quantities of dust into the air and shook the armoured cars so violently that the Rhodesians stopped firing. Perhaps a couple had their eyes filled with foreign bodies and were busy trying to clean them. When the wind finally settled all the comrades who were alive and able to run had escaped (p.112).

The fictional character quoted above has always asked himself the question “Where did the whirlwind come from?”. He knows that many will try to provide a scientific explanation but one thing he will always remember is that it was a “whirlwind that came to Nyadzonya and saved many lives...” (p.113). Mazorodze, like Mutasa, Samupindi and Kanengoni who all write liberation war novels in English, also glorify the role played by the ancestral spirits during the war. The writers see the war as ‘a war of the ancestors’. Of course it is called the ‘people’s war’, but the people are only instruments in the hands of the spirits. The ancestors are the ones who ‘sent’ the people to go and take up arms and fight, which is why Gulliver in Pesanai’s *Gukurahundi* (1985) places his group’s fate in the hands of the ancestors:

Sekuru Chaminuka, Mbuya Nehanda, nevamwe vose vakarwa hondo yechindunduma neyechimurenga, tisu vana venyu vari kutaura kuti kwamakatituma kuya tadzoka. Ndimi makataura kuti mapfupa achamuka, hezvi tamuka. Zvino tinochema kuti mutitungamirire murwendo rwedu, tisaona njodzi (p.4).

(Ancestor Chaminuka, Ancestor Nehanda, and all those others who fought in the Chindunduma and first Chimurenga war, we are your children who are saying, we have returned from where you sent us. It is you who said bones would rise, now we have risen. Now we plead with you that you lead and guide us on our journey, so that no harm befalls us.)

The image of guerrillas as Nehanda’s bones is quite common in Shona war fiction. When Nehanda was captured together with Kaguvi and later hanged in 1898 she is said to have declared that “her bones would rise” and destroy her enemies (Spirit medium Chipfeni, quoted in Tungamirai, 1995:42). The belief that the legendary

Nehanda was among the people and was guiding the liberation struggle was quite strong among ZANLA and the peasants to the extent that the spirit medium of Nehanda was carried on a stretcher to the Zambezi Valley and together with three companions and aids crossed into Mozambique (Lan, 1985:5). Komuredhi Chatambudza is also heard in Nyawaranda's *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) saying:

'Mbuya Nehanda vakasiya vati mapfupa angu achamuka chete. Chionai nhasi tototorisa namabhunu. Tiri ngozi yaMbuya Nehanda isu' (p.54)

(Before she died Nehanda said her bones would rise. Now we are harassing the Boers. We are Nehanda's avenging spirit).

Now in the liberation war the 'bones' and the ancestors are one in the struggle as suggested by the song "*Isu nemidzimu yedu takabatana muhondo*" (Choto, p.131) (We and our ancestors are united in the struggle). So this image of guerrillas as Mbuya Nehanda's 'risen bones' is quite popular in Shona war fiction. The image of Shona religious heroes like Nehanda and Chaminuka painted by the whites as African witches and wizards is not corroborated in Shona war fiction. For example, Woollacott (1975) refers to "Pasipamire-Spirit medium of Chaminuka, the wizard of Situngwiza." In fact Shona war fiction is, as Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986:2) puts it, "Africa rejecting the images of its past as drawn by the artists of imperialism". It is Africa projecting, as it were, positive images of its own past.

It is in this spirit of national independence that writers of Shona war fiction help to exalt African traditional religion. Chinyowa (2001:16) agrees when he asserts that:

Independence ushered in renewed interest in traditional Shona religious practices to the extent that the former European missionary churches like the Roman Catholic, Methodists, Anglican and Dutch Reformed also came to liberalize their former positions regarding traditional Shona expressive culture.

The period immediately following attainment of independence was a time of cultural revival and one aspect of it was the exaltation of traditional religion and medicine. For this reason literature about the war of liberation tends to want to give prominence and recognition to Shona traditional religion and medicine.

5.6 MYTHICAL STORIES

Myths and legends are part and parcel of a people's oral traditional literature. It is through this kind of oral literature that a people's culture is expressed. Myths are stories that attempt to explain the origin of things. According to Boas (1939:609) "mythological concepts are fundamental views of the constitution of the world and of its origin. These are tales that give the world interpretation of natural phenomena". The Shona people have many myths that circulated in their communities and which tried to explain characteristics and behaviour of phenomena. For example, there are myths that try to explain the origin of man or the tale that try to explain why the rock rabbit has no tail or the tale of the lizard and the chameleon that tries to explain the origin of death. However, these are not necessarily true stories. In fact they are not true stories at all. They are very similar to folktales in that the world in which the events take place is very different from the world we know and live in. In the words of Boas (1939:609-10):

It is fairly clear that stories are unhesitantly classed as myths if they account for the origin of the world and if they may be said to have happened in a mythical period, different from the one in which we live now.

Myths seem to take place, like the folktale, in the remote past and in a 'far away' country. This element tends to introduce into the Shona war narratives events that are far removed from reality. Mwaoneni (1995:35) has questioned the intention of the writers when they used these myths saying:

Although it is appreciated that these myths served an important function during the war it is now questionable why the writers knowing that art sets out to describe reality distort that reality by incorporating these myths in their works of art.

Mwaoneni should not wonder why myths are used. The Shona war fiction writer's intentions are clear. The writers were celebrating and were still euphoric. They wanted to glorify the armed struggle and the guerrillas who participated in it. Using these myths in their stories served their purpose of 'hero worshipping' guerrillas that

had done the unthinkable by defeating Smith and his army that was equipped with modern military hardware.

Some of the myths used in the war novels were taken from the liberation war where they were used for propaganda purposes. The authors themselves were subjected to this kind of propaganda like anybody else, hence the myths found their way into their war narratives. It must also be remembered that writers, because of the dominant ideology, the euphoria and the celebration of the early years, wanted to glorify the role played by the guerrillas during the war. One way of doing it was to create mythical stories around them. As a result, the inclusion of such myths introduced romantic features into the war narratives.

ZANLA fighters were trained in guerrilla warfare whose tactics ordinary people did not quite comprehend. In answer to this apparent ignorance and lack of comprehension a number of myths about guerrillas emerged and got into circulation. Two drunkards in Makata's novel *Gona ReChimurenga* (1982) popularise the myth that those fighters "*vanorwa nemishonga*" (p.38) (Those fighters use magic to enhance their fighting skills). One of them adds more mystery to the story by claiming that "*Vanhu vaye vane masaramusi shuwa. Unonzwa kunzi vari muno asi haumbovaoni vanenge mhapo*" (p.39) (Those people use magic for sure. You hear that they are around but you never see them. They are like wind.). People did not understand the way guerrillas operated so they manufactured all sorts of mythical stories in answer to their ignorance. Pfukwa (2001:31) confirms this thinking saying:

Legends about the supernatural qualities of the guerrillas grew over the years. For example, it was claimed that they could disappear or turn into cabbages.

The narrative voice in Mazorodze's *Silent Journey from the East* (1989) confirms the existence of the mythical tale of people turning into cabbages when talking about three new 'recruits' who were on their way to Mozambique:

The three had heard stories about freedom fighters, how they could disappear and change into cabbages. They could also tell what was in one's mind and foretell what would happen in future (Mazorodze, 1989:47)

Equally, in Nyawaranda's *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) mythical tales are woven around guerrillas, which remove the war novel further away from realism. Nyawaranda's fictional character, Oniyasi, says of the guerrillas:

Vaya havafi. Zvinonzi mbumburu dzinoita mvura yokunwa kana dzangomhara pavaripo (p.25)

(Those people do not die easily. It is said that bullets turn into water to drink once they hit them.)

Makurume concurred:

Ehee, vaya vane mushonga. Zvinonzi wose anongovatengesa vanototi vazvize. Unoti hausi mushonga iwoyu? (p.25).

(Oh yes, they do have magic. It is said that whoever betrays them they will definitely come to know. Do you not think that this is magic?)

Sachigaro concluded the discussion by claiming that "*Midzimu inovaita kudaro*" (p.25) (It is the ancestors who make it possible for them to do that). One is tempted to agree with Boas's assertion that each particular mythology has its own character according to the cultural interests of the tribe (Boas, 1939:23). The Shona people on average believe in the intervention of ancestors in the life of the living. The belief and fear of the power of the ancestors and of magic is quite strong among the Shona, hence the constant reference to the ancestors and magic. One other thing to note about these stories is that everyone claims that 'they heard it said' but no one says for certain that they saw these things happening. In the above examples Oniyasi, Makurume and the three characters in Mazorodze's novel all say "*Zvinonzi...*" (It is said...) but no one says by whom and no one says something that they saw. It is all hearsay and this is fertile ground for myths to thrive.

In Choto's *Vavairo* (1990) the myth that guerrillas could melt is also quite popular. Chimoto's wife says that "*Zvanzi izvo vanhu vacho vanonyungudika, vanofembera kana kuziva zvose zvinoitika munzvimbo yavanenge vari*" (It is said these people melt, that they can foresee or know everything that happens in the area where they are) and Chimoto, the husband, concurs saying "*Saka ndivoka vanhu vanositaurwa nokuti mafambiro avo in andishaisa simba. Zvechokwadi vanhu vacho*

vanonyungudika” (p.9) (So these are the people being talked about because the way they move boggles my mind. It is true these people melt).

What starts as hearsay is slowly turned into ‘fact’ until someone swears that “It is true, these people melt”? This is all myth. The truth of the matter is that when guerrillas got to an area they would first get to know the place and its ‘characters’. They first got to know who was who and what the situation was like before they put their lives into the hands of a community. They would start to operate after they would have collected very useful information about the area and its people. The people themselves provided the guerrillas with information without knowing it and that information would be used against them when necessary. Guerrillas were also well trained to confuse people with their calculated movements. That is why people thought guerrillas melted. A few guerrillas could confuse people by moving fast and exchanging positions in a manner that the slow moving eyes of the ‘povo’ could not cope with. In short, these were guerrilla tactics that confused people. In addition the sight of an armed guerrilla was frightening to the people and that added to their confusion. Otherwise no one melted or turned into cabbages. As former guerrilla Charles Pfukwa (2001:31) has pointed out, these were just ‘claims’. After all, the simple tactic of rotating fighters could be so effective as to create the impression that ZANLA forces did not die, but only they killed. Kuda Hondo, the commander of the group of guerrillas in Sungano’s Kuda Muhondo (1985) explains it in this way:

Ndaipota ndichivachinjanisa kuitira kuti munhu asajairire nzvimbo imwe chete uye boka rimwe chete. Izvi zvaiita kuti kana mumwe akafa povo yaingoti akachinjana nomumwe vogara vane chivimbo chokuti ZANU haifi, chayo kuuraya chete (p.117).

(I often rotated them so that one person would not get used to one place and to one group. This helped in that if one guerrilla died the povo would think that he swapped places with another, and so remained convinced that ZANLA fighters do not die, they only kill.)

Tactics like these led to the myth that guerrillas did not die and this was very useful for propaganda purposes. This was particularly useful for recruiting purposes, as more and more people got excited about the prospect of joining a war in which they would ‘kill without being killed’.

5.7 TABOOS

The influence of culture is also manifest in other areas such as the institution of taboos. Every society and every culture in the world has its own ways of socialising its own children so that they grow up to be socially compliant citizens. The institution of taboos is the process of inculcation through which the individual learns the principal values and symbols of the social system in which he participates. These taboos are meant to control, guide and regulate the behaviour of members of a social group, and as Haralambos and Holborn (2004:4) point out, every culture contains a large number of guidelines that direct conduct in particular situations. The Shona people are not an exception and they do have a large number of taboos that are employed in the process of socialising their citizens so that they become or remain compliant.

ZANLA took the institution of taboos with them into the liberation war and many an author has captured that in their war narratives. Pfukwa (2001:26) notes that “there were numerous taboos which the guerrillas had to observe”. Most of the taboos that guerrillas were expected to observe were related to the particular situation in which they were involved, which is the situation of a protracted guerrilla warfare. However, there was no contradiction with the institution of taboos as practised by the members of the communities among whom the guerrillas operated because the two groups, the guerrillas and the *povo*, shared the same cultural background. Lan’s (1985:27) statement that “these traditional practices were followed by the rural people since time immemorial” is correct. The guerrillas came from the people and they came back to work among the same people with similar traditions and social outlook. The only difference is that the taboos were being used to serve a certain purpose in a particular situation, that of war. The institution of taboo was now being used to harness energies to comply with the unique demands and requirements of guerrilla warfare. In Sungano’s *Kuda Muhondo* (1985) there are expressed taboos such as “*Musatore zvinhu zvavanhu*” (Do not take the people’s things); “*Musaite utsinye kuvanhu*” (Do not be cruel to people); “*Musambofe henyu makaita upombwe muhondo*” (Do not indulge in sex in war). In Nyawaranda’s *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) the guerrillas are told by the spirit medium that “*Regai kubata-bata vemadhirezi ava.*”

(Do not indulge in sex) and that “*Mumasango mamunofambamu musataura-taura twenhando*” (In the forests in which you operate there are certain things that should not be uttered).

As can be seen from the above examples some of these taboos were meant to ensure good rapport between guerrillas and the people among whom they worked. Taking their property or indulging in sex with their daughters and wives could certainly antagonise the *povo* whose support the guerrillas depended on. It was also a distraction from the war. Taboos acted as a strong deterrent. Pfukwa (2001:29), a former guerrilla turned academic, gives us some insight into this issue:

It was claimed that if you indulged in sex one would die in action. We do not know of any who died as a direct result of fornication but it was a very effective deterrent in preventing guerrillas from having and raising families during the war.

In Shona society it has always been a taboo to utter obscenities while moving in certain forests. If you did, it was always believed that you would lose your bearings and stray in the forests. That means one had to be “aware of holy things that were in the woods which had to be respected” (Mazorodze, 1989:48). It becomes conclusive that originally the underlying idea of this taboo arose as a safeguard to prevent people from offending ancestors. It appears to be that the guerrillas were not supposed to offend the spirits of the forests on whose protection and guidance they so much depended. In the eyes of the peasants adherence to these taboos made the guerrillas revered messengers of the ancestors who fought the first Chimurenga. (Pfukwa, 2001:30).

The adherence to these taboos was essential for the successful execution of the armed struggle and the revolution. Violation of these interdictions would bring harm to the individual and the organisation. Meade (1930:18) explains fully the implications of breaking or for observing these taboos:

To respect taboos was a duty towards society, because whoever broke it caught the taboo contagion and transmitted it to everyone and everything that he came into contact with. Thus it behoved the community to enjoin respect for taboos, and, even more, it behoved the individual to avoid contact with things taboo, otherwise his

infraction of this potentially conventional inhibition recoiled upon him, in particular, with deadly severity.

In *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) the spirit medium speaks for Shona society when he warns guerrillas that “*Mukaita saizvozvo, midzimu yenyika inokuchengetai. Anonga asanzwawo anosangana nazvo...*” (p.112) (If you comply the ancestors of this land will protect you. Whoever disobeys will meet the dire consequences...). Taboos were a greater deterrent than any physical punishment meted out to an offender.

It must be recalled that authors, because of the dominant mood of euphoria and celebration, intended to glorify the guerrillas and the armed struggle. For this reason they brought the institution of taboos into their narratives in an attempt to show how disciplined the guerrillas were, and that discipline accounted for the victory that brought independence. This discipline is portrayed in stark contrast to the depiction of the Rhodesian soldiers, Auxiliary Forces, and Selous Scouts who are portrayed as cruel people who rape women and burn villages, leaving peasants homeless and traumatised. There is nowhere in the Shona war novels where guerrillas are depicted while committing rape and involving themselves in sexual indulgence of any kind. They are ‘nice’ people through and through. One assumes that the fictional characters adhere to the taboos and as a result they remain focused and healthy as they are sure not to contract venereal diseases.

5.8 SHONA NOMENCLATURE AS WEAPON OF AGGRESSION

Shona war fiction writers perpetuate the tradition of using a name that is “a social statement reflecting the bearer, the namer and the social environment within which the name is found” (Pfukwa, 2003:16). The names that the writers give to their fictional guerrillas are a manifestation of the socio-cultural and historical background of the fighters themselves.

In traditional Shona culture naming a child was a special way of expressing or of communicating a message to others. Aschwanden (1982:39) found that a mother might give her child a name that expresses certain events, good or bad, and often a warning to her husband. If she calls her baby Farai (be happy) she would be asking her husband to be pleased because she has given him a son, but if she gives her

baby the name Dzingai she may be warning her husband who is ill-treating her that she does not mind if she is sent away. Roberts (1931:90) also notes that those responsible for naming a child born during an eventful era thought that circumstances might properly be perpetuated in titular fashion. Therefore a child may be named Goredema because a year of famine remains in the minds of those who experienced it. Similarly guerrillas in Zimbabwe's liberation war gave themselves names that, among other things, created living symbols for things that were on their minds that they wished to communicate to other people. In adopting such names for themselves the guerrillas were perpetuating a cultural tradition that Meade (1930), Aschwanden (1982) and Pfukwa (2003) agree has always been practised among the Shona.

Shona war fiction writers give their fictional guerrillas names in a way similar to what happened in Shona traditional culture. They give their guerrillas names that express their (the guerrillas) vision, their dreams and their hopes. These are names like Tichatonga (we will rule), Tinovakunda (we will defeat them), and Tichatora (we will take the country). Some of the names used by Shona war fiction writers sound warning to the settlers. These are names like (Komuredhi) Muchaparara, Muchapondwa Makarara, and Mabhunu Muchapera, all of which warn the settlers that they will be wiped out, they will perish. There are those names that exhort the guerrilla fighters and their supporters to persevere in the struggle. These include names like Shingirirai and Shingirai, which mean to persevere in the struggle without flinching. There are others like Bvunzawabaya (shoot first, then ask questions later), Gadzirai (fix them) and Pedzisai (finish them off), which instruct the fighters on the best thing to do in this kind of struggle. Also, as Roberts (1931:91) points out, some names deserve notice because the vicissitudes of the party or progenitors are advertised every time he is called. Names of this kind among the guerrillas that populate Shona war fiction include Shamwariyeropa (friend of blood), Masango (forests), Tafirenyika (we have died for the country), Nhamoyetsoka (a life of walking on foot), Zuva Rinopisa (the sun is hot), Moto Muhondo (there is fire in war) and Trust Blood.

The above examples show that, as was the case in traditional culture in circumstances when names like Muroyindishe (a witch is king) or Togarasei (how do we live?) were used, names given to guerrillas by the writers show that "words

become capable of generating conflict” and that language is used as a “weapon of aggression, rather than as an instrument of integration into the existing colonial system” (Izevbaye, 1990:130). These names are language that shows the trends of the fighters thoughts, just as much as traditional Shona names showed the trends of Shona thought and expressed Shona culture and customs.

Shona war fiction writers used these *noms de guerre* because first and foremost these are the names that guerrillas themselves adopted during the liberation war for various reasons (the discussion of which is beyond the scope of this research). Writers also used these names because it was part of celebrating the lives of guerrillas who returned alive in and around 1980. Writers loved to use such names because many returning guerrillas of prominence continued to be called by their Chimurenga names. For example, for some time the surviving commander of ZANLA and first commander of the Zimbabwe National Army, continued to use his Chimurenga name, Rex Nhongo, although “he was born Solomon Tapfumanei Mutuswa” (Sithole, 1983:149-159). It was later on that he dropped his Chimurenga name and resorted to his civilian name Solomon Tapfumaneyi Mujuru. Other prominent ex-guerrilla fighters who retained their Chimurenga names for some time include Joyce Mujuru whose Chimurenga name was Teurai Ropa. Joyce Mujuru returned home as Teurai Ropa and entered parliament and became a minister of government at independence using that name. Even when she became first woman Vice President of Zimbabwe she retained her Chimurenga name, now used as a middle name. When taking the oath of office as Vice President following the October 15, 2008 historic agreement signed with the Movement for Democratic Change she called herself “I, Joyce Teurai Ropa Mujuru, do swear...” sandwiching her Chimurenga name between her first name and her married name. Similarly, although Webster Shamu later became Deputy Minister and then full minister using his original name Webster Shamu, he came back from the war and was known for some time by his Chimurenga war name, Charles Ndlovu. ZANLA Chief Political Commissar returned home at independence and became Air Marshall and Commander of the Air Force of Zimbabwe using his Chimurenga name Josiah Tungamirai. Tungamirai was born Thomas Mberikwazvo in 1948 (Martin and Johnson, 1981:76) but up to the time of his passing on he was still officially known by his Chimurenga war name. As of 2009 Tungamirai’s successor at the Air Force, Air Marshall Perence Shiri, was still

known by his Chimurenga name though, according to Nyarota (<http://www.thezimbabwetimes.com>) he was born Bigboy Samson Chikerema. Equally, up to their deaths Willard Duri and Samuel Mamutse were still known more popularly by their Chimurenga war names, Comrade Zororo and Mayor Urimbo, respectively, than by their original names.

A few examples have been given here of prominent people who continued to be known by their Chimurenga names after independence, and there were many more. At the time most of the Shona war novels were written Chimurenga names were still popular and in use. Even some of the less prominent ex-fighters were still using them. Writers therefore took those names on board in their art. It was part of celebrating those heroes and also part of patriotic euphoria. Perhaps one can argue and say the war was over. The ex-guerrillas were now settling down into civilian life and now without the mythical powers that used to mesmerise the people. They would no longer ask mythical questions like "*Makamboona vanhu vakaita sesu here?*" (Have you ever seen people like us?). Many of them would no longer use their Chimurenga names. However, the use of these names in war fiction would fill the large numbers of people who were expected to read them with awe and nostalgia. Some of those who would soon read them were the 'born frees' who were not yet there when the war was going on. It was part of a programme aimed at immortalising these names so that when human memory on which orality depends for preservation and transmission fails these written war narratives will keep them alive. At the time of writing the Shona war novels, calling fictional guerrillas by their Chimurenga names that were expressive of the dreams, the hopes, the vision, the long and short term aims of the struggle was, in a way, indicative of cultural undercurrents that existed at that time. As Hadebe (2001:6) points out:

The attainment of political independence was seen by some as a final victory of a cultural struggle. There was patriotic euphoria amongst most Zimbabweans and talk of African culture, African philosophy and African languages dominated the thinking following victory against colonialism.

The use of the Chimurenga names that tell the history of the struggle is a continuation of the cultural practice of giving names that tell the history and the

vicissitude of the named and the family group to which he belongs. It is a celebration of the language that carries the culture to which the guerrillas themselves belong.

5.9 CONCLUSION

The cultural aspects that are captured in Shona war fiction are that of the Shona people who provided the majority of the fighters who constituted the army of ZANU. For almost a century Christianity and colonialism had worked to destroy aspects of African culture in Zimbabwe and particularly African religion. However, religion permeated every facet of Shona life so much so that Chinyowa (2001:9) could boldly declare that among the Shona people, who constitute seventy-five per cent of Zimbabwean population, religion permeates every facet of the people's lives. It is probably this quality, more than anything else, that accounts for the strength of Shona traditions. The strength of Shona traditions is demonstrated by the fact that during the liberation war they were revived. The war shows that Shona traditions were not dead.

The liberation war in Zimbabwe constituted an element of a crisis and in a crisis people look for something familiar to hold on to for survival. The Shona people clung to their traditional institutions and these gave them strength to fight and win. The guerrillas were the fish and the people were the water that gave them life, and that life came in the form of rich cultural traditions, among other things. From the 'water' they got charms, spiritual protection and blessings. The liberation war became a time of Shona cultural renaissance. People fell back on their traditions, particularly their religion and drew strength from them. After all, the white man's God had deserted them when they needed him most for nearly a century.

In post-independence Zimbabwe, particularly the early years of independence when most of the Shona war novels were written, people were celebrating victory and freedom. They were glorifying the heroes of Chimurenga and they were also glorifying their religious leaders. Writers of Shona war fiction wrote works that celebrated and glorified Shona traditional and cultural institutions, which they believed had been responsible for making victory possible. Writers of Shona war fiction wrote at a time when the white man and his ways were defeated. The white

man's God had been defeated and the black man's God had won. They wrote at a time when all were being "urged to work towards a truly Zimbabwean culture free from colonial distortion" (Roberts, 1983:161). This was a time when the trend was to favour everything African and to revitalise a culture that could inform a new Zimbabwean identity, even if it meant coming up with new personal Shona names, new names for towns, streets, institutions, and even coming up with a national dress.

Indeed one perspective shared by most Shona war fiction writers was that the liberation war was actually a war fought by the 'living dead' (*Hondo yedu ndeyemidzimu*) (Our war is a war of the ancestors). In glorifying the role played by traditional religion, myths, taboos and the *noms de guerre* the war fiction writers introduced the element of romance in their narratives at the expense of realism. The moment the writer, through his fictional character, concedes that "*midzimu inovaita kuti vadaro*" (Nyawaranda, 1985:25) (It is the ancestors who make them do that) then it becomes obvious that realism is compromised since spiritual and magical powers are now at play. So in a way the Shona war fiction writers' perspective on the liberation war in Zimbabwe was shaped by a strong belief that this war involved supernatural beings, an idea that they push through using their fictional characters.

CHAPTER 6

THE ROLE OF FEMALE CHARACTERS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

A study of Shona war fiction about Zimbabwe's guerrilla war cannot be considered as complete unless something is said about the role of female characters in it. This is so because questions have often been asked about the role of women in Zimbabwe's liberation war. A study of the literature that depicts that war may provide some of the answers to these questions. In this study the war novel has been treated, like the detective novel, as a sub-genre separate from the novel in the mainstream. Just as much as one can look at the role of women characters in detective fiction so too can one look at the role of women characters in the war novel. It appears to be even more compelling to do so in this case because, unlike detective fiction, the war novel derives its material from a historical event in which almost the entire Zimbabwean population alive at the time of the liberation struggle was involved in one way or another and an event on which so much was, has, and continues to be said. The entire population referred to here includes women. The aim of this chapter therefore is to discuss writers' perspectives with regards to the way they perceive the role played by women in the liberation war.

There was a time during the earlier phases of the armed struggle in Zimbabwe when joining the liberation war was largely 'voluntary' (Tungamirai, 1995:40) and undertaken by men. However, there came a time, especially in the middle phase of the war, that young people were press-ganged, and others abducted from schools without discrimination between sexes. These school children included young girls. In fact, in the 1970s there were deliberate efforts by guerrillas to recruit women as well. During the liberation war and after, efforts were made in political rhetoric to make it known that women fought and died alongside their male counterparts during the liberation war. On the surface of things this was a war that involved both men and women, without discrimination. The purpose of this chapter therefore is to examine Shona war fiction writers' perspectives on Zimbabwe's liberation war with regard to

the way they view the roles played by women as reflected in their works. Effort will also be made to discuss the factors that influenced the way writers depict the role of women characters in those works.

6.2 PORTRAYAL OF FEMALE CHARACTERS IN THE SHONA MAINSTREAM NOVEL: AN OVERVIEW

The general trend that one observes in Shona literature in the mainstream is that women always play secondary roles to those of men. Female characters are usually portrayed as being subordinate to men. Gaidzanwa (1985) discusses the images of women in Shona, Ndebele, and English literature written by blacks. She observes that women in Zimbabwean literature are largely depicted as mothers, wives, divorcees, and widows, single, jilted and as prostitutes. As wives and mothers they are usually expected to be nice, good, comforting and nurturant, passive and unassertive. If they are like this then they are depicted as good and well behaved. If they are single, divorced, jilted, widowed and prostitutes they are portrayed negatively as bad. In that sense women characters hardly break new ground in the context of Zimbabwean, and, indeed, African literary discourse (Zhuwarara, 1996:41). Powerful women characters are relatively rare in African literature (Makgamatha, 1992:85).

In Shona fiction in the mainstream writers tend to confine their female characters to what may be termed the domestic sphere. When writers allow their female characters more space in which to practise their professions they give them roles such as nursing, teaching, secretary-typist, which are, to all intents and purposes, extensions of their domestic responsibilities. It is thought so because as girls, mothers, wives and grandmothers in the home their role is seen as that of 'teaching' the young, 'nursing' the family members, and providing other social services. It is quite uncommon to find women characters playing the roles of heroines in Shona fiction. However, women are frequently created as main characters in the novels in which they feature but when that happens they are usually depicted in very bad light, either as difficult spouses, criminals, prostitutes, or victims of the actions of the male protagonists. Rarely, if ever, do women characters play the role of heroines. Zhuwarara (1996:41) therefore makes a correct assessment when he points out that

the actual significance of the female character has either been neglected or distorted. Chigidi (1998) has shown that in Shona detective fiction women play the roles of wives, mothers, nurses, secretaries/typists, victims of murder and criminals, but never that of detective heroines. That role is reserved for men. That shows, as Makgamatha (1992:85) observes, that the African world has been depicted in written literature as a man's world. The above overview is quite essential as it provides a useful background to the understanding of the role women characters play in Shona war fiction.

6.3 WOMEN AS EMOTIONAL CARETAKERS OF THE FAMILY

The image of women as wives, mothers, and nurses is not common in Shona war fiction. The war that is depicted is a guerrilla war and because of its nature, female characters that play the roles of wives, mothers and nurses are very rare. In a guerrilla war such as the one fought in Zimbabwe in the 1970s fighters do not come home at the end of the day, like the hero of the detective story does if he is not too busy, to be in the comfort of their beds with their wives; young guerrilla fighters do not ever come home to their mothers to look for love and food. Home is where "women would look after the house, home and children" (Orbach and Eichenbaum, 1984:10). Guerrilla fighters who may get injured do not come home to be admitted into hospital and be looked after by nurses like anybody else. They get 'comfort', 'love', food and whatever medical attention they need in the bush. If they survive the war they would only come home to the emotional caretakers of the family-their wives, mothers and nurses-after the war has ended, even if it took years. For this reason we do not find female characters that play prominent roles as wives, mothers and nurses in the novels that depict Zimbabwe's liberation war. Female characters that play these roles are few and far apart. Some, especially those in the roles of wives, are so insignificant that they do not deserve mention.

As mothers, women are depicted as lamenting the loss of their children to the war. Even though they appreciate the reasons for fighting that war, it should be understood that there is no woman who gives birth to a child so that he may die in a war, even if it is a just war. In Moyo's short story *Ndaponda Gandanga (Hondo YeChimurenga*, 1984) the author depicts a woman, *amai* Mukai, as a mother worried

about the fate of her one and only child. Mukai is a male war collaborator. It is now four days since he left home and went to perform his duties as a *mujibha* (male war collaborator) at the guerrilla base and the mother is worried that he may have died in the shooting incident that took place and in which many lives were lost. She weeps because she does not know whether her only child is still alive or dead.

The other role of a woman is played by James' mother in the short story *Chandakaona Gorero (Hondo YeChimurenga, 1984)*. This is a mother who behaves as an emotional caretaker to her son James, who has been badly beaten by Rhodesian soldiers in a graveyard. The woman cries until her eyes turn red because she is pained to see that her son has been beaten unconscious. The mother takes James to hospital where she passes on the role of caring for James to another female character that is a nurse. The role of mother and nurse tend to merge somewhere as they complement each other. The nursing profession is, in a way, an extension of the role of women in the home, that of caring and comforting. However, James has nothing to do with the war. He is a 'man in the middle'.

In Choto's *Vavariro* (1990), another mother, *mai* Sekesai, tells her daughter two folktales, one about the hare and the baboon and another about a hunter and a snake. Here is a female character, in a book about war, who is made to play the traditional role of women, that of telling children stories. However, the story that she tells is not a story of war like the ones that the Comrades Tinotonga, Shelton, and Tichatonga tell in Makari's *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985). Neither is it a story of war like the one that Othello tells Brabatio, Desdemona's father, in Shakespeare's play *Othello*. *Mai* Sekesai's stories are folktales and that has the effect of reducing her space to the domestic sphere where she plays a woman's role of telling children stories in the evening before they go to sleep. In Nyawaranda's *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) Rozi is a domestic worker and works for the white man, Zuvarigere. In fact, she worked for Zuvarigere's father when he was still alive and now in the life of this novel she is working for the son. She is not married and has no child of her own. However, we take her as an extension of Zuvarigere's wife because she is employed to do work that Ezra, as Zuvarigere's wife and mother of his children, would do, that of cooking, cleaning the house and caring for the family. Ezra says, "*Ini ndototyira zvangu basa romumba muno. Ko, ndingarikwanise ndiri ndoga?*" (p.9) (I am worried about work in

this house. Can I manage it alone?). This is what Mtuze (1990:19) implies when he says that, “The woman’s place is in the home where she has to do household chores such as cooking, washing and many other menial tasks”. When Rozi mysteriously disappears from the Zuvarigere house she goes to her rural home to join the other women to feed the guerrillas but is too old to become a guerrilla fighter herself. She plays her contingent role as Zuvarigere’s maid before she plays that of a *chimbwido* (female war collaborator).

6.4 WOMEN AS VICTIMS

The role of female characters as victims in Shona war fiction is quite common. In any war situation women are the most vulnerable of the group generally referred to as the ‘man (woman) in the middle’. Caute (1983:59) refers to ‘the man in the middle’ as those who “suffered from the brutal methods employed by the security forces in war zones”. In the context of Zimbabwe’s liberation war ‘the man in the middle’ should refer to the helpless people who were caught between the armed Rhodesian forces and the armed nationalist guerrillas. In Shona war fiction women characters are victims of murder, torture and rape.

In Nyawaranda’s *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) there is one of the most gruesome and cold-blooded murders of a pregnant woman in Shona war fiction. Zuvarigere and a group of white farmers surround villagers whom they suspect of stealing and killing their cattle for meat, which they eat and also use to feed the guerrillas. Zuvarigere, who lost his favourite bull called Finiyasi, calls from a group of villagers a woman who is already in an advanced stage of pregnancy. In a mocking gesture, Zuvarigere asks the woman if her stomach is not bulging because of Finiyasi’s meat that she has been feeding on. Zuvarigere knows quite well that the woman is pregnant with human life but he goes on to pull the trigger and shoot the woman through the stomach, forcing readers to raise the question that Herman (1991:1) raises of “exactly where women fit into a world in which masculine sexuality is deeply bound up with the capacity for violence—a world in which masculinity itself totemically resides in pistols, sleek and explosive instruments of death”. For a moment the woman holds the bullet hole with her open hand in an effort to keep the contents of her womb and her life in place before she drops dead, murdered. There are boys and men in the

crowd but the white man chooses a woman as his murder victim. Her sexuality and womanhood betrayed her. There is not a likelihood that women stole and brought the cattle to the villages, although they helped with the cooking and eating. This was a job done by men, yet a woman, and a pregnant woman for that matter, dies, just to demonstrate that the war novel is a “vehicle for demonstrating some of the ways in which society murders and maims women” (Roberts, 1985:5). The author’s consciousness has a hand in all this. As an African, Nyawaranda comes from social and cultural background where women are generally marginalised. As Ngcobo (1988:150) says:

A writer observes and interprets the norms, the values and the customs of society. He or she affirms or negates those values according to his or her personal convictions.

If he writes a novel in which someone has to die then he sacrifices a woman first. This is the only logical way to explain what happens in this case. When Zuvarigere asks a small boy (representing the patriarchs) what relish they ate on that day the boy says that they ate ‘*mavheji*’ (vegetables) from the garden. *Mavheji* is euphemism for meat of stolen cattle, a term adopted by the community for security reasons. Zuvarigere is convinced that the boy is talking about green vegetables and so the investigation ends there. The white farmers then turn their anger on the crops and animals. They allow people’s cattle to graze in the maize fields and after that they shoot all the cattle, goats, sheep, and pigs found in the kraals, and they leave. No man (the patriarchs) is harmed.

In Mbiriri’s short story *Chandakaona Gorero (Hondo YeChimurenga, 1984)* there is another victim of murder called Juddy. Juddy really has nothing to do with the war. She is a girl involved with James in matters of the heart. It is known from what she says to James that if she fails to get married to James she would prefer to become a religious sister (nun) or to commit suicide. She does not, as some other girls would do, talk of going to join the struggle and become a war heroine. Juddy is shot dead next to James’ father’s grave because she and James are suspected of being terrorists. The author creates this character only to watch her murdered in cold blood like this and that is all she is there for. She has no other contribution to make in a story about war.

In yet another short story *Ifa Uri N'ombe* by Memory Madziro (*Hondo YeChimurenga*, 1984) there are female characters that are presented as victims, a mother and her two daughters. The younger girl dies in an incident in which her sister pushes her against the wall when Rhodesian soldiers arrive to look for suspected terrorists. Soldiers beat up the mother and the elder sister becomes a victim of torture. All this happens because the elder sister is suspected of being a terrorist. When the suspected 'female terrorist' is finally released from captivity she is sent to hospital for treatment but there are no indications that she has any plans to turn her ordeal into something positive by joining the liberation war.

In Pesanai's *Gukurahundi* (1985) women come in just to die. They have no further role to play in this novel about war. When a contact takes place between Rhodesian forces and guerrillas all that is said about women is that:

Kuvasikana uku ndiko kwakanzwise tsitsi. Pakangotanga kurira pfuti chete vakabva vaita rurasademo vachibva pabhesi. Ipapa ndipo pavaipfurwa nendege kana kuputitswa namabhombu (p.41).

(What happened to the girls was pathetic. As soon as the sound of gunfire was heard there was pandemonium as they ran in all directions from the base. That is when they were shot or bombed.)

In fact it is reported that eleven girls had been killed in this incident. Women do not seem to have any other role to play other than to die at the hands of the gunmen.

Women in Shona war fiction are also victims of rape. The rape is almost without exception, perpetrated by Rhodesian or Auxiliary Forces and never by guerrillas. In fact there are no major reports of rape cases in the war novels in which guerrillas are the heroes. Reports of rape tend to be more common in the short stories in *Hondo YeChimurenga* (1984). This is because many of the short stories, unlike the major war novels, appear to be personal accounts of what happened to individuals during the war or what individuals imagined could have happened to them or to any other person like themselves.

The most callous case of rape (and murder) is reported by L.P.Mlambo in the short story of the title *Maokizirari (Hondo YeChimurenga, 1984)*. This is a dark story of the ordeal of two young girls whose parents were murdered first by two Auxiliary Forces before the two were sexually assaulted. The younger of the two sisters appears to have refused to comply with the demands of her assailant and was shot dead. A different assailant assaulted the elder sister. She had her clothes torn into pieces, left totally naked and had her virginity forcefully taken. Her dignity and humanity were equally torn to pieces. She was raped several times and fainted in the process. As if that was not enough, she was also raped by the other Auxiliary who had killed her younger sister. This is a very unpleasant story that one would not want to read twice. It is a story of violence, rape and humiliation of an innocent young girl. The girl had to have her uterus removed at the hospital. Worse still the raped girl became pregnant and had a baby boy, who, unfortunately, looked like his rapist father. The girl was forced by her aunt to love her child despite the fact that it would be a constant reminder of her violent past. Besides, that would be the only child she would ever have because her uterus had been destroyed and removed. So because she is a woman she has to accept the offspring of a murderous rape. She has had her uterus removed so this is the only child she will ever call her own.

If the girl in Mlambo's story is not able to express sufficiently the humiliation she suffered as a result of the violation of her body because she is the victim and the first person narrator at the same time then the omniscient narrator who depicts Angela's rape in Samupindi's *Pawns (1992)* does the job for her very excellently, for the devastating effect of rape on women is the same:

He came down upon her, his eyes wide with bestial, crazed excitement. He dragged her out of the hut. He tore at her clothes as if they were made of paper. Angela fought feebly. The blow to her head had knocked some of her strength from her body. She felt her legs being forced apart. The next moment she heard her own scream shatter the air. The pain seared her being and a blanket of darkness mercifully released her as the maniac heaved into her body, growling like a jackal, saliva drooling from the corners of his mouth (p.142).

This is how the authors see the women characters in the war novels. They are reduced to sex objects, whose primary role in this violent war is to absorb some of

the bestial cravings of these people called men who cause and fight these wars. Women are victims of this kind of violence and as Spender (1985:180) asserts:

Acts of sexual violence against women are predicated on the 'reality'-constructed by males-that they possess greater sexual urges and that women are their subordinates.

However, the feelings that the women who are the victims of this sexual violence remain with are predicated on the reality that they are vulnerable objects with no more value to themselves or to anyone else. They feel that they are helpless "warm blankets" (Chung, 2006:126) for men. Perhaps what Kudzai, another victim of rape in Kanengoni's *Echoing Silences* (1990), says to Munashe sums up all war fiction writers' perspectives on the situation of abused women in war. When Munashe asks Kudzai the question "Who are you?" her answer is that she is "nobody" (p.56). In that conversation she adds more meaning to what she means when she says somebody is "nobody". She asks Munashe: "What can you call someone who has had three abortions in one year?" (p.56), and adds, "I was raped by the bastard for over a year! I couldn't run away. I had no option but to abort. I hate men. I hate war" (p.56). If the girl in Mlambo's story is too devastated to express her feelings towards men and war, then Kudzai does it for her here, and for all women who get raped in the name of wars that are fought by men, ostensibly, to liberate them.

Aaron Chiundura Moyo has a case of attempted rape in the short story *Ndaponda Gandanga* (*Hondo YeChimurenga*, 1984). In this story *amai* Mukai is visited at home while she is alone by a rogue policeman who makes it no secret that he wants to make love to her on her matrimonial bed. If she resists he will shoot her. He says with unashamed arrogance:

Nhasi ndiri kurara pano. Mumba menyu chaimo pamubhedha pomurume wenyu nemi zvakare! Kana mukada kuita manyemwe ndinokunyudzai bara mumusoro (p.105)

(Today I am sleeping here. In your house, on your matrimonial bed and with you. If you try to be funny I will shoot to kill.)

Amai Mukai avoids being raped by outwitting the policeman. She sweet-talks him into believing that she is interested in having sex with him and that sends the would-be

rapist to 'sleep'. While he is enjoying a meal she has grudgingly prepared for him she hits him hard with a pestle right on the head. She repeatedly pounces on the head until the poor policeman is a heap of pulp, then she reports the matter to the police who come to collect their colleague.

On the cover blurb of the book *Hondo YeChimurenga* (1984) it is stated that "The stories depict the difficulties faced by people of all walks of life during the liberation war". These are stories that tell of the difficulties faced by women-the so-called '(wo)men in the middle'.

In Makata's story *Gona ReChimurenga* (1982) there is the recurrent image of a woman called Priscilla who was in love with the hero, Mabhunu, before he joined the war. When Mabhunu joined the war it was because he had nothing to live for after Priscilla had died from snakebite. Throughout the novel there is a recurrent image of Priscilla's voice saying the words she used to say to Mabhunu that "*Ndiwe baba, ndiwe amai, ndiwe upenyu hwangu*" (pp.8, 17,18,72) (You are the father, you are the mother, you are my life). Priscilla was an orphan and Mabhunu was everything to her. Her death sent Mabhunu packing for the war. Priscilla became the inspiration behind Mabhunu's decision to join the war but she is not alive herself to make her own personal contribution to the same war effort. The author is interested in her as a woman but not interested in projecting her as a guerrilla fighter. It is her role in relationship to man and not her role in relationship to the war that the author is interested in. That is why Ferguson (1986:4) says "women have been viewed as mother, wife, mistress, sex-object-their role in relationship to man". Priscilla's role is to inspire a representative of the patriarchy to become a hero. Thandi too appears briefly in the same story only to be an object of the admiration of a guerrilla fighter, Mabhunu. As she bends down to wash her plates she exposes her legs to him and he smiles and swallows. Ultimately they kiss but when the thought of Priscilla intervenes while they kiss he pushes her away and apologises. So Thandi too is a sex object introduced just to satisfy a guerrilla's sexual desires and no more. This is her way of contributing to the struggle.

6.5 WOMEN AS RELIGIOUS LEADERS, ENTERTAINERS, SELL-OUTS

Women in Shona war fiction often share the role of religious leaders with men. Writers have not hesitated to make women play the role of national or tribal spirit mediums. As spirit mediums women achieve high status in Shona war society and they gain a lot of esteem and respect. In this capacity women are consulted and they give guidance and protection to the guerrilla fighters. They foretell and forewarn guerrillas and the ordinary people of dangers or imminent enemy attacks. They provide rain, charms and advice on routes to follow as well as on rules of conduct. Some women provide entertainment, especially at rallies addressed by the comrades. One such woman is Chimoto's wife whose dancing prowess solicits generous applause from the crowd and comments from Comrade Tumirai, but at the same time generating feelings of bitterness in Chimoto, her husband who does not quite like the way his wife is dancing like a young unmarried *chimbwido*. However, she achieves the writer's artistic purpose of providing the gathering with entertainment. On the other hand a woman character in Makata's *Gona ReChimurenga* (1982) is made a sell-out. The woman, who has no personal name given, volunteers to give information to Rhodesian soldiers that leads to the discovery of a landmine that was planted by Mabhunu and his fellow comrades. In the exchange of fire that ensues several Rhodesian soldiers and two comrades perish. When the woman is captured by the comrades and asked why she sold out she admits that she wanted the money that had been promised as reward to anyone who volunteered such information:

*Vana'ngu ndiri shirikadzi, murume wangu akafa asina kana kai
kaakandisiira. Saka ndanga ndichida mazana avanotaura (p.36-7).*

(My children I am a widow, my husband died and left me with nothing.
So I wanted the hundreds of dollars that they [Rhodesian regime] talk
about.)

In an uncharacteristic gesture of benevolence Mabhunu gives her money she wants and release her with a warning not to do it again. After all, Mabhunu says, she is not the only one who is poor.

6.6 WOMEN AS WAR COLLABORATORS-ZVIMBWIDO

In Shona war fiction women are more prominent as war collaborators called *vanachimbwido* than as anything else. This is the closet that women in Zimbabwe's liberation war literature have been brought to rub shoulders with the men who actually fight the war, the male guerrillas. The majority, if not all, of the *chimbwidos* are young unmarried girls, the equivalent of the male collaborators, called *vanamujibha*. The *chimbwidos* spend most of their time with the comrades away from home. They spend most of their time with armed strangers and other local *mijibhas* at the guerrilla bases. Nyawaranda in *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985), for example, tells us that:

*Vana vechidiki vomumushamo, vanamujibha nanachimbwido,
vakanga votogara navakomana vacho kubhesi vachitandadzana.
(p.50)*

(Young people of the village, the *mujibhas* and the *chimbwidos*, were now staying with the 'boys' at the base, entertaining each other.)

Because they are known to have been in the company of people regarded by the state as terrorists it is no longer safe for them to go back into their homes and lead normal lives and possibly get married while the state of war still prevails. For a girl to abandon her role as *chimbwido* and go back to live a full civilian life in the village would entail two problems: the Rhodesian forces would come after her as a 'terrorist' sympathiser, and, on the other hand, the guerrillas would most likely finish her off so that she would not betray them to the Rhodesian forces. After all, not all war collaborators became *chimbwidos* by choice. It was an instruction from the guerrillas once they got to an area that all girls and boys should go to the base. This is the predicament in which Tsitsi and others in Choto's *Vavariro* (1990) find themselves.

There are very few of these girls who are identified by their personal names like Tsitsi and Rozi. The rest of them are just known as *vanachimbwido* (female war collaborators). When they go out to stay with the comrades at the bases it is like the woman has at last won her freedom from the confinement of the home and from what Ngcobo (1988:150) calls "social and sexual subordination of women". However, the

truth of the matter is that there is still no “changed portrayal of women in our books” that Ngcobo (1988:151) is looking for. There is still sex-role stereotyping imposed on these girls called *vanachimbwido*. The *chimbwid*os go out to war to play the same roles that they have always played in the domestic sphere. Although the war situation has extended their space a little they still play the traditional roles of cooking, washing and doing other menial tasks. The war is a phase in life during which the gender-linked roles that they have learnt from infancy are reinforced. It appears, as Ngcobo (1988:150) says, that “there is an age-old fear that the independence of the female spirit will destroy the pillars of our society.” Like Catherine Pandarara in Edmund Masundire’s detective play *Dzapiringana* (1994) who will not be allowed to enjoy glory as a detective heroine (Chigidi, 1998) so too the women in war fiction will not be allowed any glory. The Shona war novel fails in this respect to portray the woman in a manner different from the way she has always been largely portrayed in the Shona novel in the mainstream. In Nyawaranda’s *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) Nyawaranda tells us that:

*Vanachimbwido ndivo vaigeza mbatya dzaanamukoma
vachizodzichisa zvakare. Pamwe ndivo vaibika sadza raanamukoma
(p.50).*

(The female collaborators are the ones who washed the guerrillas’ clothes and iron them. At times they are the ones who cooked for the guerrillas.)

In Choto’s *Vavairo* (1990) Rozi and the other young girls are required by guerrillas to go and stay with them at the base because “*vanofanirwa kuenda kunobikira vanamukoma*” (p.18) (They must go and cook for the comrades). When they went to the base readers are told that “*Musi uyu vanasikana vakanga vakachena chaizvo*” (p.19) (On this particular day the girls were exceptionally smart). It is not certain what the author’s intention is when he makes this statement. The feeling that one gets though is that the author is once again introducing an element of sex-stereotyping on the young girls where girls have to be presentable and attractive in the eyes of the men who are fighting the war. Choto’s consciousness is not different from Mazorodze’s in *Silent Journey from the East* (1989). Mazorodze tells the reader that at a ZANLA camp in Mozambique:

A girl appeared from behind the bushes. She was not attractive and did not seem to bother to impress her womanhood on the men in front of her (p.48).

It is as if the author is saying the woman has no business being serious about the war that she is involved in. War is men's business, and her business is to ensure that she looks sexually good and attractive to them.

As in the home *chimbwidos* are the women the men will have to depend on in the bush. As Orbach and Eichenbaum (1984:18) point out, "A boy grows up learning to depend on women, first his mother and then his wife." Now the boys in the bush, having learnt first to depend on their mothers from infancy, now have to learn to depend on the *chimbwidos*. Even Danai's shoes are polished by Tsisti, the *chimbwido* girl (p.71). In Kuda Muhondo (1985) Sungano does not even seem to have a special consideration for war collaborators he calls *vanachimbwido* or *zvimbwido* (errand girls). They are briefly mentioned in connection with singing, cooking and carrying weapons (p.113-114). Also in Pesanai's *Gukurahundi* (1985) girls have no positive roles to play other than to serve the needs of the males who are fighting the war. The reader is told that "*Vasikana vakaswera vari mubishi kusona pamwe nokuwacha nhumbi dzavarwi ava*" (p.21) (The girls spent the day washing and mending the clothes of the fighters). So writers see no greater role for girls to play than to serve the needs of the male guerrillas who are doing the fighting. Girls are not there at the centre of the action. They remain in the periphery of the plot and there are a number of factors that are responsible for that.

6.7 FACTORS THAT SHAPED WRITER'S PERSPECTIVES ON WOMEN'S ROLES IN THE LIBERATION WAR

As noted earlier in this chapter many women crossed the border alongside their male counterparts to join the armed struggle. Equally, there has been so much talk in post-independence era of women having fought alongside their male counterparts in the liberation war. The reader of Shona war fiction therefore expects, naturally, to see male and female fictional guerrillas fighting side by side. Instead there are no female guerrillas in the fiction. The way women have been portrayed in Shona war fiction as shown earlier in this chapter demonstrates that writers of this fiction do not give

female guerrillas a role to play in the guerrilla war they depict. The reader becomes aware that women in Shona war fiction become everything except actual guerrilla fighters. Women in Shona war fiction are mothers, nurses, entertainers, praise singers, war collaborators (*zvimbwido*), spirit mediums, and even sellouts, but they are not guerrillas. They are not armed and are not involved in the actual physical fighting in the war. Several factors are responsible for giving writers of Shona war fiction this perspective on the liberation war in Zimbabwe.

6.7.1 Influence from oral traditional literature

What may have made Shona war fiction writers to deny female guerrillas space in their fiction may be influence from oral traditional literature. It has always been the case in Shona oral traditional literature that women have always been left hovering on the periphery of the plot. In Shona war fiction women are never portrayed as guerrilla fighters. To do so would be to make women characters play the role of heroines, which rarely happens in Shona literature. This trend is observed even in the Shona novel in the mainstream and appears to be a carryover from Shona traditional oral literature. As Kahari (1990:216) has pointed out:

Heroines are few and far apart in Shona literature. This is not without reason for the women have rarely been taking leading parts in the traditional folktale.

A woman in a traditional folktale “normally acts in a subordinate role reflecting her marginal position in society” (Ferguson, 1986:8). She is usually depicted as mother, a wife, barren, a thief, cruel, or a prize that men can compete to win. For instance, a king or a mother may have one very beautiful daughter whom he or she can offer as prize to anyone who will perform successfully a difficult task that is almost impossible to achieve. Usually the disadvantaged of society such as lepers and other physically disabled individuals achieve such tasks. For example, in *Ngano Vol. 4* (Fortune, 1983) there is a story titled *Chinyamapezi* (pp.80-82). This is a story of a king who has a daughter who is so beautiful that he does not want her to leave home and get married to anyone. He wants her to remain within the family. The king makes a shelter on a very tall tree for her to sit there and he puts bees just below the shelter. Anyone who wants to marry this girl has to pass through the place where the bees

are in order to get to the shelter where the girl is. Several able-bodied men try their luck but the bees foil all their attempts. Only the leper manages to deal with the bee stings and collect the girl from her shelter, and he marries and lives with her happily ever after. As Nandwa and Bukenya (1983:67) point out, quite a number of stories show how a man risks his life to save a woman he loves. The man who risks his life to save the woman becomes the hero of the story. In another story, also titled *Chinyamapezi* in *Ngano, Vol.4* (Fortune, 1983:85-87), there is once again a very beautiful girl who lives with her mother, and any man who wants to marry her has to resist the temptation to look back at her when he is leading her to his home. Several men turn to look at her when she sings so beautifully and they fail to marry her. However, as is always the case in such stories, it is Chinyamapezi, the leper, who wins the prize when he resists the temptation to want to look back at her when she starts singing until he reaches his home with her, and she becomes his wife. In the folk narrative “a man’s bravery is almost always rewarded with a woman’s hand in marriage” (Mkgamatha, 1992:85). When you have a story in which a woman is given away to a man as a prize in a competition then you know that the society that tells such stories treats its women as second-class citizens. No male child in these folktales is ever portrayed in this negative light. Very often too, girls in Shona folktales need boys to rescue them from some embarrassing predicament in which they will have put themselves because of their foolishness, thereby according the male characters hero status. As Kileff (1987:5) observes:

Young girls are portrayed as being vulnerable, innocent and gullible. In several stories they are deceived by smooth talking young men. In “The men who turned into lions”, it is the younger brother who saves his elder sisters from being exploited by the lion men.

It is this younger brother who becomes the hero and not the ‘foolish’ women. There are also many examples of stories in which women grapple with problems of barrenness and childlessness. In *Ngano Vol.4* (Fortune, 1983) there are three stories of women who had no children. These are *Mukadzi Akanga Asina Vana* (A woman who had no children, pp.8-9); *Mukadzi Akanga Asina Mwana* (A woman who had no child, pp52-56); and *Mukadzi Ainge Asina Mwana* (A woman who had no child, p.60). You never find a story with the title *Murume Akanga Asina Mwana* (A man who had no child). Women are always blamed for childlessness in a marriage, while men are spared.

This stereotyping we find in Shona folktales is also carried over to the novel in the mainstream where female characters like Marunjeya in *Karikoga Gumuremiseve* (1958) and Munjai in *Pfumoreropa* (1961) are subordinate to their male counterparts like Karikoga and Tanganeropa who will eventually rescue them and become heroes in the process. The same trend is discernible in the Shona detective story where, like in the Shona folktale, there are no female heroes. The detective heroes are always men. The influence from folktales that shaped the consciousness of writers of Shona novels in the mainstream and those of detective fiction also influenced the consciousness of Shona war fiction writers as well and shaped their perspectives on the liberation war. It must be understood that writers like Moyo, Makari, Nyawaranda, Pesanai and Makata, belong to a generation of writers who grew up at a time when children listened to folktales told by the *sarungano* (story-teller) as an evening pastime. It is therefore not surprising that their female characters are stereotypes in a literature that is about war.

6.7.2 Invisibility of women fighters at the war front

One of the major reasons why there are no women characters who feature as fictional guerrillas in all Shona war novels is that during Zimbabwe's liberation war of the 1970s there were no women guerrillas who were visible at the war front, physically fighting the war alongside their male counterparts. There has never been a question or debate about the physical presence of male guerrillas in the operation war zones. There were millions of Zimbabwean workers and peasants who provided food, clothes, money, shelter and moral support to the guerrillas but who never saw a single female guerrilla while the war was raging on, yet people saw with their eyes thousands of male guerrillas who were operating in the various theatres of war around the country

In the mid-1970s thousands of young men and women crossed into neighbouring countries to train as guerrillas who would come back to Zimbabwe to fight. Many of these were young boys and girls who were abducted from schools and forced to go to war. Caute (1983:150) reports that "during the five months from June to October 1978 it was estimated that 700 mission-school pupils crossed the border". Many

people-teachers, parents, relatives, government officials, and even those who would later become writers of the history books and the novels that depict the war of liberation- were aware that among the thousands of abductees and volunteers were women and girls. For instance, the abduction that was efficiently carried out by only three ZIPRA guerrillas at Manama Mission on January 30 1977 involving 500 to 700 people (Bhebe, 1999:172) included schoolgirls and the youngest nurses taken from the local hospital. So people knew that there were hundreds, if not thousands, of women out there making their contribution to the war effort. For this reason it was reasonable for people to expect to see armed female guerrillas as numerous as the male guerrillas that they were seeing fighting. However, most people did not see them. Kriger (1995:191) observes that during the war, women had roles to play as fighters, educators, providers of food and shelter to the guerrillas, and *chimbwidos* or female youths. Indeed, people saw women play the roles of providers of food and shelter to the guerrillas, and *chimbwidos* or female youths, but they hardly saw female guerrilla fighters. Those who listened to ZANLA's radio broadcasts beamed from Maputo during the liberation war heard many female voices singing in the ZANLA choir and knew that there were women and girls in the war. In addition to that every effort was made in political rhetoric to make people know that women fought alongside their male counterparts in the liberation war. *Tabx Encyclopedia Zimbabwe* (1989:279) reports that "Women fought alongside men, many of them, such as Teurai Ropa Mujuru, distinguishing themselves as military leaders". If the statistics given by Naomi Nhwatiwa, a ZANU official, to a group in Los Angeles in July 1979 and later reiterated by Sally Mugabe in an address to a conference in Copenhagen are correct, that women comprised one-third of ZANU's guerrilla forces (cited in Kriger, 1995:191) it was natural therefore that people should expect to see many of these female guerrillas at the front and in fairly reasonable numbers too. However, it appears that there existed a gap in the minds of people between the numbers of women that they 'saw' leaving for Mozambique and Zambia and the numbers that they eventually saw, if ever they did, coming back with guns to fight. There was something missing somewhere. It is this missing link, this 'absence' of female guerrilla fighters at the war front that explains the absence of fictional characters that play the role of female guerrillas in Shona war fiction.

There is no attempt in this thesis to suggest that no female guerrillas ever came to the front to fight. The argument being advanced here is that they came in such small numbers that it was possible that their presence could not be felt by the larger part of the population, and that larger part of the population includes those who later became writers of Shona war fiction. Nhongo-Simbanegavi (2000:79) found out that prior to 1978, the liberation war forces operating in the ZANLA operational zones were mostly male and for the most part the females remained in the rear base camps. This probably explains why women guerrillas were not visible at the front. Images of female guerrillas holding guns were not there in the minds of the people, hence the absence of characters that play the roles of female guerrillas in Shona fiction. This researcher first met guerrillas at St Paul's, Musami, in 1977. He also encountered guerrillas when in July 1978 ZIPRA soldiers came and closed Marist Bothers Secondary School in Dete (then Dett) where he was teaching. He also visited a guerrilla base in Ndiyadzo area in Chipinge where he had been invited by a former schoolmate who was now operating there as a guerrilla. In 1979 up to the end of the war this researcher was teaching at St. Augustine's Secondary School, Penhalonga, and attended several *pungwes* in the schools's Great Hall. One of the *pungwes* at this school that is depicted by Habakuk Gonzo Musengezi in his war novel *Zvairwadza Vasara* (1984) ended in a nasty contact with Rhodesian soldiers that claimed the life of one guerrilla, Tendai Pfefperere. In all these experiences gathered from Mashonaland East, Matebeleland North, Manicaland South and Penhalonga the researcher never met a single female guerrilla fighter. The assumption one can make is that if such experiences were used to write a Shona war novel the likelihood is that it would probably not produce a female guerrilla fighter. However, this only remains an assumption, but one that has an important bearing on the argument that is followed in this chapter.

The conclusion that one arrives at as a result of such experiences is that this war was a men's affair because the women fighters were not visible at the front. These perceptions of the war and its principal actors were reinforced by the views of some of the writers of Shona war fiction who were interviewed. In an attempt to find out whether the images of female guerrilla fighters were ever lodged in the consciousness of writers of Shona war fiction the writers were asked whether at any given time during the liberation war itself they ever saw live, a female guerrilla fighter

or a female guerrilla fighter in action. They all said they never saw one. Aaron Chiundura Moyo (in an interview, 19/07/07) said that “He never met an armed female guerrilla fighter”. However, he added that he only saw something like a female combatant during the Internal Settlement, but like Comrade Max himself and others who ‘surrendered’ to Muzorewa (Frederiske, 1982:252), it was not clear that these were genuine cadres. Asked in an interview (20/07/07) whether he had ever met female guerrillas during the liberation war, Charles Makari, who was a headmaster and an adult *mujibha* in the Zaka/Nyajena area during the war, had this to say:

No. I only heard about female carriers who ferried weapons to the front but I did not even see them. That is why female guerrillas do not feature in my novel, *Zvaida Kushinga*.

Asked when it was that he first saw an armed black woman Makari said it was at the army barracks where he had gone to see a relative early at independence. Vitalis Nyawaranda, who was teaching in the Tanda rural area during the war, also said in an interview (20/07/07) that he never saw a woman guerrilla during the war, and did not see one even when he went to an assembly point during the ceasefire.

It is possible that if writers had been among those who had the experience of seeing female guerrillas in action during the liberation war they could have featured them among their fictional characters in their novels, provided male chauvinism or patriarchal prejudices did not take the better of them. It probably would have been an exceptionally exhilarating experience to see these ‘ladies of the war’, as Donatus Bonde shows:

Women guerrillas? With real guns, machine-guns, ammunition gondoliers, rucksacks, grenades...? Women soldiers dressed like men-complete with denims and boots? They were a sensational phenomenon in those days (*Moto*, Nov. 1990, no.94, pp. 4-6)

Such a phenomenon was good stuff for use in writing a work of art. Unfortunately, this phenomenon was not common stuff for everyone to see. Just as much as there was ‘absence’ of female guerrillas at the front during the actual war, so too there is an absence of fictional characters that play the role of female guerrillas in Shona war literature.

The point being made here is not that there were no trained female guerrillas. The point is that they were not seen by many in the main theatres of war. This seems to confirm what Nhongo-Simbanegavi (2000:82) found out in her research that:

The percentage of women was always low. Whenever there was danger of enemy attack ZANLA would always withdraw their women fighters to the rear.

Women were there, but they were somewhere further removed from where real action was taking place. Where real action was taking place is where observers focused attention and that is where all who mattered as far as tough action was concerned could be seen. However, as Nhongo-Simbanegavi (2000:83) asserts:

There is no evidence suggesting that those areas ZANLA categorized as 'contested' ever saw a single woman guerrilla...Consequently, the handful of women deployed to the front were more likely to be found in ZANLA's rear detachments, the areas bordering Mozambique and nearest to ZANLA's rear bases.

That probably explains the absence of women guerrillas from areas deep into the interior where most of the action was taking place. Perhaps critics should also take a serious view of what Joyce Teurai Ropa Mujuru, a female ex-combatant and the first woman cabinet minister, who was also the sole female in the Politburo by 1990, said in an interview with *Moto* (November 1990, no. 94). In a somewhat evasive answer to the question "Did women comprise a significant part of the guerrilla force?" her response was:

To us fighting was not only the triggering of a gun, but one's contribution-whether as a teacher (of refugee children), or as an instructor, or as a commissar giving political education to recruits.

She also added in response to another question that "We also had women who were assigned other duties other than going to the front", and that "We never considered one's sex, but just assigned duties according to one's capabilities." Perhaps after considering women's capabilities:

From early 1970s ZANLA deliberately recruited women, but not for combat duties. ZANLA leaders allocated women roles as cooks,

nurses and, above all, as porters and carriers (Nhongo-Simbanegavi, 2000:xix).

Martin and Johnson (1981:82) seem to agree with Nhongo-Simbanegavi on this issue. They found out in an interview with Susan Rutanhire who crossed the border with her husband George, that she spent two years at Chifombo carrying armaments to the front, and that they used to be escorted by ZANLA guerrillas. Obviously while Susan spent two years at Chifombo carrying armaments to the front her husband George was at the front, fighting. So people probably saw George fighting at the front, but did not see Susan. Even after her training at Frelimo's Nachingwea camp in Tanzania she became a weapon's instructor at Chimbichimbi camp in Zambia. So Joyce Teurai Ropa Mujuru's statements that to them fighting was not only a matter of triggering the gun and that duties were assigned according to capabilities are quite insightful. Women were not seen at the front because they were doing other duties that they were capable of doing at the rear. Miranda Davies (cited in Kriger, 1995:191) could therefore be correct in her observation that the number of women combatants was small, and that females who left Zimbabwe hoping to join the guerrillas were usually asked to look after children. Davies' observation tends to give weight to the argument raised by Bhebe and Ranger (cited in Lyons, 2004:29) that "there have been too many attempts to produce a heroic 'herstory' of the war; attempts which have overestimated the number of female guerrillas..." in the liberation war.

If one puts together the thoughts expressed in Joyce Teurai Ropa Mujuru's evasive responses to *Moto* given above one tends to appreciate Lyon's (2004:29) concern that "...there has been a sustained and growing ambiguity as to what it was that women actually did in the liberation war". However, what is clear is that at first women who joined up in the early 1970s were mainly used to carry supplies and weapons but as air raids and other attacks by Rhodesians increased women demanded to be trained in order to protect themselves (Nhongo-Simbanegavi, 2000; Lyons, 2004).

This image of absence of women was reinforced by the fact that ZANU's component of the Patriotic Front attending the London conference was entirely male and the ZANLA leaders who came into Zimbabwe to liaise with the Commonwealth

Monitoring Troops to get the fighters into the assembly points were also all male, except for one woman whom press reported as Linda Tafadzwa (Nhongo-Simbanegavi, 2000:127). On the other hand many young women came back from Mozambique carrying babies on their backs, suggesting that instead of fighting they were probably being used as “warm blankets” who performed “night duties” at the rear (Chung, 2006:126).

The conclusion that one can make therefore is that because “ZANLA deployed few women fighters inside Zimbabwe” (Nhongo-Simbanegavi, 2000:127) while their ZIPRA counterpart did not even deploy its female cadres to the front (*Moto*, no. 94, Nov. 1990), writers did not see them, hence images of women guerrilla fighters are absent from Shona war fiction.

6.7.3 Pioneer soldiers and the politics of naming

The other major factor that shaped writers’ perspectives on the liberation war in Zimbabwe is the language that was adopted specifically to depict the war. The language that was used throughout the war period and after independence was man-made. The term ‘man’ here is not used to mean the human race. It is used to mean the male gender. It appears man (males) had complete monopoly over language that was used to point things, objects and people. This monopoly ensured man’s primacy and reinforced female invisibility. The net effect of this is that the discourse about Zimbabwe’s liberation war became the discourse of the male gender. Women were excluded from that discourse.

The reason for all this is that men were the pioneer soldiers of Zimbabwe’s liberation war. For example, early groups of fighters were made up of young men and no women. ZANU’s first group of five guerrillas that went to China for training on 22 September 1963 was made up of Emmerson M’hangagwa (leader), John Shonhiwa, Eddison Shirihuru, Jameson Mudavanhu and Lawrence Swoswe, all men (Martin and Johnson, 1981:11). The second group included William Ndangana, Bernard Mutuma, Silas Mushonga and Felix Santana (Martin and Johnson, 1981:11). To this list Ellert (1993:10) adds Noel Mukono and Edwin Mandizha and says they were trained in Ghana by Ghanaians and Chinese instructors. All these were men. The famous

seven guerillas who perished in a fierce encounter with Rhodesian troops at the Battle of Sinoia were all men, given by Sibanda and Moyana (2002:82) as Simon Chimbodza, Christopher Chatambudza, Nathan Charumuka, Godwin Manyerenyere, Arthur Maramba, Ephraim Shenjere and David Guzuzu. The first four ZANLA guerrillas sent to join FRELIMO in Tete in mid-July 1970 and led by Mayor Urimbo were all men (Martin and Johnson, 1981:21) and so was the unit of twenty one men in Nehanda sector of the Mozambique-Zimbabwe border which was commanded by Rex Nhongo and which fired the first shots of the decisive phase of the war in December 1972 (Martin and Johnson, 1981:73).

There is nothing special about any of these groups. These groups have been selected for purposes of illustrating that during the early phases of Zimbabwe's armed struggle war was a men's affair. There were no women who rose to prominence during that time. According to Martin and Johnson (1981:21), the four men-Mayor Urimbo (leader), Justin Chauke, Cornelius Mpofu, and Shumba—"and thousands who came after them, came to be known affectionately in the kraals and villages of Zimbabwe by the Shona word *vakomana*, literally 'the boys'". Frederikse (1982:xii) defines the word *vakomana* as a Shona word meaning boys, used affectionately by black Zimbabweans to refer to the guerrillas or 'the boys in the bush'. It is not quite clear how the word came to be used and who started it but it is possible to speculate that the word *vakomana* (boys) gained currency because the war came to the people with 'the boys' or simply young men, such as 'the boys' who comprise the groups given above. Because when the war started there were no women guerrillas no gender sensitive terms were used to depict things and people in the war. The word *vakomana* (boys) was used interchangeably with the word *vanamukoma*, literally 'elder brothers'. The later word, besides being numerical, also carried honorific connotations, with the result that even its singular form *mukoma* (elder brother) was also used to refer with respect to one guerrilla. Again the word *vanamukoma* (elder brothers) and its singular form *mukoma* (elder brother) gained currency because when the war started it was a predominantly male affair, and even after women came in they remained largely invisible at the front where these words were adopted and their assumed new meanings popularised.

These terms were adopted by the people for use in addressing their freedom fighters with respect and affection. They were also adopted in order to hide the identity of the freedom fighters from state security forces. However, there was another term that was adopted and used by the Rhodesian regime to refer to guerrillas with disdain and hatred. As Staunton (1990:xiii) puts it, the term was “used by the Rhodesian Front regime in much of their broadcast and printed material, the object being to denigrate the freedom fighters and suggest fear.” The Rhodesian regime regarded the nationalist guerrillas as terrorists who committed senseless murders and hence they called them *magandanga* (or *gandanga*, when referring to one). Frederikse (1982:vii) defines the word *magandanga* as a Shona word that describes a thug or criminal. Frederikse’s definition appears to be influenced by English language dictionary definitions of the terms ‘criminal’ and ‘thug’. According to the *Collins Cobuild English, Language Dictionary* (1987) “a criminal is a person who has committed an illegal action” (p.335) while a thug is defined as “a person who is very violent and rough, especially a criminal” (p.1527). While the activities of a *gandanga* are criminal, illegal, violent and rough, the definitions of the terms criminal and thug given by the *Collins Cobuild English Dictionary* do not describe the Shona concept of *gandanga* adequately, and therefore Federikse’s definition of the word *gandanga* falls far short of what the Shona mean when they use that word. The Shona people themselves use *gandanga* to describe someone who waylays people and murder them. According to the Shona dictionary, *Duramazwi Guru ReChiShona* (2001), *gandanga*, among other things, “*munhu mhondi kana akapanduka*” (p.311) (*gandanga* is a murderer or a person who became wild). The same dictionary also defines *gandanga* as “*munhu anohwandira vanhu achivauraya*” (p.311) (a person who waylays people and kill them). The latter definition is closer to the definition of *gandanga* given by Irene Staunton (1990:xiii). Staunton defines *gandanga* as “a wild savage person, an ogre”, and an ogre is also defined by Chesaina (1991:24) as “a symbol of evil and power of destruction which lurks in the world”. Murdering someone is criminal and illegal, but it is certainly not seen by the Shona people in the same light as stealing or beating people, which is also illegal. It is much worse. *Gandanga* to the Shona is a murderer.

Now the people never used the terms *gandanga* or *magandanga* (terrorist or terrorists) to refer to their freedom fighters. Although the guerrillas’ business was to

kill because they were fighting a war the people never saw them as murderers. The terms were used by the Rhodesian regime. The guerrillas also used these terms *gandanga* or *magandanga* (terrorist/terrorists) to refer to themselves in conversations with the people but only when they wanted to be sarcastic. The people were careful to let the guerrillas call themselves what they wanted but they would be careful not to use any offensive terms like *gandanga* or *magandanga* (terrorist/terrorists) to refer to their freedom fighters.

The word *gandanga* or *magandanga* (terrorist or terrorists) refers to guerrillas because the pioneers of the war were males. In Shona thought women are never regarded as *magandanga* (murderers). Women did not waylay people and murder them. In Shona thought women are more associated with witchcraft. If they wanted to kill they were more likely to use witchcraft as witches, which did not require violence. However, a woman could be described as '*gandanga remukadzi*' (a murderer-like woman) if she displayed the attributes of a murderer. This implies that *gandanga* (murderer) is a male, but a woman who behaved like one could be described as such as well. That is why Nhongo-Simbanegavi (2000:46) says:

War has always been conceptualized as a male activity and women who take part in it must be as like men as possible.

The terms described above were all used to refer to males. Makari has all of them in just one sentence in his novel *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985):

Isu tinonzi makomuredzi. Vamwe vanotidaidza kuti vakomana kana kuti vanamukoma. Tiri varwiri vorusununguko. Vavengi vanotiti magandanga (Italics mine) (p.12).

(We are called comrades. Others call us boys or the brothers. We are freedom fighters. Our enemies call us terrorists.)

The use of these terms-*vakomana* (boys), *vanamukoma* (elder brothers), *magandanga* (murderers)-during the liberation war denied female guerrillas space in war discourse and eventually in Shona literary discourse as well. The use of such terms during the actual war itself gave some Shona war fiction writers the perspective that war was a men's affair. This was not without some justification. When George Rutanhire, one of the people to come into contact with the first ZANLA guerrillas in the north-east of Zimbabwe

was recruited, he was told to bring his wife as well but he “was not sure about a woman’s place in war” (Martin and Johnson, 1981:81) and on the other side “It was part of the Rhodesian macho that war was the responsibility of men, so they were completely unprepared to fight against women” (Chung, 2006:81). While during Zimbabwe’s liberation war terms like *vakomana* (boys), *vanamukoma* (elder brothers) and *magandanga* (murderers) were used to name reality there were no terms like *vasikana* (girls), *vanasisi* (sisters), *vanatete* (aunts), or something like that that were used to at least recognise the presence of females in the war. While it may sound plausible to argue that the term *mukoma* also refers to a female elder sibling and that it was therefore used to refer to women guerrilla fighters as well, the complete absence of the variant form of the term, *vakoma* (elder sister), from liberation war discourse makes it difficult to sustain this argument. There is no reason why *vakoma* (elder sister) should not have been used interchangeably with its variant form *mukoma* (elder sibling) and yet there are larger numbers of Zimbabwean Shonas that use the term *vakoma* to refer to an elder female sibling than those that use *mukoma*. The conclusion that one arrives at is that *mukoma* was used to refer to male fighters.

Also, although the more neutral term *khomuredhi* (comrade) was used to address anyone, whether male, female, guerrilla, worker or peasant, *mujibha* or *chimbwido*, and even the enemy, it was nevertheless a word that made people think male. Whenever the word ‘comrade’ was mentioned people first thought of ‘guerrilla boys’ rather than of ‘guerrilla girls’. Nyawaranda (in an interview, 20/07/07) insisted that ‘comrade’ was synonymous with male.

The conclusion one makes therefore is that the use of terms like *vakomana* (boys), *vanamukoma* (elder brothers), *magandanga* (terrorists) and even ‘macomrades’, resulted in the formation of the image of man in the mind. This can be likened to the way people use man (and he). “Man (and he) is in constant use as a term which supposedly includes females, and one of the outcomes of this practice has been to plant man uppermost in our minds” (Spender, 1985:151). So too the effect of the constant use of *vakomana* (boys), *vanamukoma* (elder brothers), *magandanga* (murderers) and even ‘macomrades’ during the liberation war was to “plant man uppermost in the minds” of people, including the minds of future writers of Shona war fiction. These are the terms used to name the guerrillas in Shona literature about Zimbabwe’s liberation war. There are no terms used to name female guerrillas, terms

like *vasikana* (girls) or *vanasisi* (sisters). That is why in *Gukurahundi* (1985), the author, Munashe Pesanai, says, “*Hamenowo kuti shoko rakasvika sei pamusangano uyu kuti vanabhudhi vakanga vasvika*” (p.57) (It is not known how word got to the meeting that the brothers had arrived). The term *bhudhi* is urban jargon used by females to refer to males in place of the word *mukoma* (elder brother). Unattached females also use it when referring to young males they may fancy to have a relationship with, even if it is for a short period. Whatever the circumstances or interests that make some people to use the term *bhudhi* (brother) the bottom line is that it is used to refer to males. The opposite of *bhudhi* (brother), again in urban jargon, would be *sisi* (sister), which is never used in Shona war fiction to refer to a guerrilla fighter. Its use, if ever, is rare.

The use of *vakomana* (boys), *vanamukoma* (elder brothers), *magandanga* (murderers), *bhudhi* (brother) and ‘macomrades’ in Shona war stories ensures, as Spender (1985:157) puts it, that:

...in the thought and reality of our society it is the males who become the foreground while the females become the blurred and often indecipherable background.

When asked why Shona war fiction writers use *vakomana* (boys), *vanamukoma* (elder brothers) and *magandanga* (terrorists) without also using terms that denote female guerrillas, Aaron Chiundura Moyo who wrote some Shona war stories, said in an interview (19/07/07) that:

Men were first to appear as fighters. These are terms that were used for them. Women were few. Leaders were men. These terms that we used in our stories were used in the war, so we got them from there.

When Charles Makari was asked in an interview (20/07/07) why he does not use gender sensitive terms in his war novel *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) he also reiterated what Chiundura Moyo said:

Many early fighters were men. Men lead in war. The first fighters who impressed people were men.

It is not only writers of war fiction who adopt terms from the war itself that were used to name guerrillas. Historians and journalists use the same terms as well. Journalists David Martin and Phyllis Johnson in their book *The Struggle for Zimbabwe* (1981) actually give their Chapter 2 the title 'Some *Vakomana*' (p.21) (some boys) and in that chapter they talk about some of the early guerrillas to be trained to fight the war. Another journalist, Julie Frederikse, in her book *None But Ourselves* (1982) uses the term *vakomana* (boys) and also refers to guerrilla victory in the war as the victory of "the boys in the bush". Josiah Tungamirai, in a book edited by historians Bhebe and Ranger titled *Soldiers in Zimbabwe's Liberation War* (1995) talks of young men and women who joined what he calls *the vakomana* (boys). What Tungamirai implies is that women too were joining *the vakomana* (boys) who had pioneered the struggle and in that context they too had become part of the *vakomana* (boys). The term *vakomana* (boys) therefore later came to encompass everyone, male or female, who later joined the war that was started by the male pioneers. No one, novelist, journalist or historian, ever uses a term that recognises the presence of guerrilla girls in the liberation struggle.

The use of the words *vakomana* (boys), *vanamukoma* (elder brothers), and *magandanga* (murderers) which were adopted in order to name the early pioneer soldiers and dominant group in Zimbabwe's guerrilla war makes males linguistically visible and females linguistically invisible in Shona war literature. As one reads Shona stories about the liberation war one becomes conscious of the male imagery at the expense of the female imagery. Even if one were to put aside the issue of these terms one would still find that rules of conduct with regards to sexual offences during the war are given in language that is man-made. The rules are meant to prevent men from committing sexual offences. There is no evidence to suggest that it is women's behaviour being sanctioned. For example, in Sungano's *Kuda Muhondo* (1985) the Battalion Commander who gives the rules of conduct to trained guerrillas that are about to leave for the front says:

Chetatu, upombwe. Musambozofe henyu makaita upombwe muhondo umu. Munhu akaita dumbu muhondo vabereki vake voziva kuti ndimi havangambokufarirai. Munotengeswa mukapera kufa (p.88).

(The third thing is about sex. Do not ever indulge in sex matters in this war. If someone becomes pregnant and her parents know that you are

responsible they will not like you. They will sell you out and you will perish.)

Such an instruction cannot be directed at women. The language in the warning is meant for a male audience, and women would be the victims in the equation. In Nyawaranda's *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) the spirit medium, again in language that is man-made and meant for men, warns the guerrillas who had consulted him that "*Imi kana muri vavhimi chaivo, regai kubata-bata vemadhirezi ava*" (p.112) (If you are genuine hunters do not touch women). Again this is an instruction given to male fighters. In the metaphor used men are the hunters who should not womanise if they are to succeed. Women are the victims. There are no rules given that suggest that the writer or the spirit medium sees women in this war who also need to be protected against '(wo)menising'. War is men's business and rules are made in language that is meant for men's survival.

Perhaps this thinking can be understood better against the background that in traditional society Shona oral traditions say men were expected not to sleep with their women on the eve of a hunting expedition. The general belief was that if they did they would not succeed to catch animals, as the animals would evade them. In modern society too footballers are not allowed to womanise on the eve of important soccer matches. That is one of the reasons why teams go into camp a week or so before match day. If they sleep around with women close to match day it is argued that they would be weak on the field of play and lose the game. Whether it is in hunting or in a football match or in Zimbabwe's liberation war, it is the women who should be marginalised so that for the time being men can get on with the serious business at hand in which women are not central. So writers held this perspective on the war, the perspective that Zimbabwe's liberation war was men's business, and they did so in response to the way naming of reality was done during the actual war that they were depicting. As Spender (1985:163) points out:

In order to live in the world, we must name it. Names are essential for the construction of reality for without a name it is difficult to accept the existence of an object, event, a feeling.

Female guerrillas were not 'named' in the actual liberation war itself, hence writers too did not, in their consciousness, accept their existence and that explains the

absence of guerrilla girls in Shona war fiction. The problem was, however, compounded by the fact that Shona war fiction was written by men, which becomes the next point to be discussed.

6.7.4 Absence of women writers of Shona liberation war fiction

One of the possible reasons why women guerrilla fighters are linguistically and physically invisible in Shona war fiction is that most, if not all, stories were written by men and from a patriarchal perspective. Chigidi (1998) studied Shona detective fiction and found out that male authors wrote all Shona novels that deal with crime and detection. As a result, there are no female detective heroes in the fiction. Women are depicted as stereotypes. Similarly, indications are that men wrote all Shona novels that deal with Zimbabwe's war of liberation. As a result women are once again depicted stereotypically. One tends to agree with Spender (1985:191) who says that many people would be quick to challenge the assertion that women constitute a muted group in terms of the written word. However, it cannot be refuted that Zimbabwean women constitute a muted group in terms of writing fiction in the Shona language about the liberation war in Zimbabwe. The story of the liberation war in Zimbabwe is a tale told by men who choose male characters and make them guerrillas and heroes. Lyons (2004:19) has challenged Zimbabwean women by quoting an African proverb, which says that "Until lions have their own historians, tales of hunting will always glorify the hunter". This concern is also forcefully expressed by Murray (1973:19) who points out that:

Since her appearance in Genesis, woman has been a prisoner of the imagination of others, is seen trailing clouds of glory or dust or whatever has been flung at her, always as the object, not as the creator of her own self, fully fleshed out in the primary imagination...

Lyons' (2004) and Murray's (1973) concerns are justified in this case by the fact that seven major Shona war fiction writers-Makata, Makari, Pesanai, Nyawaranda, Sungano, Choto and Musengezi-all males, fail to create a single character that plays the role of a female guerrilla fighter. All their heroes are men. Perhaps these male writers ignored the role women guerrillas played in the liberation war because as Pfukwa (2003:21) observes:

There is insufficient data on the role of women in the guerrilla war. Most of the records were made by men from their own perspective and tended to overlook the role of women.

This thinking tends to match the concern held by Lyons (2004:29) that has been raised earlier in this chapter about what it is exactly that women actually did in the liberation war. Male writers tended to depict women as stereotypes because they did not think women had a place in war. When asked why Shona war fiction writers did not depict women as guerrillas in their novels Nyawaranda, one of the war story writers, had this to say in an interview (20/07/07):

Generally only men go to war. We were influenced by sex-role stereotypes that said war is for men. The idea that women go to war came with the struggle for independence. Rhodesia African Rifles were men. During World War 11 only men went to war. Ndebele impis had no women. I went to an assembly point and I did not see one, and so old perceptions about women's role in war were reinforced in me.

There are several examples that can be cited to illustrate that liberation war fiction was written from a men's perspective that does not see a woman's place in war. In Morgan Mahanya's short story *Hapana Chinodyiwa Chisina Muzorera (Hondo YeChimurenga, 1984)* there are two characters, a brother and a sister, Gladys and Gibson, who are both involved with the war in one way or the other. However, of the two siblings, it is Gibson, the male, who absconds from Chibi Mission to Mozambique to train as a guerrilla fighter while the sister, Gladys, is made a nurse. As fate would have it, Gibson comes to operate in areas around Kwekwe where Gladys is working as a nurse in a hospital. It is therefore Gladys the woman who provides Gibson's needs while Gibson the man fights the war. This story is structured in such a way that Gibson, the male character, is permitted primacy and dominance while the woman, Gladys, plays a secondary role. The story is written by Mahanya, one of the pioneers and prominent writers of Shona detective stories in which men are detective heroes while women are just victims, mothers, wives and worse still, criminals. It is therefore not surprising that in this war story genre Mahanya once again makes female characters occupy a restricted space in the 'home' while the male is allowed to go out into the 'world'. Gladys is arrested for harbouring and cooking for guerrillas. In court Gladys had this to say when asked if she had anything to say before she was sentenced:

Tongai zvenyu pamunodira, asi zivai kuti isu varidzi venyika tichaitora nyangwe muchida nyangwe musingadi (p.125).

(Pass whatever judgement you see fit, but know that we the owners of the country will take it whether you like it or not.)

She is sentenced to 25 years in jail. A woman of this calibre and bravery ought to have been given guerrilla status but Mahanya would have none of that.

One other example that shows that men will have none of what Ngcobo (1988:150) calls “the independence of the female spirit” shown by women comes from Nyawaranda’s *Paida Mwoyo* (1987). When Nyawaranda creates Chipo’s character readers get the feeling that at last they are going to see a woman who will undertake a journey of adventure with all its risks and perils. This feeling is reinforced by Chipo’s own bold and suicidal statement that:

Kana ndichinge ndadzingwa chikoro chacho, ndotokirova zvangu kuMoza.... Nyangwe ndife zvangu ndichirwa nemasoja aSmith, ndiko kuti ndizorore zvangu. Ko, kusiri kufa ndokupi? (p.12)

(If I am expelled from school, I go to Mozambique...If I die fighting Smith’s soldiers that will be one way of getting a rest. There is no option that does not end in death.)

The expectations of seeing a woman who will eventually become the first female fictional guerrilla in Shona literature are further strengthened when, in the middle of the night, Chipo is seen bidding Tapera, her teacher and benefactor, farewell. There are people waiting somewhere outside the school to assist her and others to cross the border into Mozambique and before sunrise she would be gone. However, the ‘independence of the female spirit’ about to be displayed by a woman will not be allowed to prevail in a predominantly patriarchal society. Probably because of his perception that only men go to war (obtained in interview, 20/07/07) Nyawaranda abandons the plot of a woman’s adventure story. Instead he follows a plot that takes us on ‘a non-believer’s journey’. Chipo ceases to be the protagonist of the plot. The protagonists of the new subplot are an unnamed guerrilla and Tapera, who are both men. Chipo and Tapera are arrested, and in a brief James Bond style of operation carried out in an attempt to rescue them Chipo is shot and dies soon afterwards that

same night, her dreams of becoming a guerrilla girl having been ended by that fatal shot. The two men survive but the plot loses the war interest that it picked up earlier. The woman character is dead. Tapera pursues his educational goals. The male guerrilla, who has been introduced just to display his heroic antics, is not heard of again. Possibly he has gone to join the rest of the *vakomana* (boys) while the representative of the *vasikana* (girls) goes under. This is the price that women pay for having others speak for them and on their behalf. There are no women writers to tell their own war story.

When men tell the story of the liberation war they use female characters to rescue male guerrillas when Rhodesian soldiers trap them. Women come to the rescue of guerrillas in danger, but the women themselves are not guerrillas. This happens because authors like Makari make their male guerrillas tell the stories of their exploits and antics. As we noted in Chapter 3 it is the guerrilla boys, *Khomuredhi* Tinotonga, Shelton and Tichatonga, who tell the stories of their adventures but there is no female guerrilla to tell her own story. Yet when Tichatonga sleeps in the maize field while eating sweet cane it is a woman, *amai* Nyevero, who saves him from Rhodesian soldiers who are certain to find and kill him; and when he is surrounded by the enemy while playing with some girls inside a hut it is those girls who save him. The women save the heroes but they themselves are never made the heroines.

In Shona war fiction we have paradigms of patriarchal values and culture. These are seen in the way male authors belittle female characters. One good example of how women characters are treated with disdain by male authors groomed in a strong patriarchal ideology is the way Tsitsi, a prominent *chimbwido* in Choto's *Vavariro* (1990), is portrayed. Perhaps in an obvious effort to show that women have no place in battle, when planes come and throw bombs Tsitsi is portrayed as a spoiler who throws spanners in the works, while Tumirai is the guerrilla hero who repulses the attackers. The man wants to fight back the Rhodesian planes but the woman wants them to run away without even considering safety first. To make matters worse Tsitsi holds Tumirai's arms in such a way that the hero cannot shoot at the enemy planes:

*Tsitsi akabva asvetukira panaTumirai ndokubva amubata maoko.
Tumirai akabva atadza kuridza pfuti yake (p.62)*

(Tsitsi jumped on to Tumirai and held his arms. Tumirai could not shoot.)

Tsitsi, the female character, is now a danger to the revolution. The desperation in the guerrilla's voice shows that Tsitsi is now a real nuisance. Tumirai pleads, while pushing the woman away:

Usandibate kani Tsitsi. Rega ndidonhedze ndege iyi (p.63)
(Do not hold me Tsitsi please. Let me drop this plane)

and;

Ndinopfura sei kana wakandibata maoko? Ibva mhani Tsitsi! (p.63)
(How can I shoot while you are holding me? Get away Tsitsi!)

Even under his circumstances Tumirai is able to down one plane and miss the other one because a woman is disturbing him. The author gives the man more power than the woman. The whole episode has the effect of making Tsitsi look silly, stupefied by a situation she cannot handle. Against her timidity and weakness the man's stature is thrown into sharper and bolder relief. Choto shows clearly his contempt for women in war. He seems to be interrogating the prudence of involving women in wars, for he seems to be insinuating that war is not a place for women. Choto later shows where he thinks women belong when he makes Tsitsi to express her longing for a settled life of marriage, love, wifehood and motherhood. This is the role that a woman character is made to play, that of a spoiler and not that of hero. In fact her role is anti-heroic.

One good thing though is that Choto's anti-heroic vision allows for one moment of glory, just one moment. Tsitsi does not succumb to patriarchal pressure completely. She rises up from her humiliation with some degree of admiration to plant a bomb in a white only hotel in Harare that kills fifty whites when it explodes. She receives a full round of applause from fellow comrades back in the bush but had she been a male guerrilla fighter she would have been accorded a place in the annals of history such as the one accorded to those male guerrillas who were responsible for the "daring attack on the fuel storage depot in Salisbury in December 1978" (Chung, 2006:238). Instead, no sooner than Tsitsi achieves her feat than she is reduced once again to her 'small place in the home' where the male author, so it seems, believes she

belongs. In the middle of war, with guns and bombs exploding, Tsitsi talks seriously of wanting to go home because she wants to get married. She makes no secret of the fact that she is tired of the war and wants to go home and take a good rest. Only women are made to be so naïve as to imagine that after flirting with guerrillas they can go home and rest in marital bliss and the Rhodesian soldiers will leave them alone in peace. Instead of concentrating on the war that the boys are concentrating on, she is reduced to thinking about marriage and motherhood in a manner that makes it look as if that is all that matters to women. It reminds the reader of Murray's (1973:16) comment that a woman's world "has been a world of birth and death, of food and love, of comfort and blood-a very basic world".

How Choto portrays Tsitsi's role can better be understood if it is viewed alongside the portrayal of yet another female character, Angela, in Charles Samupindi's English novel, *Pawns* (1992). Like Tsitsi, Angela is not a guerrilla woman. She is a mere *chimbwido*. Her role is to admire and appreciate the plight of the men who are fighting the war. She says:

What is the cooking, and doing the dishes compared with the battle front? After these pungwes we go back to our comfortable huts and leave you to content with the harsh night and the dark land (p.134).

At least Angela eventually leaves for Mozambique and is successfully trained as a guerrilla fighter. Perhaps the reader feels that Samupindi has succeeded to do what Shona war fiction writers like Nyawaranda have failed to do, that is, to allow a female character to train as a guerrilla fighter and send her to the front to actually fight. However, the reader is soon disappointed to realise that in Samupindi's *Pawns* (1992), like in Choto's *Vavairo* (1990), there is another paradigm of patriarchal culture and values. The patriarchal resentment of the 'independence of the woman's spirit' is manifested when, again in the middle of exploding guns and bombs, Angela sincerely hopes the war could come to an end so that she could go and lead a normal life. Her definition of a 'normal life' is expressed in three statements that she makes at Mavonde in a conversation with Fangs, the male guerrilla commander. When Fangs asks her what normal life is to her she says in response:

I don't know, every woman dreams that one day she will have her own home, raise her own children and family, participate in something which grows, something creative...(p.174).

In response to further questions from Fangs she states that "But now all I want is to have a family, with you [Fangs]"; and that "...I want to think about the future in a way I can understand with a home and a family" (p.175).

Samupindi seems to be saying women do not understand war. They only understand marriage and child-bearing. If both Tsitsi in Choto's *Vavairo* (1990) and Angela in Samupindi's *Pawns* (1992) are allowed to have their way it would have the effect of removing them physically from where all the action is, thereby reinforcing the image of absence and the invisibility of female characters and the image of the primacy and dominance of the male characters. Uko (2004:130) has rightly pointed out that:

At adulthood and in marriage, the woman is assumed to have been properly grounded in servitude, muteness, invisibility and dependence, with a natural acceptance of a corresponding male superiority and dominance.

Samupindi's portrayal of a woman guerrilla and Choto's portrayal of a *chimbwido* who, in the middle of a terrible war, are dreaming of a settled life with a man while the men are thinking of strategies to prosecute the war, confirm Ferguson's (1986:4-5) point that:

...in every age woman has been seen primarily in her biological, primordial role as the mysterious source of life. Women have been viewed as mother, wife, mistress, sex-object-their roles in relation to men...Cave drawings that show men casting spears or running after a boar also show women pregnant, their secondary sexual characteristics grossly exaggerated so that they seem all bosom, belly, and butt. Man has been defined by his relationship to the outside world-to nature, to society, to God-whereas woman has been defined in relationship to man. The word defined means 'being a limit around', 'fenced in'. Women have been fenced into a small place in the world.

Hence, Tsitsi and Angela dream of life with a man as their priority. Samupindi, like Choto and Nyawaranda, is a patriarch who sees no role for women in war. When Mavonde is attacked by Rhodesian Airforce and Infantry Angela, the trained guerrilla

girl is there. So too is Fangs, the guerrilla commander. Yet Samupindi tells the reader that “on the ground, it was men against men” (p.77), not women against (wo)men. It is Fangs the guerrilla boy who fights to the bitter end and not “Angela of unbridled passion. Angela of bright, loving eyes. Angela!” (p.80) (Fangs once made love to Angela of “unbridled passion” when she was a *chimbwido* at the front). Angela is not described anywhere fighting in the battle. She is only seen as a sexual object of Fang’s imagination. It is only after the battle is over that Fangs, the guerrilla hero, searches for Angela “of unbridled passion”, not of heroic action, and finds “her body dangling from a tree, a metre from the ground” (p.182), dead. The reader does not hear a single shot fired by her, and another opportunity to show a female guerrilla in action is lost. Valentine Mazorodze too, in *Silent Journey from the East* (1989) merely refers to a woman guerrilla, Comrade Shungu Dzehondo, as the commander in charge of three hundred men. The woman is remembered by Alexio (p.77) but she is never seen firing a shot. Even Aaron Chiundura Moyo’s attempt at creating a female guerrilla fighter in *Nguo Dzouswa* (1985) fails. His female fictional guerrilla, Kudzai, is never portrayed anywhere fighting “thereby rendering her heroine status into a spiritual, mental and moral idiosy” (Viriri, 1999:202).

The depiction of the role played by Angela in *Pawns* (1992) has been used alongside the depiction of the role played by Tsitsi in *Vavariro* (1990) to reinforce Lyons’ (2004:27) point that “a discussion of women as fighters is mostly absent from the discourse about war by both male and female writers”. The view of women’s role in war vis-à-vis their perceived natural roles in the domestic sphere has dominated the perceptions, assumptions, and stereotypes of women in war (Lyons, 2004:19).

6.8 CONCLUSION

The major argument that has been advanced in this chapter is that women do not seem to have a meaningful role to play in Shona war fiction. Women guerrilla fighters are conspicuous by their absence in a fiction that is about a guerrilla war. The chapter shows that “women are shadowy figures who hover on the fringes of the plot, suckling infants, cooking, plaiting their hair” (Mtuzze, 1990:32). There are reasons for that. Women are not usually found as heroines in Shona literature, oral or written. Other reasons proffered are that most people, including those who later gave

'accounts of the war' as writers of war fiction never saw a single female guerrilla throughout the liberation war itself, perhaps because as Nhongo-Simbanegavi (2000:83) says "the handful of women deployed to the front were more likely to be found in ZANLA rear bases". Another argument that has been raised is that the pioneers of the guerrilla war were almost all men and hence in their consciousness people came to associate the liberation war with men. By the time women were recruited the language that was essential for the construction of reality was already in place and this is the language that writers adopted in their works. The final point raised is that the negative portrayal of female roles in the liberation war results from lack of women writers who can tell the story of the war from the women's perspective. The point that the chapter raises is therefore that as long as women do not tell their own story and portray positive images of women's involvement in that war men will not do it for them. Men will continue to give glorified accounts which revolve around men while painting pictures of pitiful girls who long to get married and produce children for male guerrilla fighters.

CHAPTER 7

PERSPECTIVES ON THE WAR AFTERMATH

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Various chapters of this thesis have looked at Shona war fiction writers' perspectives on Zimbabwe's war of liberation. Different writers' perspectives on the war have been discussed and the factors that shaped those perspectives have also been analysed. Having looked at the various perspectives the Shona war fiction writers had on the actual guerrilla war itself, this chapter turns to look at how the writers see the independence and freedom that are the products of the liberation war. Zimbabwe's liberation war that is the subject of the literature under study resulted in a free and independent nation state. This chapter now focuses on discussing how the various authors of Shona war fiction view the meaning of this freedom and independence to those who were at the centre of the armed struggle.

7.2 AT THE HOME FRONT

It was noted in Chapter 1 that a war novel, among other things, might be a domestic setting (at the home front) where the characters are recovering from war. This chapter on the war aftermath looks at how the characters in the war novels are settling down and recovering from the war situation. Not every war novelist studied in this research, however, goes beyond the end of the war itself to speculate on the post-war era. The stories in some of the novels analysed in this thesis end before or at independence. Nyawaranda's *Mutunhu Une Mago* (1985) and Makata's *Gona ReChimurenga* (1982) end well before the actual end of the war itself. Pesanai's *Gukurahundi* (1985) ends at the time of the ceasefire. Both Makata and Pesanai write the formulaic expression '*Magumo*' (used by the traditional *sarungano*/story-teller) to indicate that they have come to the end of their narratives. However, a few writers did try to speculate about the war aftermath. These include Makari and Choto in *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) and *Vavariro* (1990), respectively. It is possible to speculate and say when other writers felt that victory celebration was over they decided to stop and they ended their novels. However, others were probably

reluctant to bid their fictional characters farewell. They got carried away and travelled with them into the war aftermath against the advice to avoid “prolonging the story unnecessarily after it is over through reluctance to say farewell to the characters” (Boas and Smith, 1925:228).

Those writers who travelled with their fictional characters into the war aftermath are now grouped together in this chapter with playwrights Wiseman Magwa and Aaron Chiundura Moyo who pick up the war story from right at the end of the liberation war and speculate a lot about how the characters in their dramas recover from the war situation. Magwa and Moyo wanted to comment on the quality of the freedom and independence brought by the war. Wars have causes, events and results. If a novelist writes about a war he may include its causes, events and its results. Just as some of the writers gave the causes of the liberation war in their novels they also gave some of its results and this compelled them to venture into the war aftermath. The war aftermath in this study therefore includes the immediate results of the war as the characters settled down to reconstruct their lives and their country. The war novels, which are the subject of this study, portray fictional characters in a situation of war. In the war aftermath the writers seek to comment on the quality of freedom and independence achieved. They seek to say something about how the major actors in the war fared in the immediate war aftermath. They also seem to want to say something about the way forward in the process of reconstructing the country ravaged by war.

7.3 APPEASING THE ANCESTORS

The first phase in the reconstruction process is the appeasement of the ancestral spirits. As shown in Chapter 5, authors of Zimbabwe’s liberation war fiction believe that Zimbabwe’s guerrilla war was fought and won with the blessing and support of the living dead. They believe that it is the ancestors who looked after the guerrillas and protected them from the enemy. It has been shown in Chapter 5 that most, if not all, of the Shona war fiction writers see the role of traditional religion in the guerrilla war as paramount. The reconstruction of the guerrilla’s life after the war begins with the ceremony and ritual conducted to welcome the guerrilla back from the war.

People brew beer and celebrate the life of the returned guerrilla. The authors seem to be saying the people must make peace with their ancestors.

In Makari's *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) VaMberikwazvo "*vaida kutenda midzimu yavo yakanga yapunyusa nokunzvengesa mwana wavo mupfumvu dzisingaverengeki*" (p.77) (Mberikwazvo wanted to thank his ancestors who had saved his son from all sorts of dangers). When the reader reads that "*Eheka, vakuru vanozviziva kuti midzimu ishiri, kutukwa kana kumhurwa inobhurururka*" (p.77) (Of course, the elders know that ancestors are birds, if scolded or shown disrespect, they fly away) he knows that it is Makari the omniscient narrator who is speaking. As Gelfand (1975-6:126) points out:

[w]hat is striking in Shona religion is the belief in the power of the *vadzimu* to cause sickness or indeed any reversal, tragedy or misfortune in life or even to bring about death.

Makari is actually telling the reader that it is important for all those guerrillas who survived the war to thank their ancestors who made it possible for them to come back alive from the war. So VaMberikwazvo organised a traditional ceremony to thank his ancestors for his son Moses (whose Chimurenga name is Joe Chimurenga) who came back from the war alive. Not everyone came back alive. Other fictional characters such as Comrade Dinkaka (*Silent Journey from the East*, 1989), Comrades Masango and Shamwariyeropa (*Gona ReChimurenga*, 1982) and Comrade Gabarinocheka (*Zvaida Kushinga*, 1985), to mention but a few, fought great battles but did not survive the war. In Choto's *Vavariro* (1990) "*Jeri nevamwe vake vakaronga zvekurova makuva evabereki vavo avo vakanga vafa muhondo. VaChimoto ndivo vaitungamirira zvirongwa zvose*" (p.147) (Jeri and his colleagues made plans to conduct traditional ceremonies for their parents who had died in the war. VaChimoto was the master of ceremonies). In Magwa's *Njuzu* (1991) (a war play) the author also shows that the starting point for an African in reconstructing his life after the war is to appease his ancestors and thank them for looking after and protecting their offspring during the time he was in the '*kumazivandadzoka*' (where one may never return). Nyika's father tells the gathering that:

Hwahwa hwandabika pano ndehwekutenda vadzimu vangu kuti vakatarira mwana uyu kusvikira hondo yapera. Ndiani aifunga kuti vana ava vaizodzoka vari vapenyu kuzoonana nesu sezvizvi? (p.25)

(The beer I brewed here is for thanking my ancestors who looked after my child till the end of the war. Who ever imagined that these children would come back alive and be with us like this again?)

When Tete speaks she shows that she thinks like a Christian believer rather than a traditionalist. To her God is paramount, which is why she talks of “*Mwari ngaarumbidzwe*” (Praise the Lord) rather than talk of the living dead of her people. However, no sooner than she finishes her congratulatory remarks than the crowd burst into a song in praise of the ancestors “*Vadzimu hoye, vadzimu hoye, Huyai muzoona*” (p.26) (Ancestors, ancestors, Come and witness). Whatever one believes in the important thing is that people recognise the role of the power of the ancestors that was active in the lives of the guerrillas while they were in the bush, and that power continues in the life of the community even after the war has ended. The believers feel that their ancestors are living in and among them (Chinyowa, 2001:12).

More importantly, reconstructing one’s life begins with finding one’s place within the family institution and within the community. War uprooted people and destroyed communities. War placed people into different warring political parties. It placed people against each other and others committed heinous crimes against their own people. Now it is time to conduct ceremonies and rituals under the watchful eye of the guardian spirit. When VaMberikwazvo conducts the traditional ceremony to welcome Moses back from the war the community is also there to witness this event. In the crowd there are soldiers, policemen, comrades (ex-guerrillas), teachers and many others. In short, former enemies are sharing the experience. This shows that people may belong to antagonistic political parties, ideologies or even armies, but when it comes to conducting traditional ceremonies and rituals in peacetime people of the same family or the same community come together under the watchful eye of the guardian spirit. The master of ceremonies at Moses Mberikwazvo’s welcome back party puts it metaphorically:

Ndakanyatsoona mapere akarara muchirugwi chimwe chete nembudzi. Handiti inenji guru, nhai hama dzangu? (p.78)

(I actually saw hyenas sleeping in the same kraal with goats. Is it not a bad omen?)

Marufu is a soldier in the Rhodesian army. Moses is an ex-guerrilla just returned from the bush war. Marufu reveals that just some time in the previous year he and his uncle's son, Moses, exchanged fire in the operational zone. Now they were sharing a mug of traditional brew together. Makari is saying that this is a new era of peace. The war is over. Makari probably remembers the adage that "in politics there are no permanent friends, no permanent enemies; there are only permanent interests" (John Kass, quoted by Plath, 2009/07/22).

With the metaphor of the hyenas and the goats sleeping in the same kraal Makari (through Marufu) sets the tone for a new era of reconciliation. Moses says,

Vabereki regereranai zvese zvakaitika muhondo. Tose takanga tiri pakati pokutsvaka gwara raizotivitsa murusununguko (p.79).

(Parents forgive each other for all the things that happened during the war. We were all in the process of trying to find the road that would lead us to freedom.)

So there should not be any permanent enemies. However, there is a permanent interest, the interest in the struggle to find the road to freedom.

Makari, through Moses, has set the tone for the process of reconciliation to begin. He is echoing the words of the then Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, who, on Zimbabwe's Independence Day Celebrations, said:

Our new nation requires of every one of us to be a new man, with a new mind, a new heart and a new spirit...! Is it not folly therefore, that in these circumstances anybody should seek to revive the wounds and grievances of the past. The wrongs of the past must now stand forgiven and forgotten.... We must now turn our swords into ploughshares (*The Herald*, April 18, 1980).

At the end of Makari's story the reader can clearly see the author's reluctance to bid his fictional characters farewell. Failure to bid his fictional characters farewell allows Makari the opportunity to preach his vision of the war aftermath-an era of forgiveness and reconciliation, an era of hard work to achieve socialist goals through hard work and the development of cooperatives. It gives him the opportunity to conscientise the nation about the need to fight a new war to decolonise the mind. Above all he talks

about the importance of unity when Moses says “*Ngatibatanei sesvinga rehuni*” (p.81) (Let us be united like a bundle of firewood).

The last chapter of Makari’s novel *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985) becomes highly moralistic and didactic. This is not surprising because this is a war romance and a Shona romance, like a folktale, may end up teaching moral lessons. The author ends up boring the reader by giving him a few political lessons. It must be recalled that, as noted in Chapter 2, Shona war fiction writer’s accounts of the war tend to agree with the official ZANU (PF) version of the war. Now Makari’s attempt to comment on “the quality of ‘Freedom’” (Maughan-Brown, 1985:206) in the war aftermath tends to betray his own political thinking. This reduces his novel to a mere endorsement of official ZANU (PF) post-independence policies. Wilson (1972:247) reminds the reader of the letter that Fredrich Engels wrote to Margaret Harkness warning her that the more the novelist allows his political ideas to “remain hidden, the better it is for the work of art”. Makari’s political ideas are not hidden. They are preached through his fictional character, Moses Mberikwazvo. That makes the reader to see the relevance of Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s point that:

‘...the arts try to make us not only see and understand the world of man and nature, apprehend it, but to see and understand it in a certain way, or from the angle of vision of the artist’ (1983:57).

It is possible to postulate that since Makari was a civil servant at this time, and one who had supported the war as an adult *mujibha*, it was possible that he was also seeking attention from the ZANU (PF) government. In other words, he was probably trying to endear himself with the new rulers.

Makari is keenly aware of the fact that the ordinary people erroneously believe that achieving political independence means that all the struggles are over. Makari himself sees the end of war and the attainment of independence as simply the end of one phase in the long walk to freedom. The author is conscious of the fact that the ordinary people have a very mistaken notion of what Zimbabwe’s independence means. He does not see the attainment of Zimbabwe’s independence as a signal to relax and enjoy one self. To him it is time to work to reconstruct the country ravaged

by thirteen years of a violent war. In the words of Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986:3) both Makari and his work,

...were products of the revolution even as the writer and the literature tried to understand, reflect, and interpret that revolution.

Indeed Makari was trying to understand, reflect and interpret the Zimbabwean revolution. Makari feels that the people need to be educated so that they can understand the meaning, not just of independence, but also of Zimbabwe's independence. People have the notion that Zimbabwe's independence means taking over white men's properties such as farms. They think independence means government providing them with facilities that were previously enjoyed by the white people while the people themselves sit back. The people addressed by Moses are heard saying:

Ngaatiudze kuti tichatora mapurazi avaRungu riini hondo zvayapera? Ko iyo hurumende ichatiitira chii kuti tigogarawo upenyu hwakafanana nehwaRungu vatinosweroona vachifamba nemotokari? Tinoda kuti hurumende ititengere matarakita igotivakira dzimba sedzavaRungu. Ko hurumende ichatiisira magetsi nembombi dzemvura riini? (p.58).

(He must tell us when we will take over white men's farms now that the war is over? What will the government do for us so that we can live the kind of life led by whites that we see always driving in cars? We want the government to buy us tractors and build us houses like those of the white people. When will the government give us electricity and piped water?)

This shows "...the great expectations of the majority for radical change" (Tshuma, 1997:53). This also shows that Makari is worried about the dependence syndrome displayed by the majority of the peasants. They think because they have just won freedom and independence it means that the government must do everything for them, like giving them tractors, electricity, piped water and other nice things. They want to live the life that has been lived by the white people whom they have just dislodged from a position of privilege. Perhaps Makari is concerned about the problem of "black skins concealing colonial settlers' hearts" (Ngugi wa Thiongo, 1986:7). He feels 90 years of colonial subjugation left "*pfungwa dzevanhu dzakatoputana sezviya zvinoita dehwe risina kukakwa*" (p.81) (People's minds were like a crumbled hide). The statement 'black skins concealing colonial settlers' hearts

cannot therefore be used to describe the behaviour of black political leaders alone. Even the ruled, the ordinary people themselves, given an opportunity, would love to be like their former white oppressors. They would like to move from the position they occupy to the position formerly occupied by the white oppressors and possibly become the new oppressors themselves. This is the attitude that Makari wants to change. He wants his book to do some propaganda work for the new government.

7.4 PERSPECTIVES OF THE PESSIMIST

If Makari's perspective on Zimbabwe's war aftermath looks optimistic, Magwa's perspective is quite pessimistic. Magwa opted to take advantage of the audio-visual impact of dramatic performance to paint a gloomy picture of the immediate war aftermath. He chooses to dramatise what he perceives as the negative qualities of Zimbabwe's independence. Magwa's war drama portrays a gloomy picture because it does not see anything good coming out of the independence brought about by the liberation war. It focuses on the negatives only. Magwa seems to want to place the independent state of Zimbabwe together with Central African countries whose literature shows that "people are subjected to the same oppressive misery, which condemn them to live a life full of despair" (Kitenge-Ngoy, 2004:181). These negatives are reflected in the emotional crises that three of his characters, Nyika, Mhungu and Matope, go through as they try to settle down in the war aftermath.

The play *Njuzu* (1991) begins towards the end of Zimbabwe's liberation war and crosses over into the early moments of independence. The author is therefore able to capture the moods on both sides of the divide. On one hand he captures the excitement of winning the war, the ceasefire, and the euphoria and the expectation of things to come. On the other hand he also captures the disillusionment and frustrations of the people whose dreams have not been fulfilled. When the play begins the author captures two things. On one hand there is the expectation of the end of the war and the beginning of a new era of freedom and good things:

*Nyika yedu yauya, vabereki...Panyika pachanakidza kugara vabereki.
Hamheno havo vachatadza kuona rufaro urwu. Panenge pasisina
kupambirwa pfuma zvamuri kuitwa nenjuzu nhasi uno (p.18).*

(Our country has come parents...Life on earth will be worth living, parents. I feel sorry for those who will not get to experience this happiness. Mermaids [whites] will not steal your wealth again as is what is happening today.)

The other thing the author captures is the problem of dissidents. Matope is, in Magwa's allegory, a Rhodesian soldier who has opted to become a dissident by refusing to join the others in the Zimbabwe national army on the pretext that the new black government has not fulfilled terms of the agreement that brought about peace. Matope is seen physically and sexually abusing *Mai Nyasha*, a heavily pregnant woman, and brutalising her son Nyasha. In a poem given before the play opens the author shows that Matope and others like him are operating outside the law and insinuates that this is affecting tourism. The author's consciousness is shaped by his memory of the activities of dissidents early at independence which often led to the killing or disappearance of tourists visiting the country. However, the author does not seem to have the energy to pursue this theme of dissidence and he quickly abandons it and brings Matope back into the national army. Matope's dissident activities are what he himself in his soul-searching song calls "*povho yaramba zvemadhisinyongoro*" (p.21) (The people have said no to anarchy). The author too is actually saying 'no' to dissident activity.

However, once Matope, Mhungu Nyika and others are now together in the barracks Magwa goes on a mission to take stock of what he perceives as the shortcomings of independence. Publishing his play almost eleven years after independence he imagines that he is in a vantage point from where he can comment on the way the ex-combatant has been helped to settle down in the war aftermath. Incidentally, although he writes towards the end of the first decade of Zimbabwe's independence romanticisation and idealisation of the war is still evident in the only one scene in which the guerrilla fighter (Nyika) addresses the *povo* at a *pungwe* (night meeting) and in the scene in which he is welcomed back from the war. However, no sooner than Nyika has been welcomed home than Magwa begins to comment on the way the post-independence state has treated the ex-freedom fighters, whether in the army or in civilian life.

It is possible to argue that Magwa is influenced by what he has seen or known of former freedom fighters after independence to make the kind of comments he makes.

Magwa tries to demonstrate that in the new political and socio-economic order established after 1980, colonial structures remained virtually intact in spite of the attainment of independence. This state of affairs tended to irk the rank and file of the ex-guerrilla fighters. A former guerrilla fighter named Joseph Mwakudza told *Moto* (March, 1985, p.8) that:

Not much has changed. We see people of the past regime being promoted and upheld, the people who were in the bush are exploited and suffering.

Magwa's fictional character, Nyika, complains bitterly that top positions in the army were left in the hands of the whites. This is, however, not surprising. One result of the pragmatic policy of reconciliation saw General Peter Walls, the head of the Rhodesian army that the guerrillas were fighting, "indeed made supreme commander of the armed forces" (Smith and Simpson, 1981:206). Elsewhere David Smith, a longtime ally of Ian Smith, was made Minister of Commerce, while Dennis Norman, the president of the white farmers' union, was appointed to the agriculture ministry. Also the newly independent government had inherited the CIO intact. It was still headed by its old director, Ken Flower, after independence (Chung, 2006:274). Another example of the survival of the colonial officers involved Lionel Dyke, one of the most notorious Rhodesian military officers, who had violently opposed the liberation struggle. He became one of the military leaders in charge of suppressing the dissidents in Matebeleland in the early 1980s (Chung, 2006:274). According to Tshuma (1997:52):

This policy of reconciliation and the government of national unity were dictated by the need to create stability in a country emerging from war and to allay whatever fears whites might have had about the new dispensation.

However, it is such arrangements, meant to give a practical face to the policy of reconciliation, that shaped Magwa's consciousness when he makes Nyika to complain that "*Tose takasvikoitwa varanda toshanda tiri pasi pemauto enjuzu*" (p.28) (We were all made slaves and worked under the supervision of mermaids [whites]). The argument that takes place between Nyika and Matope in *Chitambo 1, Dariro V* ends up in a fight. When the military police arrive they arrest Nyika and leave Matope alone. This shows the partiality of the police in handling former guerrillas and former

Rhodesian forces now joined together to form the Zimbabwe National Army, and seem to be pointing at the problems besetting the policy of reconciliation in the military early at independence. Magwa is consciously aware of this arrangement that left whites in charge of some key portfolios and is asking pertinent questions that some frustrated ex-guerrillas were also asking.

Choto in *Vavairo* (1990) shows that he shares Magwa's perspective on the war aftermath. Two of his characters, VaChimoto and Kanyuchi, are disturbed by this arrangement that left some whites in positions of influence even after independence. They are particularly disturbed by the fact that Rhodesian soldiers became part of the Zimbabwe National Army, when they thought their own liberation forces would take over completely. This was, however, what Choto calls "Reconciliation period" (p.147).

The plight of many ex-guerrillas injured during the war touched Magwa's conscience. Nyika in *Njuzu* (1991) reveals that he lost his fingers in battle during the liberation war but has received no assistance from the black government. Nyika speaks on behalf of "amputees who have lost limbs, or have had their breasts removed-forgotten in the rural areas where they are likely to die in oblivion" (*Moto*, no.94, November 1990). This issue also touched the conscience of another playwright who writes in English. In his play, *The Rain of My Blood* (1991), George Mujajati dramatises the plight of ex-combatants who were injured during the war and are now considered as misfits in post-independence society. Mujajati is questioning how the government expects "single-legged, wheel-chair-ridden ex-combatants to be self-employed (as carpenters)" (p.98). Tawanda walks with a limp and has only one arm, the other having been lost in the war. Tawanda argues that:

We demand that we should be treated like ex-combatants, not like a troublesome crowd of cripples. We demanded our due respect; the respect that should be given to all our liberators whether dead, living, crippled, unemployed, or holding ministerial posts (p.98).

Mujajati and Magwa's concerns are shared by Sungano in *Kuda Muhondo* (1985). Sungano does not speculate much about the war aftermath. However, in the last but one paragraph of the last page of his novel he presents his main character, Kuda Hondo, at the end of the war now with a wooden leg. His human leg was lost in the war. Peter, his long time university friend who did not join the war, now despises him.

When Peter comes to see Kuda Hondo he stays for a very short time and leaves, and it is clear to Kuda Hondo that his friend now despises him because of his condition. It is the way society looks at ex-combatants that Magwa and Sungano as well as Mujajati comment upon in their works. As for Magwa, his character Nyika (an ex-combatant) presents the reader with a litany of complaints. Nyika complains that ex-combatants have not been given land, yet according to him, this was the main reason for going to war. In addition, he complains about lack of employment for ex-combatants, especially for those without experience and for those without 'O' level passes. Sethembiso, a female ex-combatant complained to *Moto* (No.94, November, 1990) that "they made us leave school, but today wherever you go looking for jobs, they ask for 'O' or 'A' levels". Weitzer (cited in Kriger, 1995:226) notes that despite government efforts to employ ex-guerrillas, about 25,000 were unemployed in March 1988.

Nyika also complains about high school and hospital fees. It seems Magwa's consciousness is shaped by the experiences of life under the "'infamous' Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP)" (Vambe, 2001:86). Although he writes about the liberation war and its immediate aftermath his consciousness is influenced by ESAP because of the time that he writes his play. He publishes his play in 1991 and by that time ESAP was already biting. So when he comments on the war aftermath his sensibilities appear to be informed by the state of the economy during the time of ESAP.

To emphasize the sense of frustration of former guerrilla fighters Magwa's fictional character, Nyika, leaves the army. He subsequently gets into trouble with the police after being conned by thieves. He ends up becoming a domestic worker for the Muchengeti family whose members he sacrificed his life to liberate. Magwa seems to be noting that settling down in the aftermath of the war has not been that easy for many ex-combatants. One ex-combatant interviewed by Teresa Barnes (1995:118) in 1991 summed up the plight of many frustrated former freedom fighters when he said:

Perhaps I can still succeed if I work hard. But I don't know how harder I can work; I thought I was working hard in the armed struggle for independence-but only to find that I have gained completely nothing!

It seems his fate is not different from the fate of some *Mau Mau* fighters in Kenya who returned home after their struggle. One of them complained that:

The life I returned to was exactly the same as the one I left out four years earlier; no land, no job, no representation and no dignity (Maughan-Brown, 1985:30)

Magwa in *Njuzu* (1991) took it upon himself to articulate the problems faced by ex-combatants in the immediate war aftermath. Like singer Paul Matavire and others Magwa seems to be raising the issue of why the majority of the people still lived in abject poverty against the background of the state's 'socialist' policies on health, education and land (Vambe, 2001:83).

7.5 PERSPECTIVES ON THE LAND ISSUE

Unlike Makata and Nyawaranda whose novels end before the end of the liberation war itself, Choto's novel *Vavairo* (1990) goes beyond the ceasefire and the election to talk about the quality of Zimbabwe's independence. While Magwa's *Njuzu* (1991) focuses on the plight of the ex-combatants as they recover from the war Choto's *Vavairo* (1990) and Moyo's *Kuridza Ngoma Nedemo* (1985), like Makari's *Zvaida Kushinga* (1985), focus on the plight of the peasants as they also try to recover from the same war. *Kuridza Ngoma Nedemo* (1985) is set soon after the war. It is considered here because it is essentially a statement about the immediate results of the liberation war. In particular, Choto and Moyo focus on the land question.

For nearly one hundred and twenty years since 1890 land has been at the centre of Zimbabwe's political, economic, cultural and social struggles. To many black Zimbabweans the alienation and expropriation of land has been the exasperating feature of colonial legacy that led to their enslavement, poverty and misery. The land issue, as noted in Chapter 4, was therefore central in the liberation war. As Tshuma (1997:1) argues, to black Zimbabweans the agrarian question encapsulated some of the worst evils of colonialism and exploitation and was therefore one of their major grievances against colonialism. The liberation war was therefore fought to liberate that land and restore it to its rightful owners. It should be noted, as Jones (1996:50) does, that:

Post-war Zimbabwean writing examines the meaning of the liberation achieved through the sacrifices of the combatants and the plight of the ordinary people, often caught in the middle, the inheritors of the victory.

To the former 'man in the middle', the 'dubious' inheritor of the victory, meaningful liberation and independence means the recovery of the lost land. One of Choto's fictional characters, VaChimoto points this out:

Tiri kutonga zvechokwadi muZimbabwe. Dzimba dzanaDereki nhasi uno dzava dzedu. Iyi ndiyo inonzi indipendenzi zveshuwa. (p.149)

(We are now ruling in the true sense of the word. Houses that used to belong to the likes of Derek are now ours. This is what it means to be truly independent.)

Interestingly, the reader is once again reminded of the folly of believing that independence means inheriting and living in the house of the departed white man. The reader gets this feeling again that the peasants think independence means living like a white person, when in fact independence should mean living like yourself. However, the bottom line is that the white man's house is built on the land and land is what Choto mainly focuses on at the end of his novel.

Choto sees the land as "the source of the people's belief in themselves, whose productivity sustained them" (Jones, 1996:53). Some of the peasants in *Vavariro* (1990) simply leave the impoverished sandy soils they have been occupying for decades and move to settle themselves on the rich, fertile white man's farm. VaChimoto, Kanyuchi and others occupy Derek's farm without waiting to be resettled by government. VaChimoto says to Kanyuchi, "*Ndizvo tairwira izvi, komuredhi*" (p.149) (This is what we were fighting for, comrade). Simply moving to occupy the farm is a natural consequence of the sacrifices they made during the war. War was about land, so they simply go to live on it. There are surely no formalities. The fertility of the soil and the quality of the crops produced from it are magnificently and poetically described by the new 'illegal settlers' as they partake of the traditional brew made from the crop harvested from this rich soil:

Hunonzi hwahwa, Kanyuchi. Ungatambe nevhu repano iyewe... Ipwa dzapano dzinonaka kudarika dzekwatakabva. Chibage chepano

chinonaka kudarika kumazijeche kwatakatiza. Zviyo zvepano zvinoita doro rinonaka kupinda mazimvura ataimwa kumazijeche kwatakanga tarasirwa naSimisi. Mukati bhurazi uya mupenyu? (p.149).

(This is what is called beer, Kanyuchi. You cannot underestimate the quality of the soil here.... Sweet canes grown here are sweeter than those at our former place. Maize planted here grows bigger than that grown in the sandy soils we abandoned. Finger millet grown here makes much better beer than the watery stuff we used to drink at the sandy soils where Smith had dumped us. By the way, is that fellow still alive?)

Contrasting images of fertility and infertility are used to bring out the difference between life under colonial land deprivation and life lived on the rich land just 'repossessed'. The new rich soil nourishes the nation and is contrasted with the old poor soil, which undernourished the people.

The nationalist guerrillas had always used the land issue as a rallying point in their bid to win the support of the peasants in the war against colonialism. They had always used the emotive issue of land to galvanise people into action against colonial rule. They promised people at *pungwes* (night rallies) and anywhere else that when war was won the people would occupy white owned farms and take white men's properties. These were promises made to people who owned nothing and they risked their lives supporting the war in the hope that they would be better off when independence came. When war ended and ZANU (PF) won the election overwhelmingly the people, who had always been made to believe that "*munhu ndiyo hurumende*" (The people are the government) (*Zvaida Kushinga*, p.81), thought that they now had an inalienable right to occupy the white man's farms, and they occupied them. After all, as Alexander (2003:86) notes, immediately after independence, expectations of a rapid and popularly controlled redistribution of land ran high, fed by guerrilla promises and nationalists' claims to the 'lost lands'. When those expectations were not met the people decided to act on their own.

While the peasants in Choto's *Vavairo* (1990) occupy deceased Derek's farm and farmhouse, in Moyo's *Kuridza Ngoma Nedemo* (1985) the peasants occupy a farm that is still occupied by its white owner. In both cases the peasants ask pertinent questions that underlie the contradictions inherent in the struggle to return the land to its rightful owners. When Nhamoyetsoka comes from Parliament in Harare to evict

the so-called squatters, the peasants ask such pertinent questions as “*Mava kuda kuti titongwe zvakare here navaRungu, makomuredzi?*” (p.150) (Do you want us to be ruled again by the Europeans, comrades?) This question is asked because the black Member of Parliament in a black government has come to evict the black ‘squatters’ in response to a white Member of Parliament who raised the concern in parliament on behalf of his fellow white man, who is the owner of the farm. Early at independence the government defended the central role of the whites in the economy (Alexander, 2003:86). Chimoto further asks, “*Munoziva here kuti vana vedu vakapera kufira muhondo naidzo nyaya dzevhu idzi?*” (p.151) (Do you know that our children perished in the war because of this land issue?). In Moyo’s *Kuridza Ngoma Nedemo* (1985) Tinazvo explains that:

Hondo takarova; misha neupfumi zvakaparadzwa nemuvengi; kuvhota takavhota; saka izvi zvose ndizvo zvinoita kuti purazi rino rose rive redu pasina kupokana...ndiyo Zimbabwe yeduvo ino (p.12).

(We fought the war, we died; homes and wealth were destroyed by the enemy; we voted; so this is all what makes us say this whole farm is ours without any question...this is what we call our Zimbabwe.)

Tinazvo says this also in response to the white man’s demand that the ‘squatters’ vacate his farm and go back to where they came from. Given the centrality of land to anti-colonial struggles, both ZANU and ZAPU promised land redistribution programmes in the event of victory (Tshuma, 1997:28). Messages of promises were drilled into the heads of the *povo* over and over again at night *pungwes* called *moraris* in the liberation war zones. The people were promised that they would inherit white farms, houses, cars and jobs (Kriger, 1995:98). The peasants were good listeners and they had good memories. Above all they were poor. Now that victory had come they expected to get land and these other good things immediately.

Choto and Moyo see these contradictions as arising from two things. The first is that the nationalist movement wanted to deliberately use the *povo* to achieve their nationalist goals. So this propaganda was seen as necessary. The second thing is that the *povo* on their part lacked the necessary sophistication to make the difference between what was feasible and what was not feasible and tended to believe everything they were told. To show how gullible the *povo* were and how they believed

everything and anything they were promised during the war VaChimoto, when asked by Tumirai why they had gone to live on Derek's farm, responds saying "*Handiti ndimi makatiudza kuti kana hondo yapera tichanogara mumapurazi avachena?*" (p.154) (Is it not you who told us that when the war is over we will go and settle on the white man's farms?). Some of the guerrillas themselves, whose level of sophistication was not very different from that of the peasants from where they had come from, tended to get overzealous with their propaganda. They exaggerated things. Some guerrillas made wild promises with a millennial tone (Kriger, 1995:158). The peasants on their part swallowed everything, hook, line and sinker.

In the early 1980s the euphoria that accompanied independence was dying away. People were not receiving the unlimited tracts of land and wealth that they had been led to expect while they were fighting the liberation war (Bourdillon, 1993:119) The people had expected that independence would see the removal of the fences that demarcated rich soils occupied by the Europeans from the poor sandy soils occupied by the blacks. When the fences were not immediately collapsed the peasants themselves collapsed them and moved in to settle on European farms. While the government followed its preferred policy of land acquisition at that time the 1980s witnessed low-intensity land occupations or 'squatting', carried out by various communities (Raftopoulos, 2004:3) These are some of the developments that influenced writers like Choto and Moyo to focus on the land issue.

Choto seems to think that the ordinary people are more interested in bread and butter issues than in constitutions made in foreign capitals. They have no use for these pieces of paper. As Alexander (2003:84) indicates, the transition to independence in 1980 was hedged in by constraints of a negotiated settlement, moderation and reconciliation. However, the constitution constrained the government. The generality of black Zimbabweans wanted first to regain their lost lands before they could think of forgiveness (Chinyowa, 2001:94). Hence, one hears Kanyuchi in Choto's *Vavariro* (1990) dismissing the Lancaster Constitution saying,

Zvana konisitusheni izvi hazvina nebasa rese zviya. Chipepa chinonetsei tinochibvarura kana kutoswera tochimoneresa fodya zvedu isu vanaKanyuchi. (p.145)

(These constitutions are not important. A piece of paper is not a problem. We tear it up or people like me Kanyuchi can use it to roll tobacco into cigarettes.)

Any ardent reader of the history of the colonisation of Zimbabwe will take Kanyuchi's threats seriously. In 1889 King Lobengula repudiated the Rudd Concession after he had, a year earlier, repudiated another, the Grobler Treaty. Illiterate African people did not have much of a problem with tearing up agreements written on pieces of paper. A word of mouth was more binding. Of the Rudd Concession Lobengula declared, "I have since had a meeting with my Indunas and they will not recognize the paper" (Mason, 1958:131). The peasants in Choto's *Vavariro* (1990) will not be deterred by constitutions, which they do not even understand. If government will not give people enough land because its hands are tied by the terms of a constitution, the land-hungry peasants themselves will take the law into their own hands and occupy the land. After all they were not there at Lancaster but they were there in the war where they fought and were promised land in abundance. When Choto allows Kanyuchi to threaten that "*One day vachamhanya vakabatira mabhurugwa mumaoko*" (p145) (One day they will leave in a hurry) he is being prophetic. He recognises the land issue as a vexing question that will, if not resolved, continue to create problems for white farmers in Zimbabwe. Those problems came to a head in 2000 and beyond with the land invasions led by war veterans that even led to loss of lives.

Also, war fiction writers recognise a sense of hopelessness, despair, frustration and disillusionment in the peasants with the direction things were going in the war aftermath. The peasants do not understand why a black government made up of comrades who promised so much land to the people during the liberation war should tell them to go back to their sandy soils where they were once dumped by Smith (*Kumajecha kwatanga tarasirwa naSimiti* (p.149)) The peasants do not understand why the black government which they helped into power should use what Ngugi wa Thiongo (1986:9) calls "well maintained police boots" against them. In Choto's *Vavariro* (1990) the police come with guns, bulldozers and police dogs to effect evictions of the new settlers. In Moyo's *Kuridza Ngoma Nedemo* (1985) the police are also used against the Tangwena squatters. Chung (2006:273) notes that there was fierce bureaucratic opposition to the distribution of good farmland to poor and

landless peasants in the early 1980s, especially by the middle class who were appalled at the idea of so much good land going to the peasantry whom they thought could not use the land optimally. So “enforcing eviction, sometimes with brutal force became more acceptable and more common with time” (Alexander, 2003:88)

Choto and Moyo seem to see things from the perspective that in the war aftermath the landless peasants often got so disillusioned that the image of the guerrilla fighters they had during the war was dented. They became so disillusioned that they even questioned the war credentials of their former freedom fighters. In Choto's *Vavairo* (1990) *amai* Sekesai asks:

Sei muchitaura sevanhu vasina kumborumwa nehumhutu? Mukati muri makomuredzi chaiwo iyemi? (p.151).

(Why do you behave as if you were never bitten by insects? Are you genuine comrades, you people?)

In Chiundura Moyo's *Kuridza Ngoma Nedemo* (1985) Tinazvo derides his son Comrade Hondo (ex-guerrilla), who insists that his parents should leave the white man's farm and go back to their original home, saying:

Kana ndikakubvunza kuti kuhondo ikoko, wakauraya mabhunu mangani, ungandiudze kana rimwe chete zvaro iwe? (p.44)

(If I ask how many Boers you killed in the war can you name even one?)

Nowhere in Shona literature is post-independence disillusionment and despair as strong as it is in the emotive question of land distribution.

It is worth noting that in both Choto's *Vavairo* (1990) and Moyo's *Kuridza Ngoma Nedemo* (1985) the name Tangwena is used to name a place of a settlement or place of habitation. In Choto's *Vavairo* (1990) the man VaChimoto shares beer with in Rambanai Beerhall in Mbare says that he lives *patangwena* at the Mbare Market (p.153). In Moyo's *Kuridza Ngoma Nedemo* (1985) the place where peasants have settled illegally is called Tangwena. It is not mere coincidence that the two authors, writing independently, came up with the term Tangwena to name a settlement or

place of habitation. The authors use this name as a metaphor of protest by landless people. Chigidi (1994:12) points out that the name Tangwena in Zimbabwe has become synonymous with resistance and protest against eviction from rightfully occupied land. Chief Rekayi Tangwena (translated 'Let Tangwena be') fought several legal battles with the Smith regime over his eviction from his land adjacent to Gaeresi Ranch in Nyanga until the High Court acquitted him on June 14, 1968. Since then 'squatter' camps characterized by grass-thatched huts or plastic shacks that mushroomed in various urban centres of Zimbabwe since the early 1970s came to be referred to [euphemistically] as '*zvitungwena*' (Chigidi, 1994:12). The use of the name 'Tangwena' in this war fiction therefore is, in a way, a call for defiant resistance to eviction from occupied white farms. As Wilson (1972:249) asserts, we are dealing with dogma that "art is a weapon". The authors therefore make their art "an effective instrument in the class struggle", as Wilson (1972:249) further argues. It is a weapon in the struggle between the landed class and the landless class. Choto and Moyo as members of their society are actually involved in the struggles of their people for land against those who own it in abundance. Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1981:72) recognises this fact when he postulates that:

The writer as a human being is himself a product of history, of time and place. As a member of society, he belongs to a certain class and he is inevitably a participant in the class struggles of his times.

However, Choto and Moyo's perceptions are that the settlement programme will not be people driven, at least for the time being. The peasants may not have much of a choice but to go back to their original homes where they were placed by successive colonial legislations and wait until the government they voted into power resettles them. This is the message that Comrade Tumirai in Choto's *Vavairo* (1990) has for VaChimoto and all those who 'squatted' on Derek's farm, and this is the message that Comrade Hondo has for his parents and the other Tangwena 'squatters' in Moyo's *Kuridza Ngoma Nedemo* (1985). Both messages are delivered to the peasants by former guerrilla fighters (who misinformed them in the first place) and both messages create problems for the peasants. This is not the kind of freedom the peasants supported the war for. They expected victory to empower them to do whatever they wanted to do with their land and the white man's properties as wartime rhetoric had made them to believe. Now the reality of the war aftermath is in stark

contrast to their dreams and expectations. War has ended and ordinary people have to observe the rule of law. They do not have the power they thought they had and cannot hope to live the way they lived in the liberation war zones. As Lawrence (1972:124) points out:

Liberty is all very well, but men cannot live without masters. There is always a master. And men either live in glad obedience to the master they believe in, or they live in a frictional opposition to the master they wish to undermine.

Already VaChimoto knows that 'living in frictional opposition' to the new black master who has guns, police dogs and bulldozers is not an option. That is why he makes the journey to Harare to see Comrade Tumirai to seek an explanation on these contradictions and possibly be given new directions. There he realises that the reality of post independence Zimbabwe is completely different from the dreamland they lived in during the war. The reality on the ground is that there are no farms to grab. They have to go back to the sandy soils to join the others in the 'villagisation' programme.

Tumirai in Choto's *Vavairo* (1990) makes two pertinent statements to Chimoto that demonstrate Choto's vision of the war aftermath. He points out that "*Nguva yehondo yakasiyana nenguva yatiri*" (p.158) (Wartime is different from the time we are in). He also reminds Chimoto that "*Tose taivawo nepfungwa yamange munayo munguva yehondo, asi pakapera hondo takaona takatarisana nezvimwe*" (p.159) (All of us had the kind of thoughts you had during the war, but when the war ended we found ourselves facing different challenges altogether). In the very last paragraph of Choto's war novel *Vavairo* (1990) VaChimoto sums up what amounts to the reality of the situation in the war aftermath when he realises that "*Kunze kwezuva nemumvuri, pakanga pasina chemahara muZimbabwe*" (p.159) (Besides the sun and the shade there was nothing for free in Zimbabwe). In other words, attainment of independence meant the beginning of real hard work.

7.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter attempts to show that while most writers ended their novels where the war ended, there are a few who ventured on to the immediate war aftermath. These

writers seemed to be eager to comment on the quality of the independence that the liberation war produced. The issues that the authors grapple with are related to the welfare of the ex-combatants and the peasants in the immediate post-war era. The peasants and the ex-guerrillas are the two most important groups found at the war front during the liberation struggle. These were also the most important groups whose expectations, dreams, and hopes needed to be fulfilled. In particular, these groups expected to be rewarded for their war efforts by way of getting political and economic benefits, land, and above all, dignity befitting people who had sacrificed their lives to bring about the independence and freedom that people were now enjoying. As soon as they start to focus on the war aftermath authors abandon the romanticisation and idealisation of the war that has been characteristic of their war narratives and face the realities of the post-war era. Makari and Choto take the opportunity at the end of their novels to lecture the nation on their vision of an independent Zimbabwe. Magwa uses allegory to highlight the plight of ex-combatants. On the other hand Moyo uses satire to highlight the problem of land for the peasants. Perhaps Moyo “learnt the great lesson that satire and humour can often be greater and more effective weapons than serious ‘learned’ writing” (Herbert Dhlomo, cited in Heywood, 2004:116).

This chapter recognises the fact that writers who wrote on the immediate war aftermath had their consciousness shaped by the challenges of the immediate post war era. They were no longer writing adventure stories. War was over and the country was now going through the process of reconstruction. Writers were now part of that process. Perhaps, in the words of Wilson (1972:241), their literature had reached “a point of vitality and vision where it [could] influence the life of the period down to its very economic foundation”. In other words their literature was now preparing the people for the process of economic, social, cultural and political reconstruction that had just begun.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

In this study Shona war fiction has been examined and writers' perspectives on Zimbabwe's liberation war analysed. Attempts have also been made to explain the factors that shaped writers' perspectives on the war. It has been established that the picture of the war of liberation in Zimbabwe that Shona war fiction writers present to the reader is not a realistic one. Writers tend to misrepresent and distort history. They simplify history to the point of making it narrow and shallow. The liberation war in Zimbabwe was painful, terrible, and tragic. However, the Shona war fiction writers ignore its unpleasant side and present it as if it was "a kind of game that people enjoyed thoroughly" (Chiweshe, Sunday mail, 2004:E2). They glorify the role played by the nationalist guerrilla fighters, and even those writers who venture into the war aftermath fail to portray the psychological effects of prolonged suffering and exposure to war and death on the human psyche. Every author ends up trying to lecture the nation on the importance of high-sounding ideologies such as socialism, unity, egalitarianism, reconciliation, villagisation and many other things. Granted that these were presumably among the goals of the struggle still the war had its other side.

Writers deliberately chose to ignore the fact that some people committed heinous crimes during the war that would haunt them into the war aftermath and into their graves. The crimes and the after effects are not mentioned. At best writers simply register the disillusionment of the peasants and the guerrillas who realise that their hopes will not be fulfilled any time soon. There is a marked difference in this respect between Shona war fiction and works written in English by the likes of Alexander Kanengoni and Freedom Nyamubaya that attempt to portray the liberation war in a more realistic manner and show that the war was not that much of fun, and that not all its participants were clean after all. Shona war fiction writers were not objective at all. They were decisively one-sided in favour of the guerrilla army. After all none of the Shona war fiction writers whose works are studied here was physically involved in the guerrilla war that they depict. So they were writing about things of which they

had no first hand information. That is why they portray guerrillas who always seem to defy death.

There were some factors and conditions in the era of independence that assaulted the writers' consciousness and made them to take a romantic and idealistic view of the guerrilla war. It has been shown that prior to independence the Government, through the Literature Bureau, injected capital into literary production to monitor the content of the fiction in order to make sure that no protest fiction was published (Chiwome, 2002:246). So no Shona novels depicting the guerrilla war could be published before independence. The result was that authors focused on domestic and social issues, avoiding bread and butter issues.

When independence came, writers now had the freedom to write on the theme of war. So popular was the theme of war at this time that the situation got to the point where almost every writer and publisher was concentrating on this theme, resulting in re-duplication and monotony (Chirikure, 1988:31). Writers were influenced by the same conditions such that they produced manuscripts that were so identical that if you read one it was like you had read them all. They were so identical in theme, lack of depth, plot, style, characterization, language, expression and even intention.

There was a race to be the first to publish a book on this new and popular theme. Everyone wanted to be first to publish with the result that by 1985 there were already several publications on the guerrilla war. Makata's *Gona ReChimurenga* (1982) was probably the first to get out of the printing press but the effects of this rush to get out of the printing press and onto the market first is so evident. The book was badly edited that it came out with so many editorial errors. To further show that everyone must have imagined that they could quickly publish something on this theme while it was still selling like hot cakes some of the writers like Munashe Pesanai never managed to publish anything else on any other theme before or after their one and only war novel.

However, while independence and freedom created a favourable political climate in which writers could write about the positive aspects of the war, Shona war fiction writers did not quite have the independence and freedom to write about the negative

aspects as well. They did not have the independence and freedom to expose the ugly side of the liberation war as well. By their own admission (obtained in interviews) writers focused on the positives only. They wrote what they believed readers and those in authority wanted to hear. This accounts for the publication of panegyrics in praise of the war and the nationalist guerrillas. What denied Shona war novelists space to construct realistic war discourse are the prevailing conditions that existed early at independence when most of the novels were written. The early independence years were dominated by the mood of euphoria and celebration. The triumphant, euphoric and celebratory mood was so contagious that it contaminated any art that emerged at the time, be it music or literature. For this reason novels that focused on the liberation war emerged but failed to thrive. They were all naïve romances that eulogised the liberation war and the guerrilla fighters.

The scenario that was there early at independence was, in a way, similar to the scenario that was there in colonial Zimbabwe, and both scenarios produced identical results in terms of the quality of literature published. In colonial Zimbabwe writers were ruled by fear. They feared that if they wrote sensitive issues the Rhodesia Literature Bureau under Walter Krog would reject their manuscripts, and they also feared the police and the law. This resulted in “internalised censorship” [which] “arises from the existence of many censorship laws” [and] “inhibits free creativity” (Chiwome, 2002:48). Just as much as in colonial Zimbabwe writers were not free to write sensitive issues because conditions of self-censorship were ever present, so too was the situation at independence. Writers at independence practiced a form of self-censorship because conditions that prevailed induced a kind of ‘fear’ into their hearts. Because they were writing at a time when the nation was in a euphoric and celebratory mood they feared that if they wrote negative things about the war and the guerrillas they would be viewed as retrogressive and anti-revolutionary. No one wanted to be branded a sell-out at the time of reaping the fruits of victory. It is for this reason that those writers of Shona war fiction wrote narratives that glorified the war and the guerrillas and turned a blind eye to the ugly facts of that war.

This fear was real. This kind of fiction that glorified the war and tended to agree with the ZANU (PF) official version of the war was a form of “internalised fear [that] was sometimes justified as responsible writing” (Chiwome, 2002:48). It was justified as

responsible writing because it romanticised the war and totally refused to commit itself and expose the ugly facts of the war, which suited the ruling elites well. It was internalised fear because whether writers knew it or not they were afraid to write anything that did not agree with the dominant ideology of the ruling class. It has been noted in this thesis that Makari (in an interview, 20/07/07) relegated the negatives to a time in the future, but that time may not come any time soon, if ever. Interest in war fiction appears to have reached its zenith somewhere around 1985 and it fizzled out around the end of the first decade of independence without any serious efforts having been made to present a more realistic picture of the war. There is nothing that happened thereafter to rekindle the colourful images of the war years that might get readers more war literature again.

Perhaps the Shona war novels would not have become the simple romances that they became if writers had been handling any other theme. Writing on the theme of war, and a guerrilla war for that matter, rendered it difficult for even the best of writers not to write a war romance. Because writers were writing on the theme of war all their novels turned out to be adventure stories. The Shona war novelists pitied their fictional characters against an enemy whose real strength they could not quite quantify. In the novels fictional characters, like the actual guerrilla fighters they represent, go to Mozambique to train for insurgency. This journey entails travelling through unknown terrain often infested with landmines and dangerous animals and full of difficult physical features. For these reasons writing a war novel meant writing a story of adventure. The battles the fictional characters fought provided them with opportunities to display courage and heroism, both of which are ingredients of a romance of adventure. So because writers were writing on the theme of war they naturally found themselves writing adventure stories, whether they were aware of it or not. Guerrilla warfare suited plots of adventure stories very well. Jollie (1924:311), talking of whites coming out to settle in Rhodesia during the early and tough years of colonisation, once remarked that “Without Uncertainty there is no adventure, without Hope there is no romance....” In Zimbabwe’s liberation war there was plenty of adventure and abundance of hope, and these were the ingredients of romance of adventure that found their way into Shona war fiction. The conclusion one makes therefore is that Shona war fiction writers produced romances of adventure because

their consciousness was assaulted by a combination of powerful influences, namely, the theme of war and the mood of celebration.

However, although writers of Shona war fiction were conditioned by circumstances to produce romances of adventure, in their accounts of the war they stuck to the general lines of historical 'truth' in order to maintain probability. In other words, they put some historical facts into their fiction in order to retain a semblance of realism. Writers were fictionalising about a well-known historical event and therefore events and characters were set in an equally well-defined historical context. The use of correct dates, the description of action centred on well-known places where action actually took place in the 1970s, the infusion of names of actual historical persons associated with the war and the general attempts to convey a sense of historical verisimilitude are meant to give their war accounts some element of probability. The readers will say, for example, this depiction of the Chimoio and Nyadzonja massacres is not realistic, but they will certainly recognise the historicity of these events. In other words what is contained in Shona war fiction is fictionalisation of history.

The liberation war discourse as it is in the Shona war fiction is given from the perspective of Shona culture. Lack of realism in the fiction is partially explained by the fact that the role of traditional religion and myths introduces the element of powers of the supernatural into the fiction. The supernatural injects the element of magic that allows things that are difficult to explain to happen, hence the absence of realism in the fiction.

Shona war fiction shows that Zimbabwe's liberation war was a time when Shona culture, which colonialism had attempted to destroy, was revived. War constituted a situation of crisis and in a situation of crisis people cling to something familiar for survival. During the liberation war guerrillas and their sympathisers fell back on their traditional institutions for survival. Adherence to taboos was essential for the successful execution of the war, myths about guerrillas served as useful recruitment and propaganda strategies, while the *noms de guerre used* were powerful weapons of aggression.

This study has also endeavoured to show that Shona war novels are instances of paradigms of patriarchal culture and values. Despite the fact that there were so many women who joined the war and participated in it in various capacities Shona war fiction does not give an accurate picture of the involvement of women in the war. Writers give the impression that this war was a men's affair. Women are more prominent as *zimbwidos* and civilians in the war zones. They are never presented in this literature as guerrilla fighters.

One may agree with scholars like Nhongo-Simbanegavi (2000), Musendekwa (2001) and Lyons (2004) when they imply that there were very few women posted to the front to do the actual fighting, and that women were mostly deployed to do other duties in ZANLA's rear bases. However, it is unrealistic to portray women just as *zimbwidos* and civilians when writers could have portrayed some female characters leaving Rhodesia and embarking on journeys of adventure into the unknown of Mozambique, just as much as they do with male characters like Kudakwashe Zaranyika, Charles Mukai and Donald Chikara. This is a gross distortion of history. If women were not deployed to the front then let literature portray them doing whatever it is they were doing at the rear bases. A more realistic portrayal of history would probably have included the adventures of female heroines carrying weapons to the front, because this they did. This aspect of the war had its own dramas but Shona fiction does not show that. Readers are only shown women as *zimbwidos* and as 'women in the middle' who were victims of murder, rape and other forms of sexual abuse.

All Shona war novelists deny women space in literature to do something meaningful. Part of the explanation is that it has never been the business of Shona literature, oral or written, to make women heroes. Also women were relative newcomers to the actual guerrilla war itself and as a result men, who pioneered the struggle, created space for themselves in liberation war discourse, which they guarded jealously through word and deed until it found its way into literary discourse as well. The absence of female writers of war fiction could also be a factor. This latter factor is raised in the full knowledge that having female writers is not a guarantee that they would necessarily portray women as heroes. It is known from what happens in detective fiction that "despite the traditional strength of women as writers of detective

fiction, detective heroines are remarkably rare” (Cambell, 1983:497). Female writers may even prefer to portray males and not females as war heroes. Again one can look to detective fiction for another pointer to what is likely to happen. Roberts (1985:30) has reminded critics that “Even female detective story writers, many of them acknowledged masters of the form, have overwhelmingly chosen to write about male heroes”. However, while there is no guarantee that female writers would portray women characters positively critics meanwhile blame their silence for the absence of positive images that could counter the negative images portrayed by writers who were schooled in a strong patriarchal ideology.

Finally, something must be said about the term ‘realism’ that has been talked about so much in this thesis. Realism in this study has been found to be at two levels. At a lower level there is lack of realism in the manner in which writers portray the liberation war and the guerrillas who were involved in it. At a higher level that failure to portray Zimbabwe’s liberation war realistically is itself a realistic reflection of the circumstances that prevailed in the post-war era when war fiction was written. So the contents of the novels distort history, but the art itself tells the ‘truth’ of its time. In other words, writers distort history but their collective art tells the truth; that is, it tells the true story of the moment of triumph, celebration, euphoria and literary activity.

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